

CHANGING STANDARDS

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I WAS led to the choice of this subject by an impression deepened through many contacts with people I respect and like. That impression is that many are disappointed because, since the war ended, more has not been done to make real those moral and social ends for which the war was fought. Put briefly, those ends were to bring in a time of peace and good-will, good-will evident not only at Christmastide, or when some great event touches our sensibilities, but peace and good-will, constantly shaping the efforts of at least the best among us. During those years of stress, the winning of the war was the one paramount end. There could be no looking beyond with any clear vision, with any definite aim. But there was, acting as a stimulus and sustaining force, more than a hope—a conviction—that victory for the Allies would mean the coming to the nations of all good things. If all good things have not been accomplished, if we and our leaders are still fallible, if we feel too often that earth is not paradise, let us not under-rate what has been achieved.

Nations which had held that peace was to be assured by being so armed that—in attack or defence—they would be triumphant, sent plenipotentiaries to devise means by which causes which had led to wars would be lessened and controlled, by which there would be international co-operation for the improvement of the toilers, international co-operation to suppress crimes against women. If these plenipotentiaries at Versailles and these representatives at Geneva were fallible men dealing with new problems, if one could discern no Pentecostal flames above them, if interpreters were useful, still it cannot be denied that their constructive skill was equal to the devising of a machinery for international co-operation, that the nations they represented confirmed their acts, and that new machinery is working.

An International High Court of Justice has been established. Much has been done at Washington to limit the powers of aggression, to protect the weak by common self-restraint among the strong. Armies, the greatest the world has ever seen, have been disbanded without disturbance to the peoples from which these armies were drawn. The wreckage of warfare, the disabled, the widow, the

orphan, have been and are being cared for on a scale and with a thoroughness such as none dreamed of as possible in 1914. Our own men have been placed on the land under auspices the most favourable to their success. That success has to a degree been achieved, a degree which is but a promise of the full performance. Our men came back in weeks, instead of the months which shipping experts thought would be necessary. By last autumn, those already settled on the land produced ten million bushels of grain, and 600,000 acres of new land—the area of an European principality—have been brought into bearing.

There is to be drawn on for public and social work a greater proportion of people; for the impulse to serve, which led men and women to serve in the war, is surviving the fatigue of those years, and the difficulties of individual re-adjustments to a new civil life. New agencies created for the war are available in peace. It is only a question of finding work for those trained in the service of our Patriotic Fund. They are available. Older organizations, such as the Red Cross and the Y. M. C. A., find themselves with perfected and tested organizations, with an experienced personnel. We went into the war with Capital and Labour as two armed camps set over against each other in battle array, production going on in truces rather than in long periods of settled peace, and rarely with peace along the whole line. We came out of it with the foremost of employers and of the employed trying the new devices of Industrial Councils and Shop Committees, representatives elected by the employed meeting with equal voice an equal number of representatives of the employers, and settling the myriad questions which production raises. It is conference, not conflict. This new scheme, with its as yet unfolded possibilities, has been evolved since 1917 and put into practice already in many Canadian plants, and in none—as far as I know—without results satisfactory to both sides. If we can foresee aright, deepest in import of all these fruitful achievements is the staunching—if not the healing—of the centuries old wound in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

If these allusions call up before our minds any pictures of what has been attained, it will become clear that no other three years of the world's history have seen such achievements, so great a degree of common effort, such potent influences promoting the well-being of so vast a number of the human race. That picturing of what has been done should remove the despondency of the faint-hearted. No achievement satisfies those who are the leaders of the r fellows. Attainment brings to them a desire to do more. The perfervid of our times—as in the apostolic age—“forget the

things which are behind and reach forth unto those things which are before."

The "standards" about which I wish to speak may be defined as those principles which are accepted as sound rules of action for the individual, the group, the nation, and the great commonwealth of nations now shaping itself, not for the first time in the world's history, but never before with such unanimity of purpose, such sound foundations, so wide-spread and so fervent wishes that it may become a compelling power bringing about the healing of the nations. The progress to this end is made as in the order I have named; first the individual, then the like-minded, the group, the nation, until the view of action which was once novel, and therefore suspect, is accepted—not always acted upon, it may be—but still with such a sanction behind it that those who deviate from it are on the defensive. Put another way, what was once the opinion of a few people, if it has the essence of rightness in it, spreads and becomes *public* opinion, which backs up and enforces one line of action, reprobates and withdraws support from those who advocate another. Take these examples:

There were people who felt slavery was wrong long before there was any organization to abolish slavery. The struggle on this continent over slavery is within the life-time of the older of us. Godly and chivalrous men died for a cause with which its perpetuation was bound up. Kindly and gentle-hearted women sent forth their men to fight for slavery as freely as our woman-kind made their sacrifice.

There are men in Montreal who have known those of an older generation who took part in duels.

There were statesmen who preferred the equities of fair dealings between nations long before such speeches as Mr. Lloyd George's some time ago met with international approval. In 1755, when Britain was preparing to wrest by force from France her great colonial Empire, Lord Granville in the Cabinet objected to "vexing your neighbours for a little muck."

There was fair dealing and there were large-minded employers in every generation, before it had become a commonplace of our time that liberal pay and fair treatment increase and make certain satisfactory production.

Now there is no nation which can be called civilized to whose people slavery is not an accursed thing. This conviction of the fanatic of three generations ago seems to the young inherent in the constitution of human nature. He who would propose to settle social disputes by the duel, would meet a harder fate than repro-

bation. He would meet ridicule. The terms "master" and "man" have come in our own time to seem archaic. The change in what constitutes temperance is no less marked. The duty of the state to its members, of one group to others, that is now commonly accepted, would seem millennial to those who worked for the good of their fellows a century ago.

In the light of these changes in what is possible to those who would retain the good opinion of others—changes no less profound as regards the individual and society and the nation than those involved in the changes we see coming—we can hear unmoved the view that, human nature being what it is, there must always be wars between nations and destructive rivalries in social and industrial life. Our hope and expectation are not based on a change in human nature. Selfishness and sloth will always tempt. The deadly sins, envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness, will continue as impulse. But what does change is the knowledge that certain courses of action are inexpedient, are harmful. This knowledge grows, and is more widely disseminated. In this way we have brought to bear on all the sanctions of a public opinion too powerful to be resisted by any except the grossly ignorant, and those whose anti-social impulses are too strong for the appeal of conscience or the desire for the good opinion of their fellows.

There are, to the attainment of the ends we desire, obstacles other than anti-social influence. Some of these are ephemeral, fashions of speech and feeling of the passing day. We read of "strained relations" between two great Powers. Within a decade that meant the possibility of war. Now it means a disagreement between the representatives of peoples who want nothing else so much as they want peace and security, peoples already bankrupt, who would be ruined by another war.

Sometimes we are disappointed and amazed by insistence on national rights, in their incidental manifestations, instead of concentration on economic restoration, which requires free intercourse between neighbours. Poland may amaze by her passport regulations, but crowd psychology teaches us that a proud and brilliant people like the Poles, victims for so long of the tyranny of Germany, of Austria, of Russia, would insist first on the showing forth of their nationhood, regardless or a time of the inconvenience to themselves and others.

So too with the Italian, whose grandparents knew the hateful-ness of the Austrian occupation, who himself had seen his plains dominated by the mountain fortresses of the Austrian frontier. He will want to emphasize his new security. Nor can one expect

a different frame of mind in the Hungarian so long held by the power of the Hapsburgs in an unnatural alliance with an alien Austria. Give the captive time to rise and stretch himself, to get the full consciousness that he is really free. Suspend judgment until he has set forth to save himself, and prove whether he be worthy of his new freedom.

There are obstacles more enduring than these. They are for the most part good qualities in excess. Before touching on some of them, it may be pointed out that part of the current difficulties which depress are due to the fact that we have men trained in the old methods, with old consciousness, class, military, narrowly national, dealing under pressure with the building up of the new international relationships. A greater difficulty is that they are for the most part men of wide vision, and sound sympathies. They are *representatives*, are acting for peoples less well informed, peoples bound by traditional standards,—it may be of isolation or it may be of world leadership—as the manifest destiny of their nations. So whatever may be the personal view of these representatives, that view has no more value expressed in the council chamber than thought in the individual's library, unless it is accepted by the people for whom they speak. We may note the danger to a just settlement which arises from the joy which the fine mind feels—and the finer the mind is, the more acutely it feels it—of success in matching itself against other minds and winning the conflict.

Again, we have an excessive sense of responsibility, for the representative in negotiations is a trustee. He feels bound to claim all that belongs of right, so to speak, to his clients. It is the easiest way to secure commendation. One of the early difficulties in Industrial Councils was a disappointment among the employed after a Council meeting, when their representatives had no concessions to report—the persistence of the old conception of conflict in such relations. We have seen the same feeling in international affairs. This sense of trusteeship is strong. In ordinary affairs men representing a company act hardly, where if they were dealing with their own property they would have acted liberally. A normal sense of responsibility will be restored when it is commonly accepted that an arrangement fair to all concerned will produce the best results for each of the peoples or classes interested.

The chief obstacle to peace among men is that it runs counter to the forces which have built up the nations and empires of the world. The basis on which patriotism is built, with its wonderful story of self-sacrifice, is in its primitive form communal self-preservation. The cave dweller with a loyal family survived his isolated

contemporary. The tribe overcame the family. Cohesion among tribes made the nation. Self-sacrifice for the unit was highly esteemed, for it made more valuable fellowship in that group. As it increased power, the security and prosperity of that people waxed greater. What aggrandises me, fortifies my nation; what strengthens my nation, helps me. Thus it was late in the world's history before there was international action other than temporary combinations.

Then this stirring and achieving impulse of national patriotism came to excesses. Rome grew, and fell into decay. Spain became surpassingly rich and powerful, and fell. France, for the glory of her Louis XIV, almost attained the mastery of the world. Let us remember, while the talk of naval armaments is fresh in our minds, that France once had no superior at sea, that the fleet of France—undervalued by Louis XIV,—was able to withstand the combined fleets of England and Holland, her nearest rivals, that—as Macaulay writes: “Such was her strength during the last forty years of the seventeenth century, that no enemy could singly withstand her, and that two great coalitions, in which half Christendom was united against her, failed of success.”

Devotion to a monarch, which was the form which French patriotism then took, was unavailing to withstand the ultimate forces which govern nations, and Louis XIV died in failure and left France bankrupt. But such was her recuperative power, that the great-grandsons of those Frenchmen who fell in the late wars of Louis, after repulsing the coalition to force on them a king they did not want, set forth on the latest of the crusades to force on the world their splendid conceptions of universal liberty and the fellowship of all mankind.

France then stood, as Wordsworth said, “on the top of golden hours” There is in Avignon a monument to local delegates to the National Convention, on the base an inscription in phrases the music of which haunts my memory, unfortunately with an indefiniteness which does not permit me to quote. But they express aspirations for one's fellow-man, which show how real as a living force to lead men to privation and death in wide sweeping conquests were the *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, which have come to seem a lifeless phrase. That impulse, blocked by wrong methods, too early in world development, was wrested by Napoleon to his own ends, and again France was left bankrupt and defeated. Her later trials are known to all of us. What a history of vitality, with its promise for the future! What a claim on our own respect, and it may be on our patience! Thus, after Hapsburg and Bourbon, the French

Republican, and Napoleon, the Hohenzollern has in our time again asserted that might gives license to rule and that craft is its ally.

Turn now to another phase. So ingrained in our natures is it, such good results have sprung from each standing by his own, that it goes against the grain to admit—outside of the narrowest circle—that our country has been in any instance wrong. It seems almost disloyal to admit it to the outsider, and yet we must come to realize that Providence has dispensed with the agency of a chosen people, entitled to force even benefits on others, that each individual has a right to a fair chance, that each nation has a right to a place in the sun, that in the backward look the individual and the nation are entitled to be judged by the current standards of the time, that as we see the cases wherein we have been wrong—and those where our antagonist has been right—so much the sooner will we be able to come before the bar of international equity with clean hands.

There is another fact to remember, expressed in old times by the prophet; “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Put in more modern phrase, there is no statute of limitations for nations. Let me illustrate: In the middle of the eighteenth century, France had the fairest of colonial empires. It seemed sound policy for some of the greatest of our leaders—the elder Pitt, and his colleagues—to conquer that empire for the prosperity and protection of the British people. The struggle, beginning badly, ended as one of the most glorious epochs in the annals of our fightings. Prussia then was a poor, a struggling, a rapacious power, whose national industry was war. Pitt subsidized Prussia to help in beating France. The war ended; the last of the subsidies was paid, and Pitt and his contemporaries thought that the matter was ended. But the heaviest instalment of the price of establishing Prussia one hundred and sixty years ago was paid in these latest years, by a Britain greater than Pitt foresaw, and by her allies.

If these deductions from history be sound, it follows that we must read the lessons of the past from a new point of view. We must see, in the events which have made the world what it is, a proof of the futility of force as the determining factor in world affairs. We shall thus see in proper perspective the wisdom embodied in Holy Writ and in the proverbs of mankind.

Will this turning into new channels of the nations’ efforts towards well being—pay? This is no sordid question, for material prosperity is essential to well being. An income beyond the requirements of sustenance, and a decent care of one’s family, is necessary to provide a harvesting for the tax-gatherer, and the

tax-gatherer must be effective if the State is to discharge its functions tending to social well-being. Greater margins are needed for contributions to private and quasi-private institutions to the same end. Still greater superfluities are needed to provide resources for the development of every country which is not stagnant.

We can see the gain in the lessened expenditures on armaments—described to the tax-payers of every nation as for self defence,—in the setting free of the energies of the military forces, the flower of national manhood, the leaving of high inventive skill free to devote itself to the arts of peace instead of to perfecting engines of destruction. These are obvious gains.

There is an analogy from the history of a people not unfamiliar to us all. I mean the Lowland Scot, of whom I can speak freely, for I am not of that branch of the Scottish people. At home his labour and skill have turned a barren country into a highly productive area. He cultivated the muses on a little oatmeal, and has made a full contribution to literature and science. Through his inventions navigation has become safer, the healing arts have become more sure. He has penetrated into all quarters of the world. He retains his own peculiarities without exciting irritation. None can deny his success at home and abroad. He has embodied his conception of the conduct of life in a game, which—without propaganda—has spread to the uttermost ends of the earth. Its essence is competition, not conflict, the unthwarted rivals doing each his best, and one or the other winning out by greater skill. Such should be the competition of the world which is coming into being in a new era that begins with the sweeping away of outworn autocracies, and a proving in the conflict those who are to shape the future.

Writing in the style of the pulpit I cannot forego its privileges. The underlying thought which I hope I have made clear is, that by our soundness in standard and action we each contribute in our degree to soundness of the community and nation to which we belong.