

"I ACCEPT"

BY HAROLD TROWBRIDGE PULSIFER

I SHALL go out as all men go,
Spent flickers in a mighty wind,
Then I shall know, as all must know,
What lies the great gray veil behind.

There may be nothing but a deep
Unutterable void without a name
Where no sun hangs, no dead stars sleep,
And there is neither night nor flame.

There may be meadows there and hills,
Mountains and plains and winds that blow,
And flowers bending over rills
Springing from an eternal snow.

There may be oceans white with foam
And great tall ships for hungry men
Who called our little salt seas home
And burn to launch their keels again.

There may be voices I have known
And fingers that have touched my hair,
There may be hearts that were my own.
Love may abide forever there.

Who knows? Who needs to understand
If there be shadows there, or more,
To live as though a pleasant land
Lay just beyond an open door?

A PASSIONATE AMERICAN

FEW men in contemporaneous American political life have had a deeper and more constant feeling for what we are pleased to call Americanism than Franklin K. Lane, ex-Secretary of the Interior, who died on Wednesday, May 18.

The facts of his life may be simply stated. He was born in 1864, on Prince Edward Island, Canada, the son of a doctor, but he found his home in California while yet a child. He was a graduate of the University of California in the class of 1886, and during his life received a number of honorary academic degrees. On graduation from college he became a newspaper man; was admitted to the California bar in 1889; was corporation counsel of San Francisco for five years from 1897; was one of the earliest moving spirits in the campaign of reform in California, which resulted in the complete change of the political character of that State; was defeated for Governor of California in 1902 as the reform candidate on the Democratic ticket; was appointed a member of the Inter-State Commerce Commission in December, 1905, by President Roosevelt and held that important office for eight years, the last four months being Chairman; and was chosen by President Wilson as his first Secretary of the Interior, serving in that capacity for seven years. He resigned on March 1, 1920, partly because of the condition of his health, partly because he felt it necessary to practice his profession in order to provide for his family, and partly because conditions in the Cabinet during the last year or two of President Wilson's term were almost intolerably exasperating. He had suffered for some months before his death from angina pectoris, and died from heart disease a few days after he

had apparently recovered from a very serious surgical operation.

Both as Inter-State Commerce Commissioner and as Secretary of the Interior he was one of the most efficient public servants this country has had in recent years, commanding the devotion of his associates and subordinates and the entire respect of those who might naturally be opposed to him on political grounds or grounds of personal business interest.

I made Lane's acquaintance in California in the summer of 1888, when he and I were fellow-reporters on the San Francisco "Chronicle." When I got my place on that paper, I was a complete stranger in San Francisco, having arrived on the Pacific coast only a few weeks earlier. Lane was younger in years, but older in experience, and I shall never forget how he helped me in learning the ropes. I was attracted to him from the first, and, although he was only twenty-four years of age, I was impressed with his maturity, sound judgment, and determination to do good work. Even in those days he displayed the genial and engaging qualities which won him such hosts of friends in after life. But his enjoyment of human companionship, which is only another way of saying he was a good mixer, never let him slight his work or indulge in careless or slipshod methods, which, I think, constitute the one great serious fault of American daily newspapers. In a letter which he wrote to some friends when he was convalescing from the surgical operation he said:

"I have seen death come to men in various ways, some rather novel and Western. I once saw a man hanged, and I have seen several men shot and came very near going out that way myself two

or three times, but always the other fellow aimed poorly. I was being shot at because I was a newspaper man, and I should have been shot at. There must be public concern in what is printed, as well as what is truth, to justify it. That is something that newspapers should get to know in this country."

I do not believe that Franklin Lane was ever shot at because of anything he wrote himself, for, as I look back over the thirty years that have intervened since those early newspaper days, I think it may be said that "public concern" was the animating motive of Lane's career. He believed in America, he believed in the men and women who are making America, and in this sense he had a passion for Americanism. There is a little book, of only a trifle more than a hundred pages, of his addresses. It is entitled "The American Spirit" and is published by the Frederick A. Stokes Company, of New York. Without Pharisaism or cant or pomposity in every one of these addresses he urges the highest kind of American citizenship; the American pioneer, the American soldier, the American painter, sculptor, architect, landscapist, the American engineer, the American physician, the American philanthropist (and by philanthropist he did not mean the millionaire, but the modest man or woman who bought a Liberty Bond or worked in the Red Cross)—these are Americans who appealed to him.

A few years ago, in the latter part of his work as an Inter-State Commerce Commissioner or in the early part of his incumbency of the Secretaryship of the Interior—I forget which—I lunched with him in New York, and afterwards, walking across Madison Square, he told me that he had just been offered a guar-

anty of thirty thousand dollars a year with contingent profits to join a well-known New York law firm, but, although greatly tempted, he had turned the offer down, as there were things which he wanted to complete in his public service. That this decision was a real sacrifice is proved by the fact that it is announced that the estate which he left for his family was little or nothing.

As I think it over, I believe what most appealed to me about Franklin Lane was his genuineness. He was not afraid to express himself. He had sentiment without being a sentimentalist, visions without being a visionary, imagination without being a mere day-dreamer, practical judgment and compromise without being a materialist, passionate patriotism without being a jingo or a race hater. As a fine and cheering specimen of self-revelation there could not be anything better than the letter, already referred to in this article, which he wrote just before his death. I should like to print the whole of it, but space will only permit some extracts. He begins it like one of the epistles in the New Testament:

Franklin K. Lane, who is recuperating from an operation at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota, to a few friends:

It is Wednesday afternoon and I am now sitting up in bed talking to my good friend Cotter. Until yesterday I did not clearly visualize any one thing in this room, and did not know that it had a window except that there was a place that noise came through, but I did, know that it had a yellow oak door that stared at me with its great big square eye all day and all night.

Last Friday, you see, about ten in the morning I took the step that I should have taken months, yes years, ago. I was stretched on a stiff, hard table, my arms were clamped down and in three-quarters of an hour I had my appendix and my gall bladder removed, which latter was a stone quarry and the former a cesspool. To-day most tentatively I crawled on to a chair and ate my first mouthful of solid food. But four days ago I managed to shave myself and I am regarded as pretty spry.

Then, after commenting on various forms of tragic death which he himself had witnessed, he continued:

But never before have I been called upon to deliberately walk into the Valley of the Shadow and, say what you will, it is a great act. . . . Here was a path the end of which I could not see. I was not compelled to take it. My very latest doctor advised me against taking it. I could live some time without taking it. It was a bet on the high card with a chance to win, and I took it.

I undressed myself with my boy's help in one of the hospital rooms and then arraying myself in my best suit of pajamas and an antique Samurai robe which I use as a dressing-gown, submitted myself to being given a

dose of dazing opiate which was to do its work in about fifteen minutes. I then mounted a chair and was wheeled along the corridor to the elevator, stopping meantime to say *adieu* to my dear ones, who would somehow or other insist on saying *good-by*, which is a different word. I was not to be given the usual anæsthetic because my heart had been cutting up some didoes, so I must take a local anæsthetic which was to be administered by a very celebrated Frenchman. I need not tell you that the whole performance was managed with considerable *éclat*, and Dr. Will Mayo, probably the first surgeon of the world, was to use the knife, and in the gallery looking on were Dr. John Finney of Johns Hopkins, Dr. Billings of Chicago, Dr. Vaughan of the Michigan University, and others. On the whole, it was what the society reporter would call a *recherché* affair. . . .

For two days I had knowledge that this operation was to take place at this time and my nerves had not been just as good as they should have been. Those men who sleep twelve hours perfectly before being electrocuted have evidently led more tranquil lives than I have, or have less concern as to the future. Ah, now I was to know the great secret! For forty years I had been wondering, wondering. Often I had said to myself that I should summon to my mind when this moment came some words that would be somewhat a synthesis of my philosophy. Socrates said to those who stood by after he had drunk the hemlock, "No evil can befall a good man whether he be alive or dead." I don't know how far from that we have gone in these twenty-four hundred years. The apothegm, however, was not apposite to me because it involved a declaration that I was a good man, and I don't know anyone who has the right to so appreciate himself. And I had come to the conclusion that perhaps the best statement of my creed could be fitted into the words, "I accept," which to me meant that if in the law of nature my individual spirit was to go back into the great Ocean of Spirits, my one duty was to conform. "Lead, Kindly Light" was all the gospel I had. I accepted. I made pretense to put out my hand in submission and lay there.

He then proceeds briefly but graphically to describe what happened in the operating room.

The process there was lightning-like. I was in torture. "Lift me up, lift me up!"

"What for?"

"I have one of those angina pains and I must ease it by getting up and taking some nitro." That had been my practice, but I did not reason that never before had the pain come on my right side.

"Give him a whiff of ether." The tenderest arms stole around my head and the softest possible voice—Ulysses must have heard it long ago—"Now do take a deep breath." I resisted. I had been told that I would see the performance.

"Please do breathe very deeply—just one good deep breath."

That pain was burning the side out of me. I tried to get my hand up to my side. Of course it was tied down. I swore, "O Christ! This is terrible!"

"It will stop if you will reach for a big breath"—and I resigned myself. Men who are given the third degree have no stronger will than mine. I knew I was helpless. I must go through, I must surrender to that Circean voice. I heard the doctor in a commonplace monotone say, "This is an unusual case"—the rest of this sentence I never heard. . . .

I am doing well; cared for well; as happy as can be; have had none of my angina pains since the operation. And as I lie here I contemplate a frieze—a procession of doctors and nurses and internes, of diagnosticians and technicians and experts and mechanics and servitors and cooks—all, the great and the small, in profile. They are to look like those who have made their pretenses before me during the past year—the solemn and the stupid, the kindly, the reckless, the offhand, the erudite, the practical, the many men with tubes and the many men with electrical machines. Old Esculapius must begin the procession, but the Man with the Knife, regnant, heroic size, must end it.

What a great thing, what a pride, to have the two men of greatest constructive imagination and courage in surgery in the world as Americans, Dr. Charles and Dr. Will Mayo.

What a letter from a dying man! It is a practical illustration of one of Theodore Roosevelt's finest sayings: "Only those are fit to live who do not fear to die." And at the very end comes out Lane's instinctive pride in well-trained, efficient, sympathetic Americanism.

Ten years before I made Franklin Lane's acquaintance—that is to say, more than forty years ago—I made the acquaintance of another delightful American who, by a curious coincidence was to become, like myself, an admirer of Lane, although a much more intimate friend. I speak of Roland Cotton Smith, the rector of St. John's Church, Washington, D. C., the church which has ministered to a long roll of Presidents and statesmen. I first knew Cotton Smith as a crack tennis player in college. I admired and looked up to him for his skill as a tennis player, in which sport I was a mere duffer. I have since come to look up to him and admire him as an appraiser of spiritual values. When Franklin Lane took up his official life in Washington in 1905, he became a member of Cotton Smith's congregation. After Lane's death Cotton Smith, who happened to be in New York, came into my office to talk to me about this devoted American whom we both knew, one at the beginning of his career, the other more intimately at its end. The letter which Lane wrote on his deathbed and from which I have quoted was given to me by Cotton Smith. In it Lane speaks of diagnosticians. If I