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Delivered at
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on October 21st, by Huston Thompson,
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"THE PUBLIC MAN AND HIS PROBLEMS"

Let us this evening reverse the moving picture of our daily life; for the moment blot out this beautiful city, with its bricks and stones and mortar, and rush and roar of machinery, and picture this country as it was in the days of the Indians.

There was then the comparatively peaceful life of the Red Man. In that life, he exercised a thing which we call instinct, and he lacked that which we call intelligence. By his instinct, he could foretell the approach of a storm down the lake; by his instinct he trailed game; in the story of the woods and of the birds, he foretold the coming and going of the seasons. In other words, he lived and moved and had his being through instinct.

Now let us view the picture of the present hour. We look toward the heavens and see machinery whirling through the atmosphere at an unbelievable speed. We focus our eyes upon a track and see a mechanical monster go by at the rate of one hundred miles an hour. A machine dives under the ocean and by the effect of human mind travels at a speed of twenty miles an hour. We utter words through a receiver, and by a mechanism the human voice is carried around the world.

Today, from early morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve, man is tied to a machine or dodging one, until he has become a slave to machinery.

Whatever benefit he has received from machines, he has paid the price, for he has lost that guide of pioneer days called instinct. In the complexity of his life today, he has reached the point where his actions must be controlled by reason and not instinct. In the noise and whirl of business, he is far from the

still small voice which guided his simpler predecessor, and he is in great danger of becoming a machine without a soul. Yet he clings still to his primitive instinct of right and wrong, and struggles to apply it to his complicated business of living.

Deep within him is the conviction that he must be master of his fate, that he must steer his course, unswayed by prejudice, unchanged by criticism, untouched by temptations of self-interest. His character depends upon his moral courage, - is he a weakling, are his opinions vacillating, does he become discouraged and frightened by unfortunate experiences?

Mark Twain once said "don't get more out of an experience than there is in it." For example, a cat will sit on a hot stove - once - and having sat on a hot stove once, will forever after refuse to sit on a cold stove.

Our modern man must learn the difference between a hot stove and a cold stove. His reason must teach him to get out of this experience with a machine-made world the best there is in it. He has before him responsibilities of which his Indian predecessors never dreamed, and opportunities which a few centuries ago would have seemed a fairy tale.

I have been talking of the human being in terms of an individual. Gather together a few million of such individuals and we have a nation, growing, developing, improving or deteriorating to just the extent that its citizens grow and develop. And with this growth comes the need for official machinery, governmental management of national affairs, laws and rules and regulations for the good of the people and of the country.

Sometimes in the bustle of business life we overlook the importance of governmental machinery, but every four years we are reminded; and at these times at least we take an account of stock. We stop to consider our progress - is the country growing in the right direction, or is it sliding down hill? Is public interest in the

One of the dangerous symptoms of waning interest is found in the attitude of the common mind toward public office. At some stages within the last twenty years, I have seen public office going begging at a discount.

Around about the year 1900, the man in public life was looked upon almost with pathos by those in the financial world. Then Theodore Roosevelt came on the scene and officialdom took on a charm that made men seek it in preference to the market place. With the passing of the Roosevelt administration the charm died away and was only revived when Woodrow Wilson made his entrance as a national figure. For the last two years business has again dominated the imagination and one holding public office is constantly pressed in notes of pity, with the question "Why don't you get out of office and make some money? There is nothing in political life at its best." The question has been answered by hundreds of Federal office holders who have resigned from official life because they could not live on their salaries, or because they could not withstand the tempting offers made to them by business.

Why do men go into public life if there is nothing in it? Why does the young man, holding some small official position in his municipality, or occupied in business life, dream that some day in this land of equal opportunity he may occupy the White House? Why the White House rather than the master of some great business house or a mansion on the avenue of our great metropolis?

Because, back of our scramble for wealth and fame, back of our zest for business, there is the consciousness that the strongest influence in our machine-made world is the guiding hand of the man who is master of our country's machinery. That man and his official associates are making the history of our nation; in their hands lies a power for public good beyond all reckoning, and an influence that reaches to the ends of the earth.

Our dreamer knows that in our great crises, the people of the country do not look to New York, or Chicago, or San Francisco -

they look to Washington.

The youthful mind envelops the nation's capital with the halo of history and the doings and sayings of great men, until this city, with its marble buildings and its green background, becomes in his mind the apex of American life.

How does this dream work out in actual experience? Let us suppose that our dreamer receives the call, that he leaves his home and takes up his life in the heart of official action. Inspired by the romance of Washington, he enters the field and makes an assessment of what lies before him.

Opportunity, so far as dealing with big things, is greater even than ^{he} imagined. The chance for the exercise of the initiative is unlimited, and in the first flush of his official life he welcomes the thought of being able to do those things which will affect the entire nation and of living to see the results of his efforts.

It is in this frame of mind that he soon discovers that he is surrounded by a wall, and that communication with his client, the people, is exceedingly difficult. This wall is composed of groups of men representing clients. The business man's interests are taken care of by the United States Chamber of Commerce, equipped with able and energetic men. The farming organizations have their representatives who give the lie to the fast fading idea that the farmer is not as intelligent as the city man. The laboring man is protected by wise and skilled advocates. In fact all of the great groups of this country are represented except the ultimate consumer - at least until recently when there came into existence an organization called the "National Consumer's League."

These groups cannot be criticized for such representation. They however must naturally stress the side of that which they represent, and they are naturally most interested in distribution to the consumer. The constant articulation on the part of these several representatives makes it very difficult for the official to hear the voice of the consumer and to strike a fair balance of the public needs.

It is a real task to hear all and get the point of view of each. He seeks to develop an unprejudiced, judicial attitude, and he struggles to keep his dreams and make them serve a practical purpose.

Dollars and cents take on a new meaning to him. He thinks in terms of millions and strives to find an equitable division of appropriations.

As a private citizen he has heard vague rumors of graft in government offices, but he finds that every expenditure that he makes is first limited by the provisions of a statute passed by Congress, and subsequently checked by accounting officers who are under bond; and he soon realizes that there is no opportunity to graft with the public funds.

He has read that Congress appropriated for the last year five billion, six hundred and eighty-six million, five thousand seven hundred and six dollars, and he has wondered, before he assumed the yoke of officialdom, what became of such a tremendous sum. He finds that three billion, eight hundred and fifty-five million, or sixty-eight percent of the whole, goes for the World War, or previous wars, by way of pension and otherwise. Another billion, or twenty-five percent of the total bill of the nation, is consumed in paying for battleships, armaments, and the upkeep of the army and navy. Three hundred and fifty million, or six percent of the whole, pays for all the ordinary expenses of the government, which includes the upkeep of the courts, Congress, and the executive departments, as well as public works of all sorts, public buildings, rivers and harbors, irrigation projects, roads and highways, parks, lighthouses, and everything except the Post Office Department which is self-supporting. There is left but a little more than fifty-seven million dollars, which is devoted to scientific, research, and educational work. In brief, the spiritual and intellectual well-being of the people is covered by an amount which is only one percent of our total budget.

It does not take the new official long to discover that he is working against the sands of time and that no time is being taken out. The span of life for him is four years. Somehow, in the confused miasma of Capital life, he is conscious always of the folks at home, and he feels that in his home state his success or failure will be determined by the advancement he receives in office during the four years term. If he is ambitious, this thought is a stimulus to him. It may also be a cause of worry when he sees other officials ascending the ladder of officialdom where the offices become fewer the higher the ascent.

His may be a plodding task, without the lime-light focus, though none the less important in its results. Or if he is imbued with initiative and dedicated to the advancement of his Government, he may suddenly emerge from a position which is considered by the peculiar judgments of Washington as commonplace, to the center of the stage.

Then his trials really begin, for every move he makes to advance the interests of the ultimate consumer, he is bound to tread on the sensitive corns of some interest that has been driving toward material success. Voices from every direction are hurled at him, and while he may have been of assistance to a great mass of the public, those in opposition are so vociferous that the timid mind quails with fear. Unless the administrative officer has patience and can meet the oncoming reaction quietly and with a tempered mind, he will falter and fail.

At this juncture, when he emerges from the obscurity of his office into the atmosphere of publicity, he is aware for the first time of the fourth estate. Some morning his outer office is filled with a group of very active young men who know what they want to get, and when they surround him for the first time, he feels almost as if he were on trial for some great offense that he is not aware of but must have committed.

When the clipping bureau's efforts are thrust upon him, he gets the first real shock; he finds that many whom he thought were his friends do not view his acts in that light, and others whom he regarded coldly or not at all approve of his acts. Sometimes the disapproval is so emphatic that he wavers in his own mind. It is at this point of development in a public official's existence that he either makes or breaks. If he weakens, his initiative comes to a halt and he learns the art of passing the buck, settling down to a sort of negative existence; but if he is strong enough to face the music, he moves on with certain determination, serene in his own mind and conscience that he is right, regardless of the temporary criticism of those who are pronouncedly vocal in their objection.

As one ascends official life toward the goal of the White House, this pulling and hauling of the administrative officer becomes more strenuous, and the voices of those in opposition become more numerous and louder, until one wonders how a Chief Magistrate of the United States endures.

History tells us that Washington wended his way from the Capital City to Mt. Vernon weary and sick at heart from the treatment he had received. The atmosphere that surrounded Lincoln was so surcharged with criticism and so recent in history that many who are still alive remember its intensity. Cleveland left the Capital under a storm of charges and has since emerged as one of our great Presidents. At one time it seemed a wave of criticism surged up against Roosevelt that for the time being appeared as if it might annihilate him.

Let those who believe in thought transmission imagine a modern tower of Babel with all the occupants on the outside and the Chief Magistrate of this country on top. Then imagine one hundred and fifteen million voices holding the wish and sending it along in wave thoughts to him that he might be directed in the right way. Can you imagine him doing anything but the right thing, and can you imagine any force that could stop him?

On the other hand, picture a wave of criticism flowing from all directions, with the great mass of the people indifferent and sending out no emanations. Is it difficult to imagine the handicap which he must overcome - can the human mind and will alone vault such an obstacle?

When I look back in history, coming down its pages from the days of our first Chief Magistrate, I am reminded of another great magistrate who was a Sheik of the desert. He was an upright man, successful materially and spiritually, and a great ruler. Suddenly some tribes of the desert swept down upon him and carried away all of his beasts of burden and his material resources. Then a hurricane destroyed his house and swept away his children. Fate, not satisfied, struck him down in body and he became so loathsome that he was driven out of the city gates and left to welter upon an ash heap. His name was stricken from the tribal lists and ^{even} his wife urged him to curse God and die.

In this state of mind he looked up across the desert and saw three Sheiks coming toward him. As he watched their approach, hope came into his heart and he said "At least these friends will understand my situation and have sympathy with me." So great was the emotion of the three, we are told that they waited seven days before they could control their utterances. Then one by one they began to explain, first with a prelude of sympathy, just what was wrong with poor old Job, never admitting that he had any right on his side. Eliphaz the eldest, the cultured, the confident; then Bildad the bookish, the narrow; then Zepher the young, the egotistical, voluble, and ignorant, poured forth their voices. But when Job in turn attempted to reply, not only did his explanations fall upon deaf ears, but the three turned upon him and rended him verbally.

At last Job rose and in that most famous picture of sardonic humor exclaimed "No doubt but ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you."

History repeats itself. All down the ages the leaders of men have been lauded and ridiculed, approved and criticized. The speeding up of life has made existence more and more difficult and public service more and more complicated. The man who is the servant of his people has not within himself the strength to meet the responsibilities that are thrust upon him. If he has not that judgment that comes from contemplating the universe as builded by the Master Architect - if he forgets that humanity moves slowly and that a thousand years are but a day in the development of the race, he is indeed a pitiful object of weakness,

But if he realizes that there is a greater force around about him, and is responsive to a Divine force that is within him, then by the impulse of his own thought he can come into contact with that greater force. That moment his mind will become serene. The atmosphere will clarify and his brain will be clear for action. Then he will realize that his only reward will be the satisfaction that comes from service. The crowds of witnesses around about him, for or against him, will not sway his judgment. His initiative will be fired anew, and he will welcome the opportunity that his nation has given him to serve it.

Public service today demands the solution of tremendous national problems.

As we look about, we behold what appears to be a mighty conflict developing between the cohorts of capital and labor. Shall the narrow land between the opposing camps be left a derelict? Is there no one to step into the breach, courageous enough when the situation demands it, to make even a "leap in the dark"? It is just as objectionable to join in the chorus of calling the laborer, or even the striker, a "bolshevik" or "anarchist", as it is to call capitalists "bloodsuckers". Reckless use of controversial half-truths will never secure a real union of classes, both equally essential to our nation's welfare.

Labor and capital to each other are like the two blades of a pair of scissors. Blade by blade neither of them is of much productive value, but employed together their productive value is enormous.

Here, if anywhere, we need sane and unselfish leadership to bring about a better understanding between elements of our nation which otherwise may drift further and further apart towards a situation of irreconcilable estrangement.

Take the realm of trade. Out of the business experience of past generations there has come down to us the doctrine of "caveat emptor" - let the buyer beware! - This principle appeared fair and equitable enough in its day, but does it operate justly under the complex conditions of modern commerce and trade? Consider, what means has the average buyer and consumer of knowing that the food, the clothing, and the fuel which he requires as necessaries of life, are wholesome and not imitation? How can he know about deceptive containers, "weighted" silk, "loaded" sponges, false indication of origin, misleading advertisements, misbranding, and the multitude of deceptive trade practices which threaten to victimize him?

Again, who is going to protect the guileless purchaser who lays in his winter's store of fuel, or the thrifty housewife who buys sugar for the canning season against the ever-busy profiteer? How is the ultimate consumer to find through the maze of modern bookkeeping and cost accounting figures with which the profiteer and the monopolist justifies his prices and costs?

War-time prosperity has bred a veritable craze for speculation. Unscrupulous men have seized upon the opportunity. Wild cat schemes of every color and shade are being worked. The honest small investor with his savings is up against it! Adroitly worked circulars and glib-tongued promoters are on the look-out for him, and only too often does he become a victim to their snares.

You say "caveat emptor" - "let the buyer beware"! But I ask, is it fair, is it just, is it at all in accord with the spirit of our

times
times to place such a responsibility upon the millions of individual buyers and consumers?

Here, it seems to me, an almost unlimited field for public service opens up before our eyes. Here opportunities beckon to the public official to serve as a faithful tribune of the people, shielding them against the greed and trickery of selfish interests, and upholding the standard of good morals in our business life.

As the domestic problems of our nation grow in number and importance from day to day, a yearning cry rings out through the land stronger than ever for progressive and constructive leadership.

The momentous tasks of adjusting the heavy war burden, of guiding the finances of the nation safely through these critical times, of eliminating class hatred and strife and promoting peace and prosperity, cannot be solved by selfish men or time-servers, neither by reckless leaders nor by reactionary men. It would be like giving the donkey his thistles with an occasional carrot.

To bang and bolt the door on progress is only to precipitate a struggle for un-thought-out modes of its accomplishment.

What we need are men of courage, character and probity, public servants with a conscience and a sense of responsibility to our nation as a whole and to God.

And back of these men of courage, must be the whole-hearted interest and cooperation of every citizen in our nation. One man with a few helpers, however great their leadership, however true their purpose, cannot meet the situation today.

We are like the Children of Israel, wandering around in a Wilderness of Democracy. Pioneer leaders of our country have had a vision of liberty and justice. Their minds have traveled into the future and found the land of milk and honey and wonderful fruits. But as in the ancient story, others declare that the promised land is a place inhabited by giants, and would condemn the seers to bitter condemnation and stoning.

We have taken the virgin soil of this great fertile country, and from the simplicity of the days of the Indian have grown in a few hundred years to a vast estate with unlimited possibilities. We have within our grasp the heights of success and power.

At last we find ourselves on the border of the promised land where every man shall have peace and prosperity, liberty and justice. Shall we go up and take possession, or shall we turn our backs and choose to wander in the Wilderness? The answer lies within the soul of each individual and the soul of the nation.

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