

THE MAN UNKNOWN

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DEAN COLEMAN of the University of British Columbia, in discoursing upon the relationship of Canada and the United States, makes the pregnant comment that "wars begin in the feelings which men entertain toward each other." Disarmament must come, if it come at all, he tells us, "not so much within the field of political activity as within the field of man's own private thinking." The Dean may not be an internationalist after the style of Mr. H. G. Wells, but he has touched upon a fundamental truth lying deeper than the mere pros and cons of politics, namely that it is the common man, the "man on the street", who is the embodiment of the nation, and that the friendship of nations—that elusive thing for which the world is bartering to-day—will be made or marred as the common man "thinketh in his heart."

This man, in whose unobtrusive being dwells the corporate body of the nation, is the living prototype of that "unknown" man who died but a little while back, before whose bier the world bows in reverent acknowledgment of his heroic deeds, and the reward of whose martyrdom is that this his fellow-man may truly come into his own. To-day he is the fulcrum of national consciousness; his silent presence is by the elbow of the statesman; he dominates premiers, presidents and kings. It may be that this man of the people has no boast of erudition, that he has little claim to culture, that indeed he knows but little and that little what is nearest to himself. The nation, if it be his own, he regards as the expression of himself; if it be a foreign nation, he looks upon it as the expression of something less intelligible, something in which lies a hidden menace. His wholesome instincts are oftentimes overridden by prejudices and hatreds which spring from his pitiful little ignorances.

To a discriminating foreigner it is the common man who typifies the nation. Courts may feast the visitor and the genius of the land entertain him, but he will slip out of the back door of his hotel, if need be, that he may study the man on the street. If war is to be declared, to know this man thoroughly is to know how the tide will turn; if it be peace that is sought, then to know this man in whom the nation is embodied is to prophesy what a century will bring forth.

Thus the problem of making the world's new democracy safe for humanity is the problem of educating the common man in a new conception of his relationship to the world at large, of imbuing him with a new and nobler idea of what constitutes patriotism; for in the long run it is with him, and not with the statesman, that the responsibility rests of upholding the honour of his own country and maintaining the goodwill of others.

"I cannot hate a man I know" contains the germ of a truth of which the world is becoming increasingly conscious. It is the basis of all the pacific projects of the moment. "Let us get acquainted with each other" is the universal cry of all thinking people to-day. This does not mean just a nodding acquaintance. We have had that, and it has but served to veil our jealousies and stimulate our latent animosities.

It is this to which Dean Coleman refers when he speaks of "that disarmament of the mind which is the indispensable condition of an enduring world peace." He refers to "the press, the pulpit and the school" as "those agencies upon which the race depends for its ideas" and without whose "hearty and intelligent co-operation" no movement towards closer international fellowship can hope for success.

As one reads one's evening paper with its daily record of the sittings of the Conference, of the deliberations of the League, and the theories, prophecies and opinions of men of greater or less prominence in the public eye, one sees—as it were—the World in cartoon, with work basket at her elbow, applying herself to the task of mending the rent which the Great War has made in the fabric of civilization. Is she at last giving heed to the time-worn proverb that "a stitch in time saves nine"? Has she put on the proper "specs" to see the little ravellings, the drawn threads and the worn spots that will shortly break through? Will she begin, think you, by mending the histories, by flashing a cinema on the wandering boundary lines? Will she attempt to chastise the newspapers, and teach them not to tell naughty tales? Will she talk severely to politicians? Will she speak to the teacher on the sin of imparting to the young his personal and ill-founded prejudices? It is not wholly a question of the ins and outs of treaties, of the reorganization of governments and the reconstruction of countries; it is a question of whether or not the great Mother Spirit that broods over the earth to-day can gather in her incorrigibles, whether she can round off those angles of personal and national character which keep men widely apart, whether indeed she can re-make humanity itself.

It is for this reason that the internationalism proposed by

many theorists is an insufficient antidote to wars and the making of wars, in so far as this deals merely with the political relationship of peoples throughout the world. It is a demonstrated fact that people may live under the same flag, let alone under a political internationalism designed to modify their national and racial consciousness, and yet treasure animosities which menace their peaceful relationship with each other. It is admittedly true that national consciousness and race consciousness create a natural division between peoples who may yet speak the same language and possess the same religion and system of education. The national point of view inculcated in the school itself so strongly affects a man's outlook that every man may be said to see the world through the opaque lens of his own national consciousness, just as his interpretation of another man's mind is blurred by his own individual limitations.

The internationalist would level such barriers, but he would do so through the medium of political organization, by creating a world cabinet perhaps, whose duty it would be to mould the affairs of the world with a fine disregard for national susceptibilities. He would demand that a man forget his race, and think only of the human family. But he is here losing sight of the fact that nationality is nothing more than the expansion of individuality in man himself, and that human development and progress can never be based upon any system which seeks to submerge the individual or the nation. Rather must we try to wash the windows of a man's mind clean of such ignorances and prejudices as give him a distorted vision of the world. To accomplish this we must understand racial distinctions, and that which goes to the creating of a race.

Mr. H. G. Wells speaks with pride of the "breed" to which he belongs. But, strictly defined, humanity is not divided into breeds, unless we mean that which is marked by the colour line. In the animal world a breed comes purely through physical descent from a long line of ancestors, each of whom had absorbed to some extent the features of the environment in which he lived. Thus heredity in the animal kingdom is to no small degree the crystallization of environment, but this crystallization is an infinitely slow process, measured by thousands and tens of thousands of years.

Man himself is a much more flexible, adaptable and changeable creature than his younger brother, and this by reason of his higher mentality. He may succeed through the medium of his mind in diverting the influence of a thousand years; and so rapid is the process of absorption of his environment and association that he may, in one generation, so change his habit of thought and custom of life as to nullify the characteristics of his own ancestry and create in

himself the nucleus of a new and virile race. Thus, in the human world, race is not strictly a matter of heredity as has been too often supposed. It is modified by many things, including religious and political education. One speaks frequently of Englishmen, Scotchmen and Welshmen as "the British race", because their unity of political thought has—to the outside world—made them a race irrespective of actual heredity and other distinctions.

It is the tendency of people of the older races to cradle their thought in tradition, and while this has served a purpose in strengthening and crystallizing their national character, it limits their understanding of other peoples. They are too ready to outline in caricature the prominent features of other nations, and rest their judgment upon a literal interpretation of these. Thus their intuitive understanding of other people is warped. Without imagination and intuition it is of little use for any people to boast their inherent sense of justice.

Again, between people of old races and people of young races are many barriers invisible on the surface. "Class-consciousness", peculiar to all of the older peoples, creates a breach not very easily spanned. The term applies not to industrial distinctions alone, but to those social demarcations which had their origin in ancient feudalism. However it be said that the War has dealt this a death blow, it cannot be so easily abolished. It moulds the thought and affects the activities and ambitions of men. Thus, by force of habit long ingrained, men of the older nations still commit the destiny of their country to the statesman, while men of the younger nations have a clearer consciousness of individual responsibility.

But, just in so far as it is true that men of young countries have a quicker sense of individual consequence, it is equally true that propaganda works more readily among them. They are apt to be an emotional, "red-blooded" people, less easily controlled by the tempered wisdom of statesmanship. It is here that "the press, the pulpit and the school" are to be considered. There is an obvious danger in building up national consciousness upon a fairy tale, and every nation has its fairy tale,—the story that it tells to the young generation from decade to decade about the heroisms and villainies of a past age. Thus, for example, in the history of the United States for over a century Great Britain has been depicted as the wicked stepmother and France as the fairy godmother.

It is owing to the gift of a common language and literature that this picture of the "stepmother" has been counteracted by the friendship and associations of individual people whose honesty and likeability have disarmed resentment. As Dean Coleman has sug-

gested, the real friendship of nations at bottom rests upon just such personal understanding, upon the multiplication of individual friendship. For, in the long run, it is not a question of whether Mr. Balfour and Mr. Wilson meet and exchange the courtesies of international diplomacy, nor is it a question of whether some scion of a British or American family, or some genius of either race, be feasted and applauded, but rather does the friendship of the two great nations depend upon what a British Tom Jones thinks of an American Bill Smith when he meets him, and how far Bill Smith wishes to promote the acquaintance. Indeed the public is too seldom cognizant of the fact that the "intellectuals" of any nations already belong to an international family outside their respective races; they may influence the thought of their respective nations to a greater or less degree, but in the true sense of the word they are not representative,—they are the property of the world at large, and even their genius is the gift of internationalism.

And if in the past we were worshippers of the great, to-day our hero is this unknown man, this twin brother of our own intimate selves. Timidly we are stretching forth our hands to him even across the boundary lines of colour, caste and tongue, and our hearts cry out in veriest sincerity "Oh that men might have strength to will the good which now lies like a half-formed vision in their minds." Patriotism we do not relegate to the past; rather do we wish it to have a greater and nobler significance than ever it has had before. Henceforth it can never be just a convenient expression of personal or racial arrogance. It will be recognized as the responsibility resting upon each man to live for his country as well as die for it, and in his personal relationship to men of foreign nations so far to adhere to the principles of the Ten Commandments as to uphold the dignity and honour of his own country beyond reproach.