

Bryn. Commencement, June 6, 1924.

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

167

David, the shepherd boy, became King of Israel. Divine favor was shown him to such an extent that his enemies were subdued, his kingdom enlarged, and he became the foremost man of his time. At the summit of his success, when his position seemed impregnable, David commanded his faithful general Joab to count the people, the hosts of Israel and under protest by Joab the enumeration was accomplished. This act of David was a sin before God which resulted in terrible punishment upon David and his people. It is said that "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel".

It is not probable that the mere act of enumeration was a sin before God. Stock-taking at regular intervals, of every human resource is necessary for the determination of proper human action. Conduct should be based upon a knowledge of existing conditions and needs. The man who does not take stock of his operations and possessions is foredoomed to failure; the housewife who fails to survey the details of her household and her resources is inviting unhappiness; both are slothful and slovenly servants, and ultimately join the ranks of the unfit. It should be your pleasure, as well as your obligation, to pause frequently along the way of life, to look into your present condition, and to contrast it with the past, and to plan for the future.

It is more probable that David's sin was that of the proud heart. He attained a height, before the nations, not reached before by any man of his race. He was a king to whom his own people and surrounding nations paid tribute. His word was law; his wisdom ~~was~~ the current speech of the land. He was a successful warrior king, musician and poet. Self satisfaction could easily fester within him. To number the hosts of Israel would gratify his vain pride. Pride of heart is a deadly sin. Whatever an educated man may be he is not proud.

It is even more probable that the greater sin

of David was the momentary forgetfulness that his great achievements were due to the goodness of God, and that he, David, had been but an instrument in divine hands, for the accomplishment of eternal purposes. He was tempted to feel that he possessed irresistible powers, before which his enemies fled, and his friends bowed. The hosts of Israel would but be proof of this. To forget God is the deadliest sin--your education should lead you to God.

David's historian has not vouchsafed an analysis of this episode in the life of the great King of Israel. We are left to conjecture about the motives that led him to count Israel. I should like to call your attention to another deadly sin which seems to hide snugly in David's command to number the Israelitish hosts.

The royal edict sent forth was to determine the number of men in the kingdom; no determination was required of the condition of the people with respect to their obedience to the flaming law of Sinai. To kings, the people of the realm are, at least in time of war, classed with horses, cannon, and other implements and means of warfare. Here was a mighty king, who proposed to measure his kingdom by the outward number rather than by the inward powers of his people. This was doubly strange, for this king was the same shepherd lad who, armed with the strength of Israel's God, felled to the ground the armored giant, Goliath, with a pebble thrown from a toylike sling! The king seemed to have forgotten the great lesson of his youth. The man who takes stock of his goods, but not of his good will, or the housewife who feeds her family well, but pays no attention to their manner of life, is certain to reap the whirlwind.

It is even more significant that David in his power, demanded to know the numerical extent of his people; but that no record is made of a corresponding attempt to determine how he, the King, had

developed as a man as the kingdom had been established. Where did he stand before his people and before his God? Perhaps David had fallen into the altogether too common error of placing emphasis upon what he had rather than what he was. Men are always as instruments in God's hands. They have the right to feel grateful for the good they accomplish or the service they render, but the real concern, in any stocktaking of a person's life, is the condition of the man himself. Time is long, and God's purposes will ultimately prevail. The short life of man requires that the quality of life be of first consideration.

In any community the dangerous man is the one who constantly takes stock of what he has; and the most useful is the man who keeps good account of what he is. Shun the former; seek out the latter. The dangerous nation or the dangerous age is the one who takes stock of what it has rather than what it is.

This lesson needs to be shouted to our own great country, for we have acquired an ugly habit of defining our country in terms of its vast possessions, its lands, waters, coal, metals, minerals, and water power, its armies by land and its navies by sea, its great cities and its multi-millionaires. The principles of righteousness laid down in the Declaration of Independence and in the United States Constitution, are almost unknown to the hosts of our school children who can recite glibly the long list of the material possessions of the country. As for taking stock of what we are our hurry in the stock phrase, to "develop our country", takes all of our time. The voices of those who cry, "What are we after these many favored years?" are yet drowned by those who cry "See what we have!" This danger seems greatest in days of prosperity, therefore, our modern civilization sweeping onward with a thousand new-won powers, needs the steadying help of those who are able to give proper valuation to material possessions.

It is a main duty of those who receive an education to help the people by teaching and action to understand the true relationship of the gifts and possessions of life. If education has value, it is largely in the power won to see clearly through the confusion of images, to hear clearly in a babel of tongues. It is the duty of educated men and women to see clearly in the fog of many possessions, and to urge that our civilization take stock of itself. It may be a needless corollary that every educated man or woman must take frequent stock of what he is. I trust that throughout your lives, you will give frequent study of yourselves, to determine just what you are. What you have is of some importance, but must be relegated to a position of secondary importance.

Is it possible to measure the man within us, to weigh his innermost soul? What is the true measure of a man? The words that came to Belshazzar were "thou hast been weighed in the balances and hast been found wanting". Clearly the message was sent by someone who had applied a measure to Belshazzar. But, what standard may be employed in measuring a man's innermost soul? Business is measured by dollars, science by weights and yardsticks, and politics by office. Our whole civilized structure rests upon standards of measurements. Science began its growth when men began to measure the phenomena of the universe. Our government has recognized this condition and therefore maintains at Washington, a Bureau of Standards, utilizing many buildings and covering many acres. What is the measure of a man, or of manhood or womanhood? How can we determine what a man is? It is easy to determine what he has.

The process is simple enough. In a business house, after every stocktaking the first question is: "How much more have we than at the last stock-taking?" If we have more, all is well. In the measuring of a man, the question is similar. "How much more is he than at the last examination?"

If he is more than he was, all is well. In other words, "Has the man grown?" Indeed growth is the true measure of a man. Have I grown? Has my country grown? Has the age grown? These are the questions that you must ask yourselves from time to time, as you journey through life.

We say that a man has grown rich when he has acquired a few dollars more than he had. That is an incorrect use of the word, grown. Increase by outside addition is not growth. True growth is from within. Plastering putty on the fighting muscle, does not make a strong arm; the development of that muscle from within gives added power.

The body of man grows and in time reaches maturity. From that time on our problem is to keep it in a fit condition for the expression of the mind and spirit within. The Part of a man which inhabits the body, knows no end of growth. Throughout earth life, and the life hereafter man's real self may grow. The test of real success in life is whether such growth has continued.

Growth which is used as the measure of a man implies a larger capacity for enjoying and appreciating the universe in which we are placed. First of all, is the body equal to the demands made upon it? If you are to be rated high as men and women, you must care for your bodies with vigilance. Through fault of yours, your bodies must never refuse the operations of the mind. But, of greater importance in growth is the increasing power to appreciate nature and the products of life.

Does the man love nature more than he did last year? Does nature speak to him with a more alluring voice. Does he see in nature "His face whose shadow passing fills all time"? If so, the man has grown. Has he gathered more knowledge of nature, man and God? Does he have a keener appreciation of the gift of imagination as expressed in poetry, other forms of literature, music,

painting, sculpturing? If so he has grown. Is his thinking clearer; his will steadier; his devotion to duty firmer; his conscience more sensitive? Then the man has grown. Does he love his fellow men more devotedly? Has he a sublimer faith in the destiny of man? Does he give a deeper service to God? Then the man indeed has grown for he will be crowned with wisdom. In short, the larger capacity for the enjoyment and appreciation of the earth, of man and the products of the human mind, and of the Master of all, is the growth that we may use as the measure of a man.

Gladstone in his old age for health's sake walking two miles a day and chopping at a tree, and for growth's sake, reading, talking, writing and serving mankind, is the type of a man who grew all the days of his life and thus became more of a man with every day. The Prophet Joseph is even a better illustration. Throughout his short life he sought eagerly for new knowledge, wider experience, a fuller accord with righteous men and divine beings. Recall the school of the Prophets; his excursions into languages, literature, science, statesmanship and government! Every year of his life *marked* mighty evidences of growth. When he died in his early prime, the spirit of growth so radiated from him, that even scoffers at his faith spoke of the man as one who was kingly.

But, growth that may be applied to the measure of a man must be continuous. It can not be jerky or chunky. Eternal law will have its full portion. He who sins must pay the wages of sin. You had been taught eternal progression which is eternal growth. Thus only can you be rated high as men and women.

Growth, also, must be symmetrical. In our age of specialization, many persons give such intensive care to one part of life that others are neglected, and become atrophied. Charles Darwin, the eminent student of biology, gave such undivided attention

to his studies that in his old age he complained that he had lost the capacity to enjoy poetry, music and other delightful products of the human mind. Many men have confided to me that they have lost the capacity for many finer enjoyments by a lifetime devoted to onesided pursuits.

Growth is the measure of a man. Continued, symmetrical growth. Ben Johnson came near the truth some hundreds of years ago:

"It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last; dry, bald, and sere;
A lily of day
Is fairer far in May
Although it fall and die that night
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in small measures life may perfect be."

Such a program of growth though it look very consuming, is not difficult to achieve. You must be alert and alive. Sleep is the foster sister of death. You must have a desire to grow, and to stand high in manly and womanly rank. For bodily health we feed and use the body. The mind likewise should be fed with good reading, clean association and exercised by strenuous thinking and living concerning the great philosophy and purpose of life. Likewise the spiritual nature of man must be fed with a knowledge of the principles of spiritual philosophy, and exercise by use in the practice of Church duties. The use of human gifts should always imply service based upon an understanding of the plan and purpose of life.

To grow one must not depart from the simple ways of life. Daily honest duties, well performed, are the best medicine for the ills of life. A trade or a profession is an insurance against un-

8.

happiness. Motherhood and family life still remain the safest professions for women who desire life rich in joyous achievement. No better means of growth is known for man or woman than the rearing and educating of a family. To do the work of the day; to keep in touch with the gifts of our civilization to serve our neighbor and to love our God--these are means by which growth may be won. Henry Van Dyke has said it well:

Four things a man must learn to do
If he would make his record true:

To think without confusion clearly;
To love his fellow-men sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely;
To trust in God and Heaven securely.

To a man who so lives that every stocktaking of what he is, finds that he is growing, there come many rewards. A sense of well being pervades him. He is in normal touch with the world in which he lives. Distrust flees from every person who has found his place in the universe. He recognizes his value as a unit of society and places proper importance upon himself as one of the collaborators in the working out of man's divine destiny. Thus he refrains from evil, and seeks out good. His self respect becomes established.

Every person in whom there is this type of rounded growth, looks with understanding and sympathetic eyes upon the men and women who constitute the society in which he moves. Every human being becomes of interest and importance in the scheme of life. Kindliness and helpfulness radiate from such a person. Hyman service will loom larger than material conquests.

Best of all, a life of growth will lead to a richer understanding and a more intimate association with God, the divine Master of all. When a man so lives in the world of things and spirit that he

conceives and perceives the universe as one of orderly program under God's hand, in which the human race plays a definite part, there will come to the human will a new desire to serve God, and to human understanding an increased joy in the possession of a knowledge of God.

All in all, in the face of daily duties will come courage; and in the midst of battling wills power of temptation and weakness. Happiness and contentment will envelop the man of growth; by the alchemy of growth, even the things men call failures and disappointments will be transmuted into successes.

The importance of growth in individual lives is so great that self measurement should be indulged in frequently. No elaborate or formal program need be laid out to win growth. The faithful performance of simple daily duties. Thus, in the words of the poet

No endeavor is in vain
Its reward is in the doing
And the prize the vanquished
Is the rapture of pursuing.

Growth is the measure of a man, not in outward form, but in inward stature until he touches at all points the wide horizon of our God-given life.