

THE ALIEN'S OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

SENTENCING a clergyman recently to three years' imprisonment for violation of the espionage act, Federal Judge Amidon of North Dakota, after requiring the defendant to repeat a portion of the oath of allegiance to which he subscribed when he became an American citizen, said: One clause of this oath may have skipped your memory. It is found in the beginning and the end of the oath of allegiance. You renounced and abjured allegiance to Germany and the emperor of Germany, and promised you would bear true faith to the United States. That meant that you would grow a new soul as soon as you could and put aside your German soul.

Declaring that the testimony showed the defendant had not renounced Germany and the kaiser, the judge went on to say that: Your body has been in America but your life has been in Germany; if you were set down in Prussia today you would be in complete harmony with your environment and you have influenced others under your ministry to do the same thing.

Then the judge declared that it was partly the fault of the American people themselves that so many Germans forget their oath of allegiance and fail to become Americanized. And that is true.

We welcomed the German immigrant to our shores, gave him land, educated his children and conferred on him the diadem of American citizenship. Then we went away and left him, except that our politicians catered to the German vote. They made party platforms to catch the German vote. Unconsciously, they encouraged the Germans to group themselves together as a separate people, unclassified as Americans.

In the heart of America, societies keeping the Germans separate were organized and maintained. Some of them, as we know now, were directed from Berlin and working in the interest of Berlin. We know now that they spread German propaganda, further alienating them as Americans first.

The campaigns in presidential elections in America have been carried on with a view of how they might catch the German vote, or the Austrian vote, and other hyphenate votes. It was not so intended, but its inevitable effect was to keep the races, though American citizens, in separate and distinct groups.

The effect was that all over the United States there were little Germanys, little Austrias, little Italys, little Norways and little European bailiwicks of every name. The tendency was to encourage them to perpetuate everything foreign. The Americans themselves helped the naturalized aliens to forget their oath of allegiance in which the alien renounced and abjured allegiance to all foreign governments and all foreign rulers and bound himself by sacred covenant to yield allegiance only to the United States.

In the past, the oath was to many but a form of words. It has been a mere gabble of sentences, meaning nothing. The oath has not been the living, breathing thing of life that it ought to be, and that it must hereafter be.

But this perpetuation of German ideas on American soil, this maintaining of Germans as a separate and powerful group of people on American soil, has cost the United States a bloody price. It caused Kaiser Wilhelm to believe that the German organizations and German influences in America were so strong that this country would not dare to fight Germany.

There were boasts in newspapers in Germany that the German strength here would prevent America from entering the war. There is not the slightest doubt that assurances were given from America that German-Americans here would be able to hold the United States out of the struggle.

The German government relied on that theory and went ahead with its diver frightfulness and the other indignities heaped upon our shipping, our flag, our citizens abroad, and even upon manufacturing plants on American soil. That dragged us into the war. The separation of German hyphenates as a group is now costing America thousands of brave and useful lives, untold millions of treasure and sacrifices that stagger the imagination.

There is scarcely a doubt that if every man in America had been an American first and had made the fact clear to all the world, we would have spared this war and its bloody burdens.

True, some of our most loyal citizens in this crisis are Germans. The same is true of many other of our naturalized citizens. Practically all those from nations with which we are in alliance are American to the core.

But a time has come when we should have no German vote, no Austrian vote, no hyphenated vote of any kind. We should have only an American vote. If any group insists on being a separate vote, and any politician or party caterer to it, defeat should be swift and sure. If any naturalized citizen insists on clinging to a European idol, his citizenship should be canceled and he should be sent to Europe.

The rule for all, native born or alien, should be to study the American language, sing American songs, vote American votes, uphold American freedom against foreign autocracy, revere American institutions, know American history and be American through and through and all the time.

The world is more intimately connected with decent ways than some of us have believed. We have often been moved to smile sadly over the common talk that "the home" is answerable for the evil courses of wayward boys and the fall of many girls. We ask musingly what would be the result if those blameworthy "homes" were supplied with family incomes sufficient to nourish self-respect and build up moral habits of life. The love of money may be the root of all evil, but we have noticed that decent respectable lives are commonly built on money.

This is to you: You are not over there. You don't have to stand in the trenches amid a hell of exploding projectiles. You don't have to go out on No Man's Land to face big Prussian guards trying to stick bayonets into your vitals. You don't have to undergo a gas attack in which, if your gas mask is defective your lungs will be turned into a seething cauldron and your breath stop forever. You are not a target for all the bullets, all the bombs, all the machine gun fire, and all the other infernal contrivances of destruction that human ingenuity has invented. All you are asked to do is to buy bonds and War Stamps, and a dollar in each now will be worth two when normal times return.

In natural response to this treatment the women were lazy, slatternly, dishonest, untruthful. They were quite ready to prevaricate whenever a lie would shield one of their number from any shop penalty. They looked upon their employer as the common enemy against whom they were all in a conspiracy. With the war came a change. The men bosses were replaced by women. Almost all the ordinary male employees left the establishment. Women took their places. Women's wages went up to about the figure men received before the war.

The consequences, as Mr. White narrates them, were remarkable. In the first place, the women, working under bosses of their own sex, became truthful, diligent, dependable, loyal to the shop. Their personal habits were transformed. They hid away their slatternly old dresses and put on neat, almost fashionable attire. With good wages came personal pride, self respect, regard for others' opinions.

Mr. White's little story seems to support the theory that most people who follow "low" ways of life do so because they have not the means to follow better ways. Give them the wages which make civilized life possible and forthwith they put on the habiliments of civilization. We dare say the moral reformation of

the country will prefer to turn to the record of achievement, attained by patience, foresight, hard work, a minimum of bluster, and all in perfect loyalty to our allies. It was nearly two years from the outbreak of the war before the English armies from across the narrow strip of channel began to play a man's part in the world's struggle. It was nearly two years before our entrance into the war was contributing our share to allied victory, 3500 miles from our home base.

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A contemporary writer has proclaimed the altruistic objects of the American people in entering the war, he touched the heart of humanity as it had never been touched before by any human agency. And when he declared for open diplomacy, with no state secrets in the dealing of nation with nation, he set a new mark in international intercourse which will be the days when we were the foundation of the anticipated democracy of the world. The effect was electrical.

All free peoples, and all those who are struggling for freedom, responded to the new mark in international intercourse. The Prussian autocracy had tried to fasten its tentacles upon the republics of North and South America, upon Africa, India and Ireland. It nearly succeeded in strangling Russia. But the world has awakened to the situation.

Skulking, underground, lying diplomacy has been abandoned. The gray-headed, stoop-shouldered old man of Potsdam totters beneath the load of infamy he has incurred in his efforts to stem the tide of democracy, but his treacherous, hole-in-the-corpse methods have only served to expose mankind and hasten the end of his empire and the horrible thing he calls "kultur." His accursed "Weltanschauung" has been eliminated. Austria and Turkey, dismembered and disintegrated, will give place to a number of independent democratic states, and incidentally the United States will be able to do to all of them with respect, gratitude and fine friendship.

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