

HERITAGE OF THE INDIAN

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tionalize, to make excuses, not only to other people but even to themselves, instead of standing up and squarely facing the truth. I wonder how many of you here, when you have been reprimanded by your matron or your teacher or some one else in authority, have said: "She is showing partiality. She is picking on me. I am no worse than the rest of the girls." It does not matter in the least whether you are no worse than the rest of the school. Indeed, your job ought to be to live above the average, to be just a little better than the rest of mankind. What does matter tremendously is whether you have the moral courage to face the consequences of your own actions without trying to slide out from under, and place the responsibility on some one beside yourself, where it rightly belongs. As a race, we think too much about the past, and we dwell too long on what some one has done to us. We do not think enough about what we are doing by ourselves and for ourselves. Here at school you say, "My teacher does not make me hand in my assignments, and so I don't do my school work." You think you are "getting by." And some of us think it is a smart and clever thing to do. Are we going to have a prop to lean on forever? We have been bolstered up too much already! It is time now that we begin to stand on our own feet. It is said that Chief Logan, at one time, in giving council to a young warrior, said:

"My son, do not fear the face of any living man."

Such was the spirit of our fathers! But if we are to preserve that noble heritage of bravery we can not afford to be moral cowards. We must face the truth about ourselves. To keep for the world the nobility of character that rightly belongs to the Indian race, you and I must nobly—we must daily cry:

"Build thee more stately mansions, Oh my soul.

As the swift seasons roll

Leave thy low vaulted past!

Let each new temple, nobler than the last,

Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,

Till at length thou art free.

Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

There is one thing more that we need to think about in building up a great ideal for our race. One of the gravest faults of us Indians and this generation is that we do not have the power to stay by our task until it is finished. We begin to build, but we can not hold out until the job is completed. It is an easy thing to make a good beginning at any task, but to bring that task to a great conclusion requires rare patience. If you do not believe we give up when the way becomes a little hard, look at your own school here. Look at the size of the freshman class with its great numbers, and compare it with the senior class! How many have dropped out because the work became too difficult? It took too much effort to finish what had been begun. In my own junior class almost an average of one boy a month has dropped out—gone A.W.O.L.—just because he hadn't the power to see the work through. They couldn't stick, quitters!

I know an Indian man who started to build a great life for himself. He went through high school with

honors, and then he graduated from college. He distinguished himself. And newspapers all over the United States printed stories about him and published his picture. Thousands of people knew of him and rejoiced in his success. He was pointed to as perhaps the coming great leader of his people. Then by one swift action of his he failed. He tore down all those years of labor he had builded. In one swift ruin he crushed the hopes of hundreds and thousands of people. By his act he destroyed the faith of thousands of people in his race. He is the kind of man Jesus was talking of in His parable when He said, "He began to build, but he did not know how to finish."

What do you think would have happened to the world if Jesus had given up his fight in the Garden of Gethsemane? Surely no man had a more bitter struggle! Yet the whole teachings of all his life culminated in the Cross. It was the glory of his finished task that made him the Savior of the world. Without that triumphant end, all His acts of mercy, all of His words of healing, would have been as nothing.

Map out your course and follow it unswervingly. Finish the work you set out to do! We are too easily discouraged. We want to expend our energies in too many little streams, trying first one thing, then another thing, and so accomplishing nothing. Let us look deep into the life of Sequoyah, and of King Philip, and of other great leaders of ours and find there the everlasting examples of the patience and courage that is necessary to give us the power to see a thing through.

We of this generation of Indians have been given a freedom, a responsibility and a power greater than any other race has ever known. What are we going to do with freedom? How are we going to discharge this responsibility? Shall we prove ourselves worthy of such a privilege? We must determine what the future of our race is going to be. You and I must decide right now, today, whether we want it to live on, worthy of the great traditions of the past. Or whether we are willing to see it fall deeper and deeper into decay. By the lives we each determine to live, and by our power to make such a determination into reality, we can show our choice. There is no other convincing answer.

There have been times in the past history of our race when crises had to be met. Our forefathers, perhaps, were not able to see so clearly when the moment of choice arrived. The hour struck and they didn't know. They had to meet the issues blindly, as they arose, for they had no way of understanding what the future might bring. To-day you and I have no such excuse. To-day we can look into the future and see what we do. Because we have the knowledge of all the right and wrong choices of the past—because we have at our command the past experiences of all the people of history, we stand at a point where we can look forward and backward and know what is good. Your choice must be of your own making, and it is a deliberate choice. There is no better time for it than this first day of the new year with its opportunities for a new beginning and a new life.

"See—I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil: therefore choose life that thou mayest live—thou and thy seed."