

The President of Trinity College... The following address on "Some Tendencies of American Democracy," was delivered by Rev. Dr. John C. Kilgo, president of Trinity College, in Craven Memorial Hall, Durham, at the public exercises held incident to the celebration of Benefactor's Day, October 2d.

Are Americans going to degenerate into a race of vulgar rascals, or are they going to develop into a refined, dignified, strong and high-minded people? This is the vital issue in our attempt to prove the wisdom and the soundness of democracy.

The two possibilities of a democracy have been present in every attempt to establish a democratic order of society. It has been a conflict between rudeness and refinement, between coarseness and culture, between that which is low and that which is high.

Matthew Arnold put his finger on the real, the hard problem of democracy when he said, "The difficulty of democracy is how to find and keep high ideals." The value of this statement is in the assumption that high and not low ideals are the aim of democracy.

That it does I believe every defender of democracy will boldly assert. On the other ground can be defended, on no other grounds have its advocates attempted to defend it. Lowell, whose faith in democracy has been well verified, says, "It is that form of society in which every man has a chance and knows he has it."

At least this may be assumed of the English speaking nations. There is in them an innate desire to rise. They seem to be constitutionally aristocratic. They are ruled by the impulse of progress, not progress in one direction only, but in every direction.

These are not signs to be feared. "We are really no signers." They show that the essential soul of democracy is vital in the American people. They are satisfactory proofs that to a large degree the Americans still understand and highly value the true benefits of a democracy.

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of a vain effort to improve the masses... The more people are aware of their position, the more they will strive to improve it.

AMERICAN IDEALS. As much as one may dislike to criticize, yet very many obvious facts make one doubt whether to a satisfactory degree Americans have at this time ideals that are undeniably worthy of a nation like our nation.

There is no lack of protest against this unwholesome worship of the incidental, especially against it when practiced by the wealthy and the exalted social classes. However, this protest seemingly lacks sincerity.

It is done in passion. It shows that it is engendered of jealousy, instead of being the protest of a sound moral sense. And those who protest loudest are best to them in the ways of the fictitious as soon as they get the means and the opportunity to practice them.

LOWELL'S DEFINITION. That it does I believe every defender of democracy will boldly assert. On the other ground can be defended, on no other grounds have its advocates attempted to defend it.

It is the immortal triumph of American democracy must be found in the supreme regard for moral manhood formed after the loftiest ideals. The supremacy of manhood is the only true note of a sound democracy.

OF this spirit there is no sadder, no more hurtful example than that type of partisan journalism which prospers and grows more and more popular among the American masses.

That Mr. Bryce was justified in making this statement is unfortunately verified by a host of undeniable facts. I will not do more than challenge the declaration with both challenge and truthfulness.

It will be recalled that Senator Hanna during his political career was one of the worst victims of this low policy and vulgar taste among Americans.

It is this which creates the greatest concern. If this national superiority confined to the unlearned it might be charged to ignorance and cured by education, but it is not peculiar to the unlearned. The learned relish it. The taste is widespread.

TRACES OF A TRADE.

That such methods are merely tricks employed to control the masses seems clear when it is recalled that President McKinley, who was also a prominent victim of our national vulgarity, after his assassination, received the praises of the very papers which had most brutally fed the spirit that inspired the deadly shot.

It is when wealth wishes to be taken for true greatness, when it claims to be the chief end, when it arrogates moral and social and political superiority that it inspires just protest. The best it is but a material thing, an incident. It may be in the hands of a great and a true man, it may be in the hands of a small and a mean man.

POWER OF GOLD. But these are not the questions Americans ask oftenest and ask loudest. They are not the things which Americans tell with greatest emphasis. "His worth fifty millions," the statement that makes American eyes open widest and the American imagination get busy with day dreams.

It is this fictitious exaltation of wealth that makes it a real peril to American democracy. The peril does not lie in the existence of wealth, but in the fact that it is not the object of a certain poverty in the object of a certain poverty in the object of a certain poverty.

DECADE OF CULTURE. The painful decay of culture in the nation is strikingly illustrated in the literary style of to-day as compared with the literary style of fifty years ago. The private man with the public crown, the private man with the public crown, the private man with the public crown.

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YELLOW JOURNALISM.

One of our best educators has been quoted recently as saying that the evil of such journalism in New York City is worse than the evil of the whiskey traffic. As extravagant as it may appear to some I verily believe that the baneful influence of this reckless and immoral journalism is more hurtful in the whole nation than is the bar-room evil.

There is a phase of this coarseness that should be far removed from such unbecoming practices. It is what may be called vulgar familiarity. It shows itself in speaking of men in authority as the boobies in the back alley speak to each other. It leaves off all titles, it discards all forms of responsible address, it uses ugly nicknames and employs the slang of the streets in the place of the high terms of cultured and honorable society.

It is a way of saying "he is no better than I am," which would not be had if the custom did not show that its patrons thought themselves bores, barbarians, even low bred. This is their own estimate, one which all good people regret to accept.

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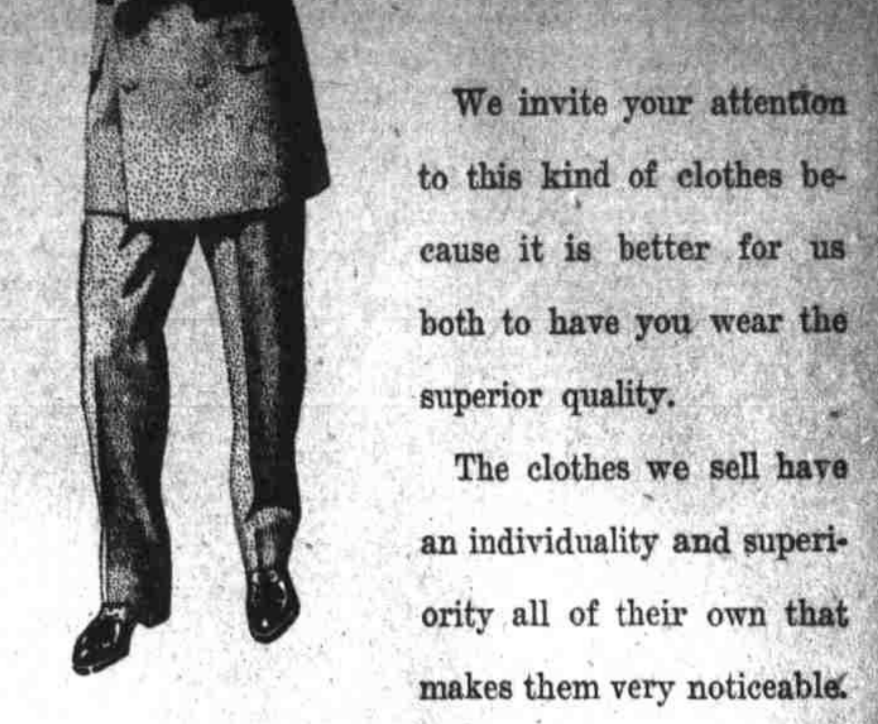
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