

A Message to the Edward H. Angle Society of Orthodontia*

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THE PERIOD in which we are living is faced with many vital and unheralded changes. Those amenities which we inherited from the 19th Century have been mostly swept away and in their place we have substituted a boldness, a rawness and a disregard for our mutual relations, moral as well as physical, which unless checked, will make us as hard, cruel and inhuman as the enemy we are fighting.

The French have a saying with which many of us try to excuse these changes; "C'est la guerre," they tell us. While war may, nay *does*, change man's reactions, we must not, with utter complacency, allow this to dominate our acts and our thoughts.

We read with a certain degree of aloofness of the wholesale murder of hundreds of thousands of young men; we see in the daily press photographs of the utter destruction of man-made beauty; we listen with passing indignation to radio reports of the ruthless wrecking of cities, the sinking of ships and the destruction of helpless children, weak women and old people.

Yes, it hurts us, but in the heat of our growing indignation we too are becoming ruthless, savage and revengeful.

What will such impulses do to us if present conditions continue throughout a long period of years? Will all the principles, all the emotions, all the finer desires with which we have thus far been imbued, be swept away forever? Are we to face utter physical and moral attrition, once a victory is gained? Shall we have to begin from the very beginning to build up a way of life that shall lead us once more into the highways of Civilization?

Surely now, right now, there must exist some anchorage whereby at least the traditions of the higher life may be preserved in a safe harbor.

This by no means is the first time the world has faced similar conditions. But always there has sprung up some well-preserved principle, which with careful and never-flagging care has grown once more into a mighty foundation upon which a civilization has been built.

For six hundred years the civilized nations lay in darkness; they called it the "Dark Ages." A few ruthless lords held all power, good and evil, in the palm of their hands. Their will, their word, was law and the people did not know how to free themselves of these vicious tentacles. War had destroyed the people's sense of values and therefore any concept of freedom; their very humanity had been forgotten. They accepted what the day brought and did not know that there might be a tomorrow. They were enslaved, body and soul. The right to live and love and learn had been forgotten and they

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were resigned to their fate because they knew no better. Today, certain Powers have a mind once more to enmesh mankind in a similar state.

What took place in that long-past period to free the people? The friendly salutation of "God's day," had not been born. God was made to appear only as an added fetter. There was one small corner where the knowledge that life had not always been thus was kept alive during all these dark centuries. Scholars hid themselves in the cells of monasteries and with care and love and patience preserved the lore of ancient days. The wondrously illuminated pages which they so patiently and lovingly wrought, came to light in due time and recalled the beauties of long forgotten eras, when men had been free.

A priest, a young, devout and earnest soul, conceiving the freedom of nations and the glory of God, had the courage and wisdom to preach these truths. He loved the birds and the flowers and the floating clouds in the heavens and pointed them out to an eager, hungry but ignorant, mankind. A poet, deeply moved by dominating and ruthless injustice, dared to hold the mirror of shame before the eyes of the mighty, dared to threaten them with everlasting punishment—and was, for his courage, banned from his beloved Florence. A young shepherd feeding his flocks was touched by the trust and love for one another which they revealed to him. He drew them on the great flat stones of the hillside. Trained by a wise and far-seeing master, this young painter naively and simply showed the people that mankind should not remain fettered in slavery but should follow the command of the Lord and live together in love, freedom and brotherhood. And the chains which had bound all humanity in ignorance and subjugation for six hundred years, began to break; the people were freed and a renaissance was born. St. Francis, Dante and Giotto are the milestones which mark the highway towards a civilization that had long been lost.

It was faith that accomplished this, faith in a common humanity, in the brotherhood of man and in freedom and in liberty and in whole-hearted love. No longer was there fear and sorrow. God revealed himself to them. It was to the glory of this new found God that all men worked—worked in reverent joy to proclaim, in deed and in song, their faith in his Fatherhood.

We are faced today with the same menace to our civilization that threatened and overcame the nations of the world in the Sixth Century. Yet they emerged triumphant! Let us hope that this evil may pass before our way of life is seriously disturbed. Already there are evidences of the terrible consequences that this would bring about. We must strive to hold firmly together our faith, our brotherhood, our liberty, that our cause may emerge triumphant.

It was a disturbing thought to me in the beginning of our conflict, that my individual efforts toward a final winning of the war appeared to be so futile. I am sure I was not alone in this opinion. Some of you may have felt a like doubt. I wish to correct my argument and to justify my point of view—and yours.

We must all remember that a cause is not won merely by force of arms. Of what avail would it be for us to triumph if all the objectives we are striving to attain were destroyed? No doubt much of the material evidence of a long-standing civilization will inevitably be destroyed. It is, alas, evident on

all sides. But the spirit, the motive, the desire to create these material evidences of man's desire for beauty, must not be allowed to die! Had those patient, unselfish lay brothers not brought forth their hidden treasure of learning and achievement, when would the renaissance, the rebirth of the world have been? They kindled once more the flame of truth, goodness and beauty which enabled the builders to erect a new edifice, a new and a nobler civilization.

So, those of us who can offer nothing more toward victory but our efforts to preserve the spirit of beauty, goodness and truth, are justified in pursuing our course with the conviction that what we do shall not be in vain. Out of our efforts will come a desire for a stronger, a more unified, a finer sense of our relations to one another—the world over.

You have your part to play in this rebirth. Some of you have already gone forth to give your lives for a common cause. It is not all of us who can have that great privilege. Shall the sacrifice of your friends, your fellows, be in vain?

What shall *we* do—you and I, to prove that we are ready to pay our debts? Can we go on complacently, as we have hitherto done? Shall thoughtless selfishness govern our future acts? Can we accept the supreme sacrifice of our brothers and receive no strong impulse toward a return for their gifts?

The first law to be observed in the accomplishment of any reform is the attainment of a complete and amiable understanding as to the objective we seek. It must be a common objective, one acceptable to all. It must benefit all alike. There must be no outstanding power to which all others bow. It must be the brotherhood of man. Shall we ignore these truths in the pursuit of our professions? Is this a time for petty jealousies, for private gain, for inglorious misunderstandings? Ask yourselves earnestly, without reservations, "Am I working for a Cause, a cause in which I believe and into which I put all my strength of heart and soul, a cause which is as sacred to my fellow worker as it is to me? Or am I working for my own good and for nothing more? Is the suffering of human beings of greater import to me than the material triumph of self?" Men, that is a vital question. You must face it in unity. Unless you do you are not doing your part toward the triumph of civilization. You must be one in a common cause.

Let the leadership of a man who pointed the way, prevail. He was wise and he was human. What matters it that his methods may be outdated?—there can be no progress without change. He would have been the very first to acknowledge this; but his principles have not changed. He stood for integrity, honesty and thoroughness. He stood for the triumph of fine and splendid work, for the constant advancement of a cause to which he gave all he had—and he had much to give—the advancement of Orthodontia. Shall you, because of vanity, selfishness and secret jealousies defeat his purpose? As a body, a united body of scientists, you have much to accomplish. Humanity needs your services, needs your *strength* not your weaknesses.

You have, at some sacrifice to each one of you, brought me here from a far distant place to do what?—to flatter you, to feed your selfishness, to soothe your vanity, to bolster up your little personal grudges, jealousies, misunderstandings? I justify my coming simply by asking you to believe in your cause, to believe in yourselves and to have faith in one another. "This above

all," Shakespeare has said; "this above all, to thine ownself be true and it must follow as the night the day, thou can'st not then be false to any man."

You are gathered here tonight for the advancement of a common good. To accomplish this objective you must set aside all factional disagreements. You are searchers after truth and truth can be found only in unselfish endeavor. Do not be proud because you, too, have worked mightily toward the establishment of a principle. Be firm in your convictions but do not be stubborn in acknowledging the better work, the more logical research of your friend. Thus and thus only will you progress. In the "Life of the Bee" Maeterlinck has given us a picture of that unity for a common purpose with which I am trying to impress you.

Shall a buzzing, tireless, unselfish bee organize the politics of a hive better than you shall organize the procedures and the ordering of *your* profession? You are here tonight in amicable fellowships. You are here to give each other the benefits of your experiences, of your discoveries. You must tie no strings to this giving.

But beyond this, at the end of your session, you shall all go back to your respective strongholds in the full consciousness that you have done this thing in all humility for the sake of a common cause and because your cause is much needed at this time, more needed than ever before. You must leave this meeting in the full consciousness that what you have revealed to one another is towards that service, towards final victory in which we all have absolute faith. And as you reach your own sphere of endeavor, I hope you will recall that you voiced open and free praise to those who in their accomplishments have given you a key to a door which has hitherto been locked to you. Be comforted by the thought that you have uttered aloud that phrase of approbation, sympathy and understanding which shall carry gladness and comfort into the heart of a fellow worker.

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