BOASTING
A
A MEANS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

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Approved by
When I began to write this thesis several months ago, I was at a loss as to the method of procedure. After many weeks of study and consultation of the best authorities in the field of social control, I began to formulate an outline. The first outline was very simple and stereotyped and failed to meet the requirements of the subject. Finally, after making the fourth or fifth outline, I proceeded to develop the subject. During the course of writing, I found that new facts and new ideas presented themselves, making a constant change of my first outlines and methods a necessity.

There have been two main sources of material for this paper. First, I was able to collect some valuable material by conversation with different persons on various subjects, detecting in their talk anything that might be classed as boastfulness. The second method, and an extremely difficult one, was to search through dictionaries, other books, periodicals, and concordances for possible examples. In all my research I failed to find as much as a single article
given over to the discussion of "boasting".

With the drive of a pioneer and the desire of a scientist for facts and truth I went forward in the work. Like Darwin, I had hoped to pile up fact upon fact, case upon case, example upon example, until the sheer weight of numbers would carry much scientific truth.

I adopt the words of Professor Lumley, who says in the preface to his "Means of Social Control", "I have not been scrupulously careful to include the latest word in technical terminology................. Hence, I have gone along with the usual language in order that the reader may forget the medium and attend strictly to the ideas which I have endeavored to set forth".

"I realize fully that I am guilty of repetition, but do not regard this as a heinous offense. Repetition is simply one method of stepping ideas down where they may unfailingly be grasped......................; it is one method of reinforcement."

I am well aware that I have only begun on this subject. I hope some day to carry on this research in a more experimental way to discover the influence this device has upon both the boaster and the victim of the boast. At present, the sociological technique for the carrying on of such tests is practically unknown. The technique that we do have is inadequate for a study of
this kind.

I am indebted to many persons for helpful suggestions and criticisms. It would be impossible to single out each one who has contributed to the writing of this manuscript. I am under an unpayable debt to Professor Lumley who, by his constant aid and guidance, has given me the courage to go on with my task, and to my mother, who has constantly encouraged me in my work.

To those of you who have read "Means of Social Control", which is a masterpiece in the field of social control, it will be apparent that I have followed its method of presentation to a considerable degree.

My aim in this paper is not to attempt any final analysis of the subject but merely to throw it open to the general reader in order to stimulate thought and reflection upon an intimate control device.

To those students and scholars who may follow me in this work, I wish to say in the words of Dr. Weiss uttered before a group of graduate students in sociology, "If you find my terminology out of date and my conclusions false, I have no quarrel with you, but in the true scientific spirit I realize that much may yet be accomplished".

- Willard J. Shawk.

June, 1926.
OUTLINE

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BOASTING: A MEANS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

"I know them, yea,
And what they weigh, even to the utmost sample;
That lie, and cog, and flaunt, deprave and slander,
Go antickly, and show outward hideousness,
And speak off a dozen dangerous words,
How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst
And that is all!"

- SHAKE SPEARE.

This short description may help us to some extent in orientating ourselves for an examination of a widely used but elusive means of social control. From the dictionaries we learn that "to boast" means to say or tell things which are intended to give others a high opinion of one's self or of things belonging to one's self, as to boast of one's exploits, courage, descent, wealth, etc. From this we see that boasting is an art of its own. In less dignified language we speak of it as "false blatting", vain-glorious speech", "laudable exaltation", "verboseness personified", and the like. From the large assortment of descriptive terms employed to define this device, we gather that it is a richly variegated and diffuse means, differing with every user of it, but yet having enough consistency and unity to be gathered within one category. Definition is difficult, but demonstration is easy. We shall work, therefore, by means of analysis and example.
It will be necessary, before going into the more elaborate discussion of the subject, to attempt a distinction between boasting and other terms that are closely allied to it.

The marginal concepts with which we shall deal are only a few of the most outstanding ones and most closely related to our subject.

For the sake of unity and coherence we will consider these concepts in the order given below: (1) Ostentation. Ostentation is in manner rather than in direct statement but is used as an aid to boasting since it lends emphasis to a direct statement which is characteristic of boasting. (2) Bragging. By bragging we mean the colloquial term applied to the same activities as boasting. It is a term used quite often but it fails to cover the entire field of activity in which we find boasting as a means of social control. (3) Vaunting. Vaunting is the term the poets use, more or less, to express the same ideas that are expressed by the larger term, boasting.

This we have considered the most applicable of the marginal concepts but by no means all of them, for were we able to draw a fine, clean-cut distinction between all these devices, we should be able to accurately describe this great field of control.
Lest we should be confronted with any possible objections to the theory that boasting is a control device, permit us to discuss very briefly a few of the more plausible ones that might arise in the minds of readers in the succeeding pages of this work. It is well to lay a good foundation, for the structure can be no more secure than that upon which it is built.

In reply to the possible objections, we wish to say that even though no one is deceived by its vaunting assertions and no one believes or is in any way influenced by boasting, then we shall be forced to admit that boasting is quite a failure as a control device. But, judging by the multiplicity of examples that can be collected from all practices of daily life, we are sure that such is not the case.

Boasting is a very ancient art and does not seem to be on the wane. There is something in the argument from survival, not as decaying and useless things, like the mummies of the Egyptian tombs, but as still functioning in our time.

We must be careful to distinguish between being deceived by boasting and being otherwise managed by it. If we admit, as we do, that many are not deceived, we do not nullify the proposition that people are manipulated. Every day, numbers of folks are controlled by devices of
which they are aware. We all know that there is the very common experience of being "flim-flammed" with such amazing skill that we really enjoy it. We all yield to inducements that we know are snares and cheats.

Many of us are continually hunting for a way or means by which to give expression to our vainglories. There is on the part of some persons an extremely haughty disdain and condemnation of this procedure, but boasting is not necessarily a wicked device, nor is it always utterly neglected by those who condemn it most.

Finally, we notice that people do not openly and angrily repudiate boasters even when they know what the braggarts are trying to do. Thus, we come to the fundamental consideration of boasting as a control device.
FORMS OF BOASTING

The mechanical forms of boasting are: Gesture, speaking, and writing. We shall attempt to discuss these various forms at some length in the above order.

Gesture is the most primitive form of boasting. Some physical qualities that are its manifestation are, "Swell up", "raise to full stature", "Sirut", etc. These forms of boasting are not entirely confined to the genus homo. First, permit us to observe the lower animals. Who has never seen a cat walk by its supposed enemy, with tail all ruffled, back and neck arched, hair standing straight up, head erect, and eyes fairly glistening, even though it knows that all this show of strength is but naught before its stronger opponent? A good dog fight will display exactly what I mean. One dog can be "scared to death", but still his snarl, growl, and protruding teeth, accompanied by an erect and stiffened body, are all meant to deceive his enemy. He would not for a minute have him think that he is the least bit scared. No matter how small the dog, it makes no difference when it comes to "showing off".

The canines are not the only species to use this art, for those of us who are well acquainted with animal
life have seen how each will use different methods of showing off strength, beauty, and stateliness.

For instance, may we look at our feathered friends in the springtime. The male bird fluffs his feathers, swells out his chest, and sings until one would think his throat would burst. Again, he will soar away in the sky until he is a mere speck in the blue, then slowly and with all the grace and grandeur of a mighty monarch come gliding to the earth, tilting, darting, and weaving back and forth with the greatest amount of stateliness at his command. Thus he shows himself to his partially concealed friend in a near-by tree or bush.

The human race is not entirely divorced from this physical practice. Just the other day we saw a fine example of this between two boys across the street,—one and lad of six years, the other about twelve. The younger child seemed to be irritated over some trivial matter and proceeded to take off his coat and roll up his sleeves. He drew up his arm, intending to display the fine muscle, at the same time puffing out his chest like a real prize-fighter. We are not interested here as to the fight or its winner or victim, but only point out the method sometimes used to "put across" our own desires. A prize-fighter gives us another example of the physical exhibition
of boasting—after he crawls into the ring, he takes off
his coat and goes through a number of antics to display
his physical perfection to the crowd of onlookers, thus
influencing people as to his wonderful physique.

The second method of boasting is by means of
speech. Who has never stood on a street corner and lis-
tened to the talk of boys boasting about their fathers?
One incident that we recall will give some idea of this.

We happened to be standing on the steps of the
First National Bank in a small town in Illinois when this
talk was going on near by:—

Johnny: "I tell you my papa is the greatest
man in this town! He works at the waterworks and can run
all the big engines that pump the water into that big water
tower for us," pointing to the city water tower a short
distance away.

Robby: "That 's nuffin'. My daddy can run
engines, too, and he owns a bank and the biggest store in
town!"

Miss K. is credited with this remark in one of
her classes the other day:

"I have one way of getting information when I
go out on a statistical survey and that is this—I tell
them what I want and that I am going to get the information
so they might just as well let me have it first as last, as
I have the power to get it. I also did more work in four hours than the one on the survey did last year in three times as long."

Here we have one of the keenest bits of boasting that you will find anywhere, and it illustrates well our second form of boasting.

The poet Madden well recognized this form of boasting when he wrote these words:

"With all his timid boasts, he 's like the sword fish, which wears its weapon in its mouth."

The third form of boasting is an outgrowth of the second but with enough importance to be placed on an equal footing with either of the former forms. Writing carries the thoughts and ideas of an individual to a greater number of people than any other form of boasting. This is done by the use of highly-colored words and phrases so common on all of our signboards and in all the leading magazines and newspapers. The kinds of boasting that are characteristic of speaking are sure to get into writing. This idea will be further emphasized and made clear to our readers as we take up the next part of our paper.

Writing plays its greatest part in the field of advertising, and for this reason we beg to demonstrate its use in the "field of operation", as we have chosen to call the next section of this dissertation.
AREAS OF OPERATION

The diffuse and variegated characteristics and attitudes of people are sure to bring into play an innumerable number of control devices. Among these we find boasting playing a very important part. We have divided this device into the following parts for the sake of clearness, emphasis, and so the reader may gain a better understanding of the subject.

I. Individual. By this we hope to bring in only those remarks and actions that have to do directly with the individual or his own personal possessions and immediate connections.

II. Group. Under this head we will discuss the individual as he allies himself with various organizations, such as Nation, Sects, and Business.

A. There is a kind of national egotism, having all the absurdities and dangers of personal boasting, or self-esteem, yet it does not seem to us to be egotism, because the object of our esteem appears to be not ourselves but the nation. Most of us have no conviction of sin about it such as we have about our personal egotism; nor does boasting about our country seem to us vulgar, like boasting about ourselves. Yet we do boast about it because
it is our country and we feel a warm conviction of its virtues which we do not feel about the virtues of any other country. But when we boast and are warmed by this conviction, we separate ourselves from the idea of the country, so that our boasting and warmth may not seem to us to be egotistical; we persuade ourselves that our feeling for our country is noble and disinterested, although the peculiar delight we take in admiring it could not be if it were not our country. Thus we take the best of both worlds and the pleasure of boasting without any sense of vulgarity, and the mental intoxication without the mental headaches.¹

During the late war every true patriotic citizen of the "greatest republic on earth" heralded forth to the world that the United States was entering the war to make the world "safe for Democracy". This in itself was as unintelligible to the average citizen who uttered it as Einstein's theory of relativity. Yet no one can doubt the great effect it had upon the mass of people in the country at large.

B. Sectarian. Under this head we will include organizations such as fraternal, religious, civic, and political.

C. Business. This is a most fertile field at the present time, and it will be our endeavor to show the part

that boasting plays in this most prolific of all the
devices yet discovered by men to place his goods before
his fellowmen. We are well aware that this classifica-
tion may be extremely broad in character, but our purpose
here is not classification but the simplification of dis-
cussion, and we ask our readers and critics to keep this
point in view.

I. Individual boasting is the most egotistical
of all. It will not be our purpose to show the truth or
untruth of any examples.

The writer is well acquainted with a merchant
in a small Central Illinois town who was always very fond
of telling all strangers or visitors how he never had a
chance to go to school and finish his education. He had
worked in a large clothing store for his living. After
many years of hard work and study at night, he was able
not only to purchase the store and secure full ownership
of the business but has held every important office in the
town at one time or other.

Judge V., a great politician and lawyer, made
his boasts to us one day that no one was ever elected to
an office in his town unless he had the sanction of the
political ring of which the Judge was leader.

Here are two instances of boasting among our
modest tillers of the soil:
Farmer J. constantly reminds his neighbors of the fineness of his crops and his livestock. A few examples will explain:

"Well, now, I tell you I have the best corn and oats crop in the country." "I have the finest bunch of hogs you ever laid your eyes on." "And I tell you I have the finest yearling colt up there in my barn that there is in this part of the country."

Farmer S. was always very careful to tell all his friends that he had the best farm in the country and raised the best crops. Just this last year he made the remark that he had the best corn crop in the whole country.

The Bible is a good source for examples of boasting. We will quote a few cases to illustrate:


"I will say to my soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

Psalms XLIX: 6-7.

"They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."


"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise
shall be continually in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad."

James IV: 16.

"But now ye rejoice in your boastings, all such rejoicing is evil."

Psalms LII: 1.

"Thy boast thyself in mischief, oh mighty men? The goodness of God endureth continually."

Proverbs XXV: 15.

"Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain."

Romans XV: 17.

"I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God."

Proverbs XXVII: 1.

"Beware not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

James III: 5.

"So the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire."

A quotation from Shakespeare will reveal still another type of boasting:

"Thou lowest labor: As easy may'st thou
Intrenchant sir with thy keen sword
impress
As make me bleed. Let fall thy blade
On vulnerable crests; I bear a charm'd
life,
Which must not yield to one of woman
born."

"Despair thy charms, and let
The angel whom thou still hast served
tell thee
Macduff was from his mother's womb
untimely ripp'd."

Lord Bacon told Sir Edward Coke when he
boasted, "The less you speak of your greatness the more
I will think of it. Mirrors are the accompaniments of
dandies, not heroes. The men of history were not con-
tinually in the glass to make sure of their size.
Absorbed in their work, they did it, and did it so well
that the wondering world saw them to be great, and
labeled them accordingly."

Caesar boasted thus, when he entered triumph-
anty into Rome: "I came, I saw, I conquered."

1Shakespeare's Macbeth.
2Brooks, J.M. "As Others See Us."
Louis XIV, of France, said of himself, "I am the State."

The former Kaiser Wilhelm III of Germany is credited with the following: "Me und Gott."

When some American deep-sea divers gave a public exhibition, one of them, before slipping into the water, called out: "We can dive deeper, and stay under longer, and come up drier than any other divers in the world."

"I will not yield
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last: before my body
I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff;
And damn'd be he that first cries, "Hold, enough!"

There are many other examples that one might find to prove the existence of boasting. However, we think these are sufficient to give anyone an idea of its prevalence as a control device.

II. We will now turn to group boasting. (Page 9).

A. As we have already pointed out, the chief
differences between individual and national boasting, we shall proceed to give a few examples to show the prevalence of the latter. After a somewhat extensive study of the characteristics of various nations in regard to boasting, we find the United States taking the lead, with Holland at the opposite extreme. The following lines from one of our most honored governors were spoken in an eastern state:

"In the depth and breadth of character, in the volume of hope and ambition, in the universality of knowledge, in the reverence for law and order, in the beauty and sanctity of our homes, in the sobriety, in the respect for the rights of others, in the recognition of the duties of citizenship, and in the ease and honor with which we tread the myriad paths leading from rank to rank, our people surpass all their fellowmen."¹

In a speech before the New York Convention, President Van Buren is quoted as follows:

"It was the pride and boast and the security of the American nation that she had in her bosom a body of men who, for sobriety, integrity, industry, and patriotism, were unequalled by the cultivators of the earth in any part of the known world; nay more—to compare them with men of similar pursuits in other countries

was to degrade them."¹

This has its match in a quotation from Mrs. Trollope:

"Mr. Everett, in a recent Fourth of July oration, speaks thus: 'We are authorized to assert that the era of our independence dates the establishment of the only perfect organization of government'. Again, 'Our government is in its theory perfect and in its operation it is perfect also. Thus we have solved the great problem in human affairs'.²

"I was once talking with an American about Webster's Dictionary and he observed: 'Well, now, sir, I understand it 's the only one used in the Court of St. James by the king and princesses, and that by royal order'.³

The following account of the Jamestown Exposition gives us a greater conception of our wanton and exuberant expostulation.

"Greatest military spectacle the world has ever seen." "Grandest naval rendezvous of history." "Greatest gathering of warships in the history of the world." "The largest military parade ever witnessed." "The greatest display of gorgeous military uniform." "The greatest

²Trollope, Mrs. "Domestic Manners of the American People." Page 163.
military and naval celebration ever attempted in any age by any nation."\(^1\)

"For the last fifty years, no pains have been spared to convince the people of the United States that they are the only religious, enlightened, and free people. They perceive that for the present their own democratic institutions prosper, whilst those of other countries fail; hence they conceive a high opinion of their superiority, and are not very remote from believing themselves to be a distinct species of mankind."\(^2\)

"Other nations boast of what they have been, but the true American citizen of the United States exalts his head to the skies in the contemplation of what the grandeur of his country is going to be."\(^3\)

Another quotation from De Tocqueville will give us a greater conception of the dogged egotism of the American people:

"I have often remarked in the United States that it is not easy to make a man understand that his presence may be dispensed with; hints will not suffice to shake him off. I contradict an American at every word he says, to show him that his conversation bores me; I preserve a dogged silence, and he thinks I am meditating

\(^1\) Trollope, Mrs. "Domestic Manners of the Americans." vol. 2, p. 163.
\(^3\) Brooks, J. G. "As Others See Us." Page 62.
deeply on the truths which he is uttering. At last, I rush from his company, and he supposes that some urgent business hurries me elsewhere. This man will never understand that he worries me to death unless I tell him so, and the only way to get rid of him is to make an enemy of him for life.\textsuperscript{1}

Bryce, the great historian, has this to say about the American principle of liberty (The Declaration of Independence):

"They have given political freedom to America and France, unity and nationality to Germany and Italy, emancipated the Russian serf, relieved Prussia and Hungary from feudal tenures, and will in time free Great Britain and Ireland also." And had the great man lived until now, would he have added, "and in the last war America made the world safe for Democracy"?\textsuperscript{2}

"From the moment they set foot on foreign soil, they begin to compare things with what they have left behind. This is intelligent and unavoidable, but the American is never at rest until he has made as many benighted 'foreigners' as possible understand and admit that their civilization and ways of life are inferior. Hotels, railways, checking baggage, the size of farms, the telephone, the method of dispatching business--one

\textsuperscript{1}De Toqueville, Journal of a Residence and Tour in the U. S., Vol. 2.

\textsuperscript{2}Bryce, American Commonwealth, Vol. 2, p. 635.
and all have to be 'rubbed into you', to use their vernacular. Americans with any breeding, of course, do not do this, but it is the curse of the country that it has so vast an army constantly on the march that is never happy unless bragging about their superiority."

It would seem from these examples that the United States has a complete monopoly upon this sort of "blandishment". But such does not seem to be the case when we look into the activities of other people and read what they have to say about their own land. A few examples will express their thoughts and ideas better than any lengthy discourse that we may write about them.

"It is because France is the heart of the world; the affairs of France interest all; the cause which she espouses is not that of selfish ambition, but that of civilization. When France speaks, she is listened to, because she does what all desire to do."

This quotation is more than matched from D'Alambert in his "Flamories". He gives one special reason why the French should travel: until they have looked upon several nations lying in outer darkness, there is no way to measure the heights of French civilization.

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1 Brooks, J. G. "As Others See Us." P. 64.
2 Ibid. P. 65.
"Just across the frontier and it at once begins to dawn upon us how unrivaled we stand in all the tests of moral and spiritual refinement. Our morals are Probes, elegantes et faciles, and our character chivalrous and loyal and without selfishness. Yet we must travel, travel, especially to the United States, only to see how wisely the good God has given us the finest country to the best of nations -- France."

England, it seems, has not so fluently expressed herself in print as the United States and France. From the quotation which we wish to give here it would seem that there was scarcely any need of more than one, as it so outrivals all the rest that it is not a case of numbers that will count in this connection. England has so nobly summed up her position in the following quotation that we unhesitatingly give it to you at this time.

"England has her fixed position in the family of nations and at the head of civilization.........a position which she has long occupied, and from which it will be long ere she is driven. We care not, therefore, what the foreigner says about us. He may look or express contempt as he walks our streets or frequents

1 Brooks, J. G. "As Others See Us." P. 63.
our public places. His praises cannot exalt, nor his contempt debase us, as a people. 1

B. Our third division, sectarian boasting, is somewhat difficult to treat. The material is extremely scattered and difficult to handle. However, a few examples will express the ideas and motives underlying this type of control.

"In the past the Rotary Club may have encouraged a feeling of superiority among its members, but the press was largely responsible for the attitude. How many times have you noticed the phrase 'prominent Rotarians' in the newspaper? The two words seem inseparable. We are the outstanding people in the community and we may as well admit it. . . . . . . . We are not quite perfect, but in the words of Honorable Harry Dodge in his immortal address to the Wilmington (Delaware) Rotary Club, 'There was only one perfect Rotarian. He lived 2,000 years ago. He was Jesus of Nazareth.' 2

The following incident was told us by an enthusiastic supporter of the organization. The quotation follows: "This 100 per cent organization is the best of its kind in existence. It has only those people in its ranks who are the finest and most upright of the American citizenry. Every loyal, true-blooded Protestant American belongs to the

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1 Brooks, J. G. "As Others See Us", p. 62.
2 Ohio State Journal, Columbus, Ohio, Jan. 30, 1926.
It has among its members a body of men who stand for liberty, justice, and equality and the protection of American womanhood. There is not a single crook or corrupt person in the entire organisation. Everyone is a good, God-fearing man."

The following from the Communist Manifesto will throw a little light upon the method used to present the views of communists in the most forceful manner possible.

"The communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by forceful overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communistic revolution. The proletarian have nothing to lose but their chains. They have the world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!" [1]

Another notable example is that given by the Chinese Students' Alliance in the United States of America. Part of the article will be given to show the part boasting plays in it.

"In the course of human events, when a nation is on the verge of achieving her salvation by breaking off the slavish yoke of imperialism, that nation owes the world an explanation. For this reason, we Chinese students studying in the United States of America, in annual convention

assembled, sharing the same views with our citizens at home, do hereby resolve to issue the following declaration:

They lay down the principles that they demand of the rest of the world and the rights of the Chinese people. We will quote the closing paragraph of the manifesto:

"This is the declaration of our rights........

........Our people did not understand that after a century of servitude a nation can only be regenerated either through virtue or through death."

"For us, believers of the creed of nationalism, the lesson is plain. We know what it is wanting to show to the four millions of people desirous of emancipating themselves—not power but faith. We, the young, have faith in our nation united for a common purpose. The rising of China for the cause of liberty in the name of independence is invincible. With such a power and such a faith as ours, we might easily make the French revolution insignificant and the Russian revolution a mere trifle. Let the imperialist tremble at the thought of a Chinese revolution.

The world did little note how we have suffered for the last eighty years, but they shall never forget what we are going to achieve in the near future."

that of Business. As we said before, this is the most prolific of all and so it will be our purpose to show as many examples as possible. We will try to draw them from various fields to show that boasting is used extensively as a means of control. We will present what we consider typical examples in order that the reader may get the general idea of the subject without extensive reading.

We realize that many questions will arise in the mind of the reader as he scans these pages. He will try to read propaganda, flattery, and other control devices into the same activity. We will attempt a possible clarification of this point in our conclusion.

"Nancy Hanks and Peter the Great, no more than two decades ago, were the pride of the state. Today, it is the completion of the Dix River dam about which every boaster boasts. Once every Kentuckian gloried in the fact that his state was known all over the world as the home of pretty women, fast horses, and fine wine."¹

If Florida, California, or any other state has anything "on" the following quotation, we should like to hear from them.

"Of all jobs which my mind can create, none appeals to me more than the selling of Alabama to the

the rest of the United States. "Alabama leads all the states in the Union when desirability for location of industrial plants is considered on a scientific basis... "

Here are a few facts concerning Birmingham, Alabama:

"Birmingham is the largest city in the world for its age (being only about only fifty years old)."

"Birmingham is blessed by having natural resources such as iron, lime, cement, etc., in inexhaustible quantities."

"Birmingham soil produces, to the highest state, cotton and corn; all known trees and vegetables are grown in Alabama."

"Birmingham has the purest water, the freshest air, the sublimest climate, and the most optimistic people in the world."

"Then one moves to Birmingham, or even visits Birmingham, he is soon bitten by the Birmingham bug and always comes back to see us."

"It is said that some of our old citizens became pessimistic on one occasion and they ran him out of town. He said he never would come back, but in a few weeks he was back on the streets again. Then asked why he came...

back, he said: "I am now a changed man. I am an optimist as far as Birmingham is concerned. I had a dream. I dreamed I was in heaven and while walking the golden streets and viewing the glorious beauty of Heaven, I met friends from Mobile, Alabama, St. Louis, Missouri, Nashville, Tennessee, and other cities, but I could not find a soul from Birmingham, Alabama. I went to old St. Peter and asked if no one in Birmingham ever reached Heaven. He said: "Oh, yes! come with me." He showed me a large oak door with a huge padlock of a ton or more on it and said, "I have to lock the folks from Birmingham up in there or they would leave Heaven and go back to Birmingham.""

The State of Ohio has this pretentious slogan:
"The sun always shines in Ohio."

A few glimpses into the automobile industry will reveal how this device is working in one of the competitive fields of business today.

Nash – leads the world in motor-car value. "This brilliantly distinctive new model is the greatest example of value-giving the industry has ever known."¹

Pontiac – "Chief of the sixes". "To see it will be to experience nothing short of a revelation in quality car design."²

Franklin – "The new Franklin enters 1926 with the distinction of having won both style and engineering leader-

¹ The Saturday Evening Post. Jan. 9, 1926, p. 57
² Ibid. p. 67.
ship. It is the finest car you ever rode in, finest in riding, handling, dependability, and economy. Its speed reflects its higher power, which is even more marked on hills and in quick get-away. It leads in progress with its perfect copper radiation, air-cooling, which makes it the only car free from the usual road and weather limitations. It has the individuality demanded by those whose desires rise above the ordinary."¹

Paige - "The most beautiful car in America."

Buick - "When better cars are built, Buick will build them."

And so on. We might enumerate advertising articles of every automobile manufacturer, but they would be only a repetition of the idea that were are trying to develop here. We are well aware that advertising contains many other devices besides boasting. We are convinced, however, that boasting plays a very important part in advertising. We notice in the examples that have been given the emphasis that is placed upon certain features of each car. We also notice that there is a great overlapping in each advertisement of the qualities of each car. Each company maintains that it produces the best and finest car for the money on the market.

We might go on and give examples of other industries but we think that it would be only senseless repetition. Thus the things that we have left unsaid so far we will discuss in the next part of the thesis.
Conclusion

Thus far in our discussion we have attempted no critical analysis of the device. We have outlined the field in the most logical method that science has given us.

Let us study the motives that cause people to boast, (by motives we mean the underlying cause or reason for a person to conduct himself in a given manner)

(1). Personal gain may act as an incentive for one to resort to blatant exaggeration. Many people who are lower in the economic strata of society will resort to most any means to aid themselves in the bettering of their position. One of the most frequent of the devices used by the social inferior is boasting. He uses as many highly colored and high sounding phrases as possible so as to attract the attention of those who are in a better status of society. Boasting is found in all circles and used by everyone in most any situation in order to keep up prestige.

(2). Others seem to enjoy themselves in this art by seeing how much they can say of themselves or of things belonging to them or pertaining to them. We have known people who seemed really happy when they could be expounding some great feat that they had helped to accomplish or were a witness to its accomplishment. This point is well illustrated by the examples we have given under the part of personal boasting.
(3). Boasting may be likened unto a "pop-off" valve on a steam engine. Some people have to say something and it must be very alluring and extraordinary; at least they will make it so by the number of gestures and polished words they use. It will also be colored by a large number of personal pronouns and the superlative of as many adjectives as they are able to call to their command at the instant. The amount of personal relief they will obtain from such a practice will vary with each and every user.

(4). We have known people who have used boasting as a revenge against other people. It is here that the inferior does his greatest amount of vaunting. He attempts to better his social position by placing as craftily as possible his own personal qualities before his superiors. Thus he comes to the point of arming himself with a vocabulary of boasting terms. It is usually when hate and revenge are the motives underlying the cause for boasting that boasting goes to the greatest depth for the user. That is, it is used in all of its camouflage and deceptive ways.

From the points thus far discussed we may say that boasting can either be the truth or a perversion. The social parasite has to resort to false statements in order to maintain his standards. Many times, he can, through deception and fraud, carry on the smoothest and most enlightened bit
of boastful propaganda to show himself an equal of those who by honest means have attained their position in life. "I am as good as the other fellow"; that is the spirit that calls forth the most offensive boasting and this may lead to strife and bloodshed.

We have in the medical world what are called chronic diseases. We would like to look at certain users of boasting in much the same way. It may be a mental condition, but we will leave that for the psychologists to decide. We are interested only in the social role it plays in human affairs and relationships. Some perfectly good people are addicted to the habit of boasting from the first few words they utter, until you are practically driven from them by their vaunting assertions of the facts and their emphasis upon the incomparableness of the thing they are talking about. This feature seems to be more characteristic of the petty politician and the chronic loafer.

Very few have ever thought of "forced boasting". We can look at this from two possible angles. The one angle is from the point where we force ourselves into bragging about some thing or some person that we are well aware is not deserving of the credit that we are giving it or him. If we have a friend who we would like to have get into a certain fraternity we will only present the finest side
of his character and elaborate well upon all the possible
good qualities that he might possess and develop in the
right kind of environment.

Again, boasting may be the result of some outside
pressure being exerted upon us to decry the possibilities
of some person or thing before the public. The history
of some of our political scandals will show best what
we mean. In the city of Chicago a certain ward "boss"
demanded of his clientage that they boost for a certain
person even under the threat of death. Many of the victims
were thus forced into boosting a politician they knew was
not the man for the position. It is true that threats
were used on a few men but they, in turn, used other
devices to present the qualities of the man who was
running for the office. The one device that stood out
was the constant talking about all the fine points of
the man and his ability to handle the job. These two
ways of boasting play an important part in the life of
individuals. Most everyone at sometime or other has
been the victim of either of these two kinds of boasting.
We might find other motives for people to resist to boasting as means of social control. We have called attention to only what seems evident. We might consider a few of the psychological processes but here we discover the lack of experimental data. Some of the older psychologists might assign it to the role of instincts. When we observe the reaction of individuals when placed in certain environment we find that all persons behave in much the same way. Prof. Thomas has proposed his four fundamental wishes; may we attempt an elaboration of these wishes and see if we can find some basis for our device?

(1). The desire for security may in some instances be a cause for boasting. Each person likes to have the feeling of security in order to maintain his position in society.

(2). The desire for recognition plays the most important part in boasting. Many of the examples we gave under Personal Boasting go to show that the individual uses this device to gain recognition. This factor of recognition is not only found in personal boasting, but also in national boasting. Here it is the desire of certain government officials on all important occasions
of state to vaunt the greatness of their country. This fact of national boasting is not only true of the United States but also of other nations of the world, as we have shown elsewhere in this thesis.

(3). Desire for response is characteristic of those who are inferior in social status. In order for them to achieve their desired position in society they will resort to this device as a means of assistance.

(4). The fourth fundamental wish plays the least part of all. It is not our desire for new experience that causes most of us to resort to boasting. But as we have pointed out in our discussion above, and as the facts which we have collected will show, the desire for recognition, security and response are the fundamental causes for boasting.

When people resort to boasting as a means of accomplishing a purpose there must be some effects. The effects of boasting may be many and varied with every individual who uses it or is the recipient of the boast. We will attempt to show how these effects work on both the individual and the community. We will no doubt be accused of using introspection in this discussion, but then we are a part of society and for lack of a better

method we resort to this one.

It helps many who are inferior out of their inferiority. This is shown by an incident we recall of a young fellow who was constantly the joke of every crowd. He never could take his part and never had much to say for himself. Finally such deep resentment toward the attitude of others came over him that he resorted to such the same devices that they had used against him. After a few weeks of careful weighing of words and the development of a real technique he was able to hold his own against all the rest and in fact excelled many in the art of boasting.

Not all persons are affected by boasting as a social device. There may be a few pious people who weigh each word and thought before it is uttered. They may restrict their conversation to the Biblical "Ye and Nay". These persons are few when we look at society as a whole. Most of us are so gullible and like as well to be fed on "eulogisms" that we are constantly seeking after them.

Where boasting has a hold on some people it tends to set up ideals and standards. Two cases will show what we mean by this. A certain community in one of our western states was constantly fed on the idea of the superiority of their town over all other towns in the
state. The entire attitude has been the result of one of the most careful bits of boasting propaganda that has ever affected a community. Here is the slogan of the town: "The biggest, best small town in central ___". Such were the conceited ideas of the people in that town that no one would dare utter a criticism or a single suggestion of civic improvement. In fact it was a perfect community.

Another method quite generally found is the one fostered by such men as Madison Grant and Edward S. Stoddard who advocate the theory of the supremacy of the Nordic race. This has been so well drilled into the average member of the white race that he is not slow in believing that he is a special creation and a distinct species. We can well remember the influence this idea had upon us and we are still very conscious of its effects. We came to believe, like the rest of the race, that we were a superior person and always conducted ourselves as superior until we learned differently by personal contact and study of the problem.
Boasting, like many other devices, leads to a great deal of humbuggery and parasitism in the world. In Kings 20:11 we read; "where boasting ends there dignity begins". So it seems that the use of this device is simply a means fostered by those who have no other way of accomplishing their purpose. The poet Milton had much the same idea in mind when he said; "lest bad men should boast their spacious deeds." Dryden has this to say; "No more delay, vain boaster, but begin." Most of us have never realized the influence and hold some of these devices have upon society. We are for the most part very careful not to punish boasters. A few have fallen before our criticism when their blandishments reached an unbearable state of prevarication.

To those of us who may enjoy a little pastime in linguistic exaggeration, boasting will tend to sharpen our wits and imagination. A fine example of this is to a group of boys telling stories, each as his turn comes will try to outdo the one before him. When such a procedure has been carried on for sometime we will find a very small semblance of truth left. The truth will all be "swallowed up" in the most ridiculous vauntings that language can possibly find words to express. It is in this connection that boasting plays the greatest socializing influence in society. It is here that it stirs up the least amount of antagonism and strife.
As we look into this device we find that it soon becomes indiscriminate, resulting as it does, from highly emotional states. People boast about anything and everything. The critical and tempering faculties are pushed aside. There is the faint boast that is hardly distinguishable from the plain unelaborated truth; then there is the extravagant ostentation that is found only in the superlative and thus evolves into senseless moutnings and blatant nothings.

We may say that boasting awakens resentment and a feeling of being degraded below the level of the society we wish to associate with. With the awakening of resentment in the extreme cases boasting may lead to violence if not actual physical encounter. Many possibilities arise out of boasting interactions. As we have observed it, and as it reacts upon us and upon the people we have interviewed as to their reaction to the boast and the boaster, (1). If the boast is given in the form of a joke or fun and joviality there is no resentment on the part of anyone. It is taken in the light of a joke or fun and passes for what it may be worth at the time it was given. (2). If it is given with the idea of trying to show ourselves better than those to whom we are talking or as an attempt to put something "over" then a very different result follows. We will at once feel ruffled and indignant.
As we have pointed out before, boasting is not characteristic of any particular caste or nation. It seems to be universal. It is a method used for social control. It is usually allied with other devices as an aid to their effectiveness. In fact it is practically impossible to find any large number of clear-cut cases of boasting without finding a strong linkage with propaganda, praise, flattery, rewards, advertising and satire.

The whole problem of social control, as it presents itself, is so interwoven that for one to point out that here is a device which acts solely and absolutely alone and is unique, would be fallacious and a misrepresentation of the truth. All devices usually rely on each other for their success.

Does boasting in itself mean anything? Is it something tangible that we can take hold of and handle as we would chemicals in the laboratory? Boasting is unlike chemicals that we handle as so much physical matter. It is more of a mental process and, being a mental process it is extremely difficult to study and analyze.

We have thus made an examination of some of the characteristics of boasting as a human symbol-device employed in the manipulation of people. We have tried to suggest how it works with the individual, group, and the nation. We realize that boasting lacks many of the
finer qualities. Some will flame, brag, show off and lose all sense of proportion when some new idea has struck their fancy. On the other hand, people who are not so enamored with the new idea will ridicule and laugh at it, in the most hateful manner.

It is worthy of notice that the above conflict which exists brings into play other control devices. We are never free from constant force of constraint and pressure. We have only a possible choice of the device which we will use and those that we will consent to have others use on us.

Finally we note that boasting like other devices has existed and continues to exist because it has the sanction of the folkways and mores. When it comes in conflict with the mores we will place a taboo upon it and it will pass from use.

As we pointed out in the preface of this study, we have only attempted to arouse interest in this subject and lay down a few possible conclusions. If we have been able to do this we feel that our purpose has been well accomplished.
FURTHER PROBLEMS.

Out of our study many questions have risen in our minds which we have been unable to answer. We may be able to give a partial solution to a few of them. Our conclusions can be only tentative as we will have to wait upon more scientific data before we can hope to lay down any rules or laws in regard to boasting as a means of social control.

We will give a few of the questions that have confronted us:

1. To measure how extensively the device is used.

Here we wish to learn how extensively the device is used in relation to the various occupations or social position.

2. How can we measure its pressure?

This problem for the present is unanswered as we have no scientific technique which would enable us to measure its influence.

3. Has it a definite peculiarity of its own so that we could unfailingly recognize it when we saw or heard it?

The few characteristics that we find in boasting may be briefly summed up in the following:
It is the superlative exaggeration of the truth or untruth of one's self, possessions, or things that may have a personal bearing upon one's self.

4. What is the most effective way of using it?

This question we are unable to answer at present. Boasting is so closely allied with other devices that it is difficult to prove by analysis its most effective use. It is employed by practically all people, varying with every user.

5. How can we develop a technique for measurement of social control devices?

This is the real problem of the social "controllists". If we can develop some system to study scientifically and dissect these devices we shall be able to solve the whole problem of social control.

6. What type of people use boasting?

As we have stated before from the data we have collected we find practically no difference as to the type of people to whom it is a means of social control.

7. Is boasting used as a last resort?

To this question we would answer, No. It fails to have enough force in it to be used as a final means of controlling other people. It has not the vicarious nature of threats and punishments. It tends more to soften the contacts of life. It is more closely allied to flattery, praise, propaganda and rewards as a means of control.
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