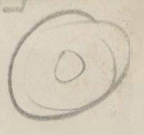


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BROOKINGS  
SOME REASONS

FROM O. M. NORLIE  
COLLECTION

FOR CELEBRATING  
the one-hundredth anniversary  
of Norwegian Immigration

A sound, well balanced man who is a true child of our times and of our <sup>the</sup> christian civilization will think more of his wife and children than of anything in this world, not even excepted <sup>ing</sup> his own life.

In other words, his chief aim is to make his nearest of kin as happy as possible.

Other races, such as the Chinese, for instance, make this aim more comprehensive than we do: They take great pains to make both their ancestors and their descendants happy.

We are drifting away from the habit of caring for those who have passed away. For better or worse, things invisible are slowly losing ground among us. One very practical result of this change is that there is more time and energy left for looking out for the future. Never before in the history of man have the masses been so bent on ignoring the past and trying to build a happier future on this earth.

In this respect we Norse-Americans do not differ materially from contemporaries sprung from other national sources.

In fact, thousands upon thousands of Norse-Americans are in our country today as a result of their parents, grand-parents, or great-grand-parents having emigrated to a land where the burdens of life were expected to press less heavily on their children, children's children, and so on.

For years my father was hesitating whether to go or not.

When the die finally was cast, some one thought it was strange that he would emigrate, for he was getting along much better than the average in that neighborhood. His explanation was characteristic: "When the children get big they will go anyway." He was wise enough to see that on the one hand it would be easier for us as children than as grown people to begin life's battle in a foreign people

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using a tongue that we did not understand; and that, ~~and~~ on the other hand, both he and mother, who were past the prime of life, would find it difficult or even painful to adjust themselves to the new conditions. But they were willing to make the sacrifice for the ~~old~~ sake of us. I wish to emphasize this thought: I think my parents by coming to America made a sacrifice for the sake of their children.

Now, a little string of reasoning may help the reader to see our way more clearly. As far as I can see, there is no solid ground for supposing that, upon the whole, the immediate ancestors of the present generation of Norse-Americans were less devoted to their offspring than my parents were. Moreover, as a Christian I eagerly and impetuously put ~~the~~ "the best construction" on the motives of our Norse ~~imm~~ immigrants with regard to their descendants. In order to make the whole situation clear and to avoid the possible charge of being biased in favor of my particular race, I also wish to take one more step in this direction: As I do not try to put my own parents above other Norse immigrants with regard to devotion to their offspring, in the same manner do I want to say that ~~and~~ and even make it as emphatic as possible, that on this score no attempt should be made to place my race above other races, no matter what their birth, color, or creed may be.

The first statement made above may have seemed startling to many readers. Briefly it is this:

The chief ~~aim~~ aim of ordinary Norse-American men and women is to make their children, grand-children, etc. as happy as possible. It is to be feared that tens of thousands fall below this standard. On the other hand I am personally acquainted with not a few whose sympathies are so broad that, without regard to kinship, they extend a helping hand where it seems to be most needed. But in treating a ~~whole~~ large group, such as a whole nationality, for instance, neither super-normals nor sub-normals, but the average man and woman must be used as a basis. It may be well to draw the lines still more clearly, so that every intelligent reader may know exactly what is meant: This discussion is intended to refer to the great majority of married American men and women of Norse extraction;

for in brain and brawn, in religion and politics, in moral worth and financial standing they are the great backbone of Norsedom in America.

Now, assuming that our main terrestrial aim is to make our offspring happy, we may naturally ask: How can we make them happy?

Here my readers will be sure to disagree. Happiness is so much like the rainbow, it is so wonderfully elusive; and the standards used in testing it are so various, even to the extent of categorical contradiction.

Neither my personal inclination nor my knowledge of history urges me to denounce my contemporaries as typical mammon worshipers. But in view of the fact that we are so much better informed than our forefathers it is rather discouraging to be compelled to admit that so many good people of our day surely overestimate the ability of riches to make people happy. Even sincere, ~~christiane~~ devout Christians will catch themselves again and again in judging a man's standing by the amount of wealth which he controls.

Those who induced me to write these lines did not ask for a sermon. But I am afraid I have to inject a little quasi-sermonizing in order to drive my arguments home.

You may praise or blame our age all you please. But at this moment there is less ground for fear of want in the wide world than at any period in times past. Man's burdens of life have never been so light as today. To be more poetical than exact: We are still groping in the shadow of the silliest, costliest, bloodiest, deadliest of all wars. But in parading the races and nations and tribes of the world before my mind's eye I cannot detect a single community where food is so scarce that a single one of its inhabitants need starve. "Reverend" Thomas Malthus sent a shock thru the minds of the political economists of his day by making out that population increases faster than the food supply, so that hunger, pestilence, war, crime, etc. only serve as natural correctives. But taking the world as a whole, Malthusianism is a delusion. For a time it served as a sort of balm for the conscience of ~~pluto~~ <sup>an exploiting</sup> cracy. But in our day the pompous specter of Malthus brings no dread to the well informed student: Man's training and equipment for doing things

are making such headway all over the world that the main question is not: How can we produce enough? But it is rather this: How can we make use of what we produce?

Too many of us labor under a misunderstanding with regard to this matter. We are so eager to add dollar to dollar, field to field, ~~how~~ house to house, so anxious to save up something "for a rainy day," that we lose sight of the essentials of human life. We dwarf our own minds and starve our own souls. But that is not the ~~wes~~ worst of it. We struggle so hard ~~mainly to~~ mainly piling up things for our children that we ~~needs~~ neglect the children themselves. Are not the very rich more apt than are people of moderate means to have worthless children? Show me a notorious spendthrift, point to a wholesale poisoner of the minds of our youth, and I shall be very apt to point to a father who was so busy making money that his son had a glorious opportunity to go to seed.

You may retort that ~~million~~ millions of American fathers have to toil all day in the shop so they have no time for training their children. In this it may be said that limited means, not to say poverty, generally comes <sup>as</sup> a blessing in disguise by compelling the youngsters to take up some line of useful work, and useful work is mortal man's boss school-master.

But what am I driving at? What does all this moralizing mean?

That remains to be seen. But we shall have to move <sup>+</sup> step by step in order that you may be sure that we are on the right track. We ~~are~~ are trying to get to the centennial celebration. But it is a brand new thing to you and me and everybody else. We have no experience in celebrating <sup>are exact counterparts of</sup> a holiday of this kind. The members of the committee are very able men, and the <sup>the</sup> ingenuity already shown by them bodes well for the fest. But they wish to have others to make suggestions. They are not so stuck on their own superior wisdom that they ignore the opinions of others. The very fact that they propose to spend hundreds of dollars on those who write these contributions seems to show that they ~~feel~~ feel the need of help. You may be sure that they don't spend that money just for the fun of it. ~~And~~ And if they, who are devoting so much hard, serious thinking to the celebration in order to make it a success, you and I certainly need not only "glittering generalities"

*in some ways*

but hard knocks that bring new thoughts and reveal new vistas before our mind's eye.

At ~~the~~ first thought, many a sensible, cool-headed, matter-of-fact Norse-American said to himself: Why make so much fuss about that ~~Cl~~ Cleng Person and his ~~alooop~~ folks? They happened to come a few years before the rest of us. ~~A~~ Person ~~himself~~ was no extraordinary man - since his day America has received thousands of Norsemen superior to ~~C~~ Cleng Person in many ways.

It is exactly ~~this~~ ~~the~~ kind of reasoning that we have to refute ~~in order to~~ in a convincing manner, or else we are in danger of being treated to a disappointment. To borrow a hackneyed slogan from American politics: It is general apathy that we are up against.

It takes time for our people to grasp things of such magnitude as this celebration; and if they fail to grasp the magnitude of it, they will surely fail to support it ~~with~~ with the enthusiasm that ~~and~~ ~~generosity~~ that it surely ~~deserves~~ ~~deserves~~.

It has been pointed out that we have had no experience in celebrating a holiday ~~of this kind~~. ~~But~~ fortunately our past history furnishes an incident which may serve as a useful lesson in our ~~present~~ ~~situation~~. In 1914, when we ~~celebrated~~ the one-hundredth anniversary of the independence of Norway, ~~the most~~ beautiful and ~~most~~ conspicuous ~~feature of the celebration was~~ the program was the collecting and sending ~~money~~ as a memorial gift to Old Norway. "A million dollars" was suggested by an enthusiast before anybody else had thought of such a thing. At first his suggestion was ridiculed. Next in order came discussion, and finally the plan was put in operation. ~~But~~ ~~in~~ some way or ~~other~~ it did not fire the minds of the masses. Norway was not in need of charity. We could make better use of our money at home. It ~~was~~ was a scheme to get the ~~Order~~ Order of St. Olaf for some ambitious leader. A few ~~here~~ here and there were very enthusiastic, but the masses ~~remained~~ practically indifferent, ~~as to "mindgaver."~~

That happened a little ~~of~~ over ten years ago. At that time the Norse-Americans surely owned a combined wealth of a few thousand million dollars. A somewhat live and general canvass would have ~~of~~ brought a million dollars. This assertion cannot be proved by actual figures, of course. But I propose to convince the reader

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anyway. The president of your organization will no doubt remember that he was asked to speak at a meeting called for the purpose of making a thoro canvass of a certain voting district. He came. He spoke. He convinced. ~~There was not much visible~~ The meeting was not what might be called enthusiastic. "But several of those present came there with a will to do something. There was only a sprinkling of ~~Norsemen~~ in the district - perhaps one-fifth of the residents. Perhaps forty Norse families ~~had~~ ~~owned~~ their homes, but as far as known, not a single one of them was what might be called wealthy. The district was divided up geographically among so many canvassers, making the job an easy ~~one~~. Practically every person approached made a contribution. The goal was \$200, and the amount raised was ~~\$200~~ \$200. Now, this was a modest sum; but ~~is it~~ it is safe to say that if the other Norse-Americans had given <sup>one-tenth</sup> as much in proportion to their means, "Mindegaven" would have run up into the millions.

Dr. H. G. Stub handed the gift to the proper parties in Norway.

"Didn't you feel cheap when the gift turned out to be so small?"

"No, it was a fine gift."

Well, I am glad he felt that way. Never for a moment have I swerved from the feeling that "Mindegaven" was a magnificent fizzle. "Hjemanden" was still too strong in us in 1914. We were not able to see that a gift of a million to Norway would have been "dirt cheap" as a business proposition pure and simple. In that case the newspapers of the entire world would have given us credit for showing a "fine spirit spirit." Our neighbors would have admired our generosity and become more disposed to give us a square deal. Norsemen all ~~over~~ <sup>been</sup> over the world would have benefited out of all proportion to the amount given away.

But we, the givers, would have been the greatest benefactors, and in a different way: To our dying day it would have given us joy to think of the gift, and even our children and children's children would have spoken of it with innocent pride and harmless glee. In short, it would have been something in the nature of a blessing.

And the people in the old country? By the tribe of a million or two we had the chance of ages to tie them to us with stronger bonds of love and thankfulness. And what in all the world is better among brothers?

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This little stunt of past history is given as an encouragement and as a warning: as an encouragement by an attempt to prove what might have done in 1914; as a warning against making another fizzle on a national scale.

Now I seem to hear some one say: Well, but "Mindegaven" and that ~~is~~ experience - what can we learn from them in the present situation? In 1925 there will be no subscription for a national gift.

No, not as far as I know. But "Mindegaven" was a token of noble wishes and joyous feelings of one group of people towards a kindred group. "Mindegaven" was intended as a united expression of lofty, multitudinous sentiments of large numbers, and that particular form was agreed upon as the most suitable.

Now, too, we are planning on expressing lofty sentiments of large numbers, and on that score we shall do well to study the lesson of 1914. Otherwise the centennial celebration is different, and much more comprehensive. Now, as then, we shall honor Old Norway and her people, past and present. But quite naturally, this feature of the program *will be of a subordinate nature.* Come what may, we deliberately choose to stay here as long as people stay in America. Assuming that my initial statement is correct, we now make a straight dig for the core of the matter:

In our efforts to ~~make~~ make our offspring happy, will the results of the Centennial Celebration correspond to the labor and money expended?

This is the question I ~~propose~~ propose to answer, and then I am thru.

It almost makes me blush to think of our general standing among our fellow citizens. Why, a Norse name seems to be almost a charm - especially after the Great War. Now, in a ~~country~~ country of superabundance and "boundless possibilities" like ours, what does this do to ~~make us~~ make us and our children ~~be~~ happy?

In the first place it makes it so much easier to get work. That means so much easier to make money - there is money in it from the very start.

But what I ~~wish~~ wish to make clear is that we get something far more valuable than money in the good-will of our fellow citizens.

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*trust*

This fact may be brought out most strikingly by a ~~contrast~~. We have a group of people in America and some other countries who distinguish themselves by being the most grasping of the races of the earth. And they succeed beyond others in making money. But the seamy side of their success is that they are singled out and nicknamed and hate~~d~~ <sup>more than others</sup> wherever they go. Few Norsemen indeed would exchange positions with those people, famous tho they be for their wealth. I venture to say that in our country the confidence and good-will of our fellow citizens constitute a very ~~s~~ essential part of our happiness.

So far it is mainly our ancestors who have put us in this fortunate position - their integrity and fairness and trustworthiness. The only way to keep this ~~ev~~ enviable vantage ground is to follow in their footsteps in all essentials of life. Will the rising generation of Norse-Americans do this?

That must, of course, be left to their choice. But for their own benefit they should be encouraged to do so. And right at this point the Centennial Celebration may be made a most powerful ~~ins~~ <sup>in</sup>spiration to the rising generation of Norse-Americans.

Yes, it may be made such an inspiration. But the celebration is a very great undertaking, and it will not be a success unless thousands of people make reasonable ~~efforts~~ <sup>efforts</sup> in behalf of the cause. Success means that on the one hand it will teach our own group to appreciate and ~~in~~ imitate the virtues of our forebears, and on the other hand convince other Americans by a mass of historical facts that we are good and true and worthy fellow citizens.

This latter point should be ~~stressed~~ <sup>stressed</sup> and somewhat amplified. We must of course avoid even a smattering of boasting - we simply try to bring out the unvarnished historical facts and let them speak for us. If we are to get lasting happiness out of the celebration, such happiness must come largely because our fellow citizens are happy to have us as neighbors and as an integral part of the American people.



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To place historical facts before us, that  
will be the most momentous feature of the  
whole celebration. ~~That right here it gives~~  
~~me a peculiar delight to say that the~~  
~~collecting and collating the historical~~  
~~and other information on~~  
the work of collecting and collating the  
historical and other information for  
the celebration ~~has been~~ <sup>is being done</sup> left to the  
the world's most suitable man for this  
job, Dr. O. M. Woodie, who "leaves  
~~no stone unturned."~~

A hundred years is a good, long working day. Hard work, too,  
for most of us. Don't you think we are entitled to a general holiday?  
Don your ~~best~~ <sup>x</sup> suit and take a few days off. Most of you

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will be agreeably surprised to see what a big, fine bunch we are. Absolutely, it will be your only chance to see many men who are worth hearing and seeing.

But what is still more important: You will find that those plain farmers and factory hands and storekeepers and laborers have left a record of which anybody may justly be proud. It will do yourself good to think of it and to tell your children and grand-children about it.

But please, don't put off everything until you are ready to go. The committee has a big, hard job on its hands. Watch the committee, and if you are asked to lend a helping hand, do it promptly, cheerfully. That is the only way to make the Celebration the success that it ought to be.

When we come to a point like this, we feel as tho we are lifted up, way up. We have an inkling that we are helping to build something for the centuries. In the very air around us there seems to be a sort of solemnity.

In one way we become so small, in another way we feel that we share in the responsibility for the weal or woe of generations to come. This feeling should not be trifled with. Only good men and women can have such feelings. Let them have their way. They make you stronger for the frays of the future.

Perhaps I ought to stop here, for I have nothing new to say. But it struck me that to some of my readers the inducements offered by me to attend the celebration may not seem definite enough: On the one hand there are no fields of golden grain, no barns sheltering valuable stock, no gilt-edged securities in fire-proof vaults; and on the other hand no glimpse of the way leading to the throne of God.

The personnel of the committee is absolute guarantee that the celebration, be it a success or a failure, will encourage only what tends to make people happier in any world, visible or invisible. To make it still more plain what I mean I shall close by applying to our Centennial Celebration what Paul wrote to the Philippians, because it is so pat, so modest, so beautiful, and so everlastingly up-to-date:

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there ~~v~~ be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."