

To the Young Men of Western Canada

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Boston Again

This page is being written in Boston, the intellectual capital of New England. It has been my fortune in one way and another to see more of Boston than of any other American city. I was here in 1892 on my way to Nova Scotia. On that trip I saw the sea for the first time. I remember at Digby going down to the shore and tasting the water to find out whether it was really salty. I was here in 1901. That time I wrote a number of special articles for the Evening Transcript. I shall never forget certain words spoken to me by one of the editors the first day I saw him: "This paper is clean, wealthy, conservative." To this day that remains a pretty accurate description of the journal in question. I was here for five or six weeks in the winter of 1911. I think the outstanding memory of that visit is a great speech by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, delivered in Symphony Hall. It was the most admirable political speech I have ever heard. I was in Boston in 1914 when the great war broke out. The universities and the intellectual elements of New England generally were pro-ally from the start. Eliot, the president-emeritus of Harvard, and Lowell, the actual president, have played influential parts in shaping American public opinion on the war. And here I am again in 1918 when the war is dwarfing all other subjects. The streets are aswarm with soldiers and sailors. Harvard seems to be converted into a great military camp.

Propaganda On Every Hand

An enormous public propaganda in favor of the allies is being conducted in this country on behalf of the allies. If there is any counterbalancing German propaganda it is certainly being carried on stealthily. First of all there are the newspapers. Every English-language journal in Boston is vividly pro-ally. The Irish opposition to conscription, for instance, has been greeted with a howl of execration. Why should Irishmen in their home island be absolved from military service, when Irishmen here are subject to the draft? Then, there are speeches to no end. Roosevelt, Taft, and Sir George Adam Smith have spoken here at Boston during the last month. I have heard two speeches by Stephane Lauyaune, editor of the Paris *Matin*—one in English at Harvard, one in French at Huntington Hall. Another very informing address that I heard was by M. Baldensperger at the Copley-Plaza Hotel. His subject was "What We Know About Alsace-Lorraine Since 1914." Italy also is being well represented in the campaign of information that is being conducted. I had dinner last night at the Cock Horse Inn in Cambridge—the house once occupied by Longfellow's Village Blacksmith. At the same table with me were four attractive college boys. One of them was on the point of leaving for New York, whence he sails to enter on Red Cross work on the Italian front.

Aliens and Citizenship

It appears that there are 123,000 aliens in the American Army. Congress has passed a bill providing that all such shall be given full American citizenship provided they apply for the same within one year of the close of the war. This bill I understand is now awaiting simply the President's signature. Another interesting bill has meanwhile been presented to the Lower House at Washington. It proposes that American citizenship shall similarly be conferred on all aliens, domiciled in the United States, who are serving with any of the co-belligerents of the United States. This is splendidly indicative of good feeling. Another bill is pending in the Senate nullifying all the financial indebtedness of France to America. What the fate of these last two bills will be, it is of course too early now to say.

The Germans in Alsace

The speech by Baldensperger that I alluded to about was extremely interesting. In company with a French staff officer he had had occasion to call at the house of a doctor in an Alsatian village after the outbreak of the war. The woman of the house received them very cordially. The husband, when he entered, was more non-committal. After some conversation the two officers and the doctor went out into the street. The corner of the house had been damaged by a German shell. The garage had been demolished by a French shell. "That is a picture of Alsace—torn between the two," said the Doctor. The eldest son of the family entered. He had been attending a German school. He was extremely cool with the Frenchmen. A younger son, who had not been specially subject to German influence, was enthusiastically and boyishly pro-French. Baldensperger said he had been in Alsace a number of times with English and American friends. These had invariably been struck by the fact that the shop signs are predominantly in German. This makes it look as if the people are in favor of the German rule. But listen, Baldensperger says: In 1886, I think it was, the German government imposed this regulation. Old signs may remain French; but,

according as necessity arises to change them, they must be couched in German. If a sign blows down it must be replaced in German. If the lettering becomes faded or defaced, and the proprietor decides to renew his sign, he must have it done over in German. So the German signs are not the result of choice but of German "thoroughness." The authorities have carried their propaganda to astonishing lengths. Alsatian children are transported to homes in remote parts of Germany. German children from distant parts are sent to Alsatian homes. The idea is that these children, kindly treated by German and Alsatian families, will become an agency of assimilation and interpenetration. Another example: The French pronounce Latin like French. The Germans pronounce it according to what is called the 'continental' method. The Germans have ordered the priests in Alsace to adopt the 'continental' pronunciation of the Latin used in the church services. Lauzaune, the brilliant editor of the *Matin* dealt interestingly with the question of a referendum for Alsace. Should the question whether Alsace is to be left to Germany or to France be decided by a referendum? If so what about the four or five hundred thousand Alsations who migrated to France after 1871 rather than accept German allegiance? What about the natural increase of population from this source? And what about the vast influx of Germans into Alsace since 1870, and their children? Should these vote in such a referendum? This sounds convincing. In other words, it makes it look as if a referendum is impossible in the conditions actually existing.

The Sense of Sin

I have heard a couple of admirable sermons by Samuel McChord Crothers whom I always try to hear when I am in Boston or Cambridge. The first was on the change that has taken place in our generation with respect to the sense of sin. According to the old conception sin was thought to be an offense against God. Take the confession in one of the Psalms: "Against Thee, against Thee only have I sinned." Suppose these words were written by David. What sin had David committed? He wanted to possess Bathsheba. He ordered one of his generals to place her husband in the hottest part of the fight, to abandon him, and let him be killed. What a dastardly crime! Then he was presumably capable of saying to God: "Against Thee, against Thee only, have I sinned!" As if he had not committed a sin against Bathsheba, against her husband, against society in general. In other words, there is to-day a new sense of the social, the humanitarian character of sin.

Sloppy Sermonizing

I went to Appleton Chapel, Harvard university, the other Sunday morning. A certain Bishop—I shall not say of what communion—was to preach. I did not purpose losing my morning, and, as I knew nothing about the preacher, I took a place conveniently near the door. The sermon began in the most indifferent, mediocre way. The speaker had no air of being adequately prepared. His material seemed to be most loosely thrown together. He confessed that he was speaking just superficially, unsystematically. Well, I listened about 15 minutes, then I unobtrusively retired. Hastening across the street I heard the latter half of another admirable sermon by Crothers. A greater contrast could not be imagined.

War, Must Cease

This must be a war to end war. That is the spirit in which Canadians, Americans, British, and all well-intentioned peoples, must wage it. It is suicide to acquiesce longer in the folly of war. This war must be waged to the end, but we must see to it that there never is another. People sometimes talk as if war could somehow be kept within bounds, as if it might conceivably be waged by kid-glove methods. The idea is preposterous. The program cannot be carried out. War is the expression of hate, and hate will inevitably go to the limit. The Germans are logical in their conception of war. Sooner or later in every major war the worst expedients will be resorted to. Science will all the while be discovering more and more of the destructive forces that lurk in the universe. The secret will some day be found out of tapping and directing agencies that may conceivably be capable of doing to death whole armies and perhaps whole communities. I make the following quotation from a Boston paper: "The gas and chemical shells now used in Europe threaten to fulfill the prophecy that future wars will be fought with disease germs, or with atomic bombs of a type which go on exploding progressively until they have devastated vast areas. It is predicted by one authority that if mankind does not find a way to stop war, the cities of the future will be built underground for protection against air-raids. This authority might have added that unless man finds a way to terminate war, war will terminate man. The mad dog of Europe must be crushed. The rest of the world is pretty well ready to end the suicide of war."

The Position of Mr. Taft

Mr. Taft retired from the presidency badly discredited. It would at that time have seemed a safe guess that he was "done" so far as the public was concerned. He has belied all such prophecies. He has been during the last three or four years, and he is to-day, one of the best liked, one of the most respected, men in the United States. How is this to be explained? In the first place, he took his beating like a man. He did not sulk in his tent. He went on, smiling and working. He has been the chief ornament of Yale as professor of law. Everywhere he has radiated cheeriness and good will. There is hardly a man in the country more in demand as a speaker. After Wilson and Roosevelt, he is to-day the chief figure in the United States. Talking of speaking, Taft is a capital speaker. Indeed I think he is a better speaker than Roosevelt. Roosevelt's material reads inspiring, but in the actual delivery he is disappointing. Mr. Taft has taken leave of absence from Yale in order to act as arbitrator during the war, between capital and labor. He is admirably fitted by temperament for this role.

Progress

The Andes have recently been crossed by aeroplane. A certain Lieutenant Cendalaria has flown for 112 miles from Zapala, Argentina, to Curico, Chili, attaining an altitude of 10,500 feet. What came into my mind when I read of this was a tale by DeQuincey. In his "Spanish Nun" he tells of the crossing of the Andes by a woman, on foot. She passed through ice and snow and ghastly solitude. Needless to say, the feat occupied many days, and exposed her to the gravest dangers. Now the thing is done in an hour by the birdman, who laughs at ice and snow, cliffs and avalanches.

A Prodigy

I have met this time at Cambridge Professor Wiener, head of the Slavic department at Harvard. His eldest son offers a remarkable case of what one would be disposed to call precocity. He was able to read at eighteen months. He was reading Darwin at six. He matriculated at eleven, and graduated in arts at fourteen. He took his Doctor's degree at Harvard at the age of eighteen. He is now twenty-three or twenty-four, and is acting as one of the editors of a new edition of the *Encyclopedia Americana*. It is being produced at Albany. This is virtually as remarkable a case as that of John Stuart Mill. Mill had read more classics than an ordinary graduate at six. I wonder what explains a case like this of young Dr. Wiener. For one thing, no doubt careful direction by his father. Mill's father also carefully supervised his famous son's education. The elder Mill was a clerk in the India office. Out of hours he composed a voluminous history of the East India Company. His son studied at the same table with him in the evenings. According to the autobiography of the younger man, he was not permitted to use dictionaries for his Latin and Greek. The father was not too busy to tell him the meanings of new words. I wonder, though, whether the mixture of races has not counted for something in a case like that of the younger Wiener.

A Modest Fortune

The will of the late John Redmond, the great successor of Parnell as leader of the Irish Nationalist Party was probated some weeks ago showing an estate of \$28,000. There is something splendidly impressive about poverty on the part of a man who devotes his whole time to public service, provided such poverty is not the result of mere improvidence. Similarly there is something sinister and even revolting about the phenomenon presented by the professional public man who amasses a huge fortune, unless the sources of such fortune are fully disclosed as legitimate.

Picturesque Slang

America is the fruitful home of picturesque slang. I have an idea that the contact of many races, generating a collective vivacity, has much to do with the capacity for quickly evolving bright turns of expression. At St. Paul I turned my bag in at the parcel office in the Union depot. Just as I received the check from the colored girl at the counter I decided to lock the bag. The girl commented, "safety first." The remark covered the situation exactly. Last spring at Washington on the desk of a business man I saw a card with this legend: "Sit down, but don't intern." The other day I was talking to two young girls—sisters. The younger misunderstood some remark made by me. The elder sister contributed: "nobody home." The victim of the misinterpretation countered: "rats in your garret." The elder sister further added: "attic to rent." In Boston I heard for the first time these variants of this idea: "Bubbles in your think-tank," and "Sand in your gear-box." Unless I am mistaken, Canada is proportionally not nearly so prolific in the evolution of picturesque expression. I suppose a vast population, with the resultant acceleration of rapid movement, has something to do with the difference.