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The Friendship of Books

FOR nearly three years I have been exiled from my study, and though I have not been destitute of books, nor entirely without the tools of my trade, my literary work has been done in a variety of strange places, and often with unusual or indifferent helps. An editor once said, that a piece of paper, a lead pencil, and his hat, were all that he needed to produce his newspaper. Some one was so unkind as to reply that the paper was quite worthy of such editing. Genius may laugh at obstacles, and scorn the aids which ordinary minds value, but I believe that even genius produces more brilliant results with comfortable surroundings, than when cold and hungry, in a garret and destitute. Certainly most literary men can write better on a study table than on a hat, can read better by the light of an argand lamp than by a farthing candle, and their thoughts flow more freely among their books than in destitute places. And so it is like a home-coming after long wandering to sit once again among my well known and accustomed friends. There are no friends like good books. They never fail you, they never disappoint you. Though slighted and neglected, treated with coldness or even abuse, they are never revengeful or malicious. The best they have is always freely offered and their pages open with delicate persuasion and invitation, upon the slightest opportunity.

Among the first to welcome me back was Jonathan Edwards. He stands in ten octavo volumes upon a front shelf; and he will stay there, for he is an honored kinsman, as well as a great divine. His metaphysics and sermons do not interest me now as much as his History of Redemption, but I prize his friendship and his influence is on the side of law and righteousness in these lawless and backbone-less times. Close by Edwards, is Mark Hopkins, whom I am delighted to greet once more in such proximity, I have been under his influence in my sum-

mer residence at Williamstown, but it is good to be with him every day in the year. Not far off is Adam Smith, who offers me two volumes of his inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. I should like to introduce him to some of our rising statesmen who think that something can be made of nothing, and that it is a good policy for a nation or for an individual, to get all it can, and keep all it gets, without regard to past experience or thoughtful forecast. Sometimes, it may be wise to shut one's eyes and jump, but not often.

I do not know why Thomas & Kempis in two volumes, is standing to welcome me beside Adam Smith, unless it be to turn away mine eyes from beholding the vanity of wealth in any form, but the "Imitation of Christ" greets me from my study table as well, and in a variety of editions on different shelves. Like the Scriptures, there can hardly be too many copies of this friendly and soul-refreshing book. My old friend, Robert Burton, is not far away with his curious "Anatomy of Melancholy," in three parts, with the original frontispiece which is as queer as many of the author's thoughts, and now Gibbon and Milman and Merivale, and Grote, and Curtius, and Hallam, and Hume, and Guizot, and Froude, and Bancroft, and a line of other masters in history, look out of their shelves and welcome me. Thomas Chalmers and a host of his countrymen shake off the dust of many months and salute me. Longfellow and Lowell and Holmes, and Whittier, and Hawthorne, and Emerson, dressed in their best clothes, by a great Boston firm, greet me as a Boston boy, who has a special claim upon them. Shakespeare lies open beside a concordance Bible, and Ruskin in a dozen volumes has just caught my eye, and there are Audubon's birds in an elephant edition, as large as life, who would almost sing to me from among the leaves if I should throw back the heavy covers that have shut them in for these weary months.

But this letter is in danger of becoming like a great reception, and I shall weary my readers with introductions, which on such occasions are often meaningless. At one of these fashionable functions, a lady friend was asked her name by the pompous individual who announced the entrance of the guests. Seeing that the hostess was over-busy in greeting the crowd, she gently whispered, "not yet;" and was dismayed to hear, the next moment, in stalwart tones, "Mrs. Not Yet" announced to the astonishment of the assembly. Lest I fall into a similar error, I will tell no more of the names of my friends, though I might go on to thousands, most of whom are worthy and pleasant to me beyond words.

This is the season of the year when we give gifts to one another. I would not refuse gold and gems, nor silver, nor the fine needlework which loving fingers weaved for a tribute of affection or respect, nor the art of sculptor or painter, nor the humble offering of the poor, nor a flower from a little child. The thought in the giver's heart measures the value of the offering and often determines its fitness. But, as I have said, a good book is a good friend, who then can do a greater kindness to one whom he loves, than to give him a new and lasting friend? And as one would think long and act carefully in bringing a new acquaintance into his own or a friend's house, so should he use care and thought and pains in the gift of a book. A book is a living thing. It may be good or evil, a

EDITORIAL

WHITES AND NEGROES IN WILMINGTON

A CALM REVIEW OF THE RECENT TROUBLES BY THE REV.
DR. PEYTON H. HOGE.

THE Observer, in commenting upon the reports of the recent race war in the Carolinas, which reports agreed with singular unanimity, said that "the moral force of civilization has broken down just where it ought to have been strongest, and reliance upon law and justice gives place to the assertion of brute force by the superior race against the established order." This review of the troubles at Wilmington has called forth a number of letters from friends of The Observer, who have supplemented the newspapers reports, by explaining the motives of the white citizens of Wilmington, and the causes which led to the change of the city government. One of the correspondents was the Rev. Dr. Peyton H. Hoge, the son of the Rev. Dr. Hoge at one time the honored co-pastor of the Brick Church in this city. Dr. Hoge himself was one of the preachers in the Fifth Avenue Church last summer. His letter was written in such a brotherly spirit, as they all were, and was such a fair statement of the whole matter from his point of view that permission to print it was requested. In the letter asking this permission, The Observer's attitude towards the problem which confronts the people of Wilmington was repeated:

There are only two ways of correcting the abuses of which you complain. One is by the patient and wearisome course of legislation, and the other by revolution. The latter can only be justified when all legal means have failed. We have the problem in New York, and have met it several times since I have lived here, by legislation. You cannot have had a worse tyranny than we have had several times during the last forty years, but we have overthrown it by usually three years of legislative and legal action, rather than by three days of shooting and violence. Only once has there been a riot, and that was in the war time, when the opposers of the government burned the colored orphan asylum and hanged negroes to lamp posts. The United States troops were promptly sent and quartered in Madison Square, and the riot ended.

The facts as you put them before me, do not seem to justify the methods which were employed, and that is the criticism which The Observer must make upon the action. It does not seem to us, and we are certainly free from bias or prejudice, and only desirous of telling the truth, that things were so bad as to require the disfranchisement of the negro voters, or the organization and action of citizens, who as a military company had no legal standing or responsibility. If you take the ground that it was a justifiable revolution, or that you were a "vigilance committee" like the one in San Francisco and produce the facts which required it, public opinion may side with you. But upon any other ground, your course cannot be defended in harmony with the laws under which we live in this nation. But it may not be needful to press the matter further, if there is no more violence.

You mistake the feeling of the North, if you think they have any sympathy with the sort of government which you describe, and especially in New York, where we have borne and are bearing the yoke of Tammany Hall, taxation, petty annoyances, black-mail, and the same insults to decent people in some parts of the town as you describe. We heartily sympathize with your situation, but feel sure that the slow but sure work of Christian love and charity, steady legislative action, and confidence in the general government as the friend of the whole nation, rather than as a partisan power, will bring about sooner than violence the better rule and real, settled peace and order.

Dr. Hoge, with characteristic gentleness of manner and frankness of statement, replied as follows:

My Dear Dr. Stoddard: I thank you for your kind letter requesting information as to the "revolution" in Wilmington. There are several points in which a wholly erroneous impression has gone abroad, and the editorial in The Observer labors under the same mistakes.

1. There was absolutely no interference with the voting of the negroes on election day. There had been a good deal of talk of this kind beforehand, but a number of our most con-

servative men seeing that matters were drifting towards a race conflict, sent a committee of gentlemen who had no connection with politics, to see the Governor of the State (who is also the head of his party in this county), with a view to a peaceful solution. As the result of their representations, he decided that no opposition should be made to the election of the Democratic ticket for local offices, and members of the legislature.

All Republicans who had business interests at stake here advised the same thing, and the Chamber of Commerce, whose president was a Republican, had adopted strong resolutions in favor of "white government," as the only salvation of the city. The committee in turn pledged their efforts to prevent any interference with negroes in voting for State and Congressional officers. Their assurances were turned into a campaign document, that was distributed broadcast among the negroes, and read from some of their pulpits. They polled very nearly their full strength, and the election passed off in perfect quiet.

2. The violence and bloodshed of Thursday, Nov. 11th, were not the methods used for overturning the city government. Nearly all the criticisms passed upon us proceed upon that assumption. But it is an absolute error. In a mass meeting held the day after election, some one proposed to "go over and clean up the city hall." But the calm and temperate speeches of leading citizens, showing that such proceedings meant anarchy, resulted in an almost unanimous vote against any such proposition. Instead, a motion was adopted requesting the mayor and chief of police to resign on account of their incompetency. (It should be understood that the city government was not involved in the recent election, and had until next May to run. The local offices involved in the election were those of the county government). They agreed to do that night.

The next day a street fight broke out between blacks and whites. There is no doubt that the first shot was fired by a negro. But if that were not the case, it would still have been only a street fight growing out of bad blood. There has not been a day here for months that such a thing has not been possible. That would have been all there was of it had there been any lawful authorities capable of putting it down. But that was the trouble. For months our city government has shown itself utterly incapable of repressing crime, for negroes have no fear of negro policemen. Robbery, rowdiness, profanity, indecency and insults to ladies, have passed unchecked, even when policemen were in sight. The Friday before election some drunken whites maltreated some negroes. They were arrested and fined because the authorities were sustained by the whites. Saturday night an officer tried to arrest a negro for stoning a street car. He was resisted by a mob of three hundred negroes; the mayor could not be found and the chief of police refused to send assistance to his own officer, who was saved from violence only by the help of some white men.

It was knowledge of these facts that had led to an organization of the white men to keep order in the event that the authorities broke down utterly. That event took place when this street fight occurred. The citizens responded at once to the call of their appointed leaders, and by their promptness, coolness and self-restraint at once restored order, repressing the more violent of their own race, affording protection to all quiet and well disposed negroes, escorting to their homes the workmen from mills and shops, and preventing them from gathering in crowds that might lead to further trouble. In short, out of anarchy they produced order. As soon as word was received from the governor placing the chief military officer here in command, the citizen's organization placed itself subject to his orders. Before sunset the city government was reorganized. The Board of Aldermen offered to resign if men could be found to take their places, who could restore order. The citizens' committee prepared a long list of their successors, and the old Board resigned one at a time, one of the citizens' list being immediately elected in his place, according to the law that gives the Board authority to fill vacancies. When the Board had thus been reorganized, it accepted the resignation of the mayor and chief of police, and elected their successors.

The first act of the new government was to protect the jail against a mob of white men who tried to lynch some obnoxious persons, who had been placed there for safety. At sunrise, word was sent to the citizens' guards, who had stood watch all night, that the government, with the military, had

the situation in hand, and guns disappeared as suddenly as they had come to light. So far as I can learn there were only two, possibly three killed, besides those who were killed in the first fight, and these were shot with possibly one exception, by the military or other lawful authority, for resistance or disobedience. If the sermons in Wilmington the following Sunday throbbed with a vote of thankfulness that seemed unseemly to those who knew only of the bloodshed, it was because for weeks we have lived under the nightmare of an impending danger, the extent of which no one could foretell. When it was over we could only draw a long breath and say: Thank God! as people do after a battle, though many of their own have fallen. To know that when all ordinary authority fails, there is an inherent power of self-government in Americans, that can organize order out of anarchy and conflict, is a fact in which all Americans should rejoice.

8. The only lawless act of the people of Wilmington, I speak of "the people" not of individuals, was the banishment of Manley, and the destruction of his press. The resolution ordering him to leave the city, I approved as necessary to the peace of the community and the security of humble homes of nameless insults and crimes. The destruction of his press, I did not approve. It was not ordered by the citizens' meeting, but was done apparently by a spontaneous movement, when no answer was received from the colored committee. Still I was thankful that the only act of violence was upon senseless matter and not upon human life. The burning of the building in which the press was, no one approved but the unknown person or persons who are responsible for it. The citizens are arranging to pay for it.

Permit me to add that the charge in some papers at a distance that ministers preached "ante-election sermons, taking the white side, and advising that all negroes be driven from the State," is wholly untrue. In the South, political sermons telling people how to vote are never heard except in the colored churches. So far as I can learn, the election was not mentioned in the pulpit of a white church, except to counsel the people to be quiet and law-abiding. The doctrine we preach is that the right has no armor but its own righteousness.

Fraternally yours,

Wilmington, N. C., Nov. 25, 1898. PEYTON H. HOGE.

THE VALUE OF GOOD READING

IT is commonly considered to be a great compliment to term this or that individual a "well read man." But what is it to be well read? Many people who claim that title for themselves or are ready to bestow it upon others would be puzzled to define their own definition. The popular notion apparently is that the individual who merits this designation is the man who is broadly read, is cosmopolitan in his literary tastes, has dipped at least into all the literatures of his own language, and into as many foreign literatures as his linguistic attainments allow, and who has not only communed with classical authors, but also kept the run of the current publications of the day. Nobody, of course, has read or can read everything, but there are persons who are walking encyclopedias of more or less thoroughly assorted knowledge gathered from almost all the great lines of thought of the ages.

Such individuals are indeed broadly read. There is no doubt about the quantity of their reading. But such omnivorous readers are not necessarily well read, in the qualitative, ethical, or even æsthetic sense. They are not discriminating readers. We must seek some other definition for "good reading." And it is evident at the start that "good reading" may be considered absolutely and also relatively. There are books and periodicals that are utterly and irretrievably bad, which no self-respecting person would touch with a pair of tongs. For their whole spirit and speech are evil. They are the product not only of a "printer's devil," but also of the devil's printer, or of some of his printers, for he helps many presses constantly running.

Many books on the other hand are in themselves most excellent and praiseworthy. There is that perfect Book, the Bible, after which follow a long series of books, issued through the centuries, and many of them surviving to the present day, which in varying degrees approxi-

mate to the high ethical and literary standard set in the divine Word.

But of these books that are absolutely regarded as good, only a certain number are relatively good for any particular man. The human mind after all is so limited in capacity, life at the longest is so short, and the pressures of practical duty are so urgent and incessant, that no man has time or strength to read hundreds of books that are excellent and desirable in themselves. Indeed, many men of action whose fame is now a part of history have had scarce time to read at all, though it may be claimed that they have succeeded in spite of, rather than because of, their aversion to books. Yet in any case each man will find that relatively to his own peculiar constitution of mind, circumstances of environment, or professional duties, certain of these many good books will especially adapted to his needs, and indeed the only feasible books to read. The choice must be carefully and intelligently made and must be preferential for those literatures which will best develop that particular individual as a man and most efficiently equip him for the duties of his own calling in life.

A few books well read, then, are probably better than many books poorly read and ill adapted to one's special capacities and needs. "Reading" according to the familiar observation "maketh a full man" but there is more to life than simply to be full of facts, adages and statistics. Knowledge must digest into wisdom and assimilate itself into mental and moral fibre and it will not so assimilate unless adapted to the digestive qualities of any one individual.

But if few books compared with the vast variety that crowd the library shelves can be read, those volumes should be first-class books of the original, unique, thought-breeding type and not second rate, third-rate, or fourth-rate dilutions of first-hand facts. The best books are those which are in a lesser measure as is the Bible in its great measure, germinal and inspirational. The Bible is pre-eminently a seed-garden for thought, and the same thing may be said in some measure of every high grade book. Next to the Bible, Shakespeare is perhaps the most necessary book to a man who would equip himself for the active duties of life, while scores of other volumes will readily occur to mind as necessary components of the library of the average reader, who should in his reading seek both for comprehension of the really epoch making books of the centuries, and for expert knowledge of such special works as may be in the line of his own particular calling in life. Choice among so many books will never be quite easy. "Lists" of books for reading are many, and often confusing. Among the increasing hosts of books that come fresh from the press, the ordinary reader may be sorely puzzled how to choose. Some of these works will be beyond his reach, and others beyond his understanding. How to avoid the books that represent so much cumbersome and valueless lumber, and how to seize upon the books that are meaty and necessary, will remain a somewhat difficult question. Towards the solution of the problem, however, the book notices and reviews of a paper like *The Observer* will contribute great assistance.

What is in any case to be insisted on is that the self-respecting man shall not become an indiscriminate, haphazard reader, like a shark seizing greedily upon bread or bottle, bone or rag, that may fall to him from some passing barque of literary fame, or faddism, but should seek to develop a cultivated taste in reading, outlining for himself a definite and consistent plan in the handling of books, so that these become not his tyrannical masters but his trusted and valued servants. We need to read, both for facts and inspiration. Good books tone up while they inform the mind, and by their genial companionship ward off melancholy and conduce to saner views of life. We must look into books as we look into other things about us. It is Ruskin who says: "Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts, the book of