

"The children are sick and the father earns so little."

"A tough lot," "a tough lot," the typewriter seemed to say as the permit was clicked off, to the growing joy in the eyes of our little pleader.

As he passed me at the door holding fast the paper he had won—his right to lay his brave young life upon the altar of Duty—his passport into the army from which there is no discharge—he lifted his glad eyes to mine and read the mother love I know they held.

Farewell, little lad! After to-morrow's sun has set, you will be no more. Across the borderland of childhood let me cry—Farewell, Little Lad!

FLORENCE STOLZE CURTIS.

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### ALTGELD'S GROWING FAME.

Portions of Oration Delivered by the Hon. Charles A. Towne at the Altgeld Memorial Service Held at the Garrick Theater, Chicago, March 10, 1907, on the Fifth Anniversary of the Death of John P. Altgeld.

John P. Altgeld is not dead. The essential part of him can never die. Even if our faith did not assure us that somewhere in a more congenial environment his strenuous and tender spirit continues its immortal journey of development, we still should recognize, in the just and courageous life that he lived, in the true doctrines that he taught, in the philanthropy that he exemplified, and in the heroic devotion of his death, contributions to the progress and happiness of mankind that shall awaken appreciation and gratitude among remote generations and continue to be potent and beneficent for ages, even after printed memorial and sculptured monument may have perished utterly. . . .

From what John P. Altgeld did; from what he said and wrote, and from what we and others who knew him leave on record concerning him, the world will finally construct its estimate of him.

Contemporary judgment of men who bear a large part in the life of their times is very often revised by posterity. When the violence of the contests in which they participated has died away; when the acclaim of the partisan and the denunciation of the antagonist are both stilled; when the events that formed their environment have drifted into proper perspective in the infinite corridor of the world's progress, there are possible a more complete review of the evidence and a more calm and reasonable temper in its consideration than any contemporary could command.

It is undoubtedly true that history has been unjust to many of its great men. A general acceptance of the justice of its verdicts is not inconsistent with the assertion that they have not infrequently bestowed praise where it was not due and visited censure where it was not deserved. In numerous instances these mistaken conclusions have endured for centuries before a tardy justice corrected them, and beyond question a large proportion of them will never be corrected at all. It is a sad reflection that the world must continue to lay the chaplets of its gratitude before many a pretentious mausoleum while the men whose tombs they should have con-

secrated must sleep forever in unremembered graves.

Contemporary opinion has, of course, great influence upon posterity; and in proportion as this opinion is general and wrong the danger of erroneous posthumous judgment is multiplied. When, therefore, a man passes away who has wrought mightily in some noble cause, but who in the struggle aroused the antagonism and enmity of opponents so powerful, so resourceful and so vindictive that they filled all the channels of publicity with systematized detraction and calumny, it is the sacred duty of those who knew him as he really was to rally, with all possible despatch and emphasis, to the defense of his memory; to the end that his character may be vindicated in the minds of sincere men whom misrepresentation has deceived; that a fair and honest record shall be submitted to the judgment of after time; and that the great principles for which he stood may be advanced and fortified.

Such a sentiment, my friends, explains the existence of this Memorial Association, whose purpose is thus expressed in the language of its founders: "To keep alive the inspiring memory of John P. Altgeld, volunteer soldier, jurist, statesman, publicist and humanitarian, and to inculcate the principles of free government to which he heroically dedicated his life."

The task of vindication is proving easier than at one time it seemed possible it could ever be. To men who remember the infamous accusations with which Governor Altgeld was loaded in those awful years of 1892 to 1900, by the most widely-read newspapers in this country; the confident mendacity with which his acts were misrepresented; the reckless aspersion of his motives; the tireless reiteration of catch-phrase and innuendo to foster false impressions of his personal appearance, his mental attributes and his moral character; the diabolical skill and audacity with which his utterances were distorted and mutilated, it is to-day almost impossible to realize that so much of the truth about him has already become so widely known. Some mitigation of these outrages was noticeable soon after the great campaign of 1896, and during the last two or three years of his life there was a marked change in the treatment accorded him by the leading newspapers. Yet the progress of justice was so slow that when on that bleak day five years ago we stood about his new-made grave and pledged fidelity to his memory, not one of us would have dared to hope that the fifth anniversary of his death would find the ancient rancour almost entirely gone, his teachings more and more widely studied, and the essential elements of his character so generally understood.

Yes, my friends, the world at large is coming to know what manner of man John P. Altgeld was. Passing strange is it to us who walked with him and loved him that any one should ever have failed to know. He himself has said that "Ideas write their characters on the countenance of man"; and who that had once looked upon his sad, benignant, serious face, furrowed by thought, rescued from an almost ascetic severity by as kindly a smile as ever spoke from lips and eyes, could so have misinterpreted nature's inscription as to find there the index

to anything but sincerity, courage, nobility, patience, charity, humanity?

These inherent qualities found inevitable expression in all that Altgeld said or did. Above all men he hated sham. Life to him meant only opportunity for noble activities. He took his vocation seriously. By birth and condition, by instinct, by experience, and by study and reflection, he was a democrat in the generic sense as well as in party political affiliation. He loved the simple virtues, the old-fashioned ways. His spirit was kin to the patriot fathers of our heroic age. Modern commercialism did not touch him. It could neither assimilate nor understand him. He feared it. He distrusted its corrupting, materialistic tendencies. He believed its current if unrestrained must undermine not only the supports of private character, but, in time, the foundations of the Republic.

Believing this, and being a man of sincerity and courage, he said it. Not seeing immediate results, he said it again and yet again, as ceaselessly and as relentlessly as ever old Cato called for the overthrow of Carthage. Being a man of purpose, he went to the limit of his capacity to put into action these things that he believed and, believing, declared. In political discussion he not only treated principles but also suggested programs. At conventions he formulated policies and adopted platforms. In office he put his convictions into practice and taught by example as well as by precept. He was a constant challenge to the social and industrial abuses of his day. He was a potential Nemesis to all special privilege. While he lived in undiminished vigor it could never relax its vigilance; nor, should his influence increase answerably to his industry and his fortitude, could it ever know security.

There was thus an irrepressible conflict between Altgeld and the dominant economic forces of his age. He survived into their predominance from an earlier and simpler system. Born thirteen years before the Civil War, and brought at once into the State whose founders had been the artificers of the Ordinance of 1787, his youth was nurtured in the atmosphere of Benjamin Wade and Joshua R. Giddings. It was the era of the public beginnings of Abraham Lincoln, of the renaissance of the principles of Thomas Jefferson and of the Declaration of Independence. There was abroad in the land a limitless enthusiasm for liberty. Men believed in the necessity and the eternity of justice. They talked about it. They sang about it. They prayed about it. They were getting ready to die for it.

Upon the sobriety and steadfastness of his exotic German stock there was thus grafted the tender native shoot of an idealism that proved to be readily assimilable, whose fruitage was a life's sincere and lofty purpose. Rooted in the soil, the tree stretched forth its branches toward the sky and made largess of its fragrance with every passing breeze.

This composite of conviction and enthusiasm carried young Altgeld into the war. In the years that followed it his maturing judgment took note of that remarkable development whereby, in a brief period of time, the idealism of 1860 was transformed into the materialism of 1900. It is probable that no war, such is the innate and ineradicable brutality of

slaughter, can be so glorious as not in some measure to deprave the majority of those who wage it, and especially of those who conquer in it. The war taught us the dangerous lesson of our strength. It bred a discontented energy. When the enemy dispersed we attacked the wilderness. When we ceased recruiting armies, we went to organizing corporations. The national debt piled up by war taught us to think in hundreds of millions in time of peace, and from the management of military loans we graduated to experiments with capital stock. Our altars erected to glory were cast down by the iconoclasm of wealth, while the inspiring formulas of the ancient service gave place to the magic of a single word, "Success."

When once the getting of money has become the supreme and controlling object of a people, it modifies their entire system of ethics. The end justifies the means. Morality has as little practical relevance as a nursery rhyme. Expediency becomes the final sanction of conduct. For a time the ancient standards are paid a certain perfunctory and formal observance, while everybody knows that right and wrong are meaningless terms in a game where self-advantage is the stake and where the implements are the primal instincts of savagery reinforced by all the resources and discipline of civilization.

It is impossible to estimate the strength of the forces arrayed against a man who has the temerity to throw down the gauntlet to the beneficiaries of this system. Social ostracism, financial ruin, political extinction, the poison of slander, and, most potent of all, the terrors of misrepresentation, accusation and sophistry through the news and editorial columns of a subservient press; these are some of the innumerable perils a man must face who braves the resentment of threatened privilege. Such perils Altgeld incurred, with full knowledge of their character, in order to expose the evils of our social and economic order and in the hope of arousing his fellow-citizens to the performance of their duty. Every resource of the system he opposed was employed against him to its limit. No other man in our day, and it is doubtful whether any other man at any time, was ever the target of such vituperation and calumny as was leveled at the devoted head of John P. Altgeld. The world knows how courageously and nobly he bore it. To the public at large he gave no sign. But he was no stoic. His forbearance was not due to insensibility. Keenly he felt the sting of the pitiless and remorseless persecution. His sensitive nature trembled and suffered under it, yet he nerved himself to meet it as the price he consciously and deliberately paid for the dear privilege of honest convictions and fearless speech.

A better day is dawning. There are not wanting many signs that the power of selfishness, of greed, of commercialism, of materialism, is rapidly waning. We are again to worship at the olden shrines and to form our national policies after the old ideals. When the new era shall have become firmly established, no name among those emblazoned high on the walls in the temple of justice to attest the people's gratitude to the illustrious men whose labors and sacrifices ushered it in, shall shine with brighter radiance than the name of Altgeld.