
WEIGHED,
AND FOUND WANTING

An Inquiry into the Aims
and Methods of the
Ku Klux Klan

By

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The ever lustrous name of patriot
To no man be denied because he saw
Where, in his country's wholeness, lay the flaw,
Where, on her whiteness, the unseemly blot.

—William Watson.

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1. THE PRICE OF LIBERTY

Sail on, O Ship of State!
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all its hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

Our hearts, our hopes are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee—are all with thee.

—Longfellow.

Among men who have given some thought to the subject there will be hardly any disagreement from the assertion of Herbert Spencer that "the Republican form of government is the highest form of government." Where every citizen is the equal of every other, where the greatest amount of liberty compatible with the welfare of all is conceded to the individual, where men make their own laws and execute them, and the common weal is the highest law—there the essential conditions of happiness are fulfilled. Under such a government private life should be marked by contentment and a feeling of security, and public life by generous good-will.

Unfortunately these ideals are not easily realized. Just because the republican form of government is the highest, "it requires the highest type of human nature"—also this sentiment of Spencer will rouse no dissent. The citizens of a republic are jointly and individually responsible for the quality of their government and the condition of their country. In order that these may flourish, the citizens must be intelligent, well-informed, and, above all, unselfish. Such men are a rare type

of human nature. Spencer holds that it is a type nowhere at present existing." He said this in speaking on the subject "The Americans." Nor will there be any to demur to this last statement.

This means that the perfect republic in the present state of human nature is still an object to be striven for, an object of prayers and tears, an object of fears and hopes. The perfect republic—if any should claim to be such—would very likely prove upon inspection to be a republic of callous hypocrites or blind enthusiasts.

The path of a good republic is never a primrose path. There are fightings without and fears within. Grasping interests may arise within the bosom of the republic. The greater freedom of the republic will even facilitate the development of their self-seeking schemes. The feeling of security under its principles of liberty may beget in the citizens a spirit of indolence, a proneness to self-indulgence, moral apathy. While they are drowsing, their enemies may be wide awake and active, preparing disaster and ruin to the very foundation of their civic life. To cope successfully with these hostile elements, to curb undue self-assertion, to bridle license which parades as liberty, to foresee the dangerous trend in new movements, to stifle vicious malcontentment, to throttle false suspicion, to head off approaching danger—all this requires on the part of the citizens of a republic a high degree of efficiency. They must be constantly alert and under strict moral self-discipline, of single-hearted purpose, and free from bias and malice. Unabating watchfulness, clear-eyed vision, frank and open counsels, straightforward speech, and calm and manly action should characterize their activity as citizens. That is the price which republics must pay for liberty.

The price is not too great for the object to be achieved. Genuine liberty is the crowning blessing of life on this earth. If bad men can lavishly spend brain and brawn, time and money, on efforts to curtail and destroy other men's liberty, should not good men stand ready to sacrifice their all for liberty? When liberty is gone there is little enjoyment to be derived from anything else, for everything else must then be enjoyed in a cage and at the mercy of a master.

2. THE AIMS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN

Unless that liberty, which is of such a kind as arms can neither procure nor take away, which alone is the fruit of piety, of justice, of temperance, and unadulterated virtue, shall have taken deep root in your minds and hearts, there will not long be wanting one who will snatch from you by treachery what you have acquired by arms.
—Milton.

Some time ago a small group of Southern men conceived the idea of reviving the Ku Klux Klan of Reconstruction Days in the South after the war between the states. "To keep alive the memory of the original Klan and the principles, traditions and institutions for which they (the members of the former Klan) risked their lives," these people decided to establish an "Invisible Empire" of Knights of the Ku Klux Klan as a "national standard fraternal order." According to an official Klan publication entitled, "The Ku Klux Klan, Yesterday, Today and Forever," an organization composed of thirty-four members was perfected in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1916. From this small beginning the Klan has now spread to many sections of the country, and it counts tens of thousands of American citizens as members.

Regarding the object for which the modern Klan was organized, the above-named publication says the following:

"The purpose of the modern Ku Klux Klan is to inculcate the sacred principles and noble ideals of chivalry, the development of character, the protection of the home, and the chastity of womanhood, the exemplification of a pure and practical patriotism toward our glorious country, the preservation of American ideals and institutions and the maintenance of white supremacy."

"No man is admitted to the fellowship of the INVISIBLE EMPIRE of today who hasn't manhood enough to assume a real oath to right and duty with a serious purpose to keep the same inviolate. No man is admitted to fellowship, who will not, or who cannot swear an unqualified allegiance to the Government of the United States of America, its flag, its constitution and its institutions.

"Only native born white American citizens, who believe in the tenets of the Christian religion and who owe no allegiance of any degree or nature to any foreign government or institution, religious or political, or to any sect, people or persons, are eligible for membership.

"Among the principles for which this organization stands, in addition to those already enumerated are: Suppression of graft by public office holders; preventing the causes of mob violence and lynching; preventing unwarranted strikes by foreign agitators; sensible and patriotic immigration laws; sovereignty of state rights under the constitution; separation of church and state, and freedom of speech and press, a freedom of speech that does not strike at or imperil our Government or the cherished institutions of our people."

It is evident from these statements that the Ku Klux Klan claims for its organization the noblest motive: the preservation of American ideals and institutions. This motive is so strongly emphasized in the literature of the Klan that it appears to lift the Klan to an ideal height of loyal

devotion to everything that is dear to the heart of an American patriot. It presents an appeal which comes to many of our citizens with a mighty urge to join and help forward the Klan movement; and we are willing to concede that it is supported by a bill of public grievances that are spoken out of the heart of American citizens who love truth, right, and equity. Our politics are notoriously corrupt. Legal processes have frequently been changed into ingenious devices for defeating the ends of justice. Traffic in vice has been carried on with the connivance and under the protection of those appointed to suppress vice. The trend toward centralization of power has been unmistakable, and state rights and individual rights are being reduced more and more. Capital has been detected in vast schemes to exploit the public and to control legislation. The line of demarcation between the State and the Church has not been respected. Churchmen meddle in the affairs of state and would use the machinery of Government for advancing ecclesiastical interests. Statesmen have sought to invade and have invaded the domain of people's religious interests. American labor has had to struggle against cheap labor imported from foreign countries. The American electorate has deteriorated through the admission of ignorant and conscienceless persons to suffrage. And the suspicion that the American press has allowed itself to become an instrument of propaganda by special interests, both domestic and foreign, has impaired the public's belief in the freedom of the American press.

Any American who has observed public affairs in his country can, therefore, readily reproduce for himself the psychological effects which a mere recital of the flagrant defects in our public life must have on many of our good citizens. He

will understand why it is that the appeal of the Klan has met with such a ready response.

3. THE METHODS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN

He who does evil that good may come,
pays a toll to the devil to let him into
heaven. —J. C. Hare.

In order to cure our nation of its ills, the Klan proposes to build up an "Invisible Empire" in America. In the midst of our American constituency there is to be reared an organization so powerful as to be able to crush out every element of evil. It is to be in closest contact with every part of the nation and every activity of its citizens. It will set up its rule in hamlet and metropolis, will ride on our street cars and railroad trains, will have its representatives in our courts of justice and legislative halls, in schools and colleges, in pulpits and pews, in every trade and profession. It will be everywhere. But it is to exercise its power in secret. The means which it may employ, the methods which it may adopt, are all at its discretion, and the Klan is not accountable to anyone but itself for its acts. Except as far as it is specially revealed, its membership is to be unknown. No one is able to know whether his next door neighbor or his friend may not have become a member of the Invisible Empire. Except as far as evidence is obtainable regarding the doings of the Klan, no one will be able to review its actions, to secure himself against attentions from the Klan, or to obtain redress from its attacks.

Every American is to be absolutely at the mercy of the Klan. The Klan means to dominate the making, the applying, and the execution of the laws of the land.

It will be the Invisible Congress, the Invisible Supreme Court, and the Invisible Magistracy and Constabulary of the country. The Klan will censor churches by expressing approval of those which it considers acceptable. It will censor the lives and conduct of Americans and will let those who appear reprehensible to it know the fact, with such warnings as may seem adapted to the case in question. No one who is approached in this manner by the Klan may know his accuser. He is not tried by a jury of his compeers; he is not confronted by witnesses, nor punished in accordance with a known penal code. The Klan is sovereign in all its acts, and no appeal from its decision is possible.

The Klan system of producing civic righteousness must start with secret denunciation and end with secret execution. It is not necessary to believe that the Klan bodily executes victims of its indignation, but it is clear that it carries on its mission by spreading terror. The dread of a swift vengeance descending upon the wrongdoer from an unknown quarter is to prove a wholesome check upon wrongdoers, and awe them into doing right.

The general public, it is true, is likely to imagine things more dreadful in connection with the secret doings of the Klan than are warranted by facts. Suspicion, working under the lash of terror, is a fruitful mother of inventions. But the Klan is not without blame for these dread misgivings. By the secrecy with which it veils its activities and the sudden startling appearance of its disguised messengers in public places, it invites these suspicions, and where evidence is not obtainable it is impossible to prove or disprove the validity of a suspicion. When one scans the pages of Klan publications and becomes better acquainted with the purposes and activities of the Klan, one is led to believe that there is a great variety

of possibilities for the Klan to become active, and that under the cover of secrecy its agents may not scruple about the means they employ to achieve their ends.

The methods adopted by the Klan set aside cherished rights of American citizens. The right of free speech, with free rejoinder by an opponent, is sacrificed. Issues are not debated in the open. Opponents are attacked from ambush, as it were. They do not see the face of their foe. Victims of Klan justice are not confronted with witnesses, not given legal advisors, nor tried by jury. Instead of open covenants, openly arrived at, the Klan offers cut and dried decisions framed in star chamber proceedings. The Klan supersedes the established institutions of the country for the preservation of law and order, and asks the public to believe that all this is right and good, because it is all done "for the preservation of American ideals." The public is to assume, with simple trust, that in all its doings the Klan is actuated by pure motives of righteousness, that it is fair in its dealings, that beneath its guise there does not lurk malice and bigotry, that private revenge, say of one neighbor against the other, of one competitor against the other, may not operate through its mysterious organization.

It is well-nigh impossible for thinking men to abandon themselves to such credulity. All that is typical of the American way of acting is absent from the methods of the Klan: frankness, manly courage, and regard for others. The American liberties were not secured originally by such dark dealings, nor will they be protected by such dealings. It is preposterous to imagine that the convention which issued the Declaration of Independence and which framed the Constitution of the United States could have

undertaken to do its memorable work in Klan fashion. The position of the Klan is hopelessly self-contradictory; its blatant avowal of high aims and purposes is rendered nugatory and farcical by the base means which it adopts for achieving them. Every right-thinking person will claim that you cannot achieve ideals and principles by first sacrificing them; or that you cannot prove that you are a hundred per cent American by engaging in utterly un-American actions.

4. THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE KU KLUX KLAN

Let us cultivate a true spirit of union and harmony. In pursuing the great objects our condition points out to us, let us act under a settled conviction and an habitual feeling that these twenty-four* states are one country. Let our conceptions be enlarged to the circle of our duties. Let us extend our ideas over the whole of the vast field in which we are called to act. Let our object be: Our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country. And, by the blessing of God, may that country itself become a vast and splendid monument, not of oppression and terror, but of wisdom, of peace, and of liberty, upon which the world may gaze with admiration forever.

—Daniel Webster.

*Now forty-eight, of course.

America has rightly been called "half-brother to the world." (Bailey). It has drawn its citizens from every country. In its sinews of strength is the mettle of many races. For its liberties men have bled and died whose cradle was not rocked here. Strong limbs and skilled minds of foreigners who had made America their adopted country have opened up the resources, built up the industries, pushed forward the commerce of our country. The spirit of clannishness, the "superior

race" feeling, and the pride of birth have been singularly absent from America. They have contributed nothing to the up-building of America, and wherever they cropped out they were speedily subdued.

It would be reasonable to assume that in an organization which exists for the preservation of American ideals and institutions everyone would be welcomed to membership who is a citizen of the United States. This is not the case as regards the Ku Klux Klan. It limits its membership in a number of ways:

1. **By the rule of color:** Klansmen must be white men. All others are barred from membership, even though they are American citizens. This rule is to insure "white supremacy" in America.

2. **By the rule of birth:** Klansmen must be native-born Americans. Many fathers who have become American citizens by naturalization and have taught their sons, born in this country, the principles of Americanism are denied membership in the Klan. It might happen that sons would have to blackball their foreign-born father, if he wished to join with them for "the preservation of American ideals and institutions."

3. **By the rule of religion:** Klansmen must be "believers in the tenets of the Christian religion." Non-Christians are not accepted as defenders of American principles and institutions, although they may, as citizens of the United States, have sworn to uphold these principles and institutions.

4. **By the rule of sect:** The Klan stresses that it is a "Protestant" organization. Others need not apply.

What divisions are created for the citizens of the United States by these selective and restrictive regulations! In a cause which presumably concerns all citi-

zens and naturally appeals to all, all may not cooperate. Perhaps half of our citizens are told that they must remain off the stage of action, and must allow a self-chosen set of men to act for them. The qualifications for membership in the Klan assume that there are in the United States at least two grades of citizens: the first-rate citizens are those who may belong to the Klan; these are usually denominated 100% Americans. Those who may not belong to the Klan are by implication through this same arrangement an inferior class of citizens. In other words, it is a considerably higher distinction to be a member of the Klan than to be a mere citizen of the United States.

It will also be observed that the qualifications for membership laid down by the Klan assume merits in mere accidents. To the Klan all men are not created equal. The color of a person's skin, which he did not order, his birthplace, in which he had no choice, his ancestry, which he could not select, fasten on him, in the estimation of the Klan, an ineradicable blemish. He is from his birth hopelessly incapacitated for defending American ideals and institutions. Or take his religion: he may have to change that to become a hundred per cent American. In other words, he may have to place his regard for men above what he conscientiously believes to be his duty towards God.

The North American Republic was not built up on any such system of arbitrary preferences. The framers of the Constitution were generous, far-sighted men, who extended the privilege of citizenship without such distinctions as are essential to the Klan. They would not look to a secret band of selectmen to uphold and defend what they had built. They would have spurned with indignation the discriminating measures of a self-appointed Tenth Legion as a body-guard for the

Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

The Klan, it is true, asserts that it wages no war on an American citizen's race, color, creed or political affiliation. This is mere rhetoric. The discriminating methods which the Klan adopts are a veiled, if not an avowed, attack on a large number of our citizens. The Klan's influence on our public life cannot be other than divisive and disintegrating. The Klan cares less for the Union as it exists to-day, than for its own special Union within the Union. All its oratory on its noble aims will not blind thinking Americans to this unhappy feature.

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To sum up: the Klan must be considered an ominous phenomenon in American social and political life. The rise and spread of this mysterious organization is to be viewed by thinking Americans with grave concern. All American citizens should, therefore, carefully consider the issue which has been created in our national life by the rise and spread of this mysterious organization. Must we actually commit the ideals and institutions of our Republic to the hands of the Ku Klux Klan for safe-keeping, and would they really be safe in the hands of the Klan?

"Let us stand by the Constitution as it is, and by our country as it is, one, united, and entire; let it be a truth engraven on our hearts; let it be borne on the flag under which we rally in every exigency, that we have one country, one Constitution, one destiny."

—Daniel Webster.



A one hundred per cent Americanism embraces devotion to the earliest ideals of our life as a nation, an ardent wish to see them realized anew in every generation of Americans that grows up under the stars and stripes, and a stern determination to throttle every attempt that may be made from within or without our country to tamper with our constitutional American rights and liberties.

