

Our Country Right or Wrong?*

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Gentlemen of the Theological Class:—We greet you this evening, as we begin another session. You are giving yourselves to a good work, when you have the Gospel ministry in view.

I preface my theme at this time only with this word, that the ministers of Christ ought to be patriots, in the best sense of the term, lovers of their country; and in such a spirit, I trust, I shall speak on this subject, Our Country Right or Wrong?

These words are generally taken declaratively, in the sense that patriotism is exhibited in advocating the country's course toward other peoples, whether that course be right or wrong. With no such conception of patriotism, I use the words interrogatively, that we may examine three questions, taking them up in order of time.

Among the recollections of my childhood is the war with Mexico. What impressed it on a child's mind can be readily seen. As elsewhere, so in Philadelphia, my native city, many illumined their homes in honor of the victories

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of the armies under Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott. All did not do so, but if any were known to be unwilling to do this, they ran the risk of unwelcome visitors "of the baser sort." Many did not rejoice, but considered the war unjust, and waged in the interest of the Slave Power. By the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, February 2, 1848, the boundary of the United States was extended from the Rio Grande to the Pacific, and for \$15,000,000 California and New Mexico were ceded to the United States.

Ulysses Grant was then a lieutenant in the Regular Army, and served under both Taylor and Scott. During his illness at Mount McGregor in 1885, with death in view, he wrote out his Personal Memoirs, and thus has left behind his thoughts as to that war. He says:

"To this day, I regard the war which resulted as one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation. It was an instance of a republic following the bad example of European monarchies, in not considering justice in their desire to acquire additional territory. Our occupation, separation and annexation were, from the inception of the movement to its final consummation, a conspiracy to acquire territory out of which Slave States might be formed for the American Union."*

In these plain terms, the dying soldier who had led the nation's forces on to the overthrow of that Slave Power, characterizes the Mexican War. Again he says: "The Mexican War

*Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, edition, 1894, p. 37.

was a political war, and the Administration conducting it desired to make party capital out of it. Scott was a Whig, and the Administration was Democratic."*

So was General Taylor a Whig, who was chosen President in 1848, but did not long survive, Fillmore succeeding him. Scott, however, failed of election in 1852, and Franklin Pierce, who was also in service in Mexico, was chosen, the nation under his administration continuing on its way of treasuring up unto itself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

May we justify that War because of the outcome, in the magnificent domain acquired by conquest and purchase from Mexico, and opened up for occupation? Shall we not accord with the dying commander? Shall we not say, the war with Mexico was an offense, and formed part of the bill of indictment against us, when God entered into judgment with this nation in the Civil War?

Ten years have not passed, since our country began war with Spain, to free the isle of Cuba from her power. This war commanded the enthusiasm of the North as well as of the South. May we attribute this altogether to love of liberty? Far back, the South coveted Cuba, and much of the diplomacy preceding the Civil War had to do with this isle and other territory south of us. On August

* Grant's Memoirs, p. 74.

16, 1854, by direction of the President, the Secretary of State wrote to Pierre Soule to unite with Buchanan and John Y. Mason in negotiations with Spain to acquire Cuba. They represented the United States at Madrid, London, and Paris. In October of that year the famous Ostend Manifesto was issued, which said as to Cuba: "We shall be justified in wresting it from Spain, if we possess the power." This came as a communication from these men to W. L. Marcy, then Secretary of State. Since that period, many Cuban estates became the property of American citizens; exiled Cubans had become naturalized. Spanish rule was a burden to many besides the inhabitants of the isle. The oppression these suffered awakened sympathy, and war came. The issue was soon determined, and Cuba was declared free.

It is noteworthy that the Government under President Palma, set up by this present administration, has been set aside by the same power. Palma yielded—in tears. He knew the end. The occupancy of Cuba is a matter of indefinite termination. No desire has developed among us to take over Cuba as a territory, with prospect of Statehood. Nothing has ever been done in the same direction for Porto Rico, also freed from Spain, but taken into possession by the treaty of Paris.

We look across the Pacific, and there also, on the East coast of Asia, are the possessions of the United States. They were obtained from Spain by conquest and purchase, much in the same way as the territory was taken

from Mexico sixty years ago. The Philippine people, when the power of Spain had been broken, were brought into subjection to the authority of the United States by force of arms. As to these events, Senator George F. Hoar, of Massachusetts, says of the proceedings in the Senate of the United States: "There was just one vote to spare when the Spanish treaty was ratified. * * * The resolution of Mr. Bacon, declaring our purpose to recognize the independence of the Philippine people, if they desired it, was lost, also by a single vote." Mr. Hoar was opposed to the course taken. Not the least attention was paid to his words, and he as well as others lost their influence by opposing the course of the Administration.

Benjamin Harrison was an eminent publicist, a Christian publicist. He thus wrote in 1901, as to opposition to the country in war, having in view Senator Hoar:

"You will not be heard at all, by this generation of your countrymen, unless disasters in war and money burdens open the way. Your magnanimity and sense of justice will be praised by the alien people in whose behalf your voice was raised. They may even build monuments in your honor, as we did to Pitt; but the home newspapers will, while you live, make you wish you had never been born; and when you are dead, they will now and then exhume your skeleton to frighten those who live after you. You must give your soul to torments and expatriate your fame."*

* North American Review, February, 1901.

As to motive, Mr. Harrison said: "We assumed a police duty in Cuba, because it is an American island—because the cry of 'murder' was on our beat. Succor was an American, not a world question. We did not assume a duty to police the world. We expressly disclaimed any hope of reward for our intervention. All this was quite out of the role of a world power. Indeed, it seemed too sentimentally fantastic to attain the credence of the world powers. Some were incredulously sarcastic. Great Britain alone kindly made us think that she accepted our ultimate conceptions."*

Speaking of the temptation, he says: "What has hitherto saved the United States in great measure from land lust and made her respect the independence and territorial economy of her weak neighbors? Was it that we did not until now feel the need of more territory, or was it a conservative timidity; or is there an American conscience that reprobates aggression and rejects the new doctrine, that the right of weak states to govern themselves rests not upon the consent of their own people, but upon the consent of the nearest world power? The Monroe Doctrine has been understood to disclaim for ourselves what it denies to the powers of Europe. The declaration of Mr. Monroe was, Mr. Jefferson said, "our protest against the atrocious violations of the rights of nations by the interference of any one in the internal affairs of another." It seems to

* North American Review, February, 1901.

have been always the ways of this statesman to generalize. This accounts for the presence in the Declaration of Independence, of philosophical maxims that now threaten embarrassment to our progress as a world power."*

These views, and former views, as at Ann Arbor in December, 1900, cost ex-President Harrison all influence. No attention was paid to them by the Government. He said at the close at Ann Arbor: "Some one will say, increasing years and retirement and introspection have broken your touch with practical affairs and left you out of sympathy with the glowing prospects of territorial expansion that now opens before us; that it has always been so; the Louisiana and the Alaskan purchases were opposed by some fearful souls. But I have been making no argument against expansion." But Mr. Harrison found for himself what he said as to Mr. Hoar.

This conquered territory, however, did not come in as Texas, when this nation was swayed by the Slave Power. The influence for good even for the humblest became operative in the Isles. Many Christian people, seeing the opportunities for service, condone the wrong of the subjugation of the people. Yet we may not do evil that good may come. The good is not the fruit of the evil. The fruit of evil is evil. Nor does the good following by orderings of Providence make good the evil. We must not allow our moral judgment to be

* North American Review, February, 1901.

warped. This nation is not free from blood guiltiness in the war upon the people of the Isles. Our own Declaration of Independence had said: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Then why were those people bound to submit to the United States under pain of death? Let us keep our moral judgments clear.

The line that connects the war with Mexico with the events of the Civil War was not hard to trace, for the spirit that led the Pro-Slavery administration of Polk controlled the administration of Pierce, and ruled over his successor Buchanan, who allowed the South to equip itself for war. But the third matter before my mind is a present question, whose beginnings go farther back than the Civil War, which followed the inaction of Buchanan.

In 1853, President Fillmore sent a letter to the ruler of Japan with Commodore M. C. Perry, in order to establish international relations with that country, especially with the view of protecting shipwrecked sailors. The fleet was sent in keeping with what is known as the "gunboat policy," for the Oriental people did not wish intercourse with the Western nations. There was, however, only the show of force, and a treaty was made at Kana-

gawa, March 1, 1854. This was the beginning of relations which are now, after the lapse of a half century, of great importance.

China, on the mainland, earlier in relation with the outer world by certain "open ports," made so by the "gunboat policy," had felt the force of modern weapons of war. That country owes much to the Administration of Lincoln, who in 1861 sent Anson Burlingame as Commissioner to China. He had been a representative from Massachusetts from 1854 to 1860. He gained the confidence of those with whom he dealt in China, and in 1867 was appointed by China to negotiate treaties of amity and commerce with the nations. He died in the service of China at St. Petersburg, the 23d of February, 1870. The Burlingame treaty of July 28, 1868, says: "The United States of America and the Emperor of China cordially recognize the inherent and the inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of free migration and emigration of their citizens and subjects respectively from one country to the other for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents." The Preamble of an Act of Congress of July 27, the same year, as to naturalized citizens, had this in its first section: "Whereas the right of expatriation is a natural and inherent right of all people, indispensable to the enjoyment of the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and whereas, in the recognition of this principle, this government has freely received emigrants from all nations, and in-

vested them with the rights of citizenship," etc. The treaty, then, had preceded it this legislative declaration as to human rights. Immigration followed under the terms of the treaty, and was welcomed for a time. But opposition came, and an exclusion law was passed, which has stood the test of the Supreme Court of the United States, not as an act of justice or faithfulness, but as an act of a sovereign power. Lately a similar exclusion law has been passed, affecting the Japanese, and the wage earners of these lands, China and Japan, are shut out. The law, in its enforcement, has had the same features as the old abhorrent Fugitive Slave Law, in the power vested in the United States Commissioner to pass upon the case, without the usual safeguards against arbitrary power. Some of the harsh details have been modified of late because of the irritation of the Orientals. Yet they all savor of the espionage of Old World systems. The crime is being in the country without leave.

Naturalization has been denied to these peoples. The law of 1802 provided for the naturalization of "aliens being free white persons, and aliens of African nativity and persons of African descent." Soon the Continent of Europe and the British Isles began to send forth a tide of emigrants, while provision was also made for naturalizing the colored race, already in the land, brought in from Africa, and also the descendants of this people. Their freedom rather than their continued bondage was in view in those days.

When the naturalization law was under consideration in 1870, Charles Sumner proposed to strike out the word white. Although this was only two years after the Act from whose Preamble I have quoted, yet objection was made that the amendment would admit Mongolians, and it was defeated. In 1873, the word was left out by inadvertence, but was restored in 1875, and mainly on the ground that the change would open the door for citizenship to persons of the Mongolian race. A case of a Japanese came before Circuit Judge Colt, of Massachusetts. He had been refused naturalization. The judge ruled against him, deciding that the Japanese were Mongolians, and as such not entitled to naturalization.*

The acquiescence in these unequal laws as affecting the peoples of the earth is general among us, and their re-adjustment is steadfastly opposed by large combinations of wage-earners. We must remember, however, that those lands have wage-earners as well, and that the introduction of the improvements and facilities of Western lands adds for the time to their distress. The generation of English-speaking people has not passed away, which can recall the distress caused among operatives at home by the substitution of steam for hand power. Great disorders arose. We must at times look at the side of other people when balancing benefits.

The course of this nation, declared by its Courts to be the exercise of a sovereign power,

* In re Saito, 62 Federal Reporter, 126.

China and Japan may then imitate for themselves. Yet what would be the frame of mind of Britons and Americans if Japan would exclude them in the exercise of sovereign power or discriminate in admitting them? Most of the so-called civilized nations have for one reason or another seized portions of territory on the Eastern coast of Asia, and as rivals in trade have no notion of receding. We have even among ourselves, who have been the fairest of all in intercourse with the Eastern peoples, an illustration of the effect of any discrimination. When Chinese guilds, in resentment for indignities put upon their people at our ports, refused to deal in American goods, the Secretary of War, a candidate now for the Presidency, talked about the prospects of war. We ought to have our eyes opened to see our present position.

What is needed is that we have just and equal laws, that bear on all peoples alike. We may not hope to escape our injustice and inequality. The Declaration of Independence in our time of trial set forth our cause, basing it on great principles, already quoted; and strange to say, among the charges against the King is this: "He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose, obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners, refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither."

A recent editorial says: "It has become the fashion among superior persons, scientific historians and students of our recent political evolution to regard the Declaration of Inde-

pendence as mainly obsolete, its allegations of questionable accuracy, and its doctrinal preamble as expressing an already-exploded sentiment."*

This is not surprising. Before the Civil War, the slaveholders came to speak of the doctrines in the Declaration as "glittering generalities." Their estimate of human rights cost us very dearly. We should not need any further lesson. Our confidence can never be placed in our naval and military equipment. It must be placed in the righteousness of our cause when we come into controversy. The doom of unjust nations was long ago set forth by the Lord through Ezekiel. Of each in turn in his day, it is said: "All her multitude are round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit."†

The spirit of caste is still rife. We may study it nearer home, or look at it abroad in its curious manifestations, even among the most miserable. In 1870 William H. Seward made the tour of the world. In the account of his visit in India, we read: "During their long drive, Lord Napier and Mr. Seward saw only one beggar, and he was blind—a Brahmin. Having been led up to their carriage by neighbors, he declined to receive alms, because he had left behind him his brazen basin,

* Philadelphia Public Ledger, July 4, 1907.

† Prophecy of Ezekiel, chapter 32.

through which he alone could accept coin from any one not of his own caste, without personal contamination.”*

They dropped a rupee into his sleeve.

The spirit of oppression is also rife, and is often associated still with the spirit of caste. They were so united in that foe of our Scotch ancestors, Graham, of Claverhouse, whose words to Henry Morton show his cruelty and pride. He said: “There is a difference, I trust, between the blood of learned and reverend prelates and scholars, of gallant soldiers and noble gentlemen, and the red puddle that stagnates in the veins of Psalm-singing mechanics, crack-brained demagogues, and sullen boors.” The Puritans and the Presbyterians whom this man despised, were in their exile privileged to plant a new nation across the sea. What course are we to run? We must do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

The spirit of the Gospel is contrary to caste and the spirit of oppression. In all ages the Church has had an ameliorating influence. Guizot, in his lectures, thus refers to the Church and caste: “Nothing like this is to be found in the Christian church. Not only is the Church entirely free from this fault, but she has constantly maintained the principle, that all men, whatever their origin, are equally privileged to enter her ranks, to fill her highest offices, to enjoy her proudest dignities. The ecclesiastical career, practically from the fifth

* Seward's Travels, page 343.

to the twelfth century, was open to all. The Church was recruited from all ranks of society, from the lower as well as the higher; indeed, most frequently from the lower. When all around her fell under the tyranny of privilege, she alone maintained the principle of equality, of competition and emulation.”*

He had said before in his third lecture: “No society ever made greater efforts than the Christian Church did from the fifth to the tenth century, to influence the world around it, and to assimilate it to itself. When its history shall become the particular object of our examination, we shall more clearly see what it attempted: it attacked in a manner, barbarism at every point, in order to civilize it and rule over it.”†

All that I have pointed out as evil, are relics of this barbarism. Shall we not be able to say of Protestantism in these latter days what this historian says of the Latin Church in those early centuries? Her ministry should faithfully apply the principles of the Gospel to modern society.

The missionaries that go forth to these foreign lands carry the assurance of a better spirit than these peoples find in contact with those whose hearts are set on gain. The trader and the missionary do not go hand in hand, though citizens of the same enlightened lands. Curzon, a member of Parliament, afterwards Governor General of India, writing of Japan, Korea and China, said: “One of

* Guizot's History of Civilization, chapter 5.

† Guizot's History of Civilization, chapter 5.

the most striking phenomena of English-speaking society in the countries to which I have referred, is the absolute severance of its two main component items, the missionaries and the merchants, neither of whom think or speak over favorably of the other, and who are rarely seen at each other's table."*

He has given the facts, not the causes. We understand them partly.

The call to Abram reads: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." He was Abram the emigrant. The call continues: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."†

The missionaries have gone forth, are going forth to carry that blessing in the word of the Gospel, which is for all men.

When Jesus was born, the heavenly host was heard praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

There are signs of the approach of the day through this night of darkness and preparations for war.

May you be heralds of that peace!

*Problems in the Far East, Longmans, Green & Co., 1894, page 425.

†Genesis 12:13.