

rejoicing, for when we have the biggest of all the things, the best of all things and the meanest of all things, certainly there must be those somewhere ready to celebrate our possession of all these things.

There are a thousand definitions of patriotism, not the most accurate being that of Dr. Johnson who defined it as "the last refuge of a scoundrel." The grandest scoundrels we have ever had in this country have been men who were loudest in the protestations of patriotism, and we are all familiar with the wonderful patriotism of the men who are always shouting for the old flag and a fat office with a big appropriation for incidental and contingent expenses.

But it is not my purpose at this time to deal with the abstract phases of patriotism. I must follow precedent and endeavor to snatch a few feathers from the tail of the eagle and wave them aloft for the delectation of the assembled multitude. Let me, then, devote a goodly portion of the time at my disposal to giving in detail some of the wonderful characteristics of this country. For more than a century we have been holding aloft our flag as a beacon to guide the oppressed of all nations to a haven of liberty and equality, but we have prudently shut our eyes to a few other things which those who follow the beacon find here among us. We prate of liberty—and go forth with sword and cannon to impose our rule upon a weaker and helpless people. We boast of equality before the law—and the rich criminal escapes with a letter of recommendation while the poor devil who steals to save a starving family goes to jail amidst the execrations of press and public. We point with pride to the vast stretches of unoccupied lands within our borders, capable of affording homes for added millions—and forget to add that these unoccupied lands have been grabbed by speculators and frenzied financiers and are kept out of the market until they are made more valuable by the sweat and toil of the homeless. We point with pride to our great universities and colleges endowed by our multi-millionaires—and shut our eyes to the hundreds of thousands of children who can never take advantage of them because human greed has condemned them to slavery in the sweat shops, the mines and the factories. We boast of equal opportunities to all—and take no thought of the fact that men whose only god is gold have purchased special laws that afford them immunity in their damnable work of robbing the masses to enrich themselves. We swell up with patriotic pride and declare that every American citizen is a sovereign—and then let a few unprincipled rascals ride rough shod over us to place and power where they can work out their own selfish plans and schemes at their elegant leisure. We have a national song and story of our utter disregard for aristocracy and our contempt for patents of nobility—and scarce a month goes by that some American sovereign does not buy a title husband for his daughter and weds her to the frayed and frazzled remnant of some washed out race of dukes and earls. We boast of our Christian civilization and pride ourselves on being the most advanced people in all the history of the world—and take no thought of the fact that within one square mile in the center of the greatest metropolis upon the western continent there exists the highest luxury that wealth can buy and the deepest poverty that ever afflicted humanity. We boast of our civic virtue—and graft reigns su-

preme in our cities, in our legislatures and in our congressional halls. We boast of representative government, meaning by that term representation of the people in the making of our laws and in the governing of our institutions—and then, gone mad with partisanship, we turn in and elect representatives of the trusts and corporations to guard their interests at the expense of our own. Our society columns are full of magnificent descriptions of elegant social functions, but never a word about the starving men and women who live and suffer and die and rot in the tenements within the shadow of the palaces erected by our multi-millionaires.

A big country? The biggest on earth! The biggest trusts, and the biggest bunch of suckers that ever had an opportunity to stand for their own rights and never had sense enough to do it. A grand country? The grandest on earth! Where the workingman is patted on the back and called the mainstay of the republic, and then crowded off the map as soon as he begins to think for himself and demand a fair share of the products of his toil, and ignorant and degraded Huns and Finns and Slavs imported in violation of our alien contract labor laws to work at wages white men can not live on—and all for the fattening of the greed of selfish men who amass their millions and then give them with brass band accompaniment to our magnificent universities, our great colleges and our worthy missionary societies. On the one side we see the most lavish and ostentatious wealth, and on the other side we see the direct poverty and distress. On one side we see a violator of law with a political pull taken into political office and promoted to a fat job with a rotten insurance company with a clean bill of health in his pocket, and on the other side we see a man who had the nerve to expose graft in public place kicked down and out in disgrace. Great country! When we do things we do them on the biggest possible scale. When we celebrate the Fourth of July we spend enough money in making a noise to keep a million poor families in comfort for a generation. And when we engineer a scheme for graft it beats anything ever attempted by the unfortunate who must live under the reign of an effete monarch in Europe. We lot the country with school houses, and then foster a condition that compels the child to enter the sweat shop or the factory almost before its tiny limbs support its body, and keep it there until disgusted nature gives up the case as a bad job and leaves the stunted little unfortunate to either die or become an enabled charge upon the charity of the public.

Retrospection is a mighty good thing, providing we have lived on the square. Introspection is not always so cheering or pleasant, but it is often beneficial and profitable. Would it not be a good idea, then, my fellow citizens, to look within a little more. Instead of boasting forever about the good things we have, let us spend a little time now and then looking up the bad things with a view to correcting them. Reverence for the flag is a good thing, but are we not in danger of making the flag a fetish? Are we not in danger of making it an idol before which we bow down and worship? Standing apart the flag is nothing more than a painted rag, and unless we appreciate what the flag stands for we are nothing more nor less than idolaters when we greet it with cheers and pay it the homage of our devotion. For fifty years it was a flaunting lie, because while it pretended to be the emblem of human liberty it waved over slaves owned body and soul by men who prated of universal freedom. Can we with truth say that it is today the emblem of freedom? While that flag waves over one American citizen who is deprived of his rights, who is bilked and

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