Rights and Duties

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Rights and Duties

I SHALL assume, Mr. President and gentlemen of the governing board and of the faculty, ladies and gentlemen of the audience, that my business here today is with the members of the graduating class; that I am not here to discuss great questions of philosophy or jurisprudence or political science, whose relation to this occasion would be remote, but to find some word, if I can, which may have light and leading in it for these young men and women. To them, this hour ought to be sacred; whatever we can do to make it memorable and serviceable to them, we are bound to do.

For myself I will confess that in thinking of the problems of the future, so imminent and grave; of the serious questions that must be settled before this new century is very old; of the struggles that must ensue; of the overturnings that are sure to come; of the ideas, full of electric energy, which are abroad and certain to be heard from,—

> For all the mark of time reveals,
> A bridal dawn of thunder peals
> Whenever thought has wedded fact,—

in all this thinking my own mind goes quickly to the young men and women now growing up, those in the colleges and universities, those standing on the threshold of professional and business life; for it is upon them, beyond question, that the weight of these responsibilities is to rest. No one can so forecast the years as to tell just when the most serious test of our American institutions is coming. But it is safe to predict that important changes are going to take place during the first quarter of this century. We are all hoping that these changes will be accompanied by the least possible violence and turmoil, but it is too much to hope that we shall emerge into the new order without passing through some anxious and perilous days. By our neglect and indifference we have been permitting great injustices to intrench themselves; these cannot endure, and they will not be dislodged without conflict and suffering. The brunt of this battle is likely to be borne by the young people who are now getting their training for life. My eyes never rest on a company of these young men and women, that my heart does not begin to beat more quickly, and my thoughts to travel forth into those stirring times in which their manhood and womanhood will be tested. It is the merest commonplace to say that the future rests with them. The answer to many of these anxious questions now looming on our social horizon will be spoken by them. A great work of reconstruction, social, industrial, political, ecclesiastical, has got to be done, and the forces by which this work is to be wrought will be found in the minds, the hearts and the lives of these young men and women. The ruling ideas by which their lives are controlled will find expression in the civilization which will occupy the earth in the next half century. How great, therefore, is the need that these ideas should be right ideas; that they should learn to see things as they are, to get values into their right perspective, to know how to live.

The great need, of course, is wisdom. "Wisdom is the principal thing" said one wise man, "therefore get wisdom." Wisdom is more than knowing, it is knowing how. It is the practical quality. My old college president, Mark Hopkins, who was one of the wisest men I ever knew, defined wisdom as the choice of the right ends and of the right means to attain those ends. The wise man is one who knows what is worth having and how to get it; what is worth doing and how to do it; what to aim at and how to hit it. The application of this principle to life as a whole, and to the various labors and enterprises of which life is made up, is what we need most of all to learn.

What, then, is the end of our existence? It may seem a very simple answer, a sort of identical proposition, but it is true to say that our business in life is to live. We are here to live; we have no other calling. Not to vegetate, but to live; not merely to exercise our animal functions, but to live; to live as men; to fulfil and complete our manhood; to realize what is implied in the powers and possibilities of our own nature —that is the end of life. There is an old hymn which affirms that

'Tis not the whole of life to live,

but to say that is to put a low and inadeqnate meaning into the infinitive "to live." If it is meant that the whole of life is not contained in the narrow space between the cradle and the grave we may assent; but when we have begun to understand what it means to live, we shall clearly see that nothing larger or higher or finer or nobler is possible to us than just living. Living, for a man, implies knowing and enjoying, and loving and doing. It connotes a mind that is alive, and sensibilities that are alive, and affections that are alive and a will that is alive; a whole man, vital in every part, each faculty fulfilling its function.

"The evident end of any being," says a philosopher, "is to *be*, according to the nature given unto him. If the rose does not blossom, if the bee does not fly and gather honey, we say they have not fulfilled their destinies. If, then, the being be a rational and moral being, it evidently has a more elevated end,—that end which its fuller intelligence discerns and the higher constitution of its nature points to. This end is the amplest, loftiest development of which its nature is possible."

The most brilliant of the recent French philosophers, Jean Marie Guyau, has enforced this idea with more cogency of statement than any recent writer; to him life itself is the supreme good; it includes in itself the ethical imperative; to live in the largest and completest sense of the word is man's chief end. "If," says Royce, paraphrasing Guyau, "the single instinct, now become a conscious desire, wars with the whole of life, our interest in life's wholeness now consciously demands that the rebellious special desire be subordinated, that our wants take on the form of wholeness, that life be harmonized, and that the desire for more life, for more harmonious, extended, and intense life become the law of our being, ruling our special desires, putting them down if need be, giving life a plan, fulfilling the end of the Self in its wholeness."

This is not, to be sure, any novelty of doctrine. More than two-thirds of a century ago Tennyson was singing—

'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
O life, not death, for which we pant,
More life and fuller that we want.

And it is almost two millenniums, since an old man was writing to a young man, showing him how to "lay hold on the life which is life indeed."

But, as Guyau has so convincingly shown us, life is far from being an individual possession. Even man himself is not a monad. "Individual consciousness is a compound of all the cells that are united in the physical organism;" it is "a *We* rather than an *I*," as Espinas would say. As a tree is not an individual, but a republic rather, thousands of individual lives co-ordinated in a community, each bud being an individual life, so man is in himself a society, a combined group of living cells united in a common consciousness. But this is only the beginning of interdependencies and co-operations. For this human personality, whom we wrongly name an individual, finds its life only in vital union with other lives. To live is not to separate ourselves from our fellows, but to unite with them in multiform ministries of giving and receiving. We are parts of a whole, and can no more consider our interests separately from the rest, than one of the wheels of a watch or one of the links of a chain can set up a separate interest and figure out its rights and liberties and possessions without reference to the other wheels and the other links. "One cannot," says Professor Royce, "*first* live for himself and *then* for others. To live his own life is to recognize his organic relationship to his fellows. My desire to love is as much a part of my own inner life interest as is my desire to eat. If I want to live largely, intensely, and in unity I want to live a life that cannot be conceived alone. I want to *love* largely, intensely, harmoniously."

If living is our business in this world, we shall be compelled, then, to recognize the fact that our life is primarily and constantly a life in relations. It is achieved only when these relations are discerned and fulfilled. It is no more possible to live separate from our kind than it is for the plant to live isolated from soil and air and sun.

"The bee," says Maeterlinck, "is above all, and even to a greater extent than the ant, a creature of the crowd. She can live only in the midst of a multitude. When she leaves the hive, which is so densely packed that she has to force her way with blows of the head through the living walls that enclose her, she departs from her proper element. She will dive for an instant into flower-filled space, as the swimmer will dive into the sea that is filled with pearls, but under pain of death it behooves her at regular intervals to return and breathe the crowd, as the swimmer must return and breathe the air. Isolate her, and however abundant the food or favorable the temperature, she will expire in a few days, not of hunger or cold but of loneliness." In man, personality has had a more complete development; independent life and action is with him a larger factor than with the bee; he might maintain his physical life for years in solitude; but all that is significant and distinctive of manhood would drop away if he were isolated; speech would be lost, thought would be paralyzed, love would be atrophied; even if the race could be propagated by some autochthonous method, all that we now understand by the life of a man would disappear with the rupture of the social bond

We are not, however, autochthons; the fact of parentage confronts us on the threshold of life; there is a society of three at any rate,—father, mother, child,—involved in the existence of every one of us. And this small natural group to which, in the narrower sense, our life is due, is bound no less really, if somewhat less obviously, to the entire social order in the midst of which we live. This organic relation of parts to the whole and of the whole to the parts is the fundamental fact of our lives. You cannot understand your own life, you cannot think about yourself or about anything else rightly, you cannot normally exercise the feelings and sentiments which are part of our human nature, you cannot make any right plans of living, save as you fully accept, as an integral part of your life, this fact of your organic and vital relation to your fellow men.

"If I want just to live, for life's sake"—thus Professor Royce interprets Guyau, "I can no longer separate my own from the common life. The richest interior life, as for instance the life of thought, is at the same time the life that is most obviously social. I cannot think alone. I can only think with others. If I want to live the thinker's life I must then make it part of my aim that there should be other thinkers in the world, my equals, whose ideas are as valuable to me as my own, and whose mental advantage is as much a part of my goal as my own in tellectual growth. All communication is social; if you will, altruistic. It is done for the sake of those to whom I speak. But it is also done for my own sake, since utterly uncommunicative thought quickly comes to mean nothing. Thus life and action exist only through their fecundity. Mere egoism is self-mutilation. Life is expansive, goes beyond itself, lives in social relations, is best for me within when it is best expressed for those without."

If you question this, ask your biologists. They will tell you that the very principle of life is expansion; that the primal cell divides to multiply and multiplies by division. The more intense is the life the stronger is its tendency to expand and find its fulfilment in other lives.

Our business is life, and we live in relations; we are parts of a whole to which we are vitally and organically related. Each has a function to fulfil, and we behave as moral beings when each discerns the function which belongs to him and by his free choice seeks to perform it. When functions are performed by moral beings we call them duties. And the simple but momentous truth which emerges from this analysis is that the fundamental fact of our social and civic life is duty. The one thing needful to healthful social life is that each one should play his part, fulfil his function, do his duty. It is when this fact is kept uppermost in all our thinking, our teaching, our contriving, our working, that the conditions are fulfilled on which our social welfare rests. If any other thought is emphasized more than this in our political and social theories, if any other idea takes precedence of this, there will be trouble and confusion, sooner or later; for it is our ruling ideas which make or mar our social structure. If we want to live together peacefully, usefully, productively, we must recognize and respect and obey the law of life which is service, ministry, helpfulness. This is the one thing which our children should be taught—the one principle which should be central and fundamental in their training. In the family they must never lose sight of the fact that each has a part to perform, a contribution to make; that the happy life of the household is the result of the fulfilment by every member of the household of the function which belongs to him. When they go out into the larger social relations they must learn that the same law governs them; that the question of questions for every man in every association to which he belongs, in every position which he occupies is how he may do his part, how he may render the service which is due from him, then and there, to those who are round about him. Especially true is this of all our civic and political relations. The one word which describes the life of a citizen is duty; the one principle which governs his life, if he is a good citizen, is devotion to duty. Something is due from every man to the community in which he lives, to the state or the nation to which he belongs; to understand what is due from him, and to render what is due from him, is the supreme wish, the controlling aim, the ruling passion of the good citizen. His entire relation to the commonwealth is defined, to his own thought, in terms of duty. He knows that the commonwealth is a living organism, and that it lives, as the body lives, when each member fulfils his function; that the paramount question for every man must therefore be whether he is doing the part that belongs to him as a member of the civil or political body to which he belongs.

It is evident that any political society in which this principle was made regnant through the habitual thought and action of its citizens would be the abode of order and peace and universal welfare. We should see in it a social organism conforming to its law, living as a social organism should live, living heathily, therefore, and prosperously, with no formidable foes to fight, and no abuses to chastise, and no parasites to exterminate; a community in which crime and pauperism were accidents and in which political jobbery and misfeasance were practically unknown.

We are not acquainted with any such community. And the fact on which I desire now to fasten your attention is that we are not acquainted with any community in which the principle that we are considering is even recognized as the regnant principle of the life of the commonwealth. There is no political society in which I have ever happened to live in which duty is regarded as the constructive idea. When men and women, American men and women, think about their relation to political society, the idea to which their minds go most directly is not duty, but something very different. I do not mean to say that they never think about their duty to the commonwealth; most of them would recognize some measure of obligation; but I mean that this idea is not the one which is central and regulative in their conception of their political relations. It is of their political rights that they they think first and oftenest. Rights, not duties, are the foundations of the political philosophy by which we explain to ourselves our relation to the state. It is our rights, as citizens, that we are chiefly concerned about, and that we are always seeking to understand and to define and to assert, and to maintain. This is the aspect of political society upon which our customary thought is fixed. The whole tenor of political discussion makes this idea central. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," says the document to which we turn as the summation of all that is fundamental in our political theories, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Rights, "unalienable Rights" are the subject matter of political philosophy. Duties are secondary interests. It seems to be considered that if our rights are claimed with sufficient emphasis and maintained with sufficient tenacity duties will take care of themselves. The right to vote, the right to hold office, the right to bear arms, the right of self-defense, these are the phrases which convey our conceptions of what is essential in citizenship. The "franchise" is what we call our personal charter of participation in the government, and a franchise is a right, or a privilege; the word conveys no suggestion of public duty. All the discussion of the newspaper, the caucus, the stump, the legislative chamber, gathers round this notion of the rights of the people; that is the phrase which the demagogue learns to conjure with.

The influence of this conception is found outside of politics. It is likely to affect the entire social attitude of the man who entertains it. He learns to think of this as a country where every man has a right to do what is for his own advantage. He has a right to be protected, of course, by the laws, in the use of his liberty, and beyond that he has the right to do what he will with his time, his talents, his social opportunities, his capital; to make all the money he can; to spend it as he pleases; to push his personal fortunes by every means within his reach; to minister, in every way that seems good to him, to his own personal comfort and pleasure; to divest himself of all responsibility for the order and welfare of the community in which he lives. If rights are our main concern; if society rests primarily on rights, this is a natural and logical conclusion. Under the influence of such a ruling conception it is not to be wondered at that employers and laborers are gathered into hostile camps, maintaining their respective rights by the most destructive wars. Even into the family these conceptions have been creeping; we have been invited to conceive of this primordial society as based on rights; and we have learned to discuss women's rights and men's rights and children's rights in such a way as to obscure the real bond that makes the household one. It is a sad day in any household when the disposition of the individual members to emphasize their rights begins to be manifest. It is not by standing up for our rights as husbands and wives or as parents and children, that we promote the peace and happiness of the home.

It is by realizing what the consequences must be of making rights rather than duties central in the family relation that we are able to understand what is actually going on in the larger social organism which we call the city or the state. The constructive principle of the one society is the same as that of the other; life is the law of both; and the parts or members of any living thing are not contending for their rights, they are performing their functions, they are doing their duties. The same morbid conditions which would be found in the human body if the various organs, instead of performing their functions began to make it their concern to get out of the general circulation as much as they could for themselves; the same morbid conditions which would appear in the family if each member thereof put rights above duties in his thought about the family relation, must appear in the commonwealth when the thought which is uppermost in the minds of its citizens is a thought of rights rather than of duties.

It is thus that we confront what seems to me a radical defect in the habitual thinking of the average American,—a wrong conception of what is fundamental in his relation to that government of his of which he is never tired of boasting. I do not say that this attitude of mind is universal, I only say that it is the general attitude, the prevailing attitude, that which gives form and tone to our public life. There are many among us who think much of public duty, and most of us have some thoughts about it; but the political idea which is uppermost in the mind of the average American is the idea of his rights as a citizen.

It is a question of proportion, merely, of more and less. We think more of our rights and less of our duties: whereas if we were thinking normally—if we were conforming our thinking to the law of life—we should think more of our duties and less of our rights. It is a question of proportion, merely; but questions of proportion are of tremendous consequence. The deadly poison and the refreshing cordial may be composed of the same ingredients, with the proportions slightly changed; the question whether you shall live or die may be the question whether there was a little more of this or a little less of that in the draught which you have just swallowed. And the question whether the *emphasis* of our thinking about our relation to the commonwealth rests upon rights or duties is a question of life or death to a democracy.

Let us follow this theory of rights to its logical issue. The citizen possesses the right to vote. A right is something personal to one's self, something that one can do with as he pleases. The right to vote involves the right to refuse to vote or to refrain from voting. It is also generally understood to involve the right to cast the vote in such a way as shall secure the individual advantage of the voter. That, in the current conception, is what it is for. That conception easily makes room for the idea that the voter has a right to sell his vote for money. May not a man do what he will with his own? There are a great many citizens in the United States today who are logical enough to put this construction upon the matter; a vote, to them, is something which they can turn into money. This is the natural result of emphasizing the idea that the elective franchise is a personal right.

Much the same thing can be said of office-holding. The citizen, we say, has a right to hold office. The natural result of emphasizing the right has been to convey the idea that the office which a man holds is his to use for his own aggrandizement. The whole spoils system rests on this idea. It means that he has a right to use the patronage which he can control to build up for himself a political machine by which his promotion may be secured, and a right to make himself, as long as he can, a pensioner upon the public treasury. It is not far from this conception of office to the idea that he has a right to use his official opportunities to enrich himself at the expense of the people whose representative he is, by granting legal privileges to those who live by exploiting and despoiling the people.

These, I say, are the logical and inevitable results of emphasizing rights and liberties as the central elements of citizenship. Rights are personal, individual; when I think of them my attention is concentrated upon myself. My interests are my main concern; for the legal definition of a right is a legally protected interest. The entire result of putting the emphasis of our thinking, our teaching, our discussion upon rights is to develop an unsocial temper, a disposition to seek our individual good at the expense of the community.

Suppose now that the logic of life had been followed. Suppose that the idea of duty had been made the central and constructive idea of our common life, from the beginning: that we had learned habitually to consider all our civic relations as based upon functions rather than rights, upon duties more than liberties or privileges. Suppose that we had been in the habit of speaking of the elective responsibility instead of the elective franchise, and of thinking of voting primarily as a duty owed by us to the commonwealth and not as a right claimed by us from the commonwealth. Such a habit of thinking would have compelled us to approach the whole subject in a different spirit. The first question to be decided in conferring this power upon men would have been whether they are qualified to perform it. If voting is primarily a duty it is certainly no man's duty to undertake a task for which he has no fitness. And those on whom the power was conferred would have been constrained to think about it very differently from the way in which the multitude are in the habit of thinking. When I am thinking of my duties I am considering the interests of those to whom my duties are due. When I am thinking of my rights I am considering my own interests. A citizen to whom voting is a duty is in an entirely different state of mind from one to whom voting is a right. The one must be in a social temper; the other may be in an entirely unsocial temper. The one to whom voting is a personal right may easily entertain the idea of selling his vote; the one to whom it is a duty cannot think of such a thing.

The same reasoning applies, of course, to office holding. The man who regards it as a duty will not dream of setting himself up as a candidate for an office for which he is unfit, nor will the citizens, who so regard it, dream of committing office to such a man. And, on the other hand, the community in which the duty of serving the state is the paramount sentiment will not be composed of people the great majority of whom always say when public service is required of them, "I pray thee have me excused."

Consider how radically changed would be the attitude,—the social attitude, the moral attitude—of the great mass of American citizens, if the emphasis of their thinking could be shifted from their rights to their duties; if they could be taught from infancy to think that citizenship rests upon duties rather than upon rights, and that when in a democracy, as in a family, duties are faithfully performed, rights may be trusted to take care of themselves. Is it not entirely obvious that the social and political evils of which we complain are due to the fact that we have emphasized rights at the expense of duties; that our entire system of political philosophy has fastened the attention of the people upon their interests rather than their obligations?

I find in a very thoughtful essay by Professor Giddings the same conclusion reached by another line of argument. He is examining the watchwords of democracy,—liberty, equality, fraternity; and he says that they " express a perfectly possible order of coexistence, but an impossible sequence. That is to say," he explains, "we cannot begin with liberty, irrespective of fraternity and equality, and expect that liberty will then develop into fraternity and equality. It is more likely to develop into the widest inequality and burning hatreds. If, however, we have first fraternity we can also have liberty. Men who are alike, who have common interests, who are like-minded, can live together on a basis of mutual agreement without any coercive power above them to keep them in order. Men of different nationalities and faiths, if also of discordant minds, can live and work together for a common purpose only when a coercive power maintains order among them. Fraternity, then, must be antecedent to liberty and not liberty to fraternity, if liberty and fraternity are to coexist."

The spirit of fraternity is the spirit of mutual service; brothers are not, normally, asserting rights; when they get into the law courts that bond is sundered.

Perhaps we may get a clearer view of the distinction I am trying to make if we look at it from another view-point. The notion which often prevails concerning our democracy is that it is simply an extension of privilege. The privilege of ruling which once belonged to the monarch and the aristocracy is now extended to the people. What is privilege? It is power claimed or conceded in derogation of the common interest. It is a possession which one holds adverse to the claims of others. The privilege of ruling, which was once enjoyed by the king and the nobles, is now divided up among the multitude. To the king and the nobles this was a means of aggrandizement; so it is to the people who have received it at their hands. The king and the nobles were supposed to use it to compel others to serve their interests; the people now endeavor to use it, each for himself, to make his fellows serve his interests. A vote is therfore a weapon which a man can wield in the protection of his rights and the promotion of his fortunes; an office is an opportunity of getting a living at the public expense or of exercising power over others, which is one of the common objects of selfish desire. Those whose minds are imbued with this fundamental idea of false democracy, that it is simply the extension of privilege, are apt to reveal their belief in their conduct. The tax-payer whose mind is infected with this notion will hide his property from the assessor; he wishes the benefits of the commonwealth, but he intends that others shall pay for them. The shiftless pauper will get his food and fuel from the public crib; why should he work when there are funds on which he can lay his hands? The selfish politician will seek office for which he has no fitness and will use his opportunities in office to enrich himself. The greedy corporation will scheme to get contracts by which it may heavily tax the public. The demagogue will attack the corporation in order that he may get his hands into the public treasury. Citizenship, in this conception, is the privilege of levying toll upon the community; nobody will do anything for the public unless he hopes in some way to get gain out of it for himself. If citizenship, in a democracy, is only the extension to the many of the selfish privileges formerly enjoyed by the ruling few, this is the logical way for the citizens of a democracy to behave.

The bottom difference between false democracy and true democracy is that the essence of citizenship is privilege in the one and service in the other. In the one the typical citizen is using what power he has to make all the rest minister to him; in the other he is identifying his interests with those of all the rest and seeking how he may promote the common welfare.

I am not going to try to tell how much there is of false democracy and how much of true democracy in the United States of America. I believe that there is a great deal of genuine unselfishness in the hearts of our people, and that there are many in office and out of office who are ready to serve without gain or reward, many who do not wish to receive from the commonwealth benefits for which they make no adequate return. Yet not a few, even of these, I fear, are cherishing a false theory of this relation,—a theory that government is a kind of equilibrium of warring selfishnesses; a system of checks and balances in which the greed and rapacity of one is neutralized by the greed and rapacity of another, so that in the universal scramble a kind of rude alligation of interests is wrought out. That theory rests, of course, on the notion that the foundation of citizenship is personal privilege, and it warrants a thoroughgoing selfishness in the relation of the individual to the state. The theory is bad enough to give us pandemonium; the relief is in the fact that there are a great many among us who are far better than their theories. But it is too true that there are millions who are more consistent; who believe in total political depravity and, as the wag said, live up to it as well as they can; who accept, *ex animo*, the principle of a false democracy, that citizenship is personal privilege, and conform their conduct to that principle. Just to the extent to which this theory governs the conduct of the citizens, do the active social forces tend to the destruction of the state. A democracy founded on that principle would be the worst possible form of government. The greatest tyrant that ever existed could not begin to do the injury which such a democracy would be sure to do. If the game is grab, seventy millions of grabbers are indefinitely worse than one grabber. If ruling is a matter of privilege, we do not mend matters much by splitting privilege in to fragments and distributing them among the populace. Armed with these fractional privileges the populace becomes the worst oppressor the world has ever known.

It might be well for us to reflect that kings do not always assume that ruling is with them a matter of personal privilege. The kings of England bear upon their crests, from childhood, as Princes of Wales, this motto: "*Ich dien;*" I serve. If that were really true of a king, if he accepted heartily the words of the only real King who ever lived upon this planet, "He that will be chief among you, let him be the servant of all," we should have less reason to complain of kings. Unhappily it has not been true of all kings; too often they have exalted privilege above service, and that is the false kinghood. But as the distribution among the people of the ruling principle of the false kinghood creates a false democracy, which is the worst government in the world, so the distribution among them, and the hearty acceptance by them of the ruling principle of true kinghood, the principle of service, would bring in the true democracy, which is the best government in the world. A democracy in which all the people were seeking, not each to intrench himself in privilege, but each to minister to the good of all,—a democracy in which greed was supplanted by good will, and the joyful effort of the united community was an effort to increase the common fund of good—that would be a political society in which, I think, we should all like to live.

I do not think, young men and women, that it is possible to overstate the importance of the subject which I have brought before your minds this morning. Your own happiness, the happiness of the communities in which you live, will largely depend on the extent to which this simple, elementary truth is recognized and obeyed. The radical evils now infesting society, the dangers with which our civilization is threatened result, in the last analysis, from the fact that men have put privilege before service and rights above duties. In doing this they have reversed the order of life, for the members of any living organism know no privilege apart from service, and get their rights in fulfilling their functions. That is the law of life; it is the law of social life; and we shall never have peaceful and prosperous social life until we understand it and follow it. We are members one of another; that is the eternal fact, and any system of politics or jurisprudence which disputes it or tries to evade it will end in frictions and fractions, in disintegration and chaos.

It seems to follow from this argument that what is most needed in this democracy is a radical change in our ruling ideas concerning the foundations of citizenship. That is the serious fact. It is idle to imagine that changes in our governmental machinery, or in the organization of our industries will bring us peace; the trouble lies deeper, in our primary conceptions. What we have got to have, if we want the true democracy, is a different kind of men and women,—men and women to whom duties are more than rights, and service dearer than privilege.

The great questions which you will have to solve will find their prosperous solution in the recognition of this principle as fundamental in society. And the call which comes to you from "the future in the distance" is a great and urgent appeal that you will do what you can to get this conception deeply fixed in the thoughts of your fellow men.

You think that a large undertaking, and it is; but greater things than this have been done in the world's history and many mighty forces are working with you to prepare the minds of men for the reception of this great truth.

One thing you can do, every one of you. You can accept this truth for yourselves, and let it govern your own lives. You can resolve that, by God's grace, you will endeavor henceforth to make the performance of your duties and not the assertion of your rights your paramount concern in all the relations in which you are placed, social relations, business relations, political relations. You can determine that henceforth, if God will help you, you will think less about getting what the world owes you, and more about giving the world all the love and service that you owe to it. Would that be a change of heart? To some of us it would, no doubt, be a change of heart, a real conversion; it is, in fact, the only kind of conversion that amounts to anything. Could you do it without God's help? No; no man ever did any good thing without God's help,

—just as no man ever rowed down stream without the help of the current. If you go the way the river is going you get the help of the river. If you fling yourself upon the current of God's almightiness, it will bear you up and carry you on. For that is the way the river is going! The increasing purpose of God, flowing through the ages with resistless stream, to which every discovery, every invention, every revolution is tributary, sets steadily toward this divine event of coöperation, solidarity, brotherhood. That is what democracy means, and it is time for us to get hold of its real meaning.

"The world has lost interest," says Charles Ferguson, "in the discouraging theorem that no man is better than another. Nor does it find satisfaction in the rule of the majority. There is no advantage in being bullied by a crowd. The democracy of blank negations is played out.

"Yes, let us confess it plainly, if democracy contained what the politicians have said that it contained and no more, it would be an entirely hopeless enterprise, the climax of unreason, the apotheosis of the absurd, the consummate delusion of history, the destruction of every sweet and human thing and the end of the world. . . . .

"Democracy, regarded as a balloting contrivance for equating the hoof and claw of warring private interests, is an ingenious futility. Let it pass now to its place in the museums of antiquities."

It is for you, young men and women, for you and those who will stand with you, to lift into the light the banner of the new democracy, which differs from the old as the Copernican astronomy differs from the Ptolemaic; to discern its divine meaning, and believe in it, and bear witness to it, and live to lead men into its larger freedom.

I give you joy of that future which many of you will see, and part of which you will be. It will be a better time than any of us have ever known, because men will more and more discern and obey the law of life. Good would it be, when the clock of this century shall strike high noon, to stand with those of you who will survive and look back upon what has been won for freedom and humanity,—upon what you shall have helped to win,—and listen to the songs that shall celebrate your triumph:

"Hail to the coming singers!
Hail to the brave light-bringers!
Forward I reach and share
All that they sing and dare.

"The airs of heaven blow o'er me,
A glory shines before me,
Of what mankind shall be,
Pure, generous, brave and free.

"A dream of man and woman,
Diviner but still human,
Solving the riddle old,
Shaping the Age of Gold.

"The love of God and neighbor,
An equal-handed labor,
The richer life where beauty
Walks hand in hand with duty."

We shall not all be there, but in that glory you will not forget this day; and there will be something of our lives, I trust, in the hearts that throb to the music of that millennial song.