

The Christian Manliness of Roosevelt.

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The Sunday School Times prints the following copyrighted article on [or incidents of] Theodore Roosevelt, by Jacob A. Riis.

Five days since a straggling canoeist brought word from the settlements, of the dreadful trouble in Buffalo, that stirred bitter, vengeful feelings in our hearts against those enemies of mankind whose madness is ever murder and more murder. Just now the mail brought me a belated letter from Theodore Roosevelt, written at Buffalo, that ends with the hopeful words: "I now believe that the President will surely recover," and the news of how grievously that hope was disappointed. Theodore Roosevelt is to-day the President of the United States. Alas for our human hopes! If it was his honorable ambition to so serve his day and his country as to earn its highest trust, I know that there is no sadder heart to-day in all our land than his; for above all the traits that endear Theodore Roosevelt to his friends is that of loyalty—loyalty to chief and to friend. President McKinley was both.

In the newspapers that told of the President's death, I caught among the messages of faith and confidence in the new executive, once or twice, a note of timid inquiry, an echo, as it seemed, of the old days in Mulberry street: "Yes, we know he is courageous and strong; we know his high ideals, his fearless purpose, his spotless honor,—we own it all, and we are proud of it; but is he—quite safe?" The answer was there, in the new President's public declaration that he would make no change, that things should remain as if the old chief had not died. There was no occasion for the inquiry. In fact, there never had been. The bitterest critics of his administration of the police in New York know now, if they were capable of learning, that his practical wisdom in dealing with that task was as great as his unhesitating courage. That task was to rescue the police from its partnership with corruption, and with unerring instinct he struck at the slough in which the corruption grew—the saloon. In no man's hands that lives and owns American citizenship to-day are the country's honor and welfare safer than in Theodore Roosevelt's. And the country knows it well.

Men who called him hasty in the old days have tried to heartily wish that they had spent their energies pushing on the load he dragged almost alone, instead of trying to persuade him from doing his duty in the interest of expediency, or denouncing him for not heeding them. Not that the one thing or the other made any difference to him. That the load was there to be dragged up the hill was enough for him. He stopped neither to consider the size of it, nor how steep was the hill. Above all, he did nothing hastily, but of deliberate purpose, most carefully weighed and thought out. In those days I was with him every day, almost every hour, and I knew not only what he did, but how he did it. One difference between him and his critics was that he had given his life to the patient study of the problems upon which they jumped with such headlong haste, anxious only to prevent "trouble," and hence that he was able to see clearly where their fears made them blind; another was that, foreseeing clearly, among other things, the consequences to himself, he was not afraid, for beyond and behind them he saw ever the duty he had sworn to do faithfully.

So it came about that during those turbulent times Mr. Roosevelt's appeal was ever to the moral forces of the community, to the forces making for decency and order, and it was their support that was his backing. The direct way to a thing was always his. When there was trouble with labor he sent for its leaders, and put the question straight—what they wanted; and when, not knowing the manner of man they had to do with, they tried blustering, he put them right in ten words, showing them clearly that they were their own worst enemies in fermenting trouble, and that, meeting him on that ground, they would lose the fight,—then turned back to the subject under advisement as if nothing had happened. And they applauded the man, and showed that they themselves were men in doing it. When he was governor, and wanted to see how the laws regarding sweating were carried out, he sent first for the labor men, told them what he wanted, and asked them to help him. Afterward he went himself, and saw what was done and what was not done. It was so always. It was thus that he, as a very young man serving in the Legislature, went to the bottom of the tenement-house cigar-makers' grievous troubles, and, having made out their side very clearly, took it without hesitation, to the amazement of the cynics, who, speechless, beheld a "silk stocking" take up the cause of the poor because it was the cause of right. And it was so that as police commissioner and governor, he gave his nights, as his days, to personal inspection of the wrongs he was asked to right. Having ascertained the facts, he went to the men who ought to help, and told them so. During the deadlock in the police board his appeal was constantly to the churches and the clergy, that of his opponents as constantly to

politics and the politicians. The result we see in New York to-day: the police force, since his grip upon it was loosened, is deeper in the rut of politics and corruption than ever, but in the battle against the conspiracy, which is bound to win, the clergy and the churches lead. They are fighting Roosevelt's fight to-day, with the Bishop of New York at the forefront of battle.

This is the alliance which he brings with him to the White House. If there be any yet who believe him "hasty," they will find themselves disappointed in that, as always before. Roosevelt has persistently disappointed his enemies from the very beginning. Seelug his rapid rise, they compared him to a rocket, and said that he would come down a stick presently. And so he would have done had he been, as they thought, a politician. But he was a statesman—a man of destiny because a man of duty.

That is the key-note of his life. It was his father's, one of the most useful and public-spirited men who ever lived in New York,—a man whose life was, and is, a lesson to us all, and whose death moved the metropolis to such sorrow as it has seldom felt for any citizen. His high ideal of citizenship he got from him; his sanity, too, I fancy, for it was a distinguishing mark of one, and is of the other. So was his fairness, his sober sense of justice, for which the policemen in Mulberry street love him yet in secret. They dare not mention his name openly in these days of Tammany rule. For once, and once only, the honest policeman who did his duty, but had no pull, had an equal chance with the schemer. Neither kind will soon forget the two years of Roosevelt. I well remember the time I clashed with all three of the qualities in him which I have mentioned. It was when a woman was condemned to death for the foul and wicked murder of her step-daughter, and he, as governor, was beset by an endless array of more or less maudlin petitions praying for pardon. I too, labored with him. I did not like the execution, but more—I never owned it before, he would have been the last man to bring that argument to—I feared the effect of it on his career. I was weak and foolish. I know it now. I went to Albany, and all that evening and night, till the 11 a. m. train went back to the city, I argued it with him in his study. I pleaded on every ground I knew how, and I saw in his face the yearning to see it as his friend did. But he could not. He had pardoned others before, and I knew it was his dear delight to temper justice with mercy where it could rightly be done. Roosevelt is farthest from being a hard man; his heart is as tender as a woman's where it may be, as hard as steel where it must be. In this case he was absolutely right. Every consideration of fairness and justice demanded that the law take its course if the prisoner was responsible. That fact he ascertained by the strictest scrutiny, and then stood aside, heedless of the clamor. It was with something almost of awe that I saw him do it, for I knew what it cost him.

Theodore Roosevelt loves children as William McKinley did. When he was a police commissioner, we would sometimes go together to the Italian school of the Children's Aid Society, or some kindred place, and I loved of all things to hear him talk to the little ones. They did, too. I fancy he left behind him on every one of those trips a streak of little patriots to whom, as they grow up, the memory of their hour with "Teddy" will be a whole manual of good citizenship. I know one little girl out on Long Island who is to-day hugging the thought of the handshake he gave her as the most precious of her memories. And so do I, for I saw him spy her,—poor, pale little thing, in her threadbare jacket,—way back in the crowd of school-children that swarmed about his train, and I saw him dash into the surging tide like a strong swimmer striking from the shore, make a way through the shouting mob of youngsters clear to where she was on the outskirts looking on hopelessly, catch and shake her hand as if his very heart were in his, and then catch the moving train on the run, while she looked after it, her face one big, happy smile. That was Roosevelt, every inch of him.

Is such a man safe as the Executive of this country of blessed homes? His own is one of the happiest I know of, for love is at the helm. It is his harbor of refuge, which he insists on preserving sacred to him and his, whatever storms rage without. And in this also he is faithful to the highest American ideals, to his country's best traditions. The only time I saw him so angry as to nearly lose his temper was when he was told that his enemies in the police department, who never grasped the kind of man they had to do with, or were able to do it, were shadowing him nightly from his office to his home, thinking to catch him in some wrong. He flashed hotly. "What!" he said, "going home to my babies?" But his anger died in a sad little laugh of contempt. That was their way, not his. When, soon after, the opportunity came to him to pay them back in their own coin, he spurned it with loathing. He fought fair even with scoundrels.

That kind of a man is he who has now, by the death of our beloved President, become the chief of our great nation. A just man and a fair; a man of duty and principle, never, by any chance, of expediency, political or

personal; a reverent man of few public professions, but of practice, private and public, ever in accord with the highest ideals of Christian manliness. In fact, I know of no one who typifies better the Christian gentleman. In the hands of such a man, no one but a frightened newspaper editor, whose secret wish is father to his fears, need be afraid to leave the destinies of our country.

Musing

Musing is not to be confounded with reverie, which means loose, distracted, aimless thinking, but is to be identified with meditation—an earnest, well-directed effort of the mind, involving its varied powers of perception, memory, reason, imagination. Thus understood, musing is the cure for one of the worst infirmities of the soul, viz., insensibility. The lack in our churches and in our individual lives is not so much a lack of faith as a lack of feeling. We have an abstract faith in the Christian verities, but it is not a "realizing" faith, there is no sufficient reaction upon the emotional nature, kindling it to a glow, and impelling the will to joyful obedience and aggressive endeavor. How shall we dissipate this insensibility and kindle the fire of holy feeling?

Well, the Psalmist gives us a bit of experience, and declares that while he was musing the fire kindled on the altar of his heart. In this declaration he suggests the cure which in our coldness and unresponsiveness we shall all do well to apply. We must muse, think, meditate. Only those things impress and move us deeply, and continue so to do, to which we give earnest, deliberate, studied, constrained attention.

The unthinking man at night time lifts his face for a moment to the sky, and sees only the upper half of a hollow sphere, whose ceiling is studded with glimmering specks of light, and he feels neither reverence nor awe. The thoughtful man sits at his window, and by the hour looks upon the same scene. Memory recalls the numerous facts of distance and magnitude, thought reaches out to its utmost, imagination spreads her wings, the depths above become infinite, the innumerable lights are suns and worlds, the whole scene is ablaze with the glory of God, and mute with wonder and adoring awe this man kneels down and worships the maker of it all.

So in the spiritual realm, though the facts of that realm are so sublimely glorious, no mere passing or occasional thinking upon them will fire the soul with becoming earnestness, and keep the fire a-burning; if one would rise to feeling and action commensurate with the sublimities which God has made known to us in Jesus Christ, he must meditate, meditate, meditate on these things, till the soul grasps their reality and sublimity, and is taken captive by them. When we recall the substance of the Christian revelation, its revelation respecting God, respecting man in his nature, worth, and destiny; when we think of the glory of the Redeemer's person, of the condescension and love of his redeeming work, of the death he died, of his resurrection, of his intercession above, of the ministry of the Spirit; when we think of the eternal significance of the new birth, and of the dignity, prospects and obligations of the Christian; when we think of the dying world and its awful need of Christ, the wonder is that every one to whom the inward revelation of these things has been granted is not aflame for the Kingdom of God. Such, however, is not the case. The vision fades so soon. The inward sense of spiritual-realities is so easily lost. If present, it can be maintained, if lost, it can be regained, only by thought and prayer.

Take a single illustration. Here is a Christian man who is mourning his lack of love for the Saviour. It is the morning for the observance of the Lord's Supper, and he comes to the table with a heart cold and dead. He is ashamed that the altar fires are so low, but he seems helpless. But suppose this man had gone into his chamber in the morning, and had spent an hour reading and meditating upon the nineteenth chapter of John. We all know the chapter. It is that chapter where our Lord is in the hands of his enemies. They scourge him till his shoulders drip with blood, they put a crown of thorns on him, in mockery they dress him like a king, they spit on him, they smite him with their hands. Outside you can hear the frenzied mob crying—Crucify him! You can see him wearily treading the sorrowful way, bleeding and fainting beneath his load. With the crowd you follow him to Calvary. You hear the sound of the hammer as they drive home the nails. Above the heads of the crowd you see his blessed face. You see his life ebb out to the last expiring cry. Oh, the sorrow and the grace of it all! Now, I say, had the brother with the cold heart gone into his chamber for an hour on the Sabbath morning to muse, to think, to pray himself into fellowship with Calvary and the dying Redeemer, he would have come out saying, "My heart was cold, but while I was musing the fire kindled," and he would have gone to the table with a burning heart, burning with the love of Jesus.

The philosophy which commends special meetings for purposes of evangelism, and for the deepening of the life of believers, is this, that such meetings promote deep sustained thought on the things of Christ and the soul. What is even more needed, however, than special meetings, is the cultivation of the habit of brooding thoughtfulness on divine things. The sermons that tell are the sermons that are born of patient, prolonged, prayerful thought. The lives that glow, and grow, and achieve in the Kingdom of Jesus, are lives that are warmed and fed and stimulated by the holy practice of musing. T. T.