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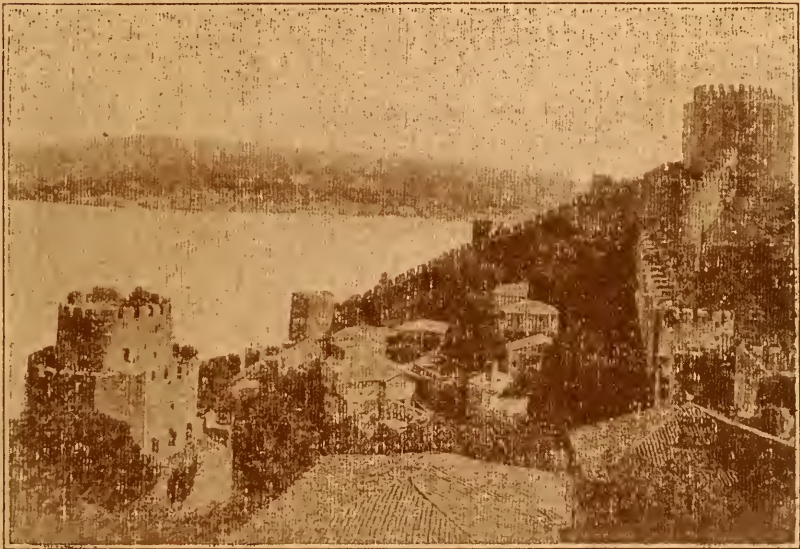
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# The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the  
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER.



FORTRESS OF EUROPE ON THE BOSPHORUS.

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THE NEWTON WINDOW IN TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

*Frontispiece to The Open Court.*

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## BECOMING AMERICAN.

BY S. N. PATTEN.

### THE BRITONET AND THE ANGLOID.

OF the many questions raised by the war, none awaits an answer more urgently than this: "Who is American?" What seems at sight a commonplace fact of residence becomes on investigation a complex problem. In ancestry, obviously, none are American, whether our forbears have been on the soil one or ten generations. Our heredity, comprising all fundamental passions and appetites, is of foreign origin and will remain for ages unchanged; newcomers and old families are peers in this respect. When the excitement of war arouses us we react as did our Aryan ancestors when a hostile tribe appeared over adjacent hills. Feelings of hate and envy overshadow later experience, while venomous expletives, which in rational moods we calmly suppress, flow out in a pleasure-giving torrent. This violence, natural though it is, does not distinguish any one as American; it shows rather that we have not yet changed the crude nature that crossed the ocean with our ancestors.

To become American is a growth in social tradition coming when our feelings and actions are evoked by American events and American ideals. It is a social, not a physical, change. Some families may have been on our soil for generations and still have foreign traditions, while in others a single generation may make over their social nature. Indeed the rapidity of the social change is in proportion to the shock which the transference of environment causes. The slowest changes come in those whose civilization is like our own, while a radical change in thought and ideal brings rapid transformation.

These facts make less important than commonly judged the

differences between the recent immigration and the older stock which, perhaps, has Revolutionary ancestry. Is the latter American, and the former half or quarter American? Not at all, for the ancestry is the same in both cases. The blood of the human wolf tingles in their veins, and the savage bite is apt to come from the one as from the other. The contrast lies not in heredity, but in social tradition. The older stock has the language and ideals of its English ancestors, which have remained unchanged because our ancestors let the English think for them instead of thinking for themselves. What has our older stock contributed in literature, art, or science? Can any one point to an epoch-making book that has come new-born from our civilization? The ideals of the man who sneers at his recently arrived brother are merely an adaptation of English thought. What difference exists is not more marked than the modification the language and thought of England have undergone in Australia or South Africa. Wherever English is spoken British thought has prevailed, and we, like other English offspring, have followed in the ways of the parent. We have been servants, not masters—followers in beaten paths, not breakers of new soil. Our population is divided, not into pure Americans and half Americans, but into those who are slaves to English tradition and those whose American adjustments are partly made. On this basis to be a German-American or an Irish-American is to be more American than the older stock. It is really a proud boast for a man to say he is half-American, for that means a greater change in culture and ideals than families long in the land have undergone.

To get a clear view of our growing adjustment new words are needed. Old divisions are partisan and biased. The differences to be emphasized are those of culture, tradition and language; not those of race, religion or nationality. Let us suggest terms that present effective contrasts and then try to show their applicability. The term *Britonet* suggests the man who holds too rigidly to the English inheritance lying at the basis of our civilization. In contrast to this, the term *Angloid* indicates the composite nature of a broader culture which has foreign elements. Many of these newer incorporations are German, and hence arise the antagonisms which have been injected with so much violence into the present controversy. We should remember, however, that these differences between the new and the old were objects of controversy before the war began, and would in time have made the present factions even if no foreign stimulus had hastened the disruption of conventional thought. In every field these contrasts are apparent, and in many

fields the controversies involved were acute before the war began. We must narrow our horizon by ejecting foreign contributions, or so incorporate them into our culture that a broader civilization results.

English culture can readily be divided into two elements. At bottom it is a classical culture, modified and broadened by the English experience of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. English tradition and education is mainly Hebrew, Greek and Roman in origin. From these elements have come the ideals of the English people, while their practice and habits have been imposed by their present environment. The content of English education has been classical, not modern. Habits have changed, but not ideals. This strong combination has been broken in America by the crumbling of the classical education, Grecian art, and Puritan morality. Our education is technical and vocational, casting aside the cultural elements that have upbuilt the English character. We hold the English traditions but have lost the older interpretations of life that made them effective. Such men may properly be called Britonet without implying any disrespect for the civilization from which their ideas are derived. They are merely half-English, and have chosen the worse half.

Against the narrowing tendencies which this exclusion involves is another equally patent tendency. In place of the older classical culture comes a modern culture. To assimilate the new elements does not demand a break in our civilization. It has a continuity from our distant ancestors, and has all the emotional force associated with our history and language. Shall our culture be broadened to this new basis, or shall it be narrowed by the exclusion of foreign elements, ancient and modern? This is the controversy now acute. The one tendency gives us a pure race, a pure language, and a conventional morality; the other puts all into the melting-pot, and cheerfully accepts the purified culture resulting when the dross, the feud and the localism of to-day disappear. The American is not a race with a heredity, but a culture with a unity. Its test is its quickening power. Our test is in its assimilation.

#### DEGENERATION AND REVERSION.

To separate the American from the non-American we must be able to distinguish the normal from the abnormal. Until this is done we lack a means of deciding who is a reactionary, and who is he out of whose loins the American race is to spring. The distinction is clear. The old bonds were in religion, race and language.

Each of these was provincial; and hence the world was split up into factions on the basis of creed, speech and race. Men loved the like and hated the unlike with equal fervor; but at bottom there was more of hatred than of love in the old life because the multitude were different, while only a small group was similar in characteristic and interest. To be a reactionary is to glory in religious, language and race contrasts, and to shut out the upbuilding forces that lift humanity to higher levels. Any motive is normal when its possession is essential to survival; but it becomes regressive when newer tests of survival displace it.

The traits of the reactionary are the oldest of the race. Not yielding to the dominance of new motives, he does what his less advanced ancestors did, but which under new conditions is productive of evil. An old religion, an antiquated morality, the race ties of yesterday, and the thought modes of any language lower the tone of those chained by them. The new bonds are social, not racial; emotional, not sensory. When millions are united in one economic group, the physical traits, the creeds and language of each locality become a matter of slight significance. Therefore, to divide regions economically, a unit on lines of creed, language or race becomes a social crime. Only the new emotional responses are elevating. When this new standard of normality is formulated the old becomes degenerate.

The physical tests of this degeneration are plain. It is a local morbidness, an oversensitiveness in some part accompanied by a numbness to impression in others. If a doctor suspects a patient of nervousness he tests the malady by a blow on the knee, causing what is called a "knee jerk." Local sensitiveness is thus discovered, and some remedy is suggested. This test is but an example of all physical tests of degeneration. Some people are sensitive to fear; others to descriptions of pain; others to peculiar sounds; and still others to language or color excitation. In each case the mark of abnormality is the same. Some fear, some pain, some group of sounds, words or colors excite unwonted activity and evoke uncontrollable feelings of aversion, with the result that the normal functioning of the individual to his environment is disturbed.

An oversensitiveness to word-reactions is a better test of abnormality than perceived suffering; imagined fears are more potent than those connected with visible objects. Many a person could walk under an unsafe building with unconcern who would become intensely excited about an imagined invasion of his country. Are these explosions of primitive emotion the normal expression of



growing manhood, or are they marks of morbid reversion? If abnormal, the facts of the present war are readily classed. The strong appeals to race, class, and language interests, the sensitiveness to described suffering, show how excitable we are about particulars, and how obtuse to great issues. The papers have indulged in the descriptive horrors of the Belgium invasion until the distinction is lost between the local seen and the vast world not yet visualized. Why do we shudder when we think of the suffering in Belgium, and remain oblivious to greater woe in our own country? Why is it horrible for the Germans to kill a hundred in Belgium, when we remain indifferent to the endeavors of England to starve millions in Germany? Which is more normal, the man who, meeting a beggar on the street, gives him a dollar; or he who refuses alms, but sends a check to some charity to relieve the suffering of those he never saw? This test of perspective shows the difference between normal and abnormal emotions. The one is true emotion; the other is merely sense excitation. Normal men visualize the larger unseen groups, and refuse to sympathize with unimportant events seen and described.

Fear and hate are primitive passions, normal in animals and in the lower orders of men. They are marks of reversion when found among the civilized races. The higher emotions lead to their suppression, causing the normal man to walk abroad with no fear in his breast and no hatred in his heart. To show hatred or fear indicates the loss of some of the impulses that dominate the higher life. It is indicative, therefore, to see the fierce outpouring of fear and hate since the outbreak of the war. The German has become a nightmare to many well-meaning persons, and hatred of him has become a creed. If these violent manifestations were those of primitive men or of the underworld they might be regarded as the natural expression of the exuberant savage. But these excited individuals are for the most part the university graduate, the professor, the editor, the lawyer, the club-man, and even ex-presidents, both of college and of nation. They are men of the old stock, and not newcomers whose feelings are naturally primitive. Instead of lifting themselves into an adjustive relation, our older stock has been sinking into modes of thought normal to our distant ancestors, but subnormal to ourselves. It is becoming Britonet instead of a creator of an American civilization.

But, it will be replied, the Germans are just as forceful in their emotional expression. There is, however, a difference. The German song of hate to which so much attention has been given is not

the work of a German professor, but the writing of a private soldier. It is genuine folklore, voicing the emotion of the lower class. That a private could write a poem of this virility is a mark of advance. But the attempt of poets and professors to write a reply, or outdo the German in his song of hate, is not literature, but degeneration. The German people should be as proud of their privates who can write of hate as our race should be dismayed and chagrined at the attempted imitation by our literary spokesmen. It verges on the comical to see committees of professors formed to pass on the hymns of hate their students compose.

If our old stock with its star-gazing idealism has failed to find the road from yesterday to to-morrow, where are we to look for guidance? Some facts are plain and some conclusions clear. No distinct physical traits out of which a new race can be formed have as yet appeared. Anthropologists assert that no European race has sloughed off its earlier characteristics, though in its present environment many thousand years. Even if this be disputed of the Continental races, the English are no more a race, physically, than are the Americans. England's civilization is built from the traditions created by the British environment of the past three centuries. These traditions we have acquired, and their loss will make us American. English ideas and ideals meant progress when they arose, and are still of importance for the preservation of English institutions. But for us they are exotic growths, and their persistence implies a decay of character in all on whom they are imposed.

We often hear of the cramping influence of Puritanism, and of a desire for greater intellectual freedom. Yet Puritanism is one of the cramping influences making our Britonet environment. Our orthodoxy, our law, our literary standards, our classicisms, our conventional notions, and even our cant and hypocrisy are all Britonet importations. They are the burden we carry and the load we must throw off. The newer American stocks have an advantage in their efforts toward reconstruction because they come from regions freer from these trammels. They are moving more rapidly than we toward the desired adjustment, and from them comes much of our dynamic force, while the old stock strive to keep things immobile and static.

#### FROM MAN TO SUPERMAN.

In the melting-pot of the present there is not merely the fusing of the old, but also the creation of the new. Of this the best index

is physical change. The new types are better nourished, live more out of doors, are fond of sport and exercise. They are aggressive, vigorous, stubborn to resist and keen to act. Who has not seen this will-to-power in America, both in its good and bad forms? It is only the blinding influence of cant that keeps us from seeing that we are more German than the Germans, and have less of the old in our code than they. We cannot check the onrush of new impulses; only we refuse to talk of them. Tradition, coming from our slave forbears, holds that the lamb is a model for imitation, and that the wolf is the representative of Satan. We lip words of peace even when our aggressive spirit makes us wolfish at heart.

This new vigor is as plainly visible in women as in men. Blinded by old ideals, we fail to see the moral advance our sisters are making. We mistake their uplift of character for a reversion because the new woman does not fit into our cramped scheme of family life. Had she only to match herself with nature in the struggle for survival, her superiority over her decadent sisters would be apparent. But man is the chooser of woman; and he prefers the weak-faced Madonna to those capable in action, vigorous in thought and wistful for motherhood.

The new in man is also apparent if we seek its manifestation in deeds and not in meaningless phrases. Words are Britonet, while action is American. The professor, the editor, the idealist, grind their grist of words which make us seem but an echo of the distant past. Yet the pulse of the nation is throbbing, its action is vigorous and its morality aggressive. Some day the new in us will find its voice; the professor will respond to the call of the world; the editor will feel the pulse of the street, and the idealist will sink to his level among the nation's dependents. Happy, happy America, when his cult is gone and his tombstone is removed to enlarge our parks! The world has but the three types—the savage, the degenerate and the becoming. Normality is a mere line separating the regressive conservative from his aggressive superior. Of both the savage is the antecedent. His attitude, his passions and greed are not matters of choice, but the result of the brutal pounding of nature. They have given a wolf physique restrained by a lamb morality.

Races in the past have been wolves or lambs. The wolf has seized and devoured, leaving a desolate world. He has been father, not of the superman, but of vice and dissipation. The lamb has not fared better. He has grown fat only to serve as food for the wolf. Out of his loins the superman has not come. To-day the

breed is as helpless as at the dawn of civilization. Only as we realize this can we remove the antinomy that has prevented the evolution of man.

Our physical heredity is transmitted by a single germ-cell. Changes in it constitute the ascending line of physical growth. In contrast to this, social heredity is perpetuated by repeated impressment. If for a single generation the language, traditions and habits of thought of the race were not reimposed they would be lost. It has nothing to do with the germ-plasm by which the physical traits are perpetuated. Nor has the germ-cell any influence on the growth of our ideals or traditions. Each element undergoes change without a modification in the other, yet only as both are altered can the superman appear. The errors and the confusion of present thought lie in the wrong application of these facts. For ages the social heredity has been dominant. It has produced not merely changes in culture, but has also determined the physical conditions of survival. Progress, it was assumed, meant the elimination of the wolf from our physical nature, and the creation of a race of docile lambs who sink from liberty to dependence, and from dependence to slavery.

I do not see that the eugenists would mend matters. If physical and moral traits are bound up together, as they assume, the physical lamb and the moral saint are parts of the same evolution. The only choice is then between a saintly lamb and the satanic wolf. There is, however, another possibility that our physical and social heredity are determined by independent laws. Can we not breed a physical wolf and control him by intensifying our social environment? If this be true we can improve the race by using the two opposing methods, each with its own laws.

I shall not attempt to argue nor to predict, but to throw light on what is actually taking place. We are getting a vigorous man with an aggressive attitude out of harmony with the lamblike qualities the benevolent moralist admires. We have more vigor, will, and imagination than our ancestors had. But we have not learned to like the man of action who may tread on our toes; nor the man of imagination who, breaking social tradition, casts aside our inherited law as a mere scrap of paper. But which is to be preferred, the dangers and joys of some pictured Utopia to be won, or the well-guarded fold in which the lamb can chew his cud and sleep in peace?

The old is a Rock of Ages for the beaten and the fleeing; the new is the beacon of hope to the ongoing pilgrim. By these facts

we should judge the militant woman, the Jew, and the German. In each case aggression, will and imagination are reflected in vigorous action. They are superior in physical power to their opponents and predecessors, but as destructive of social tradition as they are effective in action. Every physical advance means the crashing of some social idol, the downfall of some cherished ideal, the disappearance of some classical doctrine. The peace of the dove and the lamb do not fare well in a world of bustling activity. Our Britonet ideals do not conserve this new vigor, nor do they guide aright the new glow of life. Ideals and standards of broader impact must be imposed before the equilibrium between our social and physical heredity is restored. We need the aggressive man; but we need still more an uplift of social standards and the corrective influence of vivid social ideals. Aggression is not bad, but it requires a fitting end to make it an uplifting force.