

Introduction to "Kinships" by G.H. Shohet, M.D.

The accompanying manuscript represents the life's work and "soul-child" of one of the few remaining of that vanishing species, "The Last Angry Man".

He was a truly dedicated human being who, even though he had studied under heart specialist Dr. Paul Dudley White for a period, devoted his life to ^a"general practice" caring for the socio-economically lower income and lower middle income class patients (whose struggles in the period ranging from the mid-twenties to the end of the sixties he identified with, respected and supported.). On innumerable occasions he shovelled himself out in the early hours of a snowy morning to answer an urgent call only to refuse the proffered payment from an indigent patient or else ^Amake his fee ridiculously low.

In his book he combines a physician's pragmatic approach to the functioning and physiology of the human body from a medical point of view with a sensitive and lyrical perception of man's inner sensibilities, spiritual qualities and metaphysical questionings as to his place in the awesome universe and the totality of things. This is further enhanced by a reverence for the mystical wonders of nature and the Divine Creator.

It is an epic which treats with man on many levels (especially compassionate and penetrating when dealing with his potential for soaring to grand heights, and for plumbing the lowest depths and yet still nurturing something of the divine spark). His mode of expression creates an almost cinematic type of imagery colored by the powerful, delving yet poetic style of the Eastern European 19th Century Talmudic rabbinical scholars (his own progenitors) and relieved by unexpected bursts of earthy humor.

One of the most moving passages elucidates the relationships of such a rabbi with his God, his wife and his "flock". The script is semi-autobiographical in the sense that it reflects, the social customs, self-conscious mores, ingenuous pride, naive optimism and politics of a small but growing New England metropolis of the early decades of this century through its vital characterizations, thus evoking a nostalgia for the period. It also draws from the author's own youth and background in its many allusions to Biblical writings and Hebraic or Talmudic literature, his knowledge of which, in addition to his work on a local newspaper, subsidized his schooling after his arrival in his beloved shining America. The young immigrant's aching yearnings for the land of his childhood, fused with a glowing paean to that glorious beacon "Mother America" of the early 1900's are tempered by a fond indulgent youth's recognition of his parents' flaws mingled with their overwhelming virtues. This faith in America and the basic optimistic theme of the book that the spirit of all humankind will one day merge in unity because of fundamental "kinships" within mankind itself, and between mankind and "Nature" and the Universe generate a much needed antidote to rekindle our belief and confidence in America's promise.