

INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY

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Men think, as they move, in crowds, the mass following this or that doctrine or tenet as it follows the band or collects at the market place. The bulk of all thinking is modeled after what some other man thought. The credit we give an idea depends upon the credit we give him who advances it. Morley in his life of Gladstone observes that in all the earlier period of his life Mr. Gladstone valued a truth more because Plato or Aristotle had stated it than because it was the truth. In this he was a striking contrast to his great American contemporary - a man born in the same year as he - 1809 - a man who made his first appearance in public life the same year that he did - 1833 - a man who until his death labored as did Gladstone for the public good. That man was Abraham Lincoln. He discovered that the truth is to be found not in other men's books, but in the recesses of one's own mind and heart. It was a discovery to which he was never false. It was that discovery faithfully followed which differentiated him from Gladstone. To one man the thought was sacred because it had authority. To the other because it was the truth. Their careers compared offer many illustrations of the effect of the different mental attitudes. Nothing, however, shows more clearly that effect than their literary product. William Gladstone left scarcely a phrase which will be treasured as the permanent expression of a universal truth. Lincoln left many. Gladstone, voluminous writer that he was, left no single short production of pre-eminent quality. Lincoln's Gettysburg speech and his Second Inaugural are acknowledged to be among the most perfect bits of English prose ever written. Gladstone made many influential speeches on many important subjects but no speech of his compares in mastery of material, in logic and in moral fervor with Lincoln's Cooper Union speech and none of his great debates equal in high intellectual quality Lincoln's debates with Douglas.

In the Englishman's work we have a wealth of learning, a fine handling of the formulae of logic, an atmosphere of finished scholarship. It gives the satisfaction that expert workmanship of all kinds gives. But Gladstone never strikes the deep nature note. Now it is unquestionably true that at all times intellectual life has been of the Gladstone rather than the Lincoln type. The mass of men have always valued more what they learned from a book or from a reverend teacher than what they learned from their own independent intellectual processes. Certainly there is evidence enough of it in contemporary intellectual life. What else is at the base of our wide spread spurious culture than the notion that if we go through the same forms as the cultivated man we will therefore be cultivated?

Imitative thinking, the tendency to accent and expound what has been passed on to us, without putting it through the crucible of actual life, explains very largely how this country has been brought to its pitiful plight of political and commercial corruption and of consequent social unrest. What other explanation is there indeed for the long blindness and dumbness of great masses of good and disinterested men before the evils whose results we are seeing on all sides today - to bribery at elections, to political rings, to illegal and unfair business methods, to alliances between politics and commerce.

There is one other explanation - one less honorable - of our failure in intellectual integrity. It is that self-interest closes our minds to the full truth.

There is probably no doubt that it has been self-interest, not imitative thinking, that has kept a percentage at least of readers in academic and religious circles quiet in face of proved wrongs in the past two decades: that is, they have seen but they would not speak. Certain it is that we have had pulpits full of men who could explain the corruption of the Jews against which Christ revolted - but who were dumb to the money changers in their own pews; professors of ethics who could explain Plato with quotation from original and yet were dead to the moral meaning of a railroad rebate. We have teachers of

political economy who could explain the wealth of nations but who fail to see that it has any relation to a tariff which permits our steel manufacturers to sell rails at \$20.00 a ton to the Canadian in Winnipeg and \$28.00 to their countrymen on this side the border. Personally I believe that this failure to point out the meaning of contemporary practices is usually dull scholarship - the drawing of water from the cisterns of the past, not from the living springs of today. But a suffering people, conscious that somehow it is being wronged by discriminations in favor of the few - discriminations obtained by bribery and perjury and law-breaking - looks with suspicion on church and college and calls what is only intellectual barrenness by the ugly name of hypocrisy and self-interest.

When it is self-interest which hampers the integrity of the intellect, the individual suffers the more seriously. The horizon enlarges in proportion to the number of outside interests it takes in. Every friend broadens it, so does every new interest. It is only a complete horizon when it includes one's town - state - country - the world. He who sees only what concerns himself is like him who never leaves his door-yard. A mind occupied only with self in the long run defeats its own object. Our minutest interest is tied up with the common interest. Sacrifice common interest and in the final counting you sacrifice yourself. But such is the intellectual limitation put on men who refuse to consider others than themselves that they do not see the inevitable final outcome of their acts.

All human experience, the fundamental processes of reasoning, teach, if they teach anything, that a man who builds up a business by the aid of practices which have been declared contrary to the public good rests it on a support certain one day to be torn from under him. If the people cannot get what they believe to be right by demand they will take it by force - that is the history of the world and he who builds a fortune in defiance of good laws shows himself mentally as well as morally stupid. Is there any other adequate

characterization of our eminent insurance leaders who have been persistently practicing methods that a primitive moral sense should have told them was improper in handling trust funds. Frequently they went further and broke well known laws. Now nothing is more certain than that fraud, particularly fraud in use of trust funds, will be discovered. One gasps at the blind persistency with which many of the insurance men carried on their dishonorable work. It was not that they were indifferent to what the public thought. It was not that like robbers they were contented if they could escape with their plunder - not at all. They, all of them, wanted public esteem - wanted to be regarded as honorable gentlemen - some of them have not been able to endure the public scorn which followed the story of their wrong-doing. They have died of grief - fled the country, concealed themselves in remote places. What since they were sensitive to discovery could have induced them to proceed in ways which now that we know them, seem so foolishly hazardous, so certain to come to light? What if not that dullness which comes from the destruction of the integrity of the intellect? What if not that narrowness that lack of foresight which self-interest breeds in men of even the greatest ability. Do the gentlemen who today stand before the country convicted of bribery, of railroad rebates, of predatory competition - of corruption of legislatures, of perjury, and who listen to the rising popular demand in form of restrictive legislation - state ownership, governmental control - really think they have shown a high order of intelligence in building up fortunes which disgrace their names and which a hostile public threatens with confiscation? Will not even they admit now that they would have shown better business judgment if they had not allowed greed to close their minds to all considerations but those of self? Must they not understand finally their intellectual limitation in not realizing that the man, the institution, the nation which practices injustice to gain temporary good must pay? It is a law inexorable, unescapable. Injustice piles up in the mind of those a counting. Witness what we paid for slavery. What paraphrase Lincoln's fine sentence - all the wealth piled by the bondman's

250 years of unrequited toil was sunk and every drop of blood drawn with the lash was paid by another drawn with the sword. We are paying today a great price for the iniquities of our commercial system, paying in the blunted intelligence and the muddled consciences of a great body of our most energetic and resourceful citizens, paying in a general indifference to law, in a general disregard of the social obligation, paying in an increase in sophistries and hypocrisies, paying, too, in a growing and threatening unrest of those who feel themselves wronged.

After all is said the final test of the integrity of an intellect is its capacity for growth. There are no two characteristics which so stunt this capacity as these we have been considering. The essential principle of all growth is inward and unconscious. Imitation is outward and conscious. That inward principle working naturally develops the thing which is at the heart of the seed. Its whole strength is turned towards making the thing nature meant should be made, but set this principle at work trying to make something foreign to itself - set it to imitating something and you arrest development and waste strength. We see these cases of arrested development, of perverted strength on all sides of us. An artistic temperament bending itself to practical necessities, a bold and inquiring mind confining itself to convention and creeds, a discriminating taste accepting the mode of today! Temperament, logic, taste are all stunted. Growth beyond a certain point is impossible - the strength is spent in attempting to overcome the law of its own being - that law which says you can be yourself - you can never be another.

As an imitation diverts and finally saps the strength of the original principle, so self interest creates an atmosphere hostile to growth. It is an atmosphere devoid of moral oxygen. The mind will no more thrive in it than the body in illy ventilated rooms. Fidelity to the inner impulse, not imitation of the other man - the interest of the whole, not of self alone - these are the conditions under which intellectual growth is possible.

Had Lincoln been thus swayed by his contemporaries he would never have been more than a laborer, a farmer, a country storekeeper. But throughout his life

his imagination was responsive to the possibilities in things. And when he saw, he was true to the vision. The opportunity seen was like a command - a call - a thing sacred - not to be shirked, no matter what effort it cost him, no matter what antagonism it awakened.

At one of the most critical points in his history, he lost his election to the Senate of the United States by his refusal to conceal and evade the logic of the situation. His intellectual process springing from the clear waters of his own nature, and followed with strictest fidelity, was really sacred to him. His conclusion could not be avoided. It was the truth and not all the men of all the world could turn Abraham Lincoln from a conclusion unless they could throw new light in his way. Then no man was quicker to reverse his decision. And why should he not have been? He sought the truth of the thing, and if more light showed a clearer truth then the mind should accept it and rejoice.

It has been the fortune of many men of far greater natural brilliancy of mind than Abraham Lincoln, of much superior opportunities as we count opportunities and of as great patriotism and energy in serving a country to be of less service to the public because they failed to grasp the superior wisdom of this sort of mental integrity. They accepted their day as they found it, responded to its calls, fell in with its way.

We see clearly enough Machiavelli's mistake because great writer that he was he put his thoughts down so frankly and tersely. We see less clearly that in a way we all do what Machiavelli did when we accept the world without protest at its vices or effort at its improvement - that is we allow our intellects to be observed by our environment until they no longer distinguish exactly. The boundaries between right and wrong are blurred. We do not see things as they are - our reasons come to be inoperative or deflected until we cannot understand the inevitable result of even injustice. This mental dullness to the true meaning of contemporary things has always been an obstacle and the greatest enemy to real progress in

morality, in intelligence, in taste and in general cultivation. It is the greatest enemy of our day. It is the real explanation of the evils of our day. As a nation we have shown extraordinary mental activity, but it has been imitative and selfish.

It is quite time that we are realizing and that we are probing for our weak spots. Quite time that we search for the defect in our intellectual life which would permit such conditions to grow up as we are now obliged to face. I know that there is an effort making to avoid facing them. I know that there are even in this commencement season men standing in college halls crying that it is shameful to call attention to a thing so revolting as the condition of our packing houses - shameful because it will hurt the beef business - that it is anarchy and revolution for a president of the United States to denounce unlawful and unjust collusion between corporations and the railroads because the corporations are great in power and profits and loss of confidence in them may disturb business. I have heard with the rest of you the contemptuous cry of muck-raking thrown at those who pointed out evils. But I know that these cries are the cries of intellects still dull to the meaning of things - that they come from those whose eyes do not see and whose hearts are not awakened.

Personally I believe that this day - this 19th of June, 1906, is the fairest, most hopeful day the earth has ever seen. Why is our day as good as it is? Because in every past century from the days of Confucius and before down to Abraham Lincoln there has been some man or men who possessed the integrity of intellect to see and to understand the real meaning of the practices they saw about them, because these men would not keep silent to the truth, but repeated it until the dull and inactive minds about them were awakened to action. They have regarded human life as more sacred than private property and they have preferred justice to the friendship of the party in power. In their time they have set the world by the ears. But it is to them that we owe today, If we are to do for tomorrow what they did for today we must bring to our task their integrity of intellect.

Our duty is the more imperative because we are a democratic country. It is the mind and will of the mass that finally prevails in this land. The mass is huge, unwieldy, slow-moving. The impulse it receives comes from the educator, the thinking class. The people themselves, the great silent body, has recognized this from the beginning, and as early as they provided roofs for their heads they provided schools. If we are to rule, they said, we must know, we must think right. To know and to think we must have schools, pulpits, newspapers. For these agencies men are instructive and uplift the mass, have sacrificed and still sacrifice many of their ordinary daily comforts if not necessities. There is a splendid idealism in the faith the American people have in a school, in a church, in a free press, in the teacher. But if the teacher prove false to his task, if when his place is assured he ceased to grow, fall back on imitation, consider his own advantage rather than the truth, sacrifice the integrity of his intellect, what then is to become of the people? The leaven to which they trusted blindly and implicitly, which they created to save their own souls, has lost its power. They must suffer the same loss, mental and vital energy and integrity. It is the logic of the democratic institution. Let the teaching class shirk its responsibility and abuses grow like weeds; greed and hypocrisy riot at will. Eternal watchfulness is the price of safety in a land governed like ours.

There is nothing for the honest man who loves his country to do but to expose when there is something to expose - protest when there is reason for it - fight if it is necessary. We can do these things because we are hopeful - because we have faith. If nothing comes from effort then we may well discourage exposure - protest - fighting. But if effort does avail - silence and inaction are the worst of pessimism and of cowardice.