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## J. Otis Swift Correspondence

Josiah Otis Swift 1871-

Maine State Library

Oliver Leigh Hall 1870-1946

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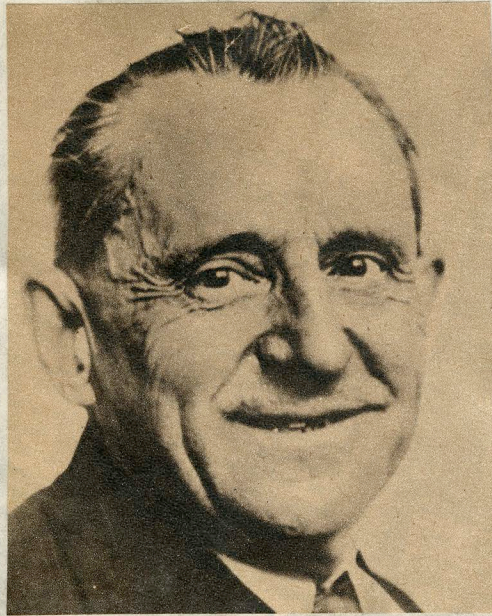
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SWIFT, Josiah Otis

Farmington, Maine, March 1, 1871-



J. OTIS SWIFT . . . nature  
authority and founder of  
the international Yosians,  
brings companionship  
(even romance) to the  
lonely, inspiration to the  
depressed, new horizons  
to the city-bound. How?  
Read "Walks of Life"

State Librarian,  
Augusta, Maine:

**New York World-Telegram**

Feb. 22, 1940



Dear Sir: Some years ago you indicated to me that you had a system of filing material about former Maine folk, for information of whomever might inquire. Perhaps you would care to file the enclosed under my name. I was born at Farmington, Maine, March 1st, 1871 son of E. Sprague Swift and grandson of Rev. Josiah Spooner Swift of Farmington both Newspaper men. I was formerly city editor of the Lewiston Journal.

Sincerely J. Otis Swift.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J. Otis Swift". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Nature Editor, World-Telegram and  
Leader of The Yosian Brotherhood.

February 26, 1940

Mr. J. Otis Swift, Nature Editor  
New York World-Telegram  
New York City

Dear Mr. Swift:

How very kind of you to remember the State Library's interest in Maine persons and their activities! Thank you for sending us the descriptive material regarding the Yosian Brotherhood.

Mr. Hall, who assumed the responsibilities of the office of State Librarian upon Mr. Dunnack's death, wishes to be remembered to you cordially.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY  
BY

hmj

SECRETARY

# WALKS OF LIFE

J. OTIS SWIFT AND THE YOSIANS ARE KNOWN

TO HIKING FANS EVERYWHERE. AND NO WONDER

BY STEWART ROBERTSON

FOR 17 years a minor mystery to most New Yorkers has persisted first in the Friday editions of the old *World* and more recently in the *World-Telegram*. It concerns a mysterious band of people who call themselves Yosians. Headlines announce YOSIANS WILL RAMBLE THROUGH BRONX RIVER GORGE OR YOSIANS MAKE PILGRIMAGE TO APOLLO'S GROVE, and below heads like these is the by-line of J. Otis Swift, described as leader of the Yosian Brotherhood, and the column includes a series of notices concerning the week-end activities of various Yosian clubs.

These notices are very likely to pique one's curiosity. For example, one Yosian club ad-

vised its members to "catch the 10:12 A.M. train on the New York Central to Eastview for an exploratory hike through Kaakcoot Mountains, Pocantico Hills, to land of Headless Horseman, and over ridge of Buttermilk Hill, 750 feet above sea level, to Graham. Bring lunch, dress warmly, fare 82c round trip, nine miles, moderately strenuous hike regardless of weather. Everybody welcome." The average New Yorker, once he discovers that these people actually walk for pleasure, dismisses them from his mind as a trifle whacky, but every Friday up they pop again. J. Otis Swift could be identified as the chap who writes a daily nature article on the *World-Telegram's* editorial page, but who and what are Yosians? Probably something like Druids, the non-Yosian New Yorker may surmise, vaguely promising himself to find out about them sometime.

Not being able to stand the suspense myself for another 17 years, I went down to the *World-Telegram* offices to see Mr. Swift. I found him to be a spry and vigorous nature editor who doesn't look anywhere near the 68 mark. This is due partly to his hiking proclivities and partly to his sturdy Puritan ancestry, which dates back to the colonial days

of the early 1600's. He is one of those tough and grisly Maine Yankees who weather the years well and live to be centenarians.

"I KNOW what you're going to ask me," said J. Otis Swift, chuckling. "You want to know who the Yosians are. Well, originally they were a figment of my mind, but at present there are 120,000 of their names and addresses in that card index over there. When I began writing my nature articles I had a horror of too much first person singular, and so when I wanted to say something poetical or idealistic I would begin, 'As the ancient philosophers of the Order of Yosiah

time I was covering a murder in the Connecticut countryside. A man had cut his wife's throat, but the police were unable to find the weapon. Their city-trained eyes were not much good in the underbrush, but after prowling around for half an hour I discovered a blood-stained razor. And you may be sure I got a scoop on the story.

"I always did my best to introduce nature into my stories whenever possible, and I was known around the *World* as a nature bug, so I wasn't surprised when Herbert Bayard Swope, the editor, assigned me to do a daily nature article. After a while I found myself running short of material, so I began taking



used to say . . . ' or 'As the Yosians had it . . . ' I felt that this camouflage would help me to say things more modestly than I could if they came from me undisguised. Yosiah was simply a slight alteration of my first name, which is Josiah, meaning 'Jehovah heals.' But let me go back a bit.

"I've been in the newspaper game ever since I was printer's devil on the Lewiston, Maine, *Journal*," Mr. Swift told me. "And after I worked up to be city editor of that paper I came to New York in 1900 to work for Joseph Pulitzer on the famous old *World*. I was always interested in nature, and one time when I was sent to cover a murder in New Jersey I went over the scene of the crime and mentioned in my story that the body had been found at the foot of a *pinus echinata*. That didn't go so well with the editor, who asked me what in tunket I was talking about, and when I told him that I meant a yellow pine, he advised me to write what I meant.

"I had plenty of leg work to do as a reporter, but that didn't keep me from taking walks and rambles when I had any spare time, and the habit has resulted in helping me on stories. For example, there was the

longer walks on Saturdays and Sundays, and I let mention of them creep into the articles from time to time.

"It wasn't long before readers were writing in to ask if they could join me on my next walk, and of course I said yes. And then one day I issued a general invitation in print. About 50 people showed up, and as most of them could quote the sayings of the Ancient Order of Yosiah, we proceeded to found the Yosians then and there."

THAT original group is called the Yosian (accent on the "si") Brotherhood, and since its founding scores of subgroups, called the Yosian Rovers, Bird Club, Jolly Hikers, Golden Rulers, Arcadians, Modern Culturists, Green Beth-El Society, and so forth have come into existence. These subgroups, as units, are not members of the Brotherhood, but the individual members automatically are members of the Brotherhood, which gives a unity to the movement. There are no dues, assessments, or responsibilities of membership, and to become a Yosian you have only to send your name and address to J. Otis Swift, care of the *World-Telegram*, 125 Barclay Street, New York City, and then go out on

one of the walks of the Brotherhood or one of its subgroups. Anyone residing anywhere in the world where there is no Yosian organization may register in the same way and start his own group of Yosians, keeping in touch with the parent body by an occasional letter reporting its activities. Yosians are scattered all over the United States, Canada, the British Isles, France, India, China, and Japan. The New York Brotherhood's emblem is a silk and rayon button bearing YB worked in yellow, blue, and green, the colors of the jack-in-the-pulpit, otherwise known as the preacher of the woods.

"The earth is our home," said Mr. Swift. "From her we sprang and to her bosom we return to rest. That is the subconscious urge that impels people in all walks of life to seek escape from the smothering effects of what we call civilization. Yes, I know that it is easy enough for a writing man to juggle words about the sacredness of duty and the job and whatnot, but the glimpse of God one gets in some sunny woodland is a clearer view than the one from a desk or a factory bench. So many of us are hobbled with debts and worries, with the care of loved ones dependent upon us, and with forever being on the defensive in the everlasting battle for existence. And yet that is not living. Let duty have its six days a week, but keep the seventh to restore your mind and soul by drawing close to nature. These minds of ours, remember, are made by nature for simpler

20-miles-or-bust before sundown, with its resultant strain on insteps and blood vessels. None of the 50-times-around-the-deck nonsense. The Yosian walks are more like strolls, with time out to look around, to learn, and to laugh.

On the Brotherhood walks, which average six miles, Mr. Swift is the leader, and he performs this role by walking backward and discoursing through a small megaphone on whatever happens to suggest a topic. He has one of those informed and agile minds which distinguishes the trained editor from the single-track professorial pundit, and there is little doubt that his remarks act as a mental hypodermic upon Yosians who may be hearing his ideas for the first time.

On these hikes, for example, a patch of wild mullein will draw from Mr. Swift the information that it may be used either as cough medicine or rouge. A rocky cliff will bring out a little sermon on the footsteps of God, as Mr. Swift likes to call geological formations. A piece of mineral, an insect, the flight of a bird—each is good for snatches of pithy data. Cross a trail, and Mr. Swift will draw a picture of historical drama. Sink deep into a sheltered glade, and he will people it with elves. He will quote poetry; he will pull up an osmunda, or cinnamon fern, and display the edible root upon which one could sustain life if lost in the woods; he will mention the palatability of basswood bark; and he will show how to make bows

ests has been responsible for scores of Yosian offshoots.

"We have plenty of ambassadors," Mr. Swift went on. "A man from Pittsburgh joined us one Sunday because he was lonely. He walked with us each week end for a month and made some 200 friends—more than he had in his home town. When he went back to Pittsburgh he started his own subgroup there. And there is a sailor who has started Yosian clubs all over the world."

"Does romance ever bud on these week-end walks?" I asked.

"I know of at least 75 marriages that are the result of Yosian meetings," replied Mr. Swift, "and some of these couples are now bringing their children on the walks. I always tell the girls not to give their telephone numbers to strangers, and I have never heard of a single untoward happening growing out of a Yosian gathering. You see, the rough and off-color elements are not attracted by what we have to offer, and so they keep away. On some of the Brotherhood walks I may have as high as 500 people, many of whom already have attended church services. As all of them can't be up in front as we walk, I work my way up and down through the group. This prevents unnecessary straggling, and I have several assistants who keep an eye on the rear so that no one gets outdistanced, although if any desire to leave and take another turning, there is no compulsion to make them stay. But I find that people who like to walk



things than the complexities we have used them to invent."

Zeal such as Mr. Swift's is nowhere more needed than in the vast wilderness of a city like New York. Here families may live for years unknown and unspoken to by their next-door neighbors. Here youth comes pouring in from a thousand smaller towns, alert and eager for the great adventure, and those who never go home again run the risk of being overlaid with the protective glaze of the big-city dweller. The average New Yorker will not willingly walk a quarter mile if he can ride; he is escorted through his days by a comic strip that makes him smile, an editorial page that fans his phobias; and his idea of a holiday is to take the city with him to some crowded beach or mountain resort. And he isn't a bit like Garbo—he *hates* to be alone.

Small wonder, then, that rather than be jelled into the mold of such horrible examples, myriad New Yorkers slip out of the city every Sunday into a world that is perfumed with pine or honeysuckle or fallen leaves instead of carbon monoxide. And although "like" is used to describe the walks, it is perhaps not the most appropriate word. There is no do-or-die, teeth-gritting march of

and arrows, traps, and stone hatchets.

Let Mr. Swift see the wild garlic plant abloom and he will recall Ulysses, and how Hermes presented that mythological hobo with a bit of it to eat so that he could exhale into the beauteous face of Circe, the enchantress, who was trying to give Ulysses that certain feeling and had changed his companions into swine. Circe must have had human frailties, because after one whiff from Ulysses she gave up trying and let him go. And the sight of a black gum tree in its scarlet autumn dress will get Mr. Swift going into the fact that its right name is *nyssa*, and that Nyssa was the foster-mother of the god Bacchus, and so away he flies upon another magic carpet of mythology.

"ANYONE may be a Yosian," said Mr. Swift. "We have radicals, atheists, agnostics, Buddhists—every race and creed—on our walks, and we avoid all controversial subjects. Nobody mentions religion or politics on the Brotherhood walks, although many of the subgroups are composed of people who have several likings or beliefs in common, and they may discuss whatever they wish on their own hikes. Community of inter-

and who love nature are pretty much of one mind and present almost no problem in handling."

"But doesn't anyone ever get lost?" I asked.

"No," said Mr. Swift, "but I have been got out of bed at two in the morning to go back over a trail in the Westchester Hills looking for a girl whose mother had telephoned me. We don't have a roll call, and there was a chance the girl had become lost, but we found that she was at the home of a girl friend and her mother. I also went out looking for an elderly doctor whose wife was worrying about him, and found he had decided to stay all night under the stars and commune with the universe. Once, though, I did get a real scare. Out at Silver Lake Park there is a pool in a huge pit that was made when granite was quarried for the Valhalla Dam, and one day the Brotherhood decided to go for a swim there. The men took one side and the women the other, and everyone changed to bathing suits under cover of the thick shrubbery. When we were ready to continue walking several hours later, I noticed one small bundle of clothes that

(Please turn to page 16)





From: THE FAMILY CIRCLE,  
April 7, 1939.

Circular sent to new members in 1940



## Yosians Hold Weekly Walks in Search of Hidden Treasure

By J. OTIS SWIFT,

Naturalist of the World-Telegram and Leader of  
the Yosian Brotherhood.

It seems altogether fitting that you should know of a great Treasure Hunt that has been going on for some years. You should be given opportunity to take part. Perusal of ancient manuscripts, somehow escaping the disintegration of thoughtless ages; legends that have been handed down from lip to lip in our human family from century to century; peculiar markings on rocks and bark of trees found long after and believed to have been made by our first parents when, for their misunderstanding, they were driven out of a Garden long ago and went sadly down a tear-stained path to a wilderness where they earned their bread by the sweat of their brows—that they might find their way back—all have to do with this hidden treasure. Knowledge of it has long been kept away from you and me and the other rightful heirs.

So busy has the world been in earning its bread, fighting for possessions, land, fine raiment, the flesh pots of Egypt, that the memory of this great fortune belonging to all men and women has been almost forgotten. But certain wise men, who have lived in each generation, preserved the secret of the treasure that should some day make its possessors happy and of great wealth. From them the Yosian Brotherhood, of which I am making you a member, has secured information of its general location. We send expeditions in search of it each week. Perhaps you would like to go along and help us seek. The treasure, which for economy of words has come to

be called by the novitiates simply "Happiness" — though it is known also to consist of the wherewithal for contentment, peace, the elements of beauty — lies hidden in a land over beyond the Workaday World; beyond the River of Doubt. Plans of Disappointment.

Those who have found their way to this Sancta Terra of the Soul, this Holy Land of the Heart's Desire, say that the treasure lies all about among the rocks and brakes beside the trail so that all may find it. Many come back bringing the treasure with them. The difficulty is to find the way, for the passes leading into the mystic valleys are invisible to those whose eyes have become dulled by the smoke of towns, the search for gold in the Market place and the pleasures that satisfy ordinary people. In fact the Valleys of Happiness lie just beyond the city's gates, just outside every palace door and government entrance — for those who can find them! One has only to step over the invisible line from office desk, workshop bench, kitchen table, prison cot and hospital bed, in the material world of trouble and worry, to the spiritual land of love, hope, friendship and peace, to find his feet on the pathway.

Thousands of people are so held in slavery to inanimate things, to grinding responsibilities, to the pursuit of glittering rainbows, and are so pursued by ghosts of their imaginations they are unable alone to take this step. So the Yosians hold their weekly walks into the pleasant coun-

try, away from the noise and turmoil of towns, that those who wish may go with them to search for their part of the treasure. You can tell, as the crowds come streaming back at close of day, who among them have found the treasure by the light of surprised happiness in shining eyes; the rosy flush of cheeks that have long been sallow; the physically tired but heart-buoyant steps as men and maids come back singing old songs of the heart in the gloaming; the peace and contentment in the eyes of white-haired men and women who miraculously have been young again for a day!

Almost every one who goes out with the Yosians finds some part of the treasure, and comes home with a feeling of vast riches. Those who go continually on these crusades to the Holy Land come to have about them an atmosphere of wealth, success, contentment, friendliness and assurance that attracts men and women to them; makes them welcome among all sorts of people — and their earthly well-being is unconsciously promoted, for people say they have delightful personalities — and material good things flow toward them.

It was to promote the equal distribution of this happiness to all sorts and conditions of men and women that, years ago, I organized the Yosian Brotherhood and led the first twelve pilgrims on a nature walk in the woods at Yonkers, N. Y. From that first dozen searchers for peace and happiness the movement has grown until it is estimated there are now upwards of 110,000 Yosians in the world. The name "Yosian," pronounced yo-si-an, accent on the si, was made up from my first name Josiah, given me by my Puritan New England parents who used to read aloud to us children a chapter from the Bible every morning before beginning the work of the farm. Josiah means "Jehovah heals, or

supports," and the Yosians interpret the name of the society to mean that when they go into the wilderness to study the ways of nature's little ones, the green-coated "physicians of the wood," the ferns, check-erberry, trailing arbutus, violets, club mosses and the friendly old trees, heal their worries and troubles and make their hearts whole.

The society has no organization beyond the card index for the sending of free literature to its followers; no social, religious, political, race or color lines and everyone in the world is welcome on the walks as long as he practices simple friendliness, tolerance, clean behavior, politeness of speech and good manners.

Discussion of troublesome topics, those things about which people naturally disagree, are banned on the walks. The Brotherhood stands for friendship, good citizenship, study of wild nature and the preservation of all the good things in the cultures of the many different peoples who have made their homes in America. There are no dues, costs or responsibilities of membership. To be a Yosian one has only to send his or her name and address to "J. Otis Swift, the World-Telegram, 125 Barclay St., New York City," and then go on one of the walks of the Brotherhood scheduled every Friday in the World-Telegram. Free literature is sent him.

Leading the walks is part of my duty as nature editor of the paper. The society has no expenses beyond my salary as nature editor. This is paid by the World-Telegram, which gives publicity to the walks in its columns.

There have grown up in the wake of the Brotherhood a large number of subgroups of the Yosian movement, each with its own leader, more or less following the principles of the parent society. As units these clubs are not members of the Brotherhood, but their members are

automatically made individual members of the Brotherhood, thus binding the movement together.

Weekly notices of the walks and meetings of these subgroups are printed with the Brotherhood notice in the Friday paper, as long as they behave themselves and function in harmony with the law and public policy—and there is room to print them.

Subgroups are in the nature of "family groups" and may be devoted to social, racial, religious, artistic, recreational and other worthwhile purposes—but when their members come on the Brotherhood walks, as they are urged to do occasionally, they are expected to leave their racial, political, religious and other differential discussions behind and meet everyone on the broad platform of tolerance and kindness.

The little nature stories called "News Outside the Door," devoted to information, philosophy and speculation about birds, rocks, trees, plants, human nature, folk lore and tradition, written by myself, and printed every day on the editorial page of the World-Telegram, are the official nature bulletins of the Brotherhood, and whoever is a reader of them is already a Yosian whether he ever comes on the walks or not, and is urged to send his name and address for enrollment and Yosian literature.

Although most of the membership is near New York, there are members of the order all over the world. After people have joined the movement and walked with the Brotherhood a few times, getting the spirit of the movement, they often pick out some subgroup that interests them, and, joining it, only come on the Brotherhood walks when the spirit moves them. Many people walk with one group after another, coming to have a wide friendship among them all.

As the movement is devoted to nature study, I generally lecture for

the first hour on the Brotherhood walks. Not many rough or uncouth people ever come—though everybody is invited — and those who are offensive in speech or insinuation, or irritating, are naturally shunned, ostracised, and so drop out. They are not long interested.

Everybody carries lunch on Sunday walks; pays his own carfare. Neither the World-Telegram, nor myself as leader assumes any responsibility for what a Yosian or a Ycsian movement group may do — and they are under no obligations to us except to be kindly, polite and well-behaved and obey the laws of the country. Many lonely men and women find life-long friends on the walks. Many marriages have taken place among those who have met at our gatherings, and now there are often children, born of these Yosian marriages, on our walks.

The spirit of the society is best shown, perhaps, in the credo of the Order of Magna Mater, one of the degrees of the society to which Yosians elect themselves as they please. It says:—

"The earth is our home. From her we sprang, and to her bosom we return to rest. She is our mother, whose love, protection, succor, faileth not. We are brothers of the wind, rain, the golden sunlight, the dewy night; the creatures of the wood, air, sea and laughing brooks; of those whose roots are in the ground, and live and die that we may exist and do our part. Though of the earth earthy, born yesterday to sleep tomorrow, we are strands of a rope of life without beginning or end. We heard the morning stars sing on the birthday of creation; we shall see the heavens rolled like a scroll when times fades into eternity.

"We hurry not. Love brought us into the world. With her we ride its storms. She is our pilot beyond the Shores of Time. We have plenty of leisure to examine the blue veins of the violet, to count the stars, to

know the sands of the seashore. The wealth of the world is curs. Ours is the gold in the sunshine, diadems of night skies, rubies and pearls of the dew; diamonds, amethysts, sapphires of ice-incrusted forests in winter; jade, opal and moonstone of the cascade's spray.

"Of our blood are all the races of mankind; dear and precious are those of every color, creed, condition and development. Though we labor in the market place, we rest our souls in the silence of woodland places. We seek Jehovah on the mountain tops; hear His voice in the sigh of pines, feel His arms beneath us in the ledges of the hills. Our Scriptures are in the lettered birch-bark, the crystals of graphic granite, the glacial scratches on rocky domes; His fingerprints on the orchid's lip. We go afield to sit at Nature's feet for knowledge and wisdom, to make confession to hoary sycamores, to garner beauty and inspiration everywhere."

Details of the weekly walks printed in Friday's World-Telegram each week give the place and time of meeting, distance to be walked, destination, carfare, etc. At noon on Sundays and holidays we sit by some wayside spring or on the shore of the

sea or by a lake, to eat lunch, and then for an hour or so sing community songs, solos, tell stories, talk. Sometimes there are voluntary solos in as many as ten different languages. Often I preach a little sermon, taking a plant or rock for my text and pointing out an ethical or moral law, but never expounding any special religion. On these walks, summer and winter, we seek the Peace that Passeth Understanding in lonely, mossy ravines and along gypsy paths winding over old pastures. We listen to the cosmic music of cascades, the song of waves along the shore. We seek Jehovah on mountain-tops and wisdom from patient ledges and wind-swept hills. We read the laws of the universe in the writing on the birch tree's bark and the glacial scratches on the ledges. We try to be as little children one day in the week that we may step over the invisible line between the everyday world of work and the Land of the Soul, and find, perhaps, that **Treasure of happiness** that has been waiting for us so long. Won't you be one of us, send me your name and address if you have not already done so, and come with us into the "Land of the Heart's Desire"?

DEAR YOSIAN:—

*I am sure you will be interested in the accompanying account of the Yosian Brotherhood, which is now a feature of the World-Telegram, and of which I have made you a member. There are no dues, costs, or responsibilities attached to membership. If you have friends you would like to make members, please send me their names and addresses and I will send them the literature and add their names to the membership list, the society now having a following of 110,000 men, women and children in this and other countries, and many sub-groups in the movement. If you have no nature club in your vicinity, why not call your friends together, start a Yosian group with yourself as leader, with no dues or organization, and send me their names and addresses? Such groups are independent, autonomous, and may be devoted to any activity that is useful and helpful to its members and the community. Notices of Yosian hikes, events, &c., appear every Friday in the early editions of the World-Telegram. The society's nature bulletins, "News Outside the Door," appear in the paper every day. Sincerely,*

J. OTIS SWIFT, Leader.

circular sent to members by old New York World before consolidation with N. Y. Telegram

# Walking With Psyche in the Land Beyond the Sunsets

By J. OTIS SWIFT

*Nature Editor of The World and Leader of The Yosian Brotherhood of Nature Philosophers*



J. OTIS SWIFT

Here is an invitation from the people of another world. They would like you to be their guest. If you are pleased with their lovely island out beyond the Shores of Time; if you find relief from depression when you get there; find that the things making you unhappy here, distraught in life among brick and mortar, the slavery to inanimate things, seem of no consequence there — they hope that you will settle among them, make a home on the coral shores, find peace and rest in valleys below mountains of ethereal blue. We who pass our days making material things to feed and clothe our bodies, who battle all week with other tired human beings to get our share of wealth produced in treadmills and bartered in market places, live under a strain. We are slaves to household furniture, homes, to those who have thrown nets of love and dependence over us and drive us to daily tasks. Our minds, made by Mother Nature for simpler life, are in danger of breaking. We work, eat and sleep that we may work again. It is so long since we left the Garden of Eden, the Innocence of Childhood—and we long to go back!

The Yosians, a mystic Order of men and women who have found happiness and want to give it to you, have discovered the Promised Land, an island of delight out beyond the Headlands of Trouble, the stormy Sea of Dismay. They want you to visit them. You can do it without effort, for though the fronded palms that shade the Isle are leagues from the materialism of city streets, bickering and quarreling of tenement and palace, you can step across the hidden border in an instant.

Lest you misunderstand me, I must tell you the Homeland of the Yosians is the mystic country of Make-Believe; the Fairyland of the Soul; the Garden of the Hesperides, where only the worldly-minded and selfish are made unhappy by discord. This delightful country lies all about us in cities and towns, and anyone may enter who has the magic lamp to light his way over the mountains into the Valley of the Peaceful in Heart. This light burns in every human

bosom, though many do not know they have it. It is the mystic fire stolen from heaven by Prometheus, the Promethean spark that makes all men divine. Those who go on pilgrimages with the Yosians learn very soon that those who are Children at Heart get quickest to the Island of Content; that the lotus-eaters, those who give themselves to dreamy contentment and forgetfulness of trouble and worry, find the magical Garden of Eden is within their own breasts. The Yosians, and novitiates who flock to them, practice living the Inner Life, the spiritual existence. They have the secret of transforming ugly things of the material into beautiful things of the spiritual world. They know, from ancient alchemists who handed their Order down the ages, the secret of transmuting. Everything they touch turns to gold. They idealize the drab, unlovely details of life and make them inspiring. They have the miracle-working password opening all hearts, no matter how crabbed, filled with hate—for they boldly practice kindness, gentility, politeness and love toward all human creatures. They go through the world finding obstacles removing themselves from their path.

To live as much as possible in this bright land beyond the sunset, thousands of Yosians in towns steal away one day a week into wilderness places where the world is fresh and young. They go on week-end walks to forests, parks, beaches, mountains. It was seven years ago that I, who had worked almost all my days in the treadmill, but had learned to live the Make-Believe Life, the Inner Life of the Soul, by spending much time sitting at Nature's feet and seeking Jehovah in far places where babblings of the Market Place never penetrated, led the first Yosian walk in the woods of Westchester County, N. Y. Twelve men and women went with me, visiting among ferns, bayberry, jack-in-the-pulpit, tall old oaks and hoary ledges. We called the society that grew out of that nature walk the Yosian Brotherhood of Nature Philosophers, adapting the word Yosian from Josiah, my first name. The word means "Jehovah heals," and we like to think that when we flee the town and its worries, and sit among little physicians of the wood, arbutus, hepaticas, maidenhair ferns, Mother Nature, who is Jehovah in His maternal capacity, heals our

wounds and makes us well and happy.

The Yosian Brotherhood has grown year by year until it is scattered all over the world, in individuals and subgroups. The sun never sets upon it. There is no organization except a card index, with names and addresses of those who have been on our walks or at events of subgroups, or have sent me their names, and are thereby made Yosians. Like the mysterious island in the skies, where its members live their ethereal lives, it is purely a thing of the spirit. Those modern people who have succumbed to the Enchantress Circe; been turned into beasts by her blandishments until they no longer believe anything good and sweet and pure, but go around grunting and nosing over waste heaps as the companions of Odysseus did, cannot see the Garden of Eden all around them. But those who have joined the woodland walks with the Yosians and have found and eaten the mystic herb moly which Hermes gave to break the spell of Circe, know the trail to the Land of Contentment.

Any one may become a Yosian by sending his name and address to me at The World office, 63 Park Row, New York City. There are no dues, costs or responsibilities of membership; no requirements. Any one in the world, of any race, creed, color or condition of mental or moral turpitude, may become a member. We think of the Yosian Brotherhood as the "brotherhood of mankind." No man is so godlike, and none so beastlike, he is not our brother! The society stands for two things: brotherhood and study of nature. Brotherhood is love and kindness among all men and women. The study of nature means an attempt to understand and learn all we can about the universe and everything in it. We wish to conserve all good things man has made through the ages by his heart, brain and hands, and accept the good things he may yet find. Many subgroups have sprung up in the wake of the Brotherhood. These groups are not units of the Brotherhood, but free clubs in the Yosian movement, managing their own affairs. We make all their members individually members of the Brotherhood, which knits the movement together. The World gives publicity to the groups when they are in harmony with the spirit of the Brotherhood and there is room in the paper. Neither The World, the Brotherhood, nor I as Nature Editor and founder of the Yosian Brotherhood for The World, assumes any responsibility for what a Yosian, or a Yosian group, may do. The groups and Yosians individually are under no obligation to The World, nor to me. But a remarkable spirit of fraternity has grown

between the more than 75,000 Yosians. People who ordinarily would have a very small circle of friends, and be intensely lonely in a great city, now have hundreds of intimate friends. They know by sight, and to smile and talk with in subways and on streets, other thousands.

They know each other among the thoughtless crowds by the Inner Light that shines through their faces. There are subgroups of the movement devoted to many different things: hiking, nature study, camping, dancing, poetry recitals, religion, philosophy, campfires on the shores of the Hudson in summer evening parties. These subgroups are like families in the great Yosian Community. In the family one may cultivate without offense to others his personal taste, his religion, politics, standard of ethics, racial traditions. So we find Jewish, Christian, Negro, and many other Yosian subgroups of people getting together to enjoy the particular atmosphere they like or believe in. When these various peoples come to Brotherhood walks with the Metropolitan Group, to which they also all belong, they are expected to leave behind their special religion, politics, racial customs and prejudices, and meet all other Yosians on the broad platform of human love and tolerance. No special propaganda is tolerated at gatherings of the Brotherhood. We believe each sect and race should, in its Yosian subgroups, preserve the best of its traditions, culture, ideals, beliefs, so that when the future American type has become fixed, perhaps in 500 or 1,000 years, your descendant and mine, inheriting from all the many races in America today, may not be robbed of anything of which he might be proud. We also think every race here now has something of value to contribute to the making of that future man. If he is to be lovable, with a peaceful soul, not torn by warring inheritances within, it is time we should be learning to love and understand his many other great-great-great-grandparents of today.

The Yosians, having read notices of the week-end walks, parties, meetings, lectures, printed in The World Saturday morning, and in The Evening World, Home Edition, or earlier editions, on sale at noon on Fridays, gather at the places designated. Those who are going out with the Metropolitan Group, which I lead Saturday afternoons and Sunday, take the Lexington Ave. subway to East 241st Street and White Plains Road, say, arriving there at 11 o'clock Sunday morning. People sometimes ride on trolleys and subways three hours to walk with us. So we wait half an hour after the

time set. If the day is fine there may be from fifty to three hundred men, women and children when I blow my whistle and we set off down into the Bronx River Parkway and walk north on the path beside the shining water beloved by the poets Poe and Drake; wild birds flitting in the bushes and trees. As we go along I lecture on plants, trees, birds, minerals, insects—whatever is suggested by what we see. Often I weave into the discourse fairy lore, medical and religious traditions connected with plants; mythology, history, philosophy and common sense. Those who are interested keep close at my heels and those who have come to walk with their sweethearts, wives and husbands, who are out for exercise, trail along behind for half a mile or so. At noon we sit by some wayside spring in the woods of Westchester and eat lunch, sing community songs, gossip or listen to solos sung, often in half a dozen different languages. Though the invitations to the Metropolitan Group walks are given to every one, none but rather well behaved and interesting people ever come. Rough, coarse people are not attracted. Sometimes I preach a little sermon, taking a plant, an insect or a mineral for my text, and pointing a moral lesson. After we have rested, made new friends, renewed old friendships, the line of march is taken up again, and we go on over hill and dale, beside still waters and along the lips of crags, talking, enjoying the countryside. We have forgotten the troubles of the rent and board; difficulties of the week's work—the fuss with the man or woman next door. Our tired work-a-day minds are day-dreaming; our bodies drinking oxygen, our nostrils delighted with perfume of black loam, the scents of the wilderness. In summer we stop and dance beside wilderness pools or sit in the shade of trees and rest. In winter skates are often carried and the whole party stops to explore some wildwood stream's glassy surface. In snowstorms, soft wool hanging to twigs, making a cotton batting woodland, snow battles are fought by those who like. Late in the afternoon, with the sun sinking in glory in the west, bodies tingling with ozone and the red blood beating in cheeks, eyes laughing and a sense of well-being flowing through us, we reach the end of a trolley, bus line or railway and return to the city; healthily tired, minds cleared of cobwebs, strength and courage renewed; old people years younger and young people strangely quiet and happy now they have worked off their superfluous energy. Every one brings his own lunch, pays his own carfare.

Any one may start a subgroup of the

Yosian movement for any purpose that seems worthy to a considerable number of people and is in harmony with public policy and the laws of the country where it is started. Names and addresses of the members of such groups should be sent to me, that they may also be made members of the Brotherhood. But the subgroup as a unit remains independent of the Brotherhood, of The World and of myself. Each group should decide as to its organization, leaders—whether a parliamentary club, or just a group with a leader but no organization, rules, red tape or dues. The latter is often most successful.

"News Outside the Door," the little nature story printed each morning on the editorial page of The World, written by me, and from which the idea of the Brotherhood grew, is the official daily nature bulletin of the movement. It is printed also in papers all across the country having The World's feature service, and thousands of people who read it regularly consider themselves Yosians, as they are, and are urged to send their names and addresses to me for including in the roster of the Order, without cost.

Through the subgroups the Yosian movement is linked up throughout the world with many large societies, religious denominations, races, museums, schools, and I, as the leader of the Brotherhood, receive friendly letters from the leaders every little while telling me of progress made. While the Yosian Brotherhood is not a religious organization and recognizes no special religion, God is often referred to on Yosian walks, at lectures, discussions, and a Natural System is generally recognized as back of the Cosmos. Yosians speak of this System under any of the names men have given the Deity, but to avoid the sensibilities of the followers of the many modern creeds, perhaps God is most often referred to on our walks as Nature, or the Great Nature Mother. The Credo of the Order of Magna Mater, the Great Nature Mother, one of the imaginary degrees of Yosianism to which every one elects himself as he pleases, expresses the Spirit of Yosianism:

"The Earth is our home. From her we sprang, and to her bosom we return to rest. She is our mother whose love, protection, succor, faileth not. We are brothers of the Wind, Rain, the golden Sunlight, the dewy Night; the creatures of the Wood, Air, Sea and laughing Brooks; of those whose roots are in the ground, and live and die that we may exist and do our part. Though of the earth earthy, born yesterday to sleep tomorrow, we are strands of a Rope of Life without beginning or end. We heard the

morning stars sing on the birthday of creation; we shall see the heavens rolled like a scroll when time fades into eternity.

"We hurry not. Love brought us into the world. With her we ride its storms. She is our pilot beyond the Shores of Time. We have plenty of leisure to examine the blue veins of the violet, to count the stars, to know the sands of the seashore. The wealth of the world is ours. Ours is the gold in the sunshine, diadems of night skies, rubies and pearls of the dew; diamonds, amethysts, sapphires of ice-incrusted forests in winter; jade, opal and moonstone of the cascade's spray.

"Of our blood are all the races of mankind; dear and precious are those of every color, creed, condition and development. Though we labor in the market place, we rest our souls in the silence of woodland places. We seek Jehovah on the mountain tops; hear His voice in the sough of pines, feel His arms beneath us in the ledges of the hills. Our Scriptures are in the lettered birch-bark, the crystals of graphic granite, the glacial scratches on rocky domes; His fingerprints on the orchid's lip. We go afield to sit at

Nature's feet for knowledge and wisdom, to make confession to hoary sycamores, to garner beauty and inspiration everywhere."

The Yosian Benediction, sometimes pronounced by the leader at the close of Yosian gatherings, is:

"And now may the blessing of the Great Nature Mother go with you and remain with you until we meet again. May you find Her peace in your hearts whether you be in the market place or in the silence under the Greenwood Tree of the wilderness. May the harmony with which her planets swing through the trackless space guide your hearts and lives; may love, service, fellowship with all the creatures with whom She has made glad the universe, make worthy your days. And of the wealth of beauty, color, music and enchantment with which the Magna Mater has strewn the earth, may your portion come to you. These things we ask for the sake of that Divinity planted in every human heart which makes all mankind akin to Her whose Milky Way is flung across the heaven's starry deep and on whose earthy bosom we shall at last find the peace that passeth understanding. Amen."

## The World

Editorial Rooms,

Pulitzer Building, Park Row, N. Y.

Dear Yosian: I am sure you will be interested in the accompanying account of the Yosian Brotherhood, of which I have made you a member. There are no dues, costs or responsibilities attached to membership. If you have friends whom you would like to make members, please send me their names and street addresses and I will send them the literature and add their names to the membership, which now embraces more than 75,000 men, women and children in this and other countries, with over 300 sub-groups in the movement. If you have no nature club in your vicinity, why not call your friends together, start a Yosian Group with yourself as leader, with no dues or organization, and send me their names and street addresses? Such groups are independent, autonomous, and may be devoted to any activity that is useful and helpful to its members and the community. Notices of Yosian hikes, events, etc., appear in the Home Edition of The Evening World Fridays, and in The Morning World Saturdays. A review of the week's Yosian activities appears in each Sunday's World.

Faithfully,

J. OTIS SWIFT, *Leader.*