

LIBERTY, RESTRAINT, SELF-CONTROL, AND PATERNALISM.

(By Doctor Hibben.)

One of my own personal indictments of the German people is that they have forgotten this man, the greatest of their German philosophers, and they have forgotten his teachings, and if they had remembered his teachings, there would have been no war; I refer to the great Immanuel Kant, the greatest of the German philosophers. He said in reference to the general theory of conduct—he had written a book on the subject of many hundreds of pages, but boiled down the thought of his book in one sentence is this:

So act in every particular instance as you would wish that act to become a universal law for all men.

That is what is meant by universalizing your conduct.

You are safe, gentlemen, when you can stand up such a foundation as that and say, "I claim this to be my right, because I am willing that the whole world should act as I am acting now under the particular circumstances which I find myself." But if we are not willing in our minds to say to our fellow men, "You have the same rights that I claim for myself" we are immoral and, therefore, we have no true sense of liberty whatsoever. We must in some way associate liberty in our minds with law, and with a sentiment of reverence for law. You divorce the idea of liberty from law and you have Bolshevism, absolutely; say there is no such thing as law in my conception of liberty, then liberty becomes licensed, and license soon becomes anarchy; and anarchy, gentlemen, is hell, in a community or in a nation, and in our conception of liberty we must have the fundametal idea of association of it with law.

Let me quote now, not a German, but back in the centuries before our Christian era, our Greek historian, Heroditis; and I am very much interested in this quotation, because it is so apt to-day, since it was so stated. Xerxes asked the Spartan king how he accounted for the valor of his people. That is a question we could very well put to-day in reference to our troops; "What is your fundamental conception of the valor of these men?" That was the question that was put to the Spartan king. And this is his answer: "Though free, they are not in all things free; the master that they own is law, and the law of duty is the only master that they fear."

Does that, gentlemen, apply to-day or not? If we are free, but yet not in all things free? The master that we must own is law, and the only master that we will fear is this law of duty.

Can we conceive of anything in this world as free that is not directed according to some law?

Which, gentlemen, is free, the ship that is without rudder and with a mutinous crew and without a pilot, or the ship that is well manned, with a master mind at the helm and steering according to chart and compass, and the constant stars? Which is free, the troops that are without training and without discipline and have never been taught to obey, or the troops that have been taught to give instant obedience to the command and well disciplined and well trained? Which is free, the community that is without law and without order and each man doing that which is well pleasing in his own eyes, or the community that is ruled by law and a sense of order and a public spirited sacrifice of its own citizens? Which is free, the individual that is given up entirely to the chance suggestion of the fleeting desire or the fugitive thought, that is ruled by the caprice or the wind of the moment, or the man that is self-governed, whose life is directed and controlled according to an inner law and a consecrated purpose? Which is free the one that knows law and reverences it, or the one that has no conception of it whatsoever?

There is, moreover, a very fundamental ratio that must be observed in the development of the sense of freedom in every man's life, a ratio that is exact as the mathematical formula of universal education, and it is this: That wherever the outer restraint is lessened the inner control must be increased. If you remove the outer restraint you have to put something within, the exact amount. That is the reason I say it can be expressed as a mathematically exact ratio. The boy that is under his parents' control goes out of the control of his father but at the same time something grows within and there becomes an inner control that balances the removal of the outer control. I have seen this so often for now over thirty years, as young boys have come to Princeton University from the restraint of our preparatory schools. Suddenly they have the freedom of university life, and the shipwrecks that have been made, the tragedies of young lives, have always been due, I think, without exception, to this fact, that this ratio has not been preserved.

They come into the full liberty of manhood without having the manly self control within, and it is all important that they should in their development year after year have more and more of the self control as they become more and more free from the outer restraint.

CANADIAN FIRE UNDERWRITERS' ASSOCIATION.

The thirty-sixth annual meeting of the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association will be held on June 24th, at Bluff Point, New York State.