

Footnotes

1. Untermeyer, Louis, *American Authors*, p.215-216
2. *Ibid.*, p. 215-216
3. *Ibid.*, p. 214-215
4. *Ibid.*, p. 217
5. (B.W.S.), *Boston Transcript*, p. 4
6. Anonymous, *Review of Reviews*, Vol. 54, p. 674
7. Untermeyer, op. cit. p. 216
9. *Ibid.*, p. 218
9. Anonymous, *Outlook*, Vol. 134, p. 521
10. Anonymous, *Springfield Republican*, p. 7
11. Anonymous, *Saturday Review of Literature*, Vol. 5, p. 533

Bibliography

- B.W.S. "Review of Mountain Interval," *Boston Transcript*, Dec. 8, '23, p. 4
- Untermeyer, Louis. *American Authors*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1921
- Boston Transcript*, Dec. 8, '23, p. 4
- Anonymous, "Review of Mountain Interval," *Review of Reviews*, Dec. 8, '23 p. 4
- Anonymous, "Review of New Hampshire," *Outlook*, 134:521
- G.H., "Review of West Running Brook," *Springfield Republican*, p. 7

Man's Opinion Of Himself

Hilton B. Atherton

Hail, fellow worm!

Now wait a moment. Don't be alarmed, gentle reader, and take no offense. The rather startling salutation is only a figurative greeting to the human race in general. I do not mean to classify the peruser of this manuscript as a member of Annelida, or any of the related phyla of the uninspired angleworm, but I do intend to give some idea of the great conceit of the bi-pedal inhabitants of the obscure little chunk of matter we refer to so confidently as "the earth."

Of course, there are several things about man which are highly commendable. His body itself is a stupendous miracle. His mind (the source of even these idle scribblings) is colossal in its import. He has advanced a little during the few moments he has existed geologically, and his future is bright. However, he remains an amoeba, and in the early embryo stage at that, as far as the age and extent of the universe are concerned.

For that matter, he isn't even complete king in his own goldfish bowl, so to speak. For instance, did you ever look for any length of time in the face of an old, passive, bored elephant at a circus? Scorn bred through the ages is expressed in every movement and expression of the pachyderm. Though I have never been on intimate terms with an elephant-trainer, I should think one would become rather humble in the prolonged presence of these old fellows. Men are generally humble when they deal with anything large enough to dwarf the petty hurryings and scurryings with which mankind is so

often busied. I am no exception. I shall no doubt be lost in the rush, hastening about like an ant in the colony.

That is why I admire the quiet men who realize what greatness really means. If you seek sincere modesty, speak to the men who climb mountains and at least know the bigness of the earth's monarchs, though the hundred highest peaks have never been soiled by the touch of mortal foot. Talk to Beebe, who has a little idea of the depth of the sea. And if you really want to get "set down a peg or two," visit an astronomer. It's truly amazing to me how these sky-searching geniuses manage to retain any respect at all for the human race. They deal all evening with stars larger than our orbit around the sun, more numerous than grains of sand, hundreds of light years away in limitless space, and then come home to read in the paper about a tremendous furor over a breach-of-promise suit, or a sensational political campaign. It's ridiculous.

Consider for a moment the opinions a Martian being might have. He (or rather it) is the standard one-eyed, three-armed, metallic monstrosity with a fourth-dimensional brain, and stands idly peering through a super-telescope toward our cozy little planet. The antics of the simple-looking human busy-bodies seem to amuse our Martian onlooker immensely. In an American city the super-telescope picks up a group of people wildly gesticulating in the

throes of an election. "They must be crazy," comments our friend in Martian accents. In another part of the city a scientist is busy trying to render an atom asunder. "Good work, but he's 'way behind," observes the Martian critic. On a different quarter of the globe, the "man" from Mars watches two groups of men trying to annihilate each other with guns. "What are they trying to do, make their species extinct?" asks the bewildered Martian. Finally, after seeing a few of the better agencies for human advancement, the monster concludes that the "earthlings" might have a chance, but it's pretty slim. However, he keeps these radical views to himself, for his fellow Martians are convinced that humans will never rise above the oyster stage of intelligent civilization, by the standards of Mars.

Perhaps if everyone realized how far man has yet to go people would become so humble and meek that society would collapse. However, I don't think this very likely. As long as men fight over money, nations are offended and go to war over insults, movie stars sway people, and society debutantes have contests to see who can marry the most foreign titles, no worries need arise from over-humbleness in the race. The majority of humans will continue to concern themselves with petty, local matters for many ages before they awake to the realization of their position in the universe. Or perhaps I should wake up myself. I don't know. I give up.