

WE AND OUR NEIGHBORS

In view of the outcry made by protestants against popish interference in this country's affairs it will be interesting to see if the Catholics say anything concerning General Ballington Booth's recall to England by his father, the organizer of the Salvation Army movement. No one on this side appears to know why he is recalled and perhaps surmises are not worth paying much attention to, but General Booth senior is said to object to the rapid Americanization of the order in this country and to be jealous of his own son, and on that son's return to England he is said to have in readiness a man thoroughly English and who will stay English, to send as the general in command of the American Salvationists. If Father Booth thinks he can keep the Salvation army of America Anglicised and subordinate to the authority of a British officer he would better study the history of Geo. IV and his failure to keep America a colony. The organization of the Salvation army is as strong as that of the Catholic church. The principle of obedience to superiors is one of the chief elements of its strength. It is a close copy of the British army in its hierarchy, promotion, duties of officers, and size of companies. This model, perfected by centuries of experiment on real battlefields, marches, camps and garrisons, was adopted by General Booth and modified as far as the real object of the organization required. He retained military discipline, obedience to a superior officer, officer's titles, a uniform etc. This perfect organization, together with the love that all crude nature has for display and the also universal but much fainter love of righteousness that humanity has, seem to be the reasons for the success of the army. An organization at present strong and potentially much stronger should not be controlled by any one, however good, residing in London, England. If he be good he is first of all devoted to his own country and thus entirely unfit to control the movements and policy of a religious-military organization in another country. If he be a bad English citizen he would be a bad American citizen. In either case foreign dictatorship is detestable and Americans will not have it. If General Booth Sr., attempt it it will probably result in destroying the official relations between the armies of England and America. Their spiritual fraternity would not be affected by the severance of official ties any more than it was when the Episcopal church of America decided to render no tithes or service to the church in England and that all the authority was resident in America.

Get up on top of a high mountain, Mr. Newbranch, and look back on the road the race has trod. After the first glimpse of the lonesome toiler at the foot of the mountain, humanity climbs in groups, which grow larger as it ascends in this order—family, tribe, nation. For several centuries perhaps a nation will be seen slipping backward. The beast which it is supposed to have destroyed has been fed to fatness and the nation wallows and rolls downward. Can you not see that the descent is always stopped before it has reached the foot? Some Camille Desmoulins steadies himself against a rock, and urges the people to pull themselves up by the nearest support, mass themselves together and bear down the weakened creatures who press against them. And the people whose hearts burn with the injustice and wrongs they have suffered, start up the hill again, walking over the bodies of those stronger than they only because they stand on higher ground.

Since the war of the rebellion there has been nothing to make men melodramatically heroic and it does look as if these times were worse than those twenty-five or thirty years ago. But we are too near to judge. Small things look large and large things are blurred. Nothing exactly like America has ever been tried before, nor that for so very long, but "all history teaches" that if this experiment fail something better will take its place. I mean all history from the first beast-man—that could be called a man to the present, teaches that we are marching upward. As bad as France is today it is better than pre-revolutionary France. English politics were never so free from corruption as today. There was a time in the Fifteenth century when the Catholic church had Alexander VI for its spiritual head. How impossible such a pope would be today. The Catholic church is the most conservative and self-satisfied of any religious or civil organization that I know of. Of course all churches have a complacent air. Otherwise converts might be fewer. But Luther discouraged reform inside the Catholic church. The protestants by rebelling, increased the rigidity of the church which has remained practically the same from that day to this. Luther was only one of a number of churchmen who were attempting at that time to reform the church from the inside. His entire withdrawal stopped reform.

In the last ten years the priests and bishops of this church have begun an aggressive crusade against intemperance. Devoted but isolated Catholic leaders have preached and practised self-denial before but never with such unanimity and vigor has the church in Italy, France, Germany and the United States taken hold of a purely moral question. The times are medicinal or they could not effect a body still under the lethargic influence of the draught held to its lips by the Middle Ages.

Politics in the United States are in a bad way. Municipal city government has been a fester in all the cities of the country excepting in those inland New England towns in which the population and the church membership list coincided. City councils are a little more careful to cover up evidences of corruption than they were twenty-five years ago. They feel that the large stupid but exacting eye of the public is upon them. They do not commit the robberies they used to, not because they are better, but because they are watched. There are sturdy men in the United States and in the house of representatives. It is scarcely fair to quote Daniel Webster, to show the degeneracy of those who succeeded him. You might as well scorn all literature that preceded or came after Shakespeare. These God-men are hors du concours. They prove nothing except that once in three hundred years or so God himself makes a man and breathes genius into him. Leaving out Webster, the men of the day will match any name in your "good old days" list. Conkling, John Sherman, Grant, Tilden, Whitney, Evarts, Lodge, Cleveland, Plumb of Kansas and our own W. J. Bryan are names that future generations will quote as great and honest statesmen.

Finally, discouragement is foolish so long as America produce men of honesty ability and courage of which yourself, Mr. T. E. Wing and the editor of this paper are examples. Another thing, history teaches very few specific things. It is unsafe to conclude that

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