

To the Young Men of Western Canada

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A New Psalm

I believe the most prominent feature in the English temper, speaking broadly, is the ethical sense. The outstanding element in this ethical sense is the feeling of responsibility. Our racial heroes, the men whom we put on a pedestal and revere, have been men animated by a feeling of solemn responsibility. Take as examples Alfred, Cromwell and Nelson. Tennyson notes this same characteristic in a man-like Wellington:

"Not once or twice in our fair island's story,
The path of duty has been the way to glory."

There is on the whole a point of contact here between the English race and the Hebrew. Wherever this note is signalized in English literature we are aware of the Hebrew note. That note was struck, for instance, by Rudyard Kipling in "The Recessional." The real grandeur of that poem is a moral grandeur. The profoundly ethical and religious sense of our race makes itself clearly felt in a psalm recently composed by Mr. A. W. Pollard, of the British Museum. I transcribe it herewith.

"Let us praise God for the Dead: for the Dead who die in our cause."

"They went forth first a little army: all its men were true as steel."

"The hordes of the enemy were hurled against them: they fell back, but their heart failed not."

"They went forward again and held their ground: though their foes were as five to one."

"They gave time for our host to muster: the host of the men who never thought to fight."

"A great host and a mighty: worthy of the men who died to gain them time."

"The men who never thought to fight have not been found wanting: in the strength God has given them they are great of heart."

"They fight against those who love war: they fight, and by faith in God they shall prevail."

"Let us praise God for these men: let us remember them before Him all our days."

"Let us care for the widows and orphans: and for the men who come home maimed."

"Truly God has been with us: these things have not been done without His help."

"O Lord our God, be Thou still our helper: make us worthy of these who die."

Patriotism

I had a practical illustration this afternoon of the way patriotism is built up in the breast of the citizen. As I wrote in my study, my five-year-old boy was playing in another room. Suddenly he called out to me: "Do the Germans kill little children, Daddy?" "Yes, they do," I answered, recalling mentally the Lusitania and other incidents. "Do the British?" he went on. And, without a moment's hesitation I answered: "No, they don't." There is no doubt a thing like this will stick in his mind, as long as he has a mind. And so the structure of his racial pride, of his national patriotism will go on being reared.

The Use of Time

Arnold Bennett, among his legion of books, has one interesting little one entitled "How to Live on Twenty-four Hours a Day." He takes practically the same position as Robert Louis Stevenson, namely that most of us waste unimagined intervals of time. When I refer to R. L. S. I am thinking of one of his early books: "The Amateur Emigrant." He says there that most of us spend about a third of our time "in born idleness." Arnold Bennett says the average man works about eight hours a day, he sleeps perhaps eight hours, and he conjectures that not many of us would like to have to say point-blank what we do with the rest of our time. He believes the mind is virtually tireless. "One of the chief things which my typical man has to learn is that the mental faculties are capable of a continuous hard activity: they do not tire like an arm or a leg." All they want is change—not rest, except in sleep. I believe there is a great deal in this, particularly if one acquires the habit of asserting the reality of one's own personality over one's passions, whims and moods.

When I Was a Child

I often think of those words of St. Paul: "When I was a child I thought as a child, I spoke as a child." Everybody knows where they occur, at the close of that famous 13th chapter of the letter to the Corinthians. Outside the gospels that chapter is probably the finest thing in the New Testament. I was reminded of the words in question the other day. The youngest of my three girls agreed with her mother that she would do up all her dolls—with clothes and carriages and what not—and send them to the Salvation Army or some such organization to be given to some children whom they might make happy. Somehow the incident made me sad and pensive. It symbolized for me the passing of the dear old life. Henceforth there would be no more dolls. A milestone had been passed in the life of my family. Ever and anon in the history

of us all these symbolic and symptomatic events occur. If one has any sensibility they always cause reflection. Happy we are if we are living so that they do not need to cause us self reproach or remorse. I lived for some weeks in a certain house in London, in 1898. In 1904 I returned for a time to the same house. I remember how haunted, not absolutely in the worst sense, I was throughout the first evening of my second visit to that house. What had those six years done with me, I could not help conjecturing. Fourteen years have again elapsed. I wonder what reflections would be prompted now were I to return to that same place? The experience of every day is the very stuff of life. What are the days doing with us? That is to say, what are we letting them do with us? Are our wills stronger or weaker? Are we still "following the gleam," or have we succumbed to the ignoble and the base? Does the flame of aspiration still burn within us? Is the sky still flushed with rosy hues, or has all the coloring faded? Have we still warm, human hearts, or have we grown hard, unimpressionable and callous? Are we still driven forward with earnest convictions, or have we temporised with our ideals until all the generous enthusiasm seems gone? A man is great only in so far as he has convictions, and is prepared to pay the price in order to try to realize them?

Lions and Stags

I was talking to a friend the other day about a certain government. I mentioned the fact that some said it was an aggregation of strong men, each of whom did his own will, so that the whole seemed to lack co-ordination. My friend reminded me of an old Greek saying: "Better a herd of stags with a lion for a leader than a company of lions with a leader who is just a stag." I fancy that is true. How clearly that note rings down through the centuries. What a glorious race the Greeks were in many respects! How many things they said in ways that have never been surpassed!

A Great Poem

It is a long time since I first read Matthew Arnold's "Lohrab and Rustum." After many years I said to myself the other night: "I will read that poem to my daughters. I will see if it sustains its former impression of austere nobility. In particular, I will see if it impresses the children as it once impressed me. Well, I found that we were all three enthralled by it. One line struck me especially: 'That vast neighboring mountain of milk snow.' What a benediction it would be for our children if we could crowd their minds with noble imagery! There is far too little reading nowadays of the old standard literature. Our days pass in a rush of trivialities."

The Power of Good Literature

I have read a good deal to my five-year-old son. For the most part I am afraid I have read to him rather commonplace material—animal stories and that sort of thing, written by I know not whom, and couched mainly in language of no distinction. The other week I started reading to him Hawthorne's Wonderbook and Tanglewood Tales. I was struck instantly by the change. Here was distinction, words etched as if in bronze. His response was immediate. I am convinced that good style as such has a special power, even on young children. I remember what an enormous influence was exerted on John Ruskin by the reading done in his presence when he was a child by his father. The reading was not done to child by his father. The reading was not done to him specially. He was simply present as his father, a wine merchant, read all the great books. The experience showed itself ultimately in the noble style of the future art critic and political economist. We have the making of our children largely in our own hands. Parents and the day school can condemn our children to mediocrity or lift them up to nobility.

The French Mission

Winnipeg recently enjoyed a visit from a distinguished French mission. Its three members were all devout Catholics. It is understood that they came to mediate between France and French Canada. They were certainly notable men, and were admirably fitted to give one a fine idea of modern France. One realized, listening to them, the noble qualities that have enabled France to stand so well the strain of the great war. Captain Duthoit, the head of the mission, was one of the noblest speakers to whom it has ever been my privilege to listen. Latin eloquence at anything like its best is splendidly attractive.

Bourrasa and the French Canadians

Bourrasa has done his compatriots all but irreparable damage. We have been playing with fire, letting him pursue his propaganda with impunity. His paper should have been suppressed long ago. His has been virtually the only propaganda that has been

followed up in Quebec. He has created a school. He is a very attractive personality. He is amazingly well informed. He has a vivacious and dynamic eloquence. He has convictions. They are wrong-headed and reactionary, but they are powerful. He has appealed with special attractiveness to the young university men of the province of Quebec. It is time that he was segregated from the rest of Quebec. Through leaving him scot-free to pursue his campaign, the thinking of Quebec has been perverted. The best of his compatriots regret his influence.

American Law Schools

The University of Manitoba recently had as a visitor Dean Wells, of the North Dakota Law School. At a dinner at the Fort Garry he gave us a very interesting description of the Case-system as it is followed in the American Law Schools. The system was originated at Harvard, and through it the Harvard Law School has become famous all over the world. As distinguished a jurist as Sir Frederick Pollock I think it was, said that the Harvard Law School was the finest in the world. There is something immediately practical about this system that is characteristically American. I think it should produce a good average of lawyers. Whether it is equally calculated to produce the great exceptional advocate I do not know.

Camouflage

Among the words to which the war has given great currency one of the most notable is "camouflage." I never heard it before the war. I am not sure what its origin was. A good many people better informed than I scarcely know. For example, I heard the head of the French Mission, to whom I alluded above, speaking about it. He is a very learned man, a professor of International Law in the Catholic University of Lille. He acknowledged that he wasn't quite sure about the word, so we need not mind not being dogmatic. One suggestion is that the central part of the word is "monfle" which means "a mitten" or a glove without fingers. The French, of course, also have the word "mitaine" which is our "mitten."

Community Scholarships

Another noteworthy visitor to Winnipeg recently was Dr. Soares, Professor of Religious Instruction in the University of Chicago. He delivered a remarkable series of addresses. His lecture, "Fight the Next War Now" was on the whole the ablest analysis of the war I have listened to. I was particularly struck by the feasibility of a suggestion he made in an address on "Community Culture." He asked why communities should not adopt the practice of giving scholarships to promising young students who are not able to pay their way while getting an education. Isn't that a fine idea. A boy or a girl gives evidence of notable capacity in school studies, music, what not. The community takes the matter in hand and makes it possible for that young person to go forward. Where might that plan be more easily carried out than in Western Canada? The farming communities of the West are enormously prosperous. A few scholarships of this sort would be a bagatelle to a community of wealthy farmers. The effect might be wonderful. The recipients would be thrown on their mettle. The esprit de corps developed would be a notable asset in the life of the locality. Far as that boy went he would be a community product, community property, as it were. At a meeting of the Manitoba Educational Association Dr. Thornton, Minister of Education, told us a very noteworthy thing. A certain girl from the municipality of Assiniboia recently won a medal in a provincial spelling match. She is evidently a promising girl unable to educate herself for the time, anyway. Dr. Thornton reported that the council of the municipality has actually voted her a scholarship—\$75 a year for three years—to assist her in procuring a training. May the practice spread! It might exert a mighty influence on the character and capacity of the country.

School Grounds at Eden

I put alongside that another symptomatic incident. Prof. Stoughton, of the University of Manitoba, Department of Architecture, tells me he is going out to Eden to assist the School Board of that place in planning their school grounds. It seems that the school is located on a property seven acres in extent. The Board is desirous of planning these grounds. The Professor of Architecture of the Provincial University is asked to assist with expert advice. This is exactly the right spirit. Incidents like this are symptomatic of community consciousness. The old days of un-restricted individualism are passing. These are the things that determine the character and destiny of communities. The whole attitude of the community in question toward education will be affected for the better by this policy. Again, may the practice spread!