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Comment

John Ely Briggs

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Comment by the Editor

CRUSADERS

Crusades are not confined to the Middle Ages. The great expeditions of the Christian hosts against the Saracens were essentially symbolic of the eternal conflict between the forces of idealism and reality. Reformers have always broken their lances against the armor of conservatism. There have been "causes" since the dawn of human reason; and so long as men are conscious of good and evil the struggle in the name of righteousness will never end. Throughout the long process of social evolution, some people have always been dissatisfied with things as they are — willing to sacrifice personal advantage for the right to worship as they pleased, for the abolition of slavery, for equal suffrage, or for universal peace. Whatever the "cause", none has been lost for the lack of a valiant leader.

The character of a crusader is a curious compound. He must possess the vision of an oracle, the faith of an apostle, the zeal of a fanatic, the sincerity of a teacher, the perseverance of a lover, the courage of a soldier, the exaltation of a martyr, and the dignity of a saint. Like the elements of a great symphony the traits of his personality are blended into harmonious unity. From the alchemy of human

nature emerges the figure of a spiritual genius. John Brown was a crusader.

Out of the corruption and violence of "bleeding Kansas" came this man of iron, this self-styled Moses for the children of bondage, obsessed with the idea that his mission in life was the abolition of slavery. With all the force of his indomitable will he directed every thought and action toward the accomplishment of that splendid object by the only means within the range of his experience. If he had been killed at Harper's Ferry he would have been accounted a desperado, but he lived six weeks and by his bearing and conversation proved himself to be a crusader. He died a martyr. Slavery was hanged on the same scaffold.

Endowed with the same nobility of character, pledged to the same doctrine of liberty, and inspired by the magnetism of his personality, the Coppoc boys are entitled to share in the glory of John Brown's achievements. They subscribed to the tenets of his creed without reservation and followed his leadership to the tragic end. The calm heroism, dignity, and frank sincerity of Edwin, during the period of his captivity, won the respect of every one who saw him. To the day of his execution he never faltered in his devotion to the cause for which he gave his life. "Thank God," he wrote in a spirit of exaltation, "the principles of the cause in which we were engaged will not die with me and my brave comrades. They will spread wider and wider, and

gather strength with each hour that passes. The voice of truth will echo through our land, bringing conviction to the erring, and adding numbers to that glorious army who will follow its banner." Within sixteen months a mighty army was moving southward, singing

John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave,
But his soul goes marching on.

J. E. B.