

To the Young Men of Western Canada

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The Splendor of Youth

It is magnificent to be young. Age is apt to bring disillusionment. The man who is "disillusioned" is shorn of power. There is a very real sense in which it may be said that power lies in illusion. The magnificence of youth is, of course, a moral magnificence. What it is due to is the element of potentiality. The man of forty—as a rule you know just about how far he will go. The lines are pretty well set by that time. But that youth of twenty—how far he will go, no one can tell. Wordsworth, in a sonnet on *The French Revolution* says:

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven."

Really, it is always heaven to be young. One of the regrettable things is that we do not realise our privileges while we have them.

The Pity of Not Seeing

Tennyson has a stanza that comes often into my mind:

"Or is it that the past will always seem
A glory, from its being far,
And orb into the perfect star,
We saw not when we moved therein."

We mortals are perverse creatures. With many of us the present, our present I mean, is the least attractive of all times. From sixteen to nineteen I was in the old university town of Cobourg, Ontario. I thought most of the time I was having a pretty dull experience. I look back now, and the incidents of those years seem set in a golden light. What a pity that my eyes were holden, so that I could not see, at the time. I see to-day in my mind's eye the columns before the old college building; I see the broad sidewalk of a certain fine old avenue littered with the golden and russet leaves of autumn; I see stately old professors walking to and from their classes. It was all poky and dull at the time. Now, as I say a golden haze rests over all. That, by the way, was the process that Goldsmith went through with respect to the little village he was reared in. Palos is said to have been a very squalid little place. And yet the day was to come when Goldsmith would look back and call it: "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain."

Let us pray for the grace—which is another way of saying, let us cultivate the habit—of seeing in the things that now are, the beauty we shall one day see they actually possess.

The Mind is King

In these days when we see the change that has been worked in a once lovable people by a false set of ideas, it should be easy for us to be convinced that the mind is really king. Think of such great words as these: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "Out of the heart are the issues of life." "Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city." Think again of the often iterated word of Christ: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." It would not be a bad thing for a young man to keep constantly before him those brave, austere words of Henley:

"I am the captain of my fate,
I am the master of my soul."

Secrets of Power

Talking of self-mastery, I was long ago much struck by the wisdom of two lines in Tennyson's "Oenone." One of the goddesses says to Paris, the young Trojan prince:

"Self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power."

By "sovereign" power I suppose she means real, as opposed to superficial or factitious, power. The Romans had an adage: "Each one is the architect of his own fortunes." We hold in our own keeping the issues of life. Not much could go wrong with the life that was characterised by those three habits: Self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control. The first, would place us rightly, and would keep us from trying what we are unfitted for. The second would save us from much danger—both gross and subtle. The third is imperative if we would succeed in any high way.

Selfishness

Make no mistake about it, selfishness is the mother of unhappiness. The selfish man, in the first place, cannot be happy himself. And he is bound to make others miserable. Precisely to the extent that selfishness appears, it destroys joy. Selfishness can make a home that has all the potentialities of happiness, a little hell. One selfish individual in any group you like to think of, can spoil the atmosphere and spirit of the whole. Wherever selfishness intrudes, faction, intrigue, jealousy, embitterment follow. Selfishness always provokes reprisals. Play the selfish game and you will always get back blow for blow. Practically all the trouble—indeed quite all of it—between Capital and Labor is due to selfishness on one side or the other, or

on the part of both. A corporation employs spies to break down labor's organization. Labor replies with all the means at its disposal. And so a condition of exasperation is apt to reign on both sides.

Life as an Adventure

Zest is one of the saving salts of life. We should take life more or less as an adventure. This should, of course, not lead us into irresponsibility. One should somehow steer between the Scylla of too great seriousness, and the Charybdis of an unseemly levity. Here, as in so many other respects, Horace's "mediocritas aurea," the golden mean, is, I suppose, the ideal. And to hit the exact ideal is more easily said than done. But the truth is, too many of us are mastered and submerged by life, rather than triumphantly in control of it. Read Tennyson's *Ulysses*, and imbibe some of the spirit of the old land and seafarer. He is "game" to the end. The lights of the cottages of Ithaca are twinkling on the rocks. The night is falling. "The deep moans round with many voices." The old Ulysses is about to step into the frail bark that may carry him beyond the sunset. His aged comrades press about him. He fires them with his own spirit. They are playing for big stakes. Some gulf may wash them down; but, on the other hand, they may see the great Achilles, whom they love. Finally Ulysses conveys to his friends the whole spirit in which he addresses himself to his last task, in these words: "That which we are, we are; one stalwart temple of heroic hearts, made weak by time and fate, but strong in will, to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." There is another motto that one might well put on one's table: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

The Danger of Temperament

Temperament is at once a strength and a weakness, a resource and a temptation. Some of us go through life picking out the easy ways and the easy things. We have all our feelers out and we are very sensitive to the approach of what we think difficult. Watch a caterpillar. He undulates along while the way is smooth. Suddenly an obstacle looms. He stops, and presently, with a sort of ignoble capitulation, he turns aside, anxious to continue a smooth rather than a difficult way. We should make war on our laziness, on our softness, we should inure ourselves to the doing of hard things. Temperament needs to be watched. Of course often, and particularly from the artistic point of view, it is a strength. Two girls play the same piece of music. One plays faultlessly but woodenly. She excels in technique; she has no temperament. The other's execution of the piece is marked by color, warmth, animation; she is brimful of temperament. The fact is, temperament is an admirable slave, but a most desolating master. Make it do your bidding, and it will carry you far. Become its slave and disintegration is not far away.

A Strange Vicissitude

Going to — not long ago I found myself chatting with a man whose refinement and intelligence had struck me in a rather pronounced way. He was getting off the train, I found, at —. He was a Dane and a graduate of Harvard. His grandfather had been the Danish war minister at the time Germany tore Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark, and later he had become Prime Minister of the country. What a far call from Copenhagen to this little town in Northwestern Canada? How different the backgrounds that lie behind us!

Quiescence of Races

I asked him the population of Denmark. He said, about two million; of whom 600,000 are in Copenhagen. The position of Denmark, like that of all the small states bordering on Germany, is very delicate and even distressing. She is between the devil and the deep, blue sea. Whether Great Britain is in this case the deep, blue sea, or not, Germany is certainly the devil. Denmark has to steer an extremely precarious course. But what I had in mind by the title to this paragraph, was as follows: how hard to realise to-day that the Danish race for a number of centuries flamed in wreckage and ruin over the face of Europe. Think of Alfred's struggle with them! Recall the pathetic incident of Charlemagne's weeping as he gazed out of his palace window at some Danish Viking boats. Asked why he wept, the great Emperor said he wept to think what chaos those strangers would work on his Kingdom when he had gone. From English kings they wrenched money in the form of the *Danegeld*, and land in the form of what was called the *Dane-lagh*. Bulwer Lytton says this part of the country, settled by Danes, became the seed-bed of many of the most progressive constitutional movements in our national history. From the French the Danes similarly wrenched the country lying along the lower reaches of

the Seine River. This became Normandy, with its capital Rouen, the city of Rou, or Rollo. Then think of the three Danish kings that actually sat on the English throne—Sweyn, Canute, and Hardicanute. After one hundred years residence on the soil of France, these wild Northmen had become the most accomplished courtiers in Europe. Norman became a synonym for "elegant." I remember a certain incident on this head in Scott's "Ivanhoe." At the close of a banquet given after the tournament, Cedric the Saxon there is represented as dipping his fingers in water and then wiping them with a napkin. The more fastidious Norman knights present waved their hands daintily in the air until the moisture evaporated. The point is that the Normans had come to be recognized as the arbiters of taste.

Stricken Halifax

By the time this page appears the mystery surrounding the Halifax catastrophe will probably have been cleared up. It certainly brings the war home very closely to Canada. Whether there was any element of treachery involved in the event or not, at any rate the calamity is closely related to the war. A ship laden with munitions for use in Europe blows up on this side of the Atlantic, kills and maims some thousands of people, and does property damage estimated to-day at \$25,000,000. The violence of the concussion and the extent of the desolated area constitute as yet a mystery. I was in Halifax this summer for the first time, and was much attracted by it. It was founded, I think, at about the exact middle of the 18th century, 1749 runs in my mind as the date. It was named after the Earl of Halifax. It has a rather impressive Anglican cathedral. Its public gardens are about as beautiful as those of Boston. In Dalhousie University it has an institution with an excellent reputation. Halifax has a naval training college, the only one so far as I know in Canada. I should have said "had," because I believe this building is one of those destroyed. The main importance of Halifax lies in its harbor. This is one of the most secluded and capacious in the world. The promontory or tongue of land on which the citadel and city stand, rising loftily, shuts out the inner harbor from the sea. Ships entering follow a comparatively narrow channel, which finally debouches into Bedford Basin, an almost land-locked lake of great extent and huge depth. Here a vast navy could ride at ease wholly unseen from the ocean without. The rise and fall of the tide is very slight at Halifax. This constitutes one of its main advantages over St. John, where, as at most other points on the Bay of Fundy, the tidal variation is very great.

Canora

Not long ago I passed for the first time through Canora, Saskatchewan. I was interested to find that it is still a Doukhobor centre. I remember a few years ago reading a rather good novel written by W. J. Dawson, part of the plot of which is laid at Canora. The book deals with the reappearance of Jesus on the earth; and it is to certain Doukhobor men at Canora that Dawson makes him appear for the first time. On the night in question a number of men are represented as being gathered together waiting for Jesus. At length down the middle of the village street at midnight comes the risen Christ. He turns in at the little gate, knocks at the door, and appears in the midst of the little company. Thereafter the scene of the story is shifted to New York. The story is called "A Prophet in Babylon."

Homage to Literature

It is strange how literature gives a touch of romance to what would otherwise be prosaic. The mere fact that Canora had figured in a book of some little consequence made it interesting in my eyes. Strange how the world doffs its hat in the presence of literary genius. Shakespeare did not cut a great figure in his own day, but everybody who can now journey to Stratford on Avon. And when you get there Shakespeare is the only thing you are interested in. As you stand on the bank of the Avon your eye searches for Trinity Church. Why? Because Shakespeare is buried there. You visit his birth place, and if you walk to Shottery it is because he used to walk thither when he was courting Anne Hathaway. I once spent an afternoon at Farrana in Italy. Why did I linger there when Florence was awaiting me? Because Goethe laid there the scene of a drama I had once loved to read. I have watched for hours the old Manse at Concord, Massachusetts, where Hawthorne, living with his young bride, wrote "Mosses from an Old Manse."

"A thousand cities claimed great Homer, dead
Through which the living Homer begged his bread."

Literary fame somehow exerts a witchery over the mind and imagination of posterity out of all comparison beyond that exerted by the renown of the soldier or the statesman.