With Head, Heart, and Hands: Elbert Hubbard’s Impact on B.J. Palmer

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Elbert Hubbard, the creator and developer of the Roycroft Arts and Crafts Community in East Aurora, New York, was a mentor to B.J. Palmer, the self-styled “developer” of chiropractic. This paper explores the relationship between Palmer, Hubbard, and chiropractic. The most visible sign of Hubbard’s influence on B.J. Palmer was the creation of the Palmer Print Shop. Hubbard had instigated the Roycroft Press in 1895, and Palmer modeled his own print center, in a more modest way, after his mentor’s. He also employed many of the marketing techniques to promote chiropractic that Hubbard used to promote the Roycroft books, furniture, and metal work. Palmer even styled his personal appearance after Hubbard’s, complete with long hair pulled back with a band around the forehead, and a black flowing tie. When Hubbard went down with the Lusitania, B.J. purchased one of Hubbard’s “tall-case” clocks, and proceeded to furnish much of the early Palmer School of Chiropractic (PSC) with the Roycroft pieces. Those pieces can still be viewed on the Palmer campus today. This paper will explore these themes in more depth.

"Life Without Industry is Guilt: Industry Without Art Is Brutality.” Elbert Hubbard

The above quote synthesizes the Roycroft community’s dual themes of the inherent dignity of work and the necessity for art. Elbert Hubbard established the Roycroft community in the village of East Aurora, New York, in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Hubbard, born in 1856, joined with John Larkin to found the Larkin Soap Company in 1875. The company was a huge success, partly as a result of their marketing strategy of giving away premiums in return for their soap labels. Hubbard decided in 1892, at the age of thirty-six, to leave the business to become a writer. After a brief sojourn at Harvard University as an undergraduate, Hubbard visited England and met William Morris. He determined to go back to America and try to produce books in Morris’s Kelmscott Press tradition, but with an American character. What began as a modest printing establishment in 1895 with the publication of the journals The Philistine and The Fra, soon evolved into a community of almost five hundred artists, craftsmen, and other workers who were drawn together by Hubbard’s charisma and by a loose allegiance to the social and artistic ideals of the English reformers John Ruskin and William Morris. In addition to the printing shop, the Roycroft community eventually produced handmade furniture (1898), leather goods (1905), pottery (1901), and metalwork. Between 1895 and 1938 the Roycroft community played a large role in the popularization of the arts and crafts movement to middle-class America.

B.J. and Elbert’s Friendship

How B.J. Palmer and Elbert Hubbard met is not documented. The author speculates that they may have met on the lecture circuit. Hubbard was one of the most sought after lecturers of the first decade of the twentieth
century, and B.J. Palmer was developing his own following in that decade. Documents in the Palmer College special collections indicate that by 1910 they had met and were corresponding. According to B.J., in The Bigness of the Fellow With, they not only corresponded, but visited each other, breaking their journeys to spend time with one another. Hubbard would visit Palmer at Palmer's residence at 803 Brady Street, Davenport, Iowa, and Palmer would stay at the Roycroft Inn in East Aurora, New York, and occasionally spend time at Hubbard's private cabin on the outskirts of East Aurora.

B.J. tells this story of one of Hubbard's unexpected visits to 803 Brady Street:

When ever Hubbard was vacating West he broke his journey to spend a day with B.J. He knocked at the doors of his friends. He walked in unexpectedly and was always welcome. He traveled with his secretary, "Percy."

One morning he came in B.J.'s front door. He looked like he had ridden the bumpers all night. He was dirty, clothes unkempt, linen wrinkled, etc. B.J., at the time, was reading Hubbard's current issue of The Fre in which was a full-page advertisement and picture of Hubbard in an immaculate Royal tailored suit. Without hellos or greetings, B.J. looked up, saw the dilapidated Hubbard, and said, quoting the full-page ad: "Behold the Royal Tailored Man." Hubbard smiled and said, "That is an advertisement.

Hubbard was followed by "Percy" luging a big, heavy, Underwood typewriter. B.J. turned the pages of The Fre and again quoted another full page advertisement which said, "I wouldn't travel without my trusty Corona." Hubbard smiled and said...

This letter from B.J. Palmer to Hubbard is interesting for several reasons. First, B.J. tended not to talk about his problems. Those who had disappointed him were usually dealt with by not being mentioned again - this letter is a departure from his usual mode. Secondly, because B.J. tended not to talk about disappointments, this letter gives an insight into his perceptions of the events that led to the formation of the Palmer School of Chiropractic. Third, it does indicate some degree of a reciprocal relationship between Palmer and Hubbard.

In 1914 Elbert Hubbard visited B.J. Palmer and signed the Palmer residence guestbook: "I believe in B.J. P. I believe in Mrs. B.J. P. I believe in work, laughter, play, study, and love." (5)

The nature of their relationship appears to have been somewhat lopsided. B.J. Palmer was more influenced by his friendship with Hubbard than Hubbard was by his friendship with Palmer. Although Palmer allowed his friendship with Hubbard, Elbert Hubbard makes little reference to Palmer, other than in his advertising pieces. The difference in their ages and the different stages each was in their careers at the times they met may explain the inequality of the relationship.

Whatever the depth of their friendship, B.J. was undoubtedly influenced by Hubbard's appearance. Both wore their hair long, sometimes pulled back and sporting a sweatband. Both were long, flowing, black bowties, as did many of Hubbard's and Palmer's most fervent supporters.

Another area in which the two men agreed was their political stance on women's right to vote. Both Hubbard and Palmer supported the women's cause, which was being hotly contested in the decade of 1910-1920. Hubbard emphasized his position on women's suffrage on the walls of a Roycroft barn. B.J. proclaimed his stance to the citizens of Davenport by painting the same phrase on the PSC. Hubbard on the side of one of his barns.
Chiropractors quoted Hubbard's praise and当成 chiropractic in their own ads.

Hubbard wrote a pamphlet for the National School of Chiropractic titled "The New Science or the Fine Art of Getting Well and Keeping So". In it, he not only extols the virtues of chiropractic, he extols the virtues of the National School's version of chiropractic:

A good Chiropractor in his own life illustrates the beauty of the science that he represents. Especially have I noticed that in the National School of Chiropractic in Chicago its common sense prevails.

Doggie medicine is no better than dogmatic theology. Both lead to tyranny and persecution. You must recognize the right of people to think and decide for themselves. At the best, so man is so wholly right that he can afford to say that anybody else is wholly wrong. . . .

What is needed now is integration of the rights of other people to live their own lives, think their own thoughts, come to their own conclusions.

Palmer placed this ad promoting the PSC and chiropractic in Hubbard's journal The Fra

the most highly paid (7).

Few would argue B.J.'s penchant for advertising. The epigram, "Early to bed, early to rise, work like hell, and advertise" was displayed prominently in the Palmer School's front hallway. B.J. was also the author of two best-selling marketing manuals: 1) "Selling Yourself," a pamphlet which he wrote to help chiropractors market their services; and 2) Radio Salesmanship, a book that was produced in six editions and used widely in the radio industry and by those wishing to exploit the medium of radio. Palmer advertised his PSC in many journals, including Hubbard's. Additionally, he used his printing presses to produce the products of his imagination and sales craft, and marketed them to the entire chiropractic profession through his journals, The Chiropractor and The Fountainhead News.

Elbert Hubbard and Chiropractic

Regardless of B.J.'s and Elbern's friendship, Elbert Hubbard was a salesman and was not above selling to B.J.'s chiropractic competitors. In approximately 1912

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There is a constant danger for new converts to focus on one thing and imagine that when they get this, they have arrived. All the rest goes into the rag-bag.

The N.S.C. teachers, however, I have noticed, constantly wail into their students the necessity of a good equipment of plain, old-fashioned, commonsense.

You should never hear National teachers berate the old schools, although they might smile at some of their prescriptions. . . .

We believe in old-fashioned work, kindness, good-cheer, helpfulness, and the "National Chiropractic Trust," thus making the world a better place because we are here (9).

Chiropractors were quick to seize upon Hubbard's endorsement of their fledgling science. An advertising flyer by E.B. Jones of Eldora, Iowa, quotes Hubbard as saying "Any man or woman making a life work should investigate Chiropractic as taught by the Palmer School of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa, which is called the "Fountainhead" by all Master Chiropractic Practitioners" (10). Jones' note was quoted from the ad which appeared in the July 1910 issue of the The Fra (11).

Last the chiropractic profession that Hubbard has been converted to chiropractic and advertised chiropractic exclusively of other health sciences, the following ad appeared in the July 1915 Memorial edition of The Fra:

Well or Sick - You Need - Autology. By Elbert Hubbard.

You can not have Health by paying another for it. You can only EARN it. Notice the slight play on B.J.'s style of capitalizing words for emphasis: Any man who looks to Doctors and Medicines to make him well and keep him well, will never know what is Health. . . . Health is the most natural thing in the world. Nature is on our side. Health is the Norm, and all Nature tends thither. If you seek Health you must get Medicines out of your Mind - and out of your body. All the wise and good Physician can do is put you in touch with Nature and with yourself. This Doctor More, a graduate of the Harvard Medical School, will do. He gives you the Foundations of Health in a wonderful book called Autology. With Autology to guide us, there need be no such thing as Disease. With Autology there isn't one person in ten that ever needs "Professional Service." He is his own Physician. Since the advent of Autology the cause of Disease has been made clear - and the way to avoid it! (12)

Hubbard also penned a salutation to the osteopathic profession in a Hartford City, Indiana, newspaper, The Daily News. In an article titled, "The Success of Osteopathy," he extols the virtues of osteopathy. "An Osteopath does not claim to cure disease. All he does is to give Nature a chance" (13). This phrasing is very similar to that used by many chiropractors in promoting their services.

Touched of Elbert Hubbard's advertising genius can still be found on the Palmer campus today. David Palmer's signature epigram, "Palmer is to Chiropractic what sterling is to silver," was featured in a 1915 The Fra advertisement of Schroeder-Standard blankets: "Schroeder-Standard" is to Navajo Blankets what "Sterling" is to silver (14).

Prolific Wordsmiths

Both Hubbard and Palmer were gifted writers and speakers, and each produced voluminous amounts of printed material. Both had very loyal followers. The circulation of The Fra never dropped below 100,000 until after Hubbard's death. B.J. Palmer circulated his jour-
Although Hubbard was a supporter of chiropractic, he also approved of osteopathy. Hubbard would write testimonials that were printed by the Roycrofters and could be purchased in bulk by the appropriate practitioners.

The Roycrofters created fine drawings to illustrate their work. B.J. borrowed this technique and used it to illustrate himself and D.D. Palmer (shown). as well as Isabel Palmer (not shown).

Buffalo to see Hubbard. He wheeled up in front of the Roycroft ten, and said, “Whoa!” to his sparkling pair of bays. Taking leaves in the road was a person in a battered hat, a flannel shirt and corduroys. “Here, John,” said the prosperous one. “Hold my horses.” And he passed the scruffy one a quarter. Going inside he asked the girl at the desk of the inn where he could find Mr. Hubbard. “Why,” said the girl, “he was here just a minute ago.” Then glancing through the open door she pointed, “Oh, there he is, out there holding those horses.”

In The Rags of the Fellow Within Palmer tells a similar story. In his story the shabby person is Palmer, not Hubbard, and the story takes place in Davenport, Iowa, not East Aurora, New York. Hubbard himself had several charges of plagiarism brought against him. In an early issue of The Philistine, Hubbard acknowledged that “certain of the truths herein set forth have been expressed before, but not well” (17).

Printing Similarities

Elbert Hubbard’s enormously successful printing enterprise at the Roycroft Community influenced B.J., and may have been the motivating factor in his developing his own print shop, which he dubbed “The Prettiest Printing Plant in America.” From approximately 1914 to 1916 B.J. proceeded to print in his print shop some of his green books, most of his pamphlets, and thousands of advertising pieces for chiropractic field doctors. The David D. Palmer Library Special Collections holds an impressive array of these advertising pieces. A graphic device that Hubbard used frequently in his journal was adopted by B.J. and used in the Palmer publications. Line drawings of B.J. and D.D. are reproduced after the style that Hubbard popularized.

Mottos and Epigrams

Before B.J. started printing his own material he purchased items from the Roycroft print shop. The Roycrofters produced many of the epigrams that were printed for B.J. Palmer, who sold them in his early catalogs. Hubbard printed a book titled *A Thousand & One Epigrams* in 1911, and issues of *The Fra* are peppered with elegantly printed mottos. B.J. developed many mottos of his own. He also reworked Hubbard’s epigrams, borrowed freely from James Elliott and A. St. Elmo Lewis, and proceeded to embellish the Palmer campus with the results. In 1921 Palmer published *As a Man Thinketh*, a booklet which documented the epigrams and their decorative effect on the Palmer campus. One of the epigrams most
Palmer commissioned many pieces of furniture from the Roycroft furniture shop, including this 'tall case' clock, of which only four are known to be in existence today. This clock is on display today in the Special Collections reading room on the Palmer campus.

Stirring examples of the Roycroft hand-made furniture can still be seen today, located around the Palmer campus. In the David D. Palmer Health Sciences Library’s Special Collections Reading Room stands one of four tall-case clocks still in existence designed by the Roycroft artists. The six foot nine inch clock was purchased by B.J. shortly after the Hubbards went down on the Lusitania. B.J. paid Elbert Hubbard’s son and the Roycroft artisans to add the word “chiropractic” to the face of the clock. Twelve letters are hammered into the copper face of the clock in addition to the standard one to twelve digits. In the same room is a split-log bench built by a Roycrofter named Ali Baba. In various hallways, other public spaces, and offices of the Palmer campus are thirty-nine Roycroft arm-chairs that have engraved on their backs the names of individuals or organizations that supported the Palmer School of Chiropractic. The Palmer mansion, B.J.’s personal residence, houses a bedroom set of Roycroft furniture, a copper Roycroft lamp, and a plaque done by the Roycroft community inscribed, “Be Thyself.” Most of these pieces are easily identified either by the orb and cross insignia, or by the word “Roycroft” inscribed into the wood.

Hubbard’s Death

Elbert Hubbard and his wife Alice were killed on 7 May 1915, when German torpedoes sank the Lusitania as it was making its way to Europe. B.J. Palmer inserted this notice in the June 1915 The Chiropractor.

German civilization is in retreat. The Lusitania lies at the bottom of the sea, and the soul of Elbert Hubbard went out with her sinking. In life, Fra Elbertus was a foremost lay exponent of Chiropractic ideals. What we here say is to his honor, for his friendship to our science, his belief in and advocacy of our principles, and for the worthiness of his character (19).

Conclusion

The influence Elbert Hubbard had on B.J. Palmer was proportionately larger than the amount of time the two men spent together. Impressed by Hubbard’s printing presses, marketing techniques, and arts and crafts community, B.J. emulated the older man by dressing like him, starting his own printing company, marketing chiropractic and the PSC vigorously, and decorating his fledgling campus with Roycroft pieces. Marie Via, a scholar of the Roycroft community, says of Hubbard that his biographers are numerous, his detractors many, and his devotees legion. Via asserts that Hubbard is portrayed as a saint and a sinner, a savior and a charlatan. These words have also been used to describe B.J. Palmer and his influence upon the chiropractic profession. B.J. did, indeed, follow his mentor with his head, his heart, and his hands.

Acknowledgements

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