

## The Conservative.

J. STERLING MORTON, Editor.

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### PRESENT DEMANDS OF PATRIOTISM.

BY EDWIN BURRITT SMITH.

We have witnessed within recent years a revival of patriotism, which has found expression in "Christian-Citizenship" leagues, schoolhouse flags and the great movements for civil service, ballot and municipal reform. This revival, in so far as it has assumed a lack of patriotic sentiment among us and sought to supply its place by a noisy din in cant phrases, and in so far as it has cheapened our flag, has been harmful. It has made such terms as "old glory" and "Americanism" mere cant expressions of a narrow provincialism. On the contrary, in so far as it has assumed that patriotic sentiment among us is as universal and sacred as love of parents, and has sought to enlighten this sentiment and lead it into wise and definite political action, this movement has already produced results of incalculable value.

The civil war left our people "party-mad," with political power "condensed and packed for delivery." For many years normal political action was impossible. Party leadership fell completely into interested, often corrupt, hands. The distinction between allegiance to party and loyalty to country was all but lost. Government by public opinion was supplanted by government by private interests. Not always and everywhere was public opinion submerged by the rising tide of private interests, but as a general proposition the thirty years following the war witnessed the capture by commercialism of municipal government, its frequent control of state authority, and its occasional manipulation of congressional action. The measure of its control of the several agencies of government—municipal, state and national—was in an inverse ratio to their command of public interest and attention. Because these were mainly centered on the affairs within the national authority, commercialism acquired practically undisputed sway in the municipality and state.

The awakening finally came. When

private interests had possessed themselves of public authority and imperiled free institutions, the revival of patriotism began. A new generation of voters, who could neither claim a personal share in the triumphs of the war nor be bound by the dying prejudices of an historic epoch, had come upon the scene. These men, anxious to meet the obligations of their own time, refused to live in the past and submit to mere mercenary authority. How effectively they, with some support from their elders, have addressed themselves to the discharge of their duties as citizens is witnessed by the progress made in recent years in civil service, ballot and municipal reform. The opening of the present year witnessed these great reforms well begun, a growing desire to recover representative government, an increasing participation by private citizens in public affairs—a situation rich in promise.

A few brief months have changed all this. We have turned away from the great problems of home administration to perform a police service beyond our jurisdiction and on behalf of an alien people who have no claims upon us. Most of us believe that war might have been averted, that it is without justification in international law, and that the president would have obtained all we ought to have asked if left a free hand by congress. Indeed, the final concessions by Spain constituted a great diplomatic victory for the administration. While no power on earth can give Cuba as good a government as that of Canada, we could have compelled Spain to keep a direct promise to us to create similar conditions there. But war is now upon us, and what might have been is no longer a practical question. Those who would have "war-at-any price," those who had "extras" to sell, those who were so keenly alive to the exigencies of an approaching congressional election, and those who were led to support war by sentiments of humanity have irrevocably committed us to the expulsion of the Spanish from the western world. Whatever we may think of the necessity of this course, it has become our duty, as well as our united purpose, to press the war to a successful conclusion. Beyond this the demands of patriotism do not go.

The really vital matter upon the serious consideration of which we cannot too soon enter, is whether "a war begun in the cause of humanity shall be turned into a war for empire." That we are to have a larger international influence has been for some time apparent. Whether this influence shall make for the peace of the world or for selfish conquest, whether our part in the leadership of the race shall be by force of ideas or of arms are the vital questions of the hour.

Chief Justice Holmes of the supreme court of Massachusetts, in an address to students some three years ago, urged

that "war is the business of youth and early middle-age;" that "in this snug oversafe corner of the world" we need its discipline to make us "ready for danger," and that its losses would be a "price well paid for the breeding of a race fit for headship and command." The Outlook, which has from the outset justified and favored war on grounds of humanity, now contends that in times of peace "the atmosphere grows heavy and the spirit drowsy. The energies of men, failing to find high adventure or splendid combat to excite and to employ them, either flag or are diverted into narrow channels and directed to mean ambitions. The shock of war awakens the nation from its lethargy, summons it to heroic self-sacrifice, teaches it that there is something nobler in life than to make money and accumulate wealth, furnishes it a better standard for the measurement of values than either gold or silver, and sets its pulses beating with new if not altogether higher life." This writer also finds in the war a remedy "for the last semblance of division between north and south," and for the "chasm which some alarmists thought they saw opening between east and west," the cause of the retirement of recent political issues and the improvement of "the relations of classes to each other in this country," and a cure for provincialism and for our former lack of perception that "the world is greater than the United States." What is this but a glorification of war for war's sake? If the occasional "letting of a little blood" is so good a thing in itself for all of us, what shall we say of the vendetta, or of the case of the individual who, feeling his spirit grow drowsy in the heavy atmosphere of peace, slays a neighbor whom he has privately condemned as unworthy longer to live?

Patriotism requires us to prosecute the war to which we are committed to a successful and speedy issue, but it does not demand that we shall accept a view of public policy that would engage in war for war's sake, that would require the nation from time to time to kill and destroy in order to maintain the physical courage of its people and testify to their indifference to material gain and of their love for the things of the spirit.

The danger of the hour lies in the growing disposition to turn a war professedly begun for humanity into "a war for empire." Mr. Moorefield Story, at the mass meeting in Faneuil Hall, protested "that an attempt to win for Cubans the right to govern themselves shall not be made an excuse for extending our sway over alien people without their consent." He adds: "Nothing can wipe from our flag the disgrace if it floats over any but a free people." We can safely acquire no possessions whose people may not be incorporated into the free citizenship of the United States.

Mr. Justice Bradley, in the "Civil