



ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

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AN ADDRESS

BY

THE HONOURABLE

WILLIAM RENWICK RIDDELL, LL. D., ETC.,

OF TORONTO

(JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF ONTARIO)

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[At the Fourth American Peace Congress, St. Louis, Missouri,  
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In 1879 a well-preserved lady of eighty-one years of age, seated in her beautiful home overlooking the Canadian Thames, wrote to her cousin, a gentleman of high official standing in Ontario, her reminiscences of the war of 1812. She said: "In May of 1814 we had several days of heavy fog. On the morning of the 13th, as the fog lifted, we saw seven or eight ships under the American flag anchored off Ryerse, with a number of small boats floating by the side of each ship. As the fog cleared away they hoisted sail and dropped down three miles below us, opposite Port Dover. Of course, an invasion was anticipated, but no resistance was offered. On the 14th, the Americans burned the village and mills of Dover; on the 15th, as my mother and myself were sitting at breakfast, the dogs kept up an unusual barking. I went to the door to discover the cause; when I looked up I saw the hillside and fields covered with American soldiers. They had marched from Port Dover to Ryerse. Two men stepped from the ranks, selected some large chips and came into the room where we were standing and took some coals from the hearth without speaking a word. My mother knew instinctively what they were going to do. She went out and asked to see the commanding officer. A gentleman rode up to her and said he was the person she asked for. She entreated him to spare her

property and said she was a widow with a young family. He answered her civilly and respectfully, and expressed his regret that his orders were to burn, but said that he would spare the house, which he did. . . . Very soon we saw columns of dark smoke arise from every building; and, of what at early morn had been a prosperous homestead, at noon there remained smouldering ruins. . . . My father had been dead less than two years. Little remained of all his labors excepting the orchard and cultivated fields."

During the lifetime of her husband, the young wife, who had come from New York, had yearned to return to her native land; "could not relinquish the hope of emerging from the woods and being once more within the sound of the church-going bell," and had been promised by her husband that after she had for six years given "the country a fair trial, if she then disliked it, and wished to return to New York, he would go back with her; the party feeling by that time would have greatly subsided."

Her daughter continues: "It would not be easy to describe my mother's feelings as she looked at the desolation around her . . . but there was no longer a wish to return to New York."

Captain Samuel White, of the Pennsylvania militia, who took part in this invasion, published an account of his experiences in a 12mo, Baltimore, 1830. He seems to justify the burning, as he claims that the houses burned belonged to officers who had been engaged in the expedition against Buffalo and Black Rock the year before.

Assuming the good faith of this claim and that it was a valid excuse if true, let us see what the expedition of the previous year was. In December, 1813, a British-Canadian force of about fourteen hundred men crossed the River Niagara at Lewiston, with the avowed object of attacking the American troops at Black Rock and Buffalo, which were assembled, it was thought, "to attempt the prosecution of the atrocious system begun at Fort George of laying waste our peaceful frontier." The orders of Lieutenant-General Drummond were to disperse this force and destroy "the villages of Buffalo and

Black Rock in order to deprive the enemy of the cover which these places afford."

This invading army performed its task very thoroughly; the troops were scattered; the houses along the river, and the villages of Buffalo and Black Rock burned. The official report of the British General says: "The town (Buffalo) itself (the inhabitants having previously left it) and the whole of the public stores, containing considerable quantities of clothing, spirits and flour, which I had not the means of conveying away, were set on fire and totally consumed, as was also the village of Black Rock on the evening it was evacuated."

The New York Evening Post of January 11, 1814, said: "This all arises from the wanton and abominable act of Gen. McClure in burning Niagara after he and his militia abandoned Fort George;" and added that the war will "be carried on after this more to satiate the revengeful feelings of commanders and individuals than to obtain any great national benefit from it."

This brings us back to Gen. McClure. He had been in possession of Fort George, Upper Canada, a few weeks before but had deemed it prudent to retire, on the advance of a British-Canadian force; and when he retired, he laid in ashes the unfortified village of Newark, a short distance away. The New York Evening Post of December 29, 1813, said: "The destruction and misery which this dastardly conduct has occasioned is scarcely to be described. Women and children, being the principal inhabitants, have nowhere to place their heads." Dr. Withrow tells of the wife of Councilor Dickson, lying ill in bed, carried out to the snow in the bed clothes, and lying watching in that bitter December night the destruction of her home with its valuable library. Many tell of vain attempts to save their homes, putting out the flames while the soldiers went around with torches, setting on fire. "Sometimes the fire would be put out by the owners, only to be lit again and again, the owners standing by to see the eventual destruction of all they valued."

These were not all the feats of arms in that war of a century ago. Toronto had been taken in April, 1813, and the

public offices burned, including the Court House and Parliament Buildings; the church was robbed of its plate and the library consumed with its records and most of its books. What were saved were kicked around the streets. The evacuation of Toronto took place exactly one hundred years ago, and it was re-taken three months afterwards.

In July, 1814, Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane issued from Bermuda a proclamation declaring for retaliation, at the request of the Canadian Governor. It read: "Whereas, by letters from His Excellency, Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost . . . it appears that the American troops in Upper Canada have committed the most wanton and unjustifiable outrages on the unoffending inhabitants by burning their mills and houses and by general devastation; and, whereas, His Excellency has requested that in order to deter the enemy from a repetition of similar outrages I would assist in inflicting measures of retaliation; you are hereby required and directed to destroy and lay waste such towns and districts upon the coast as you will find assailable . . . you will spare merely the lives of the unarmed inhabitants of the United States. For only by carrying this retributory justice into the country of our enemy can we hope to make him sensible of the impolicy, as well as the inhumanity, of the system he has adopted."

And so a British force came up the Patuxent to Benedict and destroyed some tobacco, to Lower Marlborough and destroyed some more with the building; then to Washington, burned the capitol and the navy yard, destroying \$7,000,000.00 worth of public property and some private property as well.

What a magnificent exhibition of the logic of War!

The American soldier, as he rendered Canadian families homeless in the middle of a Canadian winter, proved conclusively that Britain had no right to impress British seamen on American vessels; the redcoats, when they burned Buffalo, proved that she had; the victorious American kicking along the streets of muddy York the books of the public library advanced an earnest and cogent argument against the orders

in Council already repealed, and the flames of the capitol and navy yard seemed unanswerable in the opposite sense.

But notwithstanding these brilliant efforts of ratiocination, the envoys charged with bringing about a peace did not even obtain a decision on any one point in dispute which had been advanced as a cause for war. That most uncommon of all faculties which we English-speaking people call common sense, the English-speaking people claim to possess in the highest degree—I am not sure that they do not sometimes claim a monopoly—and that common sense in both contending nations forced the negotiators to come to terms even although that involved an absolute ignoring of all the alleged causes of the war.

Negotiations were going on in Ghent for months concurrently with operations in the field; neither negotiation nor battle had any effect; it was the common sense, the moral sense of the two peoples, which triumphed. It may perhaps be a matter for congratulation that the latest hostile attacks by either upon the land of the other contestant failed; while the Kentucky Mounted Riflemen were driven from Western Canada, Pakenham suffered defeat at New Orleans.

I have said no word of blood and agony and death; of splendid manhood and courage of thousands and tens of thousands lost to the Continent and the Islands; wounded cripples, living out the rest of their lives in pain and helplessness; the wail and tear of the widow and orphan; or of the dislocation of affairs, national, business, domestic, the pouring out of treasure, the destruction of natural resources. And with all the valor and self-sacrifice on either side, and all the unutterable barbarity and cruelty of the some on either side, what was settled by this war? Nothing, literally nothing.

There was, indeed, another demonstration of the fact that he whom we call the Anglo-Saxon will sooner fight than eat if he can find a pretext; that when he does fight, he fights with all his might; that he gives himself up to the cause he espouses with his whole heart; that he exhibits a valor unexcelled by any nation, ancient or modern, a devotion and self-sacrifice like those of the Spartan of Thermopylæ, the Theban of Manlinæa. Nor has he shaken off the brutality of his progenitors,

but is capable of acts of gratuitous, illogical, and senseless inhumanity.

But the whole world knew all that long before, and needed no new lesson. A wicked, wanton war, costly in blood and treasure settled nothing.

Not wholly without effect, however, was it?

Upper Canada was peopled chiefly by those who had left the new Republic; some before, but most after the Treaty of Peace in 1783. These United Empire Loyalists are but now receiving some measure of justice from American writers; their fidelity to principle is hardly yet fully recognized. Within six months, I have been told by an intelligent gentleman in this state (I insist on the intelligence—he was a Judge, and I stand by my Order) that the objection he had to these people was that they were traitors to their country in order to keep their property from being seized, preferring their lands to their land. This of a class of men who sacrificed everything they had from devotion to the Empire and Flag, who refused to barter their fealty for their confiscated lands and . . .

"Got them out into the Wilderness,  
The stern old Wilderness;  
But then—'twas British Wilderness!"

"They who loved  
The cause that had been lost—and kept their faith  
To England's Crown and scorned an alien name,  
Passed into exile; leaving all behind  
Except their honor. . . .  
Not drooping like poor fugitives they came  
In exodus to our Canadian wilds,  
But full of heart and hope, with heads erect  
And fearless eye, victorious in defeat.  
With thousand toils they forced their devious way  
Through the great wilderness of silent woods  
That gloomed o'er lake and stream, till higher rose  
The northern star above the broad domain  
Of half a continent, still theirs to hold,  
Defend and keep forever as their own."

These men, monarchists, were of the same breed as those who were left behind in the United States, republicans; the two factions were alike set upon their respective views of government as were Roundhead and Cavalier a century and more before, and while there were on either side those unworthy of respect—revolutions are necessarily non-moral and we can not expect a revolution either to be advanced or crushed by forces uniformly virtuous and admirable—there is no valid reason for inferring that either side was superior to the other in manhood and integrity. Those who support a beaten cause are always at a disadvantage. Even yet in England, at least aristocratic England, the Roundhead has not come into his own.

With the new Canadian, loyalty was a passion; but he did not cut all acquaintance or refuse to do business with his brother who had been successful in a rebellion against the Crown. The student of Canadian history will find numberless instances of the United Empire Loyalist returning and living for a time with his former friends and relatives, and the American sojourning with his Tory friend in his new home. Moreover hundreds of the rebellious Americans came into Upper Canada to make there their permanent residence, hoping for a fortune, or at least a competence, as within the last few years hundreds of thousands of Americans have come to our Canadian Northwest.

The student of early Upper Canada affairs comes across many instances of the emigrant returning to the home of his nativity to bring away his affianced left behind; and some maidens who came across the river with Loyalist father returned with Continentalist bridegroom. Some, too, there were who, like Mrs. Ryerse, had hoped "to return in a few years, for party feeling would by that time have greatly subsided." The mere party feeling was not active, the anger, indignation, excited by the refusal of several of the States to implement the implied promises of the fifth article of the Treaty of Peace for reimbursement to the Loyalists for their confiscated estates, had died down; new homes had been made in lieu of the old and there was abundant, if rude, plenty. A

feeling of friendship, of kinship, was making its way on both sides of the international line.

Then came the War. I make no enquiry into its origin; recent American historians have done that thoroughly and well. Whatever the origin and ostensible causes, the Canadian saw his country overrun by those whom he had looked upon as brethren, his substance given to the flames, his children slaughtered, all in a quarrel in which he had no part.

As with Mrs. Ryerse, "that was no longer a wish to return to New York;" affection and friendship were replaced by indignation and hate. Loyalty, which was a passion with the first settlers and which has not been bred out in their descendants, came to be identified with hatred of the neighbor who was by birth a kinsman, but who had shown himself an implacable enemy.

Dr. Russell speaks of the anger and indignation over the burning of the navy yard and capitol expressed by Americans he met upon his visit to Washington fifty years after the event. I can speak from personal knowledge of anger and indignation by descendants of those on Canadian soil who had considered themselves injured a hundred years ago. International hatred dies hard, and it is but the other day that school boys in either country ceased (if they have ceased) to sup full of the outrages committed by the soldiers of the other and the glorious, victorious and resplendent valor of those of their own.

Why all this anger, this indignation? War is hell, and always has been. One does not hear the German complain of the ravages of the French forces during the Napoleonic wars, nor does the Frenchman's eyes flash when he thinks of 1871. War is war, and no fault could be found with an enemy for doing his worst. Why, then, did American and British-Canadian feel so keenly and resent so bitterly the usual incidents of war? Was it not the feeling that the two peoples are one? that the division between them is infinitesimal both in point of time and in point of substance when compared with the long history which they have in common, their common

ancestry and their fundamental and essential unity in everything which make a people?

It was not because "an enemy hath done this," but because a brother hath done this that the anger was real, the indignation unappeasable.

"And to be wroth with one we love  
Doth work like madness in the brain."

And even in their ashes live the wonted fires of past wrongs and discords, ever ready to burst out into renewed flame, destroying confidence and affection brought into existence in the intervening time by acts of kindness and brotherhood.\*

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\*Dr. Dunlop, an Anglo-Canadian army surgeon (afterwards Member of Parliament in Canada) who was attached to the Royal Forces during the war, tells two stories which are worth the consideration of both American and Canadian. "Recollections of the American War, 1812-14, by Dr. Dunlop, Toronto, 1905."

A battle had taken place. Dr. Dunlop says "We had obtained a victory but lost severely in so doing, and the enemy in consequence of the masterly arrangements of Major General Scott, one of the best soldiers in the American army (and one of the most gentlemanly men I have ever met with), had retired on Fort Erie." The narrative then proceeds: "There is hardly on the face of the earth a less enviable situation than that of an Army Surgeon after a battle—worn out and fatigued in body and mind, surrounded by suffering, pain and misery, much of which he knows it is not in his power to heal or even to assuage. While the battle lasts these all pass unnoticed, but they come before the medical man afterwards in all their sorrow, stripped of all the excitement of the 'heady fight.'"

"It would be a useful lesson to cold-blooded politicians who calculate on a war costing so many lives and so many limbs as they would calculate on a horse costing so many pounds—or to the thoughtless at home, whom the excitement of a gazette, or the glare of an illumination, more than reconciles to the expense of a war—to witness such a scene, if only for one hour. This simple and obvious truth was suggested to my mind by the exclamation of a poor woman. I had 220 wounded turned in upon me that morning, and among others an American farmer, who had been on the field either as a militia man or a camp follower. He was nearly sixty years of age, but of a most Herculean frame. One ball had shattered his thigh bone, and another lodged in his body, the last obviously mortal. His wife, a respectable elderly looking woman, came over under a flag of truce, and immediately repaired to the hospital where she found her husband lying on a truss of straw, writhing in agony, for his sufferings were dreadful. Such an accumulation of misery seemed to have stunned her, for she ceased wailing, sat down on the ground, and taking her husband's head on her lap, continued long, moaning and sobbing, while the tears flowed fast down her face: she seemed for a consider-

The war came to an end through the efforts of those removed from its sphere of action. I am not wrong in putting it thus: those engaged in the war on both sides desired its continuance.

Now let us contemplate another scene:

On the 22d of September, 1816, two gentlemen arrived from Portland at the small New Brunswick town, St. Andrews. One was John Holmes, a resident of what was then part of Massachusetts, but soon to become the State of Maine. He had been a member of the Massachusetts Legislature and was to be a Congressman and a United States Senator, a man of high standing in his community and a true patriot.

The other was Colonel Thomas Barclay, of Nova Scotia, who had recently been British Consul-General at New York, a man of much acuteness and business ability. These two had met at Portland, representing their respective national governments in an enquiry concerning the international boundary. Britain claimed certain islands in Passamaquoddy

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able time in a state of stupor, till awakened by a groan from her unfortunate husband, she clasped her hands, and looking wildly around, exclaimed, 'O that the King and the President were both here this moment to see the misery their quarrels lead to—they surely would never go to war again without a cause that they could give as a reason to God at the last day, for thus destroying the creatures that he hath made in his own image.' In half an hour the poor fellow ceased to suffer."

Dr. Dunlop speaks in another place of the Glengarry Regiment of Canadian Militia. He tells us, "In this regiment there were a father and three sons, American U. E. Loyalists, all of them crack shots. In a covering party one day the father and one of the sons were sentries on the same point. An American rifleman dropped a man to his left, but in so doing exposed himself, and almost as a matter of course was instantly dropped in his turn by the unerring aim of the father. The enemy were at that moment being driven in, so the old man of course (for it was a ceremony seldom neglected) went up to rifle his victim. On examining his features he discovered that it was his own brother. Under any circumstances this would have horrified most men, but a Yankee has much of the stoic in him, and is seldom deprived of his equanimity. He took possession of his valuables, consisting of an old silver watch and a clasp knife, his rifle and appointments, coolly remarking, that, it 'served him right for fighting for the rebels, when all the rest of his family fought for King George.' It appeared that during the revolutionary war his father and all his sons had taken arms in the King's cause, save this one, who had joined the Americans. They had never met him from that period till the present moment; but such is the virulence of political rancour, that it can overcome all the ties of nature."

Bay, as did the United States. During the war the British seized at least one of them and continued to hold it, though before the war it had been granted to landholders by the State of Massachusetts. What better excuse for a war could there be than such a state of affairs? "National honor!" "National territory!" "What we have we hold!" "Not one foot of American soil will ever be given up on any pretext," etc., etc. Do you not hear the Jingo?

But these two gentlemen sat down quietly, and after a number of hearings in St. Andrews and Boston drew the international boundary where it has ever since continued, dividing the islands between the contesting parties, each of the representatives yielding a part of his individual opinion for the sake of harmony and peace.

The United States received the three islands, Frederick, Dudley and Moose, and never even in recent years has there been a word of complaint.

"Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war" and "*Melior tutiorque est certa pax, quam sperata victoria.*"

But you may say the matter in dispute was, after all, unimportant—not worth fighting about. I agree it was not worth fighting about; but there have been many and bloody wars with much less excuse.

Let us, however, take another case. After the United States beat Britain by a head in the race for California, there arose a dispute destined to be of long standing as to the boundary between their territories. Britain claimed down to the mouth of the Columbia River between 46° and 47° north latitude; the United States, up to 54° 40'. In 1818 an arrangement was entered into that for ten years the strip in dispute should be open to settlers from either nation without prejudice to the claims of either. In 1824 and 1826 attempts were made to determine the international boundary, but in vain; and in 1827 the arrangement was extended indefinitely.

Polk's election was fought and won in 1844 on the party slogan, "Fifty-four forty or fight," and the President in his inaugural address said about as much. England replied in like tone and war was universally expected. But election cries are

one thing, legislation another—at least this was so seventy years ago. Arbitration indeed was refused, but two diplomats got together and discussed the situation with candor; and an offer of the Imperial Government to “split the difference” at the 49th parallel was accepted in 1846; the British Government adopting a line which had been offered to them at least twice before. Now here was a strip 400 miles wide, stretching half across the continent, worth untold millions, but the two countries could not get up a war over even that splendid territory.

The trouble was not over; the international line was fixed to run south of Vancouver Island along the middle of the channel which separates the Continent from Vancouver Island. Geography has a way of laughing at diplomats: there turned out to be three channels, each of which might fairly be claimed as the main channel.

It needs no subtlety of intellect to guess how the two peoples made their claims. Rosario, nearest the mainland, was Britain's choice; De Haro, nearest to Vancouver Island, that of the United States, and Douglas, between, was disowned by both. An American commander, General Harney, took possession with an armed force of the Island of San Juan, of which the Hudson Bay Company were in occupation, as British territory. British men-of-war were sent out and—there was no fight. A joint occupation was agreed to, and finally the question in dispute was left to the Emperor of Germany, who decided in favor of the American contention. And no one complains or feels aggrieved—unless it is the United States.

Almost exactly a hundred years after the beginning of that war, questions of considerable difficulty which had troubled the two nations for many years, came to be decided. This time a Board of Judges was chosen. Two were in fact Judges, an American and a Canadian, and the three others were lawyers of high standing. (I do not use the expression “Jurists of repute;” that has an ominous sound in the ear of a Canadian since 1903.) Their award was hailed with acclaim by all parties. Everyone felt that any settlement of our stand-

ing difficulties was better than keeping them alive as a source of irritation, and giving to the "lewd fellows of the baser sort" a pretext for international accusation.

During the intervening century all kinds of questions had been settled by all kinds of arbitrations; questions of boundary; of the amount to be paid for land taken by one government from the subjects of the other; for slaves taken by the warships of Britain from American citizens; where Americans might fish and what the United States should pay for Americans fishing where they had no right to; where Canadians might catch seals and what they should be paid for not being allowed to catch where they had a right to; what Britain should pay for her defective Municipal law, allowing the escape of the Alabama, and many more such questions.

And sometimes there was a single arbitrator, the Sovereign of a friendly state; sometimes two, one representing each party with or without a third to be chosen by lot or otherwise; sometimes five, two by each and a fifth by these four; sometimes five or seven, three to be chosen by foreign princes or potentates named. Sixteen arbitrations during that intervening time with half as many methods of selecting the judges; in all there have been twenty-one such references, all but a mere handful successful.

Not all the awards received the acclaim of that in 1910. Some were considered unjust; one at least was repudiated by both parties; but the discontent was of short duration and died out when the award was submitted. The American, when he complained of the Halifax award; the Canadian, when he complained of the Alaska award, consoled himself with the consideration, "I have been beaten in a lawsuit; the judges were ignorant or perverse, but at all events my opponent has not burnt my Capitol or slain my son." Patriotism itself—than which, says Pato, nothing is more cruel, and I add, more unjust—could not find a ground for international hate in a lawsuit lost.

This is a utilitarian age; we are all looking for results. Whence are the results worth having? From war, with its present blood and agony, destruction of property and of life,

suffering and sorrow, and its legacy of hatred and all evil, or from the determination of all disputes by peaceful means with consequent amity and good will?

Stopford Brooke said: "I am glad before I pass away to see the beginnings of a regeneration of Society. I am glad to believe that it will be wrought not by violence and revenge, but by patient work and ardent faith and hope; and that the stones of its temples will be cemented by forgiveness, their halls built by justice, and their foundations be the brotherhood of man in the Fatherhood of God."

So we in international matters have seen the beginnings of a regeneration working without violence; its halls built with justice.

The determination by the English-speaking peoples that they will conclude their disputes by peaceful means is final and irrevocable, and must in the nature of things have a tremendous influence upon the world at large. For the future of the world in no slight degree depends upon the English-speaking nations; all the others have more than they can attend to at home and can not be expected to take up the White Man's burden. The eye of the world is upon the United States and Great Britain. Where these lead the others will eventually follow.

No one desires or expects a political union, but there is a growing and developing and ever stronger sense of unity which must guide in future actions both peoples.

And is Manhood lost? or anything worth while?

I have elsewhere said: "Discordant notes are to be heard." Of course the "fire-eater" is not dead, or the pessimist, or he who can walk only per vias antiquas; while the fool we have always with us. We hear that wars are necessary to keep down population, although the same argument is not advanced for famine . . . that war is needed to awaken and keep alive valor and masculine virtues generally, although those who know most about war know best the absurdity of the argument: there is more valor in one day of attendance upon the sick in an epidemic than in a month of active warfare. I undertake to find ten men to face bullet or bayonet for every

one who will face smallpox or malignant fever. We are told that questions of national honor can not be arbitrated, and that if any nation were to fire a shot at a peaceful ship of another, war must ensue, although Britain did not suffer in the eyes of the world or in her own, because she submitted to international arbitration when her peaceful fishermen were shot down on the Dogger Bank; that a man does not go to law when someone assaults his wife, as though that justified him in stealing the other's fish—or as though the circumstance that some outrage might be so gross that law would be forgotten, furnished an argument against law in general.

All these objections will, in the long run fail, and the objectors will—must—suffer defeat. The brute, the tiger, must die, for what is war but a survival of the brute within?

Much better are the words of one now silent, whom that true son of peace, my friend Andrew Carnegie, calls "one of the purest, sweetest white souls that ever breathed."

T'was said: "When roll of drum and battle's roar  
 Shall cease upon the earth, O, then no more  
 The deed—the race—of heroes in the land."  
 But scarce that word was breathed when one small hand  
 Lifted victorious o'er giant wrong.  
 That had its victims crushed through ages long;  
 Some woman set her pale and quivering face  
 Firm as a rock against a man's disgrace;  
 A little child suffered in silence lest  
 His savage pain should wound a mother's breast;  
 Some quiet scholar flung his gauntlet down  
 And risked in Truth's great name, the synod's frown;  
 A civic hero, in the calm realm of laws,  
 Did that which suddenly drew a world's applause;  
 And one to the pest his lithe young body gave  
 That he a thousand thousand lives might save.

(Richard Watson Gilder.)