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"The Great Characters of the Nineteenth Century."

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The Greek Character of the Nineteenth Century. 253

This great century, "with its marvellous successes, and its equally striking failures," along intellectual, moral and social lines, is drawing to a close. To our minds it brings thoughts of the wonderful achievements of man and the problems he has both solved and left unresolved. For the future he has gathered many facts, and laid the foundation for greater progress. More than all others combined, it has lifted man-kind to a higher plane and given a clearer view of duties, of privileges and of the methods of progress.

While, to a great extent, the commercial spirit has dominated, it has brought to light two phases of character building, and while building for the material and physical, has not altogether omitted thoughts of the ethical. And especially has this been true in this latter half. When there has sprung up new ideal and aspirations in the human breast, pointing toward a soul development, along with the

great physical and mental growth. It is being recognized more and more that a fully rounded life has more than two phases to develop, and this recognition has forwarded the growth of new sentiments and paved the way for a brighter future. Certain great leading characters dominate the spirit of every age. They are found in every walk of life. Those of whom I speak belong to the political field, and their actions to the development of nations. This field exerts a great influence over all others and every element in it has its due effect upon the elements of others; therefore the better and purer the political action of man, the less in truth and value will be their theories of other movements. The cultivation of great character in this field is one of the needs of our age. There comes to our mind at present, as being of the highest type.

Our century opened in a period of upheaval and political change. New social forces were seeking for power, and the agitation of new political principles was in progress.

Napoleon was tramping under foot the thrones of Europe, and, but for a fatal mistake, might have been ruler of the world. Mistakes such as these arouse mankind, and though for a time the military spirit is in ascendancy, it soon gives way to the quick and more thoughtful mode of progress. In to many life of such a time, enters the magnitude of change, and the more thoughtful mind and kindlier spirits are the result.

Our three characters enter the stage of action about the same time (two in 1809, and the other in 1815) in widely different parts of the world, and to a great extent surrounded by different environments, schooled to different thoughts and moulded by contrasting wants. Yet all played an active part in the history of their countries, serving them faithfully and well. In many cases, they made progress possible, and with their definite ideas and plans moulded their thoughts into the nation, accomplished their great work and peacefully laid aside the duties of life, through which duties, conscientiously done,

they had drawn the strength of the government
and the kindly feelings of its people.

Germany, England and America honor
these great men most, but the world cannot
but inspect their work. Germany has Disraeli,
England, Gladstone, and the United States,
Lincoln. Why are these great national
characters,

Germany, at the beginning of the
century, could hardly be called a nation.
The feudal system left her a set of petty
king doms and free cities, and thus she had
remained. It was a part of the great battle
ground of Europe. War devastated and left
her cities a waste, her people poor, the land
almost a desert. Protestant and Catholic had
done this much for her people and their
country. The people had no time for thought,
either of education or liberty, and as a re-
sult the rulers had remained aristocratic.
Gustavus Adolphus laid the corner stone of
equality of ranks in the economy of nations.
Frederick carried on his great work, civil-
ized and made Prussia in the Eighteenth

Century. Bismarck has carried it forward in the nineteenth.

The early life of Bismarck was such much as that of any other young country noble. He was "noted for being a big, bulky, good-natured, reckless, and wild fellow," a leader of his set, and yet he had a naturally alert mind. After spending some time at the Gymnasium in Berlin and completing his education at the University of Göttingen, he served his year in the army.

His father's estate then required his attention, and here we find him as a very ordinary member of the upper class, spending his time with boon companions who were noted for their wild larks. All this time, his latent talent seemed not yet awakened. Marrying in 1847, he settled in a home, to which he always enjoyed returning. His personality did not strike one as being extraordinary. Poincaré noted well his solidity of frame, features firm in outline, with clear, deep blue eyes. His manner was genial and kind.

ly, but when fired by opposition was dignified, aggressive and quick spoken. His speech was clear and emphatic, unphased now and then by a gesture and quick flash of the eye. He seldom wrote, but was a continuous reader. Over all these dominated a strong will power, which he tried to the utmost to have obeyed. Situations were judged quickly, and their essence firmly fixed. The temper of the times was his constant study. With him "no two situations are alike, and no man should copy even himself. Through his long public career, we shall see how closely he followed this rule.

At the German Diet in 1851, he may be said to have made his first appearance in public life. He has succeeded in being heard, and in bringing Prussia to the front. After this, we can read his aim. In it he was open and straight forward. The unification and aggrandizement of Germany with Prussia as the leading state subordinates all other objects. To do this, he

did not hesitate to throw Austria out of the
 union. La Bona was the close of Austrian
 affairs as connected with those of Germany,
 Prussian arms and Bismarck's states-
 manship were slowly changing German
 interests. He did not wait for the people to
 act, but with judicious foresight to what
 was refused, gained his points and brought
 to Germany the glory. Parham, he considered
 as only a juggle of principles, while his
 was one of iron and blood. The confeder-
 acy was formed while affairs a broad slowly
 brought him in contact with France.

His opportunity had come. In the
 brief but brilliant campaign that followed,
 the military prestige of France was broken,
 German national feeling was intensified,
 and an Empire became possible. Prussia's
 king was at its head, and Bismarck its
 Chancellor. He dictated terms of peace at
 Versailles, and his power is shown by the
 Emperor's task when he said, "Roon whittled
 the Prussian sword, Moltke wilded it, and
 Bismarck has made her great by wisely direct-

ing his policy." Thus ended his long struggle for Human Unity. This accomplished, peace must be restored, and the resources of the country developed. Peace came with the coalition of France and the Triple alliance. Industry was forwarded by a strong protective tariff and a judicious consideration of laws regulating all its concerns. Germany was no longer a nation of doubtful status, but of strong and manly character.

Quied by the constant turmoil and intrigue, Bismarck now sought to resign, but in the universal protest that followed he found his power and used it to his advantage. It became one of his customs when opposed, to offer his resignation, but this occurred once to often, for in 1890 young Emperor William found it prudent to accept, and Bismarck retired to his country home where he employs his time quietly and enjoys the last years of his most useful life. Germany's great character of the Nineteenth century had fulfilled his mission. Great men often reach beyond

the minds of common men and lead where the latter can not follow. Great principles seem to be played for offch to others, while to themselves, they are the dominant factor of their lives, leading them to point out the way though they fall in the attempt. With highest sentiments and a Christian spirit, they accept the opposition of others as a mere factor of human life and only justly seek to persuade men to their views, acknowledging their mistakes if in after years they find they have made them.

Gladstone, the "foremost Englishman of his time" was just such a man as this. Liberality of view, yet consistency with principle guided his actions in both private and public life.

Born, as he was early in the century when England was struggling against democracy and Napoleon, naturally inheriting the thoughts and principles of the class to which he belonged, he became a man of conservative views and action. He overshadowed all reform movements and

the Tory party controlled England, English conservatism was at its height and dominated the thought of schools, Church and State. Taking into consideration these factors, we cannot but see how they affected his after career.

He entered life Dec. 29, 1809, and closed the last scene May, 19, 1898. He was educated at Eton and at Oxford, and in the latter school absorbed the conservatism of this Tory stronghold. He afterwards traced one of his greatest defects to his education here, namely "that of undervaluing the inalienable and inestimable principles of human liberty."

In 1831, after graduating, he traveled abroad, where the strife of state and democratic principles were first strongly called to his attention. In two fine letters "he challenged the attention of Europe to the Neapolitan government." His political career dates from 1835, when he became a representative from Warwick. He gradually rose through the various departments of government,

till he became a leader of the "Liberals," and as their leader was appointed Prime Minister when they were in power. It was in 1851 that he began his long fight with Disraeli which continued till 1876 when Disraeli entered the Prime and Gladstone refused to follow. His conservative views were overturned by the agitation of the "Cone" law and the "Jewish Disabilities" measures, after this we find him at the head of the Liberals.

In conclusion, we may sum up very well by saying he was an open-minded, sympathetic lover of truth, a thorough analyzer of all factors of life, a deep and original thinker, and having a character which was sustained by a "moral force beating its way against wind and waves of doubt." His great command of ideas and language drew minds to him, and his works have builded him a place in honor at the grave.

He was respected and honored by all parties. Of him, the conservative Premier, Marquis of Salisbury, said, "He

was ever guided in all his efforts by a lofty and moral ideal." He will be remembered, not so much for his political work as for the great example, hardly paralleled, in history, of a Christian statesman. The Czar of Russia wrote "the whole civilized world will mourn the loss of the great statesman whose political views were so widely human and peaceable." Thus, amid the heart felt sympathy of the world, England's statesman was laid to rest.

America, though her historical existence may be shorter than the other two nations of which we have spoken, has presented questions for solution and gone as far as any other towards solving them, has promulgated principles and established institutions of as great import, and has given to the world honorable character in their fulfillment.

This Century has brought our country face to face with the question of American sovereignty and human rights; the preservation of the Union and the establishment of

greater progressive elements than the world has ever before coped with. Character appears continually upon the stage of political and social action but it remains for our to conduct affairs through the stormy period of national history, and to come from it free unscathed by prejudice and sectional hatred.

This character was Abraham Lincoln, the soul of the Northern cause, and a leader not only as a political factor, but also as a social regenerator. Lincoln was born in an obscure part of Kentucky, Feb. 12, 1809, and was killed of the continuing spirit, at the hands of an assassin, April, 15, 1865. Varied experiences fill his early life. Coming as he did from districts sparsely settled, and at a time when the hardest physical work was necessary, he gained little common school education. He was his own teacher and the product of his environment. Natural tact and ability created in him a model self-made man.

He drifted from one calling to

another, serving as a soldier in the Black
 Hawk war, as a flat boatman on the Miss-
 issippi, later as a surveyor and then his
 genius carries him into the political field.
 He enters the legislature and soon afterwards
 is admitted to the Bar. From now on
 politics and the law has his constant
 attention. In these workings, he is a deep
 student and in both fields rises to marked
 attention. During his campaign for sen-
 ator, he came in conflict with Mr. Douglas
 and they traveled over the state of Illinois
 together, debating the great questions that
 were just then appearing on the horizon
 of American politics. In this campaign, he
 revealed to the people "his gift of oratory,
 his depth of judgment, and the soundness
 and breadth of statesmanship." Though de-
 feated, he had gained his point, meeting
 and successfully coping with this other
 powerful leader.

He was a close observer of politi-
 cal affairs, and soon saw the coming of
 the inevitable conflict between the slave

and the free states; and upon one principle he saw that the settlement must come. By this, he stood all through the great Conflict. In 1860, he was nominated for the presidency, and elected. As president, before him stood the great Question, "whether the higher union of nations should be preserved," and subordinate to it was the question of slavery which he knew could not last long. With vigor he brought all the forces of the great North to bear on the question, and his triumph in the four years of struggle did not only give him a place in the American Nation as a statesman but also in the world as a whole. He placed Union above State interests, and showed that states can again live harmoniously in a higher union.

Through the great struggle, we have not space to trace his acts, but we always find him energetic and persuasive though his sympathetic heart was almost smothered by the struggle. Peace

found him "full of generosity for the fallen rebellion, and hope full of the early adjustment of all difficulties"; whom he felt the North look a leader, the South a friend.

Briefly stated, his life was one of untiring labor and ceaseless devotion to principle. These factors raised him from obscurity to the highest pinnacle of American Statesmanship, and guided the nation through its greatest peril. An actor, he clearly and concisely stated his views, was scrupulously fair to his opponents, and never lost himself in a maze of policies and principles but "singled out the transcendent and supreme thought and made it a guide of all his acts." He established his place here and in the world's history. He was a true sympathetic type of greatness.

Craving as we have, these three great characters of the nineteenth century, we find certain factors which raised them above the run around them, supported and guided their work and which gave it fruitage by great progressive

movements. Though acting in widely different parts of the world, and upon different characters, they accomplished a great advance in national life and enterprise. All studied to a great extent the laws of human nature and social justice. They mastered the laws of government, held to a lofty purpose, and systematically worked towards the accomplishment of their ideas. Their energy was concentrated, and their plans simple and concise.

Thus they accomplished what many others failed in, because of the close study and able judgment of these factors. The world will remember their principles for centuries after it has forgotten the men, for they are woven into the social and political fabric of the day that every progressive move brings us face to face with them. They lived for a purpose.

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