

Immortal Youth¹

By JOHN BASSETT MOORE

I HAVE referred to the life of the university as one of immortal youth. This necessarily implies that the university must be progressive. No man, no state, no nation can stand still and maintain its place in the world; nor does any man, any state, or any nation deserve to hold its place in the world that is content with what has been achieved. Mere contentment with the past, no matter where we find it, means decay; the so-called happiness that springs from placid satisfaction with things as they are, or from exaggerated worship of things as they have been, is essentially spurious and is not a blessing but an evil. Man was born to labor. For this purpose he possesses his faculties, and if he hides them or permits them to remain unused he justly incurs the sentence cast upon the unfaithful steward who lost not only the opportunity for profit but even his original store.

As perpetual vigilance is the price of liberty, so perpetual struggle for higher and better things is the price that must be paid for the immortality of the university. But, in striving for immortality, what are the things for which the university should stand before the world?

I have mentioned the word "liberty." Like all things else, this is a relative concept. All mundane things are subject to human conditions; and, in spite of all efforts to formulate precise definitions, we are never able to find one that is permanently satisfactory. Nevertheless, there is such a thing as liberty, of the absence of which, if we lack it, we very quickly become conscious. In its essence, liberty means freedom of self-development, and this freedom is to be allowed as far as the absolute safety of society will permit individuals to determine for themselves what they will or will not do. The university should, therefore, stand for liberty, meaning the widest possible individual freedom of thought and of action. By no statesman or philosopher has this principle been more luminously expounded or more clearly exemplified than by the founder of the University of Virginia. Perhaps one may say that if he had been called upon to designate the one great principle to the inculcation of which the institution which he had founded should through all future time be devoted, he would have designated the principle of human liberty.

This necessarily leads us to another thought, and that is the principle of toleration. Today we are living in a world still racked by the passions resulting from a great war. Human beings, instead of loving one another, have been fighting and killing one another. This is a condition into which the world, as long as we have known it, has from time to time fallen; and at such junctures, confidence being supplanted with suspicion, there is a tendency to regard differences of opinion as a menace and as something to be suppressed. We should ever be on our guard against this tendency, alike in society, in politics, and in religion. Today our eyes and ears are constantly assailed with wholesale attacks upon persons of a particular faith, attacks which, if not inspired by passionate excitement, would be regarded as purely wanton. Such things can only be deplored as manifestations of human traits which fortunately are exhibited chiefly under abnormal conditions.

In antithesis to the principle of toleration, I venture to mention another word which has come to be characterized by base associations. I refer to what is now popularly known as "propaganda," signifying in effect the systematic dissemination of falsehoods or perversions for political, commercial, or other selfish purposes. The world is today rife with this sort of activity, which is by no means confined to the perpetuation of bitterness by and between nations that lately were enemies. Stimulated by the war into abnormal activity, and now practiced more or less by all against all, it seeks, with frenzied

and unscrupulous zeal, in an atmosphere of universal suspicion, to permeate all the relations of life and to create and foster ill-will among all nations, including even those supposed to be friendly. Scarcely can one attend today a gathering for the discussion of public questions without being treated to the pernicious productions of this vicious system, which, finding their way into the press and into books ostensibly genuine, are glibly rehearsed by persons whose position and profession should cause them to exhibit a greater sense of care and of responsibility. A university, as a seat of learning, should set its face against such methods. One of the chief glories of the university is the fact that it is a place devoted to the search for truth. . . .

The word propaganda has, however, been associated in times past with a type of thought and of action altogether different from that which has lately made it repulsive. Some years ago, in the city of Buenos Aires, I saw a volume which one could not touch without feeling deeply moved. It was a copy of a translation of the Bible, into a dialect of the Misiones territory, by some of the Fathers, agents of the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, who bore Christianity to the aborigines of that then remote and almost impenetrable region. Not only did they make the translation, but they printed it in the wilderness at a place even the site of which is today unknown. This they did to save men. In their holy zeal to carry salvation, according to their belief, to unknown lands, they shrank neither from peril nor from sacrifice. As we think of their helpless separation from the haunts of civilized life, of their self-denial and their days and nights of solitary toil, we are lost in admiration of the men who wrought such a token of their faith and of their love for their fellow-beings. Could there be a more inspiring example for those who accept a teacher's sacred trust? . . .

In the ceaseless, endless flow of its intellectual and moral influence, the university both conserves and creates. Tennyson spoke of his generation as "the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time." In a sense no saying could be more fallacious or more misleading. As he who would be first in the Kingdom of Heaven must become the servant of all, so the first requisite of knowledge is a spirit of humility, such as renders us willing to learn. The potentialities of heirship are severely limited by human conditions. We all begin life in the same helpless way, dependent on others for existence and physically and mentally groping about. But, as we grow older, and become more self-conscious, we are perhaps not over-respectful of the wisdom of the aged. Indeed, even if it be liberally conceded that we know the causes that previously produced certain ill effects, we are disposed to believe that their similar operation may be averted in the present instance; and, obedient to our possibly uninstructed impulses, we proceed to try our own conceptions of what is wise and expedient. The assumption, then, that we are the heirs of all the ages, representing the farthest human advance, should not be unduly encouraged. Such an attitude is essentially hazardous, and, if inadvertently indulged, tends recurrently to subject the world to the loss of a large part of its garnered treasures.

For the prevention of such loss, we look to our seats of learning. While the university conserves the teachings of the past, it also uses them for the profit of posterity. In its quiet halls of study and reflection, overconfidence is chastened, so that uninformed aggressiveness may neither mar the present nor embarrass the future. The impulses of youth are refined and widely directed. The mind is fertilized. Ideals are raised. Ambition is stimulated; and in endless train there issues from the gates the eager procession of intelligent builders by whom human institutions are competently fashioned. Society and the state are the gainers; life itself is dignified and ennobled. Rejoicing, then, in our university as the perpetual dispenser of priceless benefits, let us strive to maintain and strengthen it with all the resources at our command, placing above its portals the words, "Conserver of the Past, Creator of the Future."

¹ From an address delivered for the University of Virginia on its hundredth anniversary celebrated at Charlottesville, Va., June 2.

Is the Black Horror on the Rhine Fact or Propaganda?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: I am quite satisfied, now, that you published my letter, although I did not intend it for publication. You gave wide publicity to my protest against what I and many fellow-Americans regard as the crowning outrage of the war, an outrage which most certainly will dreadfully avenge itself in Europe's next war, especially if the outrage should be continued. And it seems that France is fully determined that it shall continue, perhaps for fifteen years to come, and that England will complacently and contentedly look on.

While I thank the editor of *The Nation* for publishing my letter, I do not thank him for the caption A Hymn of Hate. My letter was not intended to be, nor was it, an expression of hate, at least not of hate of persons. I repeat here the words of a distinguished American clergyman: "It is not the color of the troops that we protest against, it is the color of the crime. And the crime is black as hell."

It is thoroughly Christian to hate and in strong language to inveigh against and denounce crime and outrage, and it is un-Christian not to hate it.

The only line in my letter which under any form of interpretation could be construed as expressing hate of persons was this: "In the next war God pity France—and *England!*" The words were intended as a prediction, a prophecy, and a solemn warning, or rather as a suggestion that *The Nation* might, editorially and otherwise, raise its voice in earnest warning.

The Nation would serve the cause of civilization and of future peace much better by warning the perpetrators and abettors of the Outrage on the Rhine than by encouraging them in their mad course of revenge by cloaking and palliating their crime.

New York, June 10

F. P. WILHELM

[*The Nation* has neither palliated nor cloaked the so-called Horror on the Rhine, but its investigation, made wholly without prejudice, has brought conviction that the facts by no means warrant the wild exaggerations which have been given currency and that despite Mr. Wilhelm's statement to the contrary the emphasis on the color of the occupying troops has been mistaken and un-Christian. The appended comment of two German newspapers which we reprint herewith is pertinent and should be enlightening.]

THE BLACK HORROR

[From *Der Kampf*, Munich]

From Speyer we receive the following communication dated April 26:

On my return from Munich, I must look around to see if I am really in occupied territory, for here I look in vain for what I saw in the Imperial Theater under the title of The Black Horror. And this is not the only place. In Ludwigshafen, Mainz, Worms, etc., you search in vain for the conditions exposed in that film. It seems to show that the "Socialist" Deputies, like Klement of Kaiserslautern and Körner of Ludwigshafen, oppose the licensing of this film because they must know that the things shown in it belong to the realm of imagination and are only produced in order to arouse popular feeling and to stir up passion and the spirit of revenge.

What I saw with my own eyes in Speyer—white women around 9 o'clock in the evening in a side street in the vicinity of Altgürtel, joking with black soldiers, eating chocolate, and doing even more than that—certainly does not look like the acts of violence of the black troops. The fact that three women sneak into the guard-house to sleep with the black guards is certainly not the fault of the occupying troops, still less of the occupation authorities.

The Hon. Deputies must also know that the black troops are very severely punished for any assaults upon white women, and that in such cases German officials are always called in to the trial. I learned that the hotel-keepers in Wiesbaden asked the press owners to give the facts and to show the falsity of the rumors that are being spread about the black troops, so that business will not be ruined by these lies.

As for the brothels, I shall tell you what I observed myself from visiting one of these places. The entrance to such a house is enough to convince you that you won't find women who are brought there by cunning and force. Any woman is free to leave at will. The behavior of these women would fill you with shame and disgust. Ten or twelve of them stand at the entrance, in their brothel clothes, for selection. When you go into the drinking-places you see these women sitting on the laps of the blacks, kissing them passionately. A guard with six men is stationed to keep order, and if anyone should take too much liberty he is thrown out or even arrested and punished. And they see to it that the military authorities do their duty.

I have been informed that in Ludwigshafen there were three times as many women as were needed at the brothel when it opened. A war-widow, mother of four children, was among them. But you must not think that all these women have come here for their own amusement. Most of them have been driven to it by poverty, unemployment, and the terrible increase in the cost of living. In this respect the Government has completely broken down. The women who worked in the factories during the war were turned out onto the streets as soon as their employment no longer brought profits to the war lords, and then they realized where they stood. It is all the same to the Government whether they go into the brothel or meet their fate on the streets.

THE BLACK HORROR, A BAD BUSINESS!

[From *Rote Fahne*, Berlin]

Nationalist hatred reaches its highest pitch with the threatening occupation of the Ruhr. Especially the "black horror" is used to stir up the unenlightened chauvinist workers in White-guard Germany. Phantastic descriptions of excited old maids relating to the horror of the French occupation are being spread as actual facts. Even a German "Kultur Propaganda Film" is being shown, in which each white woman and each growing girl is forcibly seized by Negroes in French pay and violently enticed into a brothel. In Berlin and elsewhere extravagantly financed protest meetings of German people are held against "race destruction," and even official places such as the medical chambers are spreading inflammatory protests in the medical and daily press and give grossly exaggerated accounts of violent attacks of Negroes upon unprotected German women. Of course, outrages by young men in the French or English "garb of honor" may occur. Such things will happen as long as militarism sends young men into foreign lands against their will for the sake of conquest.

Has anyone heard a word of indignation from the bourgeois world about the fact that in the fight of January, 1919, against the Berlin workers black "volunteers" and even black officers in Noske's white troops helped slaughter German workers? Has the armed German Nationalist ever been ashamed of his brotherhood-in-arms with the South Africans?

In the Rhineland the Moroccan troops, which are considered colored, have a racial origin very similar to that of the Turks, "Germany's good ally in the World War." Furthermore, one often reads of French soldiers getting 3 to 8 years in the house of correction for rape—penalties which were never inflicted by the German war court for such crimes during the German occupation in Belgium, France, Poland, etc., but only for disobedience to superior officers.

Particularly does it ill become the German medical organizations to drag in indignation and humanity, after they looked upon similar crimes of German militarism in half of Europe for four and a half years without raising a protest, and even aided in denying the notorious crimes of their own undisciplined soldiers in the celebrated explanation of the ninety-three professors and eminent scholars.

It is now evident, however, that all this protest and clamor is already becoming disagreeable to the Nationalists themselves. Now the Rhine business people are complaining about the poor patronage of visitors to the hotels and health resorts on the Rhine because, as a result of the extreme anxiety the right-bank Germans shun the Rhineland; also these protesting medical circles put themselves in the position of mouthpieces of the health resorts and bathing-beaches of the Rhineland to prevent their business from coming utterly to a standstill. We quote such an article from the *Berlin Medical Correspondence* of April 30, 1921:

"Health Resorts in Occupied Rhineland"

"In order to acquaint the German physicians with the conditions existing in the health resorts of the occupied Rhineland, the