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American Harvest

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Recently at the San Francisco Conference one of the Arabian delegates was asked why none of their group had made any speeches. He replied, "Words are like the sands of the desert which are blown around by the wind and accomplish nothing." This saying can be used to illustrate to a large degree why we as Danish-Americans have failed in our attempts at making a go of our folk-schools and in stressing the importance of our great Danish heritage. This wise Arabian meant, of course, that words without action and the proper attitude mean nothing. So, we as Danish-Americans talk too much without having our heart in what is being said.

What can our contribution as Danish-Americans be to America? The answer is simple: The revealing of the principles and truths of our Danish heritage. And notice, I did not say "transmitting our Danish heritage to the American people," BUT "revealing the principles and truths."

The Danish people, through their great heritage, have come to understand certain fundamental laws of human life and fellowship, that are not very generally recognized by other people. They have also thoroughly understood, through their experience of a thousand years as a nation, the necessity of being faithful to principles. They do not believe in compromise. They believe that certain immutable laws of life must be observed if the essential goal is to be reached. Their songs, their hymns, their church life, and their folk-spirit express this. The undercurrent of the Danish life-stream expresses the desire for peace; not only peace in the materialistic sense, but also peace of mind, of soul, of human fellowship, and of religion through a sincere belief in the triune God. Greed, selfishness, brute force, and revenge find no place in such a life creed.

The American people have a yearning toward a united accomplishment of a better way of living; but, in their struggle toward this ideal they are constantly bumping into stumbling-blocks on their road which retard their

progress. Greed, selfishness, and lack of spiritual guidance are some of them. It seems like the conscience of the American people has not yet been directed toward the spiritual light. It is namely, concerning this last thing, "the spiritual light," that the Danish-American people can do much toward helping our fellow-Americans better our country.

A concentrated effort to reveal the principles and truths of our Danish heritage can liven up our Danish-American group which is at present cutting itself away from the spiritual life-stream of Denmark. The manner in which many of the old members of the folk-school still cling to the human and spiritual ideals taught them is a sign that the spirit is as yet far from being dead; but we must do something about it to keep it alive. For the folk-school spirit is in communion with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and is therefore part of the spiritual light.

As all great ideals or movements function best in the vicinity of their origin this effort should be in very close contact with the Danish vision of the old folk-school movement.

This effort cannot be done by direct translation. As has been proved from the past this type of an effort has only served to make our songs and hymns lose too much of their spiritual power and clarity. No, we must be prepared to lose our identity. We must feel a merging with the American people themselves. Therefore it is apparent why the effort should be in very close contact with the Danish vision, because it is the original one and retains its spiritual power and clarity.

The great yearning that the American people have for a better way of living will probably prove to be a stepping-stone toward the emergence of the American folk-spirit. If we will constantly keep in mind that our fellow-Americans need a helping hand to see the Light it would speed the emergence of this folk-spirit. Of course, language is no barrier to such an effort as the universal spirit pays no heed to it.

Before we are able to feel that we are merging with the American people we must also become conscious of the fact that we are not transients any more, that we are part of a great nation, that we have now become rooted in the

soil, the history, and the traditions of "our country," and, finally, that our great Danish heritage is not something to be thrown away and forgotten; for where Danish seed has been sown America may profit by a great harvest. Also we must become one with America's problems. We must realize the destructive effects to American well-being of power politics, imperialistic trends, and nationalistic greed and selfishness.

We must abandon many of our Danish reactionary and traditional forms that prevent the spiritual contents from flowing freely into American life. Similarly we must help America to abandon many of her traditional forms that tend to prevent the emergence of the folk-spirit.

By our actions and deeds toward our fellow-Americans we can show them the principles and truths of our heritage. If we fail to do this we will only be absorbed into the American life-stream through the biological process, with complete loss of our heritage.

America is continually searching and yearning for a better way of life. This can be seen through such a man as Henry Wallace who takes directly from the source, through Denmark itself. This is a slow process and the full benefit can never be reached by this method. Whether we speed this process by a school, or a public forum, or a guild, or other means is of little importance as long as an effort is made.

If we do this, then the day that America becomes conscious of her folk-spirit she can truly be thankful.

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A New World in the Making

While the demons of modern warfare have been leveling the proud structures of our materialistic age thoughts of a better world have been conceived in the minds of people around the world. However, it is already evident that the new, if it is born, will not come without severe birth pangs. New life is never born without a struggle. A mother must always risk her own life to give birth to the new life which has been growing in her womb. The same is true in regard to a new world order. We are not going to have a new world order without a struggle nor without surrendering our allegiance to the old.

Leaders in many countries have for some time spoken about a world of lasting peace. A distressed and war tired world has listened and has taken the words seriously. Much serious thinking and much serious planning has been done in the hope that such a world might be born. People have an apprehension of what continued warfare may mean. If we do not end war, war will end us. The robot bomb points only to methods of destruction still much, much greater. Man has come to fear his own creation and the possibilities of future weapons of destruction. The possibility of blowing up the globe on which we live is not as remote as we may suppose.

However, to sacrifice what the Spirit of Life demands for a world of peace is not easy. We are like the rich young ruler who wanted life so badly but turned sorrow-

fully away when he was told of the cost. He stood at the threshold to life but he was unable to part with his possessions. So it is with us as we stand at the threshold to world peace. We sincerely believe that it can be obtained but we tremble when we consider the cost. Thus it has always been. Therefore, the world passed the burden on to coming generations to sacrifice in blood what it at the time refused to sacrifice in order that future generations could live in peace.

The new world whose birth so many are awaiting is not concerned about the preservation of the old. Life is never something preserved; it is always a fresh flowing stream. The new to be born must be like a fresh, strong stream marking its way forward toward a destiny not yet revealed. Thoughts now conceived of a lasting peace cannot now stop to map out more easy routes of the dried up beds of old streams, they will have to plow their way forward with toil, slowly and patiently toward the destiny in view. What if it is beyond our immediate grasp? If man never reaches for anything beyond his grasp nothing will ever be attained.

I can sympathize with the men in San Francisco who are there to lay down plans for such a world. They have met there not only with the interests of peace at heart but all are also there with their respective national interests. How they must hate to have to retreat from any selfish interests they may have. They must surely also be eyeing each other with some suspicion, the natural result of years of distrust amongst nations. Old suspicions and prejudices are not buried so easily. Many would see in Molotov the bearded gangster of the cartoons in the twenties. When Eden arises men will see not only what Eden stands for but also the imperialism of Britain in past years. Many will sneer at American proposals, remembering that the league of nations was first conceived by an American and then America retreated into an era of isolationism. Yet in spite of all misgivings the men are not let to forget the high purpose for which they have met.

A world of lasting peace will come slowly, reluctantly, and with much pain. And there is the ever constant danger that it will already be dead at birth. If the vision is reduced to a fantastic dream and substituted with the interests of big powers the future will suffer for the cowardice of our times. It is up to the people everywhere to insist that it must not fail. The time has come when we cannot pass the buck to the future such as we have done in the purchase of war bonds instead of meeting the pinch of added war taxes.

The thought of lasting peace is something more than the ideology of one nation or one man demanding entrance into the world. It is God who is speaking and forcing man to wrestle with a power not to be killed with bombs. Inwardly man knows that there can be no compromise between the old world of materialism and the spirit which creates lasting peace. Let our thinking be clear, if we want a world of lasting peace we will have to think in terms that build it and not in terms of the old with mere wishful thinking that the new will take care of itself. How true it is that man must be born anew if he is to enter into the realm of life. Let us carry Ostergaard's song with us:

"That cause can never be lost or stayed
Which takes the course of what God hath made,
And is not trusting in walls and towers,
But slowly growing from seed to flowers.
Each noble service that men have wrought
Was first conceived as a fruitful thought.
Each worthy cause with a future glorious
By simply growing became victorious."

Lasting peace is a vast and a mighty thought. It is not an impossibility. Let us not run away from the vision now conceived. We must give ourselves to it and let it carry us with it.

HAROLD PETERSEN, Ringsted, Iowa.

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Americanization

III

AAGE MØLLER, Solvang, Calif.

It is important that we use two terms in designating our country, United States and The American People. Here at home and in the world at large a person from Vermont or New Mexico is known, not as a United Stater, but as an American. He is not altogether identified with the civic order which changes and shifts from one class to another. Americans have more in common than administration, a tradition, a growing culture, a language, a destiny. The tradition goes back to prehistoric dimness, the culture and languages grow up and out of the primeval, fertilized and cultivated soil, affected by oceans, mountains, prairies, immigrant influx, etc. The destiny is timeless and quite intact of government. At times this ocean deep soul-life expresses itself in a person, a Beecher, a Lincoln, a Roosevelt, reminding all the people that it is there.

I tried last time to show how the children of the immigrant community were in many ways drawn into the union called the American people. Today I want to be a bit more specific in telling how the transmutation influenced the free school of the community. A boy of five was permitted to attend the school the last month of the term. He was seated close to the teacher's desk. The day began with singing and devotion. When the boy heard the thirty children sing in unison with the canary in the cage, the trees outside, the fragrance of May flowers, the shimmering lake beneath the hill he went into a trance, a state of exaltation. Coming out of it he noticed that the assembly looked quizzically at him. In the next song he tuned down to the level of the others but he came near the point of passing out again when the teacher told the story of Lincoln.

It was the energy and nature of the school which animated him and kept on doing so for seven years. The school was an outlet for the resourcefulness of the community. It was started and maintained out of poverty; but it was a necessity. The patrons had to have a school which was free from the state. They desired a school in which the spoken word was given ample opportunity, and where the free flow of life had replaced stagnant text-books. Here the children should hear the high and deep tones of

language, the unfathomable story of humanity, the secrets of nature and the truths about a great God. Only thus could they avoid the pitfall of denatured and despirited materialism. I do not err in saying that for a while the pupils experienced that life is wonderful and the parents' struggle for the school was a blessing.

The norms had decided that one boy was to take the course of the student. When he was fifteen years old his parents thought it was feasible for him to attend the high school, seventeen long miles away. They hoped he was sufficiently rooted in freedom to go through "the dark school." The day was set when he and his brother should drive in the sulky to Falls, trying to find a boarding place. On the preceding night he cried as he had never cried before or since. Forty-five years have passed, and it is as yet difficult for him to analyze the cry. There was fear in it. He had seen some of the boys in Falls. There was a sense of loneliness in it, but there was more. It was the grief of a community leaving a fatherland, going out into a strange country. For a short time they had been released from the state both in the old and the new country and they knew that the law is thralldom for the spirit of man. Had the new state been of the Bismark type they would not have given in. Now it was democratic, lenient and appealing, therefore they could not withstand it.

The boy and the members of the community had to store their experience into their souls, where it was crystallized into a memory. Therefore they became conservative trying to satisfy themselves with the bleak atmosphere of decency, and yet striving for a freedom which is concomitant with happiness.

People who are transmuted from one ethnic group into another are wanderers in the desert, suffering from an inferiority complex. On the journey the memory starts to sprout and becomes a driving force. In the new land they must have an unknown God like they had had in the old, a mystery which cannot be tabulated. To avoid a school of factualism and a church of committees, he prefers to go fishing or puddle around with new experiments. He joins the union but he wants more than state socialism. He reads the news, but Orphan Annie is more interesting. He is a loyal citizen but he is searching for something more than a constitution. He does not stay put anywhere but he roams. He sees a new peak and he moves onward toward it.

The American has much faith in education. It is a panacea to many but the untold numbers of discussions going on everywhere does indicate a thirst for light. The common discontentment in regard to our systematized education suggests that there is an embryo which must in due time be born. Hutchins tries to wriggle himself out of a school which is largely patterned after the European latin school and which is subservient to the giants. All of a sudden a community in Georgia revolutionizes its high school. Marietta Johnson created her own unique school at Fairhope.

The American mind which is both national and cosmic is groping for a school which is more than a compiler of facts, a discipline of eleven civic duties, a preparation for a college. It needs a school of liquid vibrant history, which can set minds in motion. It needs a school where memory can be utilized in the fostering of a vision, where the child can get in touch with the heart of humanity.

"TWO-FOLD IS THE TRAIL OF THE EMIGRANT"

I.

The trail of ships and trains
Slashing through space
With a speed that leaves behind
Man's outer body;
As in a dream the unbound self
Roams at will in a world
Of uncertain dimensions and horizons.

The unseeing eye shedding sights
As sheds the window-pane the driving rain.
The soul only now crossing the bridge
Of separation from all for all time
Remembering the faces that were sweet
With knowing. --
Remembering the last, stilted phrases
Spoken as in the presence of the dead
Before the grave is heaped.
The tears;
The hurt that sat upon the skin like dew;
The promises that mocked the face of fate.

The lost loneliness in waiting-rooms,
Scanning strange faces for the quick
Flicker of recognition, like the bee
Bouncing from bloom to bloom
In quick rejection at the lack of sweetness.
Groping to feel the meaning of strange words;
Words without faces, without souls.
Only the smile and the gesture
Making the heart glad with kinship.
The valiant will to feel the courage
Of the wanderers into the unknown,
. . . Remembering again and dying half.

The journey's end. The earth
Pressing against one's feet;
But cold, unresponsive earth.
Birds and flowers, sky and sun
Speaking in unfamiliar accents;
Only the moon coming all the way from home.
Dear moon! dear moon!

A homeless wraith of a man
Seeking a new body, cast of friendly soil
And human fellowship;
Of little things shared with brothers.

By work he came to know the earth.
The furrow, the hard road, the cool of the
Earth's patience in the shadowed grass.
The earth, flushed with the victory of abundance;
The earth, beaten senseless by storm and drought.
It took him in and covered him
With the garment of kinship;
And he was once more a man,
"Clothed and in his right mind."

II.

Coinciding with this physical journey but stretching
beyond it into the years, at times consuming generations
for its completion is the spiritual emigration. It is char-
acterized by the spirit's persistence in looking INTO the
new land, its insistence on observing it from a place re-

moved by thousands of miles and separated by the chasm
of disdainful reserve. Judging the new surroundings with
the biased eye of a mother looking over the new neighbors'
children. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the spiritual emi-
gration takes place until the day comes when the immi-
grant LOOKS OUT of the country of his adoption and
feels behind him the solicitous sympathy of soil and peo-
ple, now his own; facing the world with that feeling of
unruffled security sensed by the child who knows his
mother's eyes follow him from the door-way. When that
happens, the emigrant has completed his journey. He is
no longer an exile and a weary traveller; he is once again
at home.

His own spiritual heritage now becomes a real asset
because a changed attitude permits him to give of it freely
to his new environment, whereas in earlier stages it had
tended to become a hoarded treasure, eventually slipping
through his clutching fingers.

It is now for him to explore deeply the history and
the life of his new community in order that his contribu-
tion may be of such texture that it blends naturally and
without irritation with the historic trends of the people.
Only sympathetic understanding and a real desire to serve
will afford him both the opportunity to make his contri-
bution and at the same time assure its acceptance.

The real task that faces the leaders of an immigrant
group at this stage of fusion is to bring about the closest
possible contact with the stock best rooted in the soil and
to open all vital channels in order that the life-streams
from two peoples may fork and blend and swell the banks
of the joint channel to the sea.

HOLGER J. KOCH

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CONVERSION

By FRANSIS ANGERMAYER

Look, God, I have never spoken to you
But now—I want to say: "How do you do."
You see, God, they told me you didn't exist
And like a fool — I believed all of this.
Last night from a shell hole I saw your sky,
I figured right then they had told me a lie.
Had I taken time to see the things you made
I'd known they weren't calling a spade a spade.
I wonder, God, if you'd shake my hand,
Somehow I feel that you will understand.
Funny I had to come to this hellish place
Before I had the time to see your face.
Well, I guess there isn't much more to say,
But I'm sure glad, God, I met you today.
I guess the "zero hour" will soon be here,
But I'm not afraid since I know you are here.
The Signal—Well God—I'll have to go,
I like you lots—this I want you to know—
Look now—this will be a horrible fight—
Who knows—I may come to your house tonight.
Though I wasn't friendly with you before
I wonder, God—if you'd wait at your door?
Look—I'm crying—me! — shedding tears—
I wish I'd known you these many years —
Well I will have to go now, God—Good-bye!
Strange—since I met you—I'm not afraid to die.

Submitted by Mrs. Frederikke Johansen, Luck, Wis.