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SECONDARY ENTHUSIASMS

Supreme crises make direct appeal to supreme ideals. At other times primary enthusiasms go stale. They are a little too remote from the day's task. In time of war our country is a present reality. In time of peace it is a place to make money. Yet it may be just as truly patriotic to build up a nation's business as it is to help it win wars. In fact, that may be the way in which the genuine patriotism of many people will express itself. But the immediate motive for industrial activity is commercial.

So in the case of the church. We all want to see the Kingdom of God brought to pass, but it is harder to arouse enthusiasm for the Kingdom of God than for a denomination.

It is regrettable that primary causes do not always evoke primary enthusiasms, but, taking life as it stands, church leaders may as well face the inevitable. The wise leader is one who can utilize secondary enthusiasms to further primary causes. That is the method of the practical idealist. Your radical is interested in ideas more than in persons, in reforms more than in folks. He denounces such policy as opportunism. But one difficulty with radicals is that they assume that human nature is as tractable as ideas. Most of their lamentations are to the effect that men are not as good as they ought to be because they do not immediately put ideals into operation.

Nothing is easier than to shoot an ideal into the air with the hope that it will strike somebody somewhere. But such a method is like laying down a barrage where there are no signs of the enemy. An artilleryman who wants to save his country must do something more than write letters about patriotism. He must aim his gun and fire it. That is a secondary duty that may be counted upon to further primary ideals.

THE TRAGIC WAY TO JUSTICE

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That men suffer and die through the fault of their fellow-men is a commonplace of human life: the list of victims in almost every fatal railroad wreck or fire supplies new proof of it. This is the price we pay for living together in a society. Our interests are interwoven; our lives touch and overlap; we are forced to co-operate in industry and business; and, of course, the result of all this is, that our fellow-men have an extraordinary power to hurt as well as to help us.

This is serious enough. But of late we have been realizing keenly a still more unwelcome fact, that often the men who suffer for other people's faults are the very men who have been doing most for other people's welfare. Had there been any doubt in our minds that this sort of thing does actually happen, our soldiers who lie beneath the wooden crosses in France and Flanders would prove it to us. They were not merely innocent victims. They did not suffer merely because they were members of society and could not avoid the normal penalty of that relation. They did not stumble on death accidentally. Death sought them out while they were fighting for the rights and liberties of their fellow-men.

Nor is it war only that produces this strange result. Again and again in times of peace the men who take seriously their duty as members of society, acknowledging that they ought

to work as earnestly for the welfare of others as they do for their own, have found this path of service a rough and dangerous one. The most famous example of this type of manhood is Jesus Christ, who in obedience to his own teaching made himself the Servant of all, and was crucified on Calvary. And a study of history reveals that in a very large number of cases the men who have thus been great servants of mankind have been great sufferers also, and that their suffering seems somehow to have been the direct result of the service which they were rendering, as, for example, in the case of Jesus. If he had confined himself to the pursuit of his own personal advantage he might have lived in peace and safety; but because he gave himself with complete devotion to the work of teaching and helping the neglected people of his time, he met with suffering and death.

Why should this be so? Why should such a devoted work for the people for whom no one else cared have met with anything but gratitude and honor? Why should suffering and death have been its reward? It was because Christ's work for the despised and neglected people of his day was *resisted* by the people who had despised and neglected them; and because, when he refused to be turned back from his unselfish aim, that resistance became more bitter, more fierce, more violent, until it killed him. If there had not been this resistance, if

his service for the needy among his fellow-men had been accepted by the leaders of that time, if his plans for human betterment had been followed by them, if they had adopted his ideals, then the great Servant of mankind would have won only honor and happiness.

Sometimes in human history the event does reach this more satisfactory conclusion. That is what happened here in America at the beginning of our national life; and this may be one reason why there is such a profound spirit of optimism, such an ineradicable spirit of cheerfulness, in the American temperament. George Washington, that great servant of the American people, though he was of course strongly opposed on occasion, yet possessed so predominant a portion of the affection and approval of all his fellow-citizens that he ended his days, at his beloved Mount Vernon on the Potomac, surrounded by the gratitude of an entire nation.

But we Americans have had the other experience also, the tragic experience; and may we not trace to that fact the beginnings of certain other qualities of our American temperament which have developed later, and especially a deepened sense of responsibility which was not so characteristic of the more light-hearted days of our national immaturity? Abraham Lincoln, the other great servant of the American people, did not die in a ripe old age, surrounded by the love and esteem of the people to whom his life was devoted; for the resistance to what he was trying to do for America (for all of America, North and South together) was too strong. All through his course it beat

upon him, so that sometimes it all but broke his stalwart spirit; and finally it killed him. With Lincoln, as with Christ, it was resistance to the plans and deeds of a devoted servant of the people that turned service into sacrifice. It was because the mass of men would not let one of their number work out a plan of benefit for them all, because they thwarted him, and opposed him, and conspired against him, and, when he refused to be turned aside from his purpose, attacked him by force, that service led to sacrifice. Otherwise service would have led to nothing but blessing and happiness for all concerned.

These references to certain great names of history do not lay before us an exceptional condition; they lay before us a condition that is liable to exist wherever the persistent efforts of some men to increase the well-being of their fellows are resisted by the determined opposition of others. In the days of long ago it was only one solitary spirit now and then, often at long intervals, who attempted to better the conditions of his fellow-men. In our day there are a multitude of such people, and their efforts, merging, form a great combined movement, more or less coherent, and give leadership and inspiration to the masses who are using their newly won powers in their own behalf. Call this whole enterprise the labor movement, if you will, or the general movement for social betterment—under one form or another this concerted endeavor to extend the rights and improve the conditions of the mass of men is characteristic of modern times. It may truly be said nowadays that in a sense society itself has taken over the work

which in an earlier period was attempted by a few individuals. But this extension of the spirit of service has produced a corresponding extension of the suffering which is liable to result from it: for wherever the modern movement for social betterment (which ought to form part of the steady, peaceful progress of the race) meets with rooted opposition, is stoutly resisted, either by those who stand stock still and refuse to be budged by it, or by those who grow fearful of its power and turn to attack it, there suffering of the intensest sort is likely to follow for the whole community, and the developing drama of social life suddenly becomes a tragedy.

Sometimes, it is true, the resistance that produces this result is due to stupidity or ignorance, and stupidity and ignorance are often excusable. This cause, however, used to operate more widely in earlier times than it does today; for, as the world has gone on learning more about itself and about the conditions of its own life from century to century, resistance to the improvement of social and industrial conditions has of course been less and less due to mere ignorance. Moreover, in our own day the men who hold the power in business and industry, and who therefore are the ones who will offer resistance to social betterment, when such resistance is offered at all, are men who, for the most part, have had the advantages of education and are intelligent men, so that the resistance which is characteristic of our day cannot plead ignorance as a sufficient excuse. It is resistance that knows, or ought to know, what it is doing. And when it is rooted resistance, when it ceases to be resistance

to dangerous haste in progress and is seen to be resistance to progress itself, then it becomes responsible in a still profounder sense: it becomes morally responsible. For when men in these days are found regularly on the side which resists each change that is proposed, and, though they assert that they would favor wise and practicable changes, yet as a matter of fact are never found working for any changes whatsoever, it must be assumed that their resistance is due to selfish contentment with things as they are, and to indifference to the troubles of other people. When, therefore, this resistance clashes with the onward movement of the age, and suffering results, perhaps in the form of violence, the chief blame lies with these men who have offered the resistance.

This applies in the most direct and thorough way to the Great War, from which we are just emerging. We have good reason for our hope that out of this awful conflict the world is after all going to reap some large benefits: human life is going to be freer, safer, more equal in its opportunities, more united, than it was before the war. Let no mistake be made as to what sort of betterment is here referred to. It is not so much the improvement in international relationships that is here intended, as the attainment of fairer and fuller opportunities for individual men and classes of men within the several nations, our own and others. In speaking of the hopeful results of the war the intention is to express the growing conviction that, as the direct outcome of all that the world has gone through during the dreadful years of the conflict, the less

privileged classes of the world's population are going to move a long step forward, and there is going to be less injustice, less neglect, less inequality than there have been up to now. If that is so, the war will not have been in vain, we comfort ourselves by saying.

But those same results ought to have been achieved—can anyone question this?—by peaceful and steady progress, the method by which not a little human advancement has been won in the past in our own country and elsewhere. The reason why that did not happen was because there were people, and groups of people, who did not want to have the conditions of the world changed, unless the movement could be backward instead of forward. The peaceful method of advancement they rejected, and, as a result, in order to reach the social improvements which we now see ahead of us, we had to fight our way through the most horrible war of history.

Surely we all realize in some degree that this is true. We know that the force which really precipitated the war was not the force of the German military machine but the wicked desires and purposes and plans that prepared and used that machine. But, while we say this, have we always a true conception of what the real wickedness of Germany in this matter was? Do not most of us, when we are thinking of the wickedness of Germany, think of her atrocities, her lawless and heartless use of every sort of cruel method in the prosecution of her purpose? Utterly detestable as that aspect of Germany's conduct has been, that does not by any means get at the root evil of which Germany was guilty. That was merely a surface indication

after all; it represented the personal equation; it only showed us Germany's characteristic way of achieving her purpose. The chief evil lay in that purpose itself, and that purpose was seen in her selfish grasping at power and land and wealth for her own exclusive advantage, without any care of what might happen to others in consequence; it was the purpose to "look out for number one," and to oppose or attack whatever was contrary to that selfish ambition.

This purpose, however, is not something that is exclusively German. It is precisely the same as the purpose of anybody who, in the interest of his own selfish welfare, and to protect his own prosperity and possessions, effectively opposes and defeats the betterment of others. The application is even wider than that. Germany went out to get, at the expense of others, what she lacked and was determined to have; and the war was the outcome. But a person who already has what he wants, but whose holding of that possession or advantage keeps other people from having their fair share of the world's good things, and who selfishly resists the movement of the world toward an equalizing of such differences, is following in the very same course that led Germany to her moral downfall. The man who really resists the orderly and steady progress of the race toward social betterment and tries his best to keep things as they are, simply because that is most to his own advantage, is forcing a conflict on the world as truly as the Germans did. Like them he is driving the world through tragedy on its way to justice.

The outbreak of Bolshevism, which claims such anxious attention of the whole world nowadays, makes this truth even plainer than the Great War does. When the most and the worst has been said about the outrages of which the Bolsheviki have been guilty, the incontestable fact remains that the motive power behind their movement is a demand for denied rights and for a resisted sharing of advantages and possessions, which is by no means without foundation. Everybody knows that the Russian peasants, for instance, have been ground down, and held back, and set aside, in a manner that has been a shame to twentieth-century civilization. They ought to have had long before now many of the things at which they are now so fiercely grasping; and the reason why they are so fierce about it, so violent, so outrageous, is because the steady, peaceful amelioration of their condition was resisted, was prevented. Somebody sat on the safety valve. And the real blame for the outrages in Russia today lies with the people who selfishly offered that resistance to progress. This is not saying that the Bolsheviki are to be allowed to run riot at will. On the contrary, wherever they do not represent a true majority, but gain their power by terrorizing the bulk of the population; wherever, failing in the attempt to establish peaceably a new social order, they aim nevertheless to destroy the order that now is; and wherever they countenance looting and murder (in Russia or anywhere else), they must be dealt with by effective measures—yes, killed, if need be. That is the tragedy, the horror of it; for the real blame lies not with them but with the sinners who kept on saying as long as they were able,

“The world is all right as it is, for it is very comfortable for us.”

But the war is over, it will be said, and Bolshevism, except for certain sporadic and exotic outbreaks, is a problem for the remoter parts of Europe. Both of those statements are true, but we should be blind indeed if we should suppose that the seeds of both those incidents in human history have no existence in the soil of our own life here in America today. We have only to ask ourselves whether there are any class distinctions that cause resentment in America today; whether everybody is contented with what he has and with his outlook in life; whether conditions are such that everyone ought to be contented to have things continue as they are, unchanged; whether the poor have any grievance against the rich; whether the ignorant are satisfied that their children shall continue under the disadvantages from which they themselves have suffered. America is a great, free country, with wonderful opportunities. Compared with any country of five hundred years ago it is a paradise. Compared with all but a very few nations of the present day it is unequalled for its advanced democracy. But anyone who thinks that civilization has reached its goal here, or that we are so fully abreast of the times that we can now afford to stand still for a decade or two—the least that can be said of him is that he lacks imagination. Also, it would appear that he does not read the newspapers and is ignorant of what nine-tenths of his neighbors are talking about.

There was never any bigger question for America than the question how she is going to deal with the industrial and social problems that now lie before her.

Or rather, this is not a question for America as a whole, but for a certain class of Americans, those who hold the preponderant portion of the country's wealth and influence. Which course will they choose? Will they resist this unquestionable movement toward still further improvement in the life-conditions of our people, this demand for considerable and not-too-long-delayed advance toward equality of opportunity? Or will they give their energies, in an honest and whole-hearted way, to the peaceful, orderly, continuous, unretarded advance toward a thorough democracy in the United States?

For many men a strong temptation to resistance will lie in the fact that in their case resistance means merely doing nothing. To stand pat is their most effective means of preventing change, and protecting the personal privileges they now enjoy and their comfortable bank accounts. They think that no great blame can attach to them if that is all they do—just nothing at all! But if things get into a mess later on, if bodies of men, at this place and that, try to take by force the just share of life's advantages, which they have not been allowed to get by any other means, whose fault will it really be?

Something that Thomas Arnold, the famous head master of Rugby, wrote a little less than a hundred years ago, when England was passing through the critical period of the Reform Bill, may well be read with attention by us of today. He wrote to a friend at that time:

As I feel that, of the two besetting sins of human nature, selfish neglect and selfish agitation, the former is the more common,

and has in the long run done far more harm than the latter, although the outbreaks of the latter, while they last, are of a far more atrocious character; so I have in a manner vowed to myself, and prayed that with God's blessing, no excesses of popular wickedness, though I should be myself, as I expect, the victim of them, no temporary evils produced by revolution, shall ever make me forget the wickedness of Toryism [rooted conservatism, as we should say today], of that spirit which crucified Christ himself, which has throughout the long experience of all history continually thwarted the cause of God and goodness, and has gone on abusing its opportunities, and heaping up wrath by a long series of selfish neglect against the day of wrath and judgment.

To the present leaders of America these words of Dr. Arnold point out a way, at once generous in itself, and accordant with the serious needs of the period before us. If a considerable number of them will adopt it, escaping thus from the selfish prejudices of their own class, and will contribute to the popular movement not only the effective energy of their support but that steadying influence which their leadership could so well supply, then America will achieve by peaceful means the next long stage of her democratic progress. But if instead they resist this peaceful development and oppose the changes in law, in business and industry, and in social custom, by which alone it can be attained, the blame for any excesses that may result will rest with them. If our democratic civilization has then to fight toward its goal through violence and bloodshed, they will be responsible. If the world has to be crucified again, in order to be saved, they will be the ones who make that necessary.