

The Moral
Tendency
of the
Age

Bernard A. Hoffman.

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As the curtain of advancing civilization slowly rises at the opening of the seventeenth century, disclosing the thrilling melodrama of the world's progress, historians are confronted with a strange picture. The land of Europe only a few decades before, the home of that grand Roman power and royalty, now passed into utter oblivion, is wrent by mighty conflicts. Aristocratic England, mistress of the seas, grim and defiant, keeps guard over her own resources. Germany, suddenly permeated with religious fervor is about to hurl herself and neighbors into the terrible thirty years struggle between the Evangelical Union of Protestantism and the Holy League of Catholicism. At the same time Spain, cowering under the humiliation incurred thru the loss of the numerous galleons forming her invincible Armada, is frantically endeavoring to make amends by expelling the Moors from Granada. France, likewise seething with war massacres, is cringing under the power of her arrogant prime-minister, Cardinal Richelieu. Europe indeed presents an alarming spectacle!

But over and above the noise and din of the frightful conflict waged by those concerned, for the establishment of creeds and beliefs as a secondary motive and for the acquisition of wealth and power as a prime motive, over and above it all there comes a clear voice saying, "I am persuaded that the Lord hath more truth yet to come to us, more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word." The speaker is a Puritan clergyman, John Robinson. Standing on a pier at Southampton in Holland, he utters those prophetic words as a farewell to the Pilgrims, who, 102 in number leave in the Mayflower on Aug. 5, 1620 for the alien shores of America. Upon their arrival, the first act was the forming into a colony with a code of laws by which they pledged themselves "to live in peace and harmony with equal rights to all, obedient to just laws made for the

common good." Here we have the founding of the first principles of civil liberty in America.

The foundations of the other commonwealths followed in rapid succession, all resulting from the immigration of intelligent peoples, who, tired of the religious intolerance of Europe, sought refuge in the peaceful haven of rest which America offered. Though men of different creeds settled in different localities, they all became blended together in the pursuit of new industries, the establishment of new institutions and in the intermingling of new ideas. "The rude apprenticeship of Puritanism lasted more than 150 years before the hour of change was struck and on April 18, 1775, the canons of Lexington called a new-born nation to regenerate the world." Later followed such a period of rapid growth and development which astounded all nations.

No portion of the field of human activity has been slighted. The acquisition of new territory in each successive epoch of our growth has disclosed more grand opportunities, more great industries, more splendid achievements and permanent resources for wealth and power. Industrially, financially, educationally and politically, America today stands high above her ambitious neighbors across the waters. And yet, in spite of all the excellent things we may say of America, in spite of her high prestige, her illustrious and brilliant career, in sounding the depths of public opinion we find facts which constantly seem to convince us that the United States is the most fruitful field for dishonesty, immorality and corruption. From all sides comes the complaint of our unnatural greed for gold; that men risk character, honor, and reputation in their quest for everything stamped with the dollar mark; that in high finance where there exists the concentration of few men and much capital into powerful business corporations, we have the despotism of the rich; that the managers of such corporations do crimes which their conscience would not permit them to do in private life; commercial dishonors following close upon the subsequent insurance investigation, in short we have a

deadly contest between capital and morality.

But, Ladies and Gentlemen, the entire affair has merely been an experiment and unlike many of our great experiments, this has failed - failed absolutely. John D. Rockefeller, rolling as he is to-day in wealth, bequeathing a curse to his posterity with his millions, is the most wretched man in the world. Deprived of a conscience, entirely lacking physical health and moral peace, as the mighty oil king and the greatest financial phenomenon of the twentieth century, he has incurred the hatred of all classes and for all future times the story of his life will stand forth as a striking example of our experiment in high finance.

Another frequent grievance of the pessimists is the wail of the oppression of the poor by the rich; the social inequality of the classes as is evidenced by the prevalent starvation wages in the cities, the lack of morality, education and refinement among the so called "lower classes." In considering these facts we are by justice bound to bear in mind that the majority of the humbler class are of foreign birth and parentage, possessing native traits of the land where their elders were born and reared and where immorality has existed for centuries. Such people are gradually beginning to understand and admire our form of government, and to adapt their mode of life in accordance to the best wishes of society. But there are those who are incorrigible, some preferring evil to good and others too ignorant to distinguish between good and bad. Our police force, corrupt and inefficient as it has been and as it may be at present, is being improved by the extension of civil service competitive examinations, and the criminal class is slowly being lessened in number. Complaints of the barring of the working class from educational opportunities will not and should not be tolerated by any intelligent individual for at no time during our growth have the children of America been favored with such unlimited and broad advantages for learning as at the present day. Private, public and philanthropic schools, seminaries and colleges,

all open to those who wish to learn, are nowhere more numerous than in the United States. Frequent allusions are made to low wages and the sweat-shop system but let me tell you the time when the common laborer had to bear the burden of his employer is past, and the day is not distant when the man in the overalls, the man with the dinner-pail, the man with the clay-pipe shall rule the once haughty individual with the gold headed cane. Why? You ask. Because the common laborer will, owing to the skill of his manual toil, gained especially in one branch of a complicated industry be able to command his own salary. The cause is already improved by trade unions and will continue to improve by the further division of labor.

But the greatest commotion regarding the moral situation is heard from and among the politicians. One of the present writers paints the picture with the phrase: "At present the condition of America is-government of the people by the rich for the rascals." Our magazine writers of today under the guise of patriotism, (and by the way, you remember Ben Johnson said: "patriotism is often the last refuge of a scoundrel") under the guise of patriotism, men disclose to us systems of organized bribery, the dishonesty of politicians, the "treason of the Senate" and various other sensational conditions. But common sense convinces us that the dishonest politician can only gain his reward from adherents equally as dishonest as himself. The people, the ruling power in this republic, will not as a majority elect one whom they cannot trust. "Politics" Bryce tells us, "is a profession and its ranks, like other professions include honest and dishonest men". Regarding the so called "treason of the Senate" its only benefit at a greater risk of its writer losing his influence on public opinion, is to make people think and their conclusion is: - "of the many grave and serious questions which that august body has decided, no law or statute can be found in the heaps of congressional records which did not prove beneficial directly or indirectly to the American people," Bryce tells us in his American Commonwealth -

"It is particularly hard to discover the truth about Congress for few of the abundant suspicions excited and accusations brought against Senators or Representatives have been or could be sifted to the bottom."

To overcome the evils mentioned, which let us assume really do exist, men have in vain suggested remedies. Phillips and Steffens appeal to public conscience, Lawson and Russell arouse public wrath. Mitchell favors trade unions and Post assails them. Hearst dreams of accomplishing a complete reform in politics; Watson suggests that the Government dissolve the trusts; Bryan urges the governmental purchase of the trusts and even Grover Cleveland voices his plan of improvement in the tariff reform and yet, recognizing as they do that the highest aim of society is the harmonious development of the human race, physically, mentally and morally, the reformers have come to but one conclusion and in accordance with Plato's philosophy that "to be good is to love righteousness and be convinced of the unprofitableness of sin" they maintain that the good moral character of America will continue as long as the principle of the Pilgrim fathers is adhered to by our citizens, that is, that each remain true to his conscience, true to his country and true to his Creator. *←→ Carry over next pp to mark*

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, when any one dares to state that America is rapidly falling into a moral decadence and ruin which will soon equal that of Imperial Rome, are you, can you be proud of the comparison? Honoring and cherishing as you do the principles upon which our grand American institutions were founded, respecting and reverencing as you do, the memory of those noble men who during the entire course of their illustrious lives stood up and battled for these principles, it certainly should cause your patriotic blood to boil with indignation, when the United States, the land of your fathers, the land of your birth, is brought on a level with a barbarous polity founded as Rome was amid martial strife and sensuality, which pollutes and defiles the pages of history with the

tales of a callous Nero and with every form of debauchery.

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The present situation is plainly told in the words of Bishop Potter of New York who says - "Next to the danger of apathy in great moral questions is the danger of mere emotionalism, sentimentalism and sensationalism, passions often awakened with an awakening sense of injustice, cruelty, indifference or greed. These are the impulses to which our modern agitation in connection with socio-economic questions is apt to appeal." Another writer assures us that "that which is ethically best will finally prevail in the field of human endeavor." In reviewing the entire situation, Bryce concludes "Religion and conscience have always been a constant active force in the American Commonwealth, not indeed strong enough to avert moral and political evils, yet at the worst times inspiring a minority with courage and ardor by which these evils have been held at bay and in the long run generally overcome." Frederick Wm. Farrar of England speaks thus in his "Farewell Thoughts on America: "Shall America dare to kick down the ladder and spurn the low degrees by the aid of which she ascended to her magnificence, and, despising the holiness which was once her single excellence, now in the days of her boundless prosperity, to enter into a league with death? I do not believe it. I do believe she will be preserved from such perils by the memories of the dead and the virtues of the living; I believe she will not suffer the wise voices of a few to be drowned in noisier and baser sounds. I believe she will listen to the three Great Angels of History, Conscience and Experience which, as the great teachers of mankind, ever repeat to us the eternal accents of the moral law."

By a special kind and benign Providence, every great cause which presented itself at the beginning and at the crisis of America's welfare, has been successfully overcome by some great and noble man who it seems at such a time embodied within themselves all the moral strength of the people. Of George Washington, the hero of the Revolution and the father of his country, our martyred president William McKinley says -"His

foresight was marvelous, his conception of the philosophy of government, his insistence upon the necessity of education, morality and enlightened citizenship to the progress and permanence of the Republic, cannot be contemplated without filling us with astonishment at the breadth of his comprehension and the sweep of his vision. He blazed the path of liberty; he laid the foundation upon which we have grown from weak and scattered colonial governments to a United Republic, whose domains and power as well as whose liberty and freedom have become the admiration of the world". Again when the stormcloud of slavery and secession loomed above the bright horizon of our nation, it was to no indefinite purpose that the senatorial halls reverberated with the thunderous voice of the orator Daniel Webster, who with the utmost power of his forsonic ability practically demanded the preservation of the Union. But the story is eloquently told by Col. Henry Watterson. "Amid the noise and confusion, the clashing of intellects like sabers and the booming of the big oratorical guns of the North and South now definitely arrayed, there came one day into the northern camp one of the oddest figures imaginable; the person of a man, who in spite of an appearance devoid of beauty wore a serious aspect if not an air of command, and pausing to utter a single sentence pregnant with meaning, he passed on and for a moment disappeared. The man bore a mission from God on high. He said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half free and half slave. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall but I do expect it will cease to be divided." That man was -- Abraham Lincoln. Born as lowly as the Son of God in a hovel; reared in penury and squalor with no gleam of light of fair surroundings, without graces actual or acquired; without name or fame or official training, it was resolved for this man, late in life, to be snatched from obscurity, raised to supreme command at a supreme moment and entrusted with the destiny of a nation."

Even so at the present day, when we are confronted with the monster of crime, immorality and corruption, we have, occupying the highest position that his country can offer him, a man whom we must style: "The Ideal American of the Twentieth Century," Theodore Roosevelt: the man who passed thru the most dangerous temptations of dishonest politics with his moral character unscathed, a figure who, measured by the most severe and exacting standard of sturdy manhood as he may be, his character remains noble and undefiled, the real ideal of all American youth. His opinion on the moral tendency of the age is adequately expressed in his strenuous life when he says- "The Twentieth century looms before us big with the fate of many nations. Let us boldly face the life of strife, resolute to do our duty well and manfully; resolute to uphold righteousness by deed and by word, resolute to be both honest and brave to serve high ideals, yet to use practical methods. Above all let us shrink from no strife, moral or physical, within or without the nation, provided that we are certain that the strife is justified, for it is only thru strife, thru hard and dangerous endeavor, that we shall ultimately win the goal of true national greatness."

Then since Washington rescued America from England, since Lincoln secured freedom for the Black man, since McKinley saved the Cuban from the cruel cunning of the Spaniard, we have strong reason to hope that in accordance with the experiences of the past, Roosevelt can rescue all patriotic Americans from all apparent National disgrace and debasement.

Considering the question as I have to-night we must reach the final conclusion that the moral tendency of the present age in America is toward the improvement of all our existing Conditions, toward the striving for and attainment of higher ideals, the securing of happiness and comfort to the humbler classes, the greater dignity of manual labor, the ennoblement of politics, the improvement of society in general, and a higher and nobler destiny for America. Let the muck rakers discuss

the Socialism of Germany, the Communism of France, the Nihilism of Russia, but in their own country it is their duty to salute the stars and stripes, for the temple of Freedom reared by the Fathers still stands in undiminished glory. The past has taught its lesson; the present has its duty and the future its hope. In spite of all that the vivid imagination can portray, in the words of Holmes there is

"One flag, one land,
One heart, one hand,
One nation,
Evermore."