

Power of the Natural Man

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Clarke, Geo. W. "Power of the Natural Man." *The Annals of Iowa* 29 (1949), 544-552.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.7032>

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POWER OF THE NATURAL MAN*

By Gov. GEO. W. CLARKE

While I am somewhat lacking in years to consider myself an old settler, yet, inasmuch as I have "settled" here all my life I feel that in a way at least, I am entitled to that distinction. Further, my family history is in my favor, in that my mother was born in Dallas county and has lived here all her life, and my grandfather, Benjamin Greene, came to Adel, then called Penoash, in the early fifties. And so, I say I feel that in some degree at least, I am an old settler.

The pioneers of this country have always held a very high place in my esteem. We are all justly proud of our state and speak with pride of our motto, "In all that is good Iowa affords the best." And because of the fact that the Iowa of today was made possible and produced by the toil, hardships and sacrifices of the pioneers of yesterday we all take off our hats and salute with feelings of profound respect and gratitude "Our Old Settlers."

The pioneers of this state were a hardy and powerful people. The hardships they were compelled to endure were such that they must necessarily have been hardy. Often have I heard my grandfather tell of his experience in teaming through from Davenport to Adel with ox teams. When every low place in the prairie road was practically bottomless, and as often as he attempted to cross one, just so often was he compelled to get out and carry his sacks to firm ground in order to lighten the load so that his oxen might pull it out. Often have I heard him tell of the terrific storms of the winters and of the heavy snows, of the extreme cold and its attendant suffering.

Yet, while nature presented to the pioneers in a great many ways her harsher side, she likewise favored them

*An address delivered August 18, 1904, at the Dallas county Old Settler's Picnic, some years before Mr. Clarke was governor.

with her gentler. I have had him tell me how the fall would come, very much as it does now, only with a different setting. How when the first cool breezes from the north would begin to form the first delicate tracings of ice around the prairie ponds, and to waft down the smoky haze of Indian summer, which spread its smoky mantle carressingly over the fields and wooded streams, the long lines of wild ducks and geese would begin to fill the sky and bring sport and food to the pioneer. And how all through the early autumn it seemed as though nature was content with her labors of the summer and was resting peacefully after her labors of work well done. And so, I might continue to enumerate the pleasures and hardships of the early settlers' life, and should I do so, it is to be feared that the hardships would far outnumber and outweigh the pleasures.

GREATNESS COMES THROUGH STRUGGLES

Yet, it was these very hardships which produced the men who have made this state what it is and have made the great men among our settlers. All the great men the world has ever produced have come into prominence by reason of a struggle. Search history over and nowhere on her pages will you find a truly great man but who came there in some crisis. Man becomes great by overcoming and conquering. Wars make history, and great names, because in such great crisis all the latent powers of man's nature are aroused to meet the obstacles presented and a great man is the result. Men to be real men must rely on themselves; they must have the courage of their convictions.

The conditions which confronted the pioneers of this state were such as necessarily must have produced men strong of body and strong and self-reliant of mind; men firm in their own beliefs, firm in their convictions. They struggled against all the hardships of earth and sky and became strong by reason of obstacles overcome. The broadness of these prairies, the strength of old Iowa's

winters and her storms, could only produce men of broad mind, of honest bearing and of true worth. Such conditions produced what I term natural men.

And what do I mean by natural men? What characteristics constitute their makeup? There never was nor never will be, in all the history of the world, a truly great man who was not a natural man. The natural man uses the powers given him by nature in the way nature intended they should be used, that is naturally. He is not hampered by conventionalities; neither is he dwarfed by customs. He moves, thinks and acts in a natural manner. He has no place for show or for shame in his makeup. He deals with things honestly and fearlessly. He has a ruggedness about his nature that sees through sham and artificially instantly because such cannot be a part of his nature. He places value upon things of real value because he weighs them according to his innate, his natural sense. He sees the operation of the law of cause and effect clearly because he is natural in his reasoning. Artificial rules and dogmas of reasoning have no effect or weight with him. He is natural. He follows his innate sense given him by nature, which can never be far from right.

Take all the great men the world has ever produced and you will find this rugged natural power as the foundation of their greatness. Lincoln, the man who held this nation together during four years of the most disastrous local war the world has ever seen, could do so because his actions were governed by his innate sense of the eternal fitness of things, by his dependence on his own convictions; because he knew he was right, because he felt it. What made the nation love Lincoln? It was his naturalness, his hatred of sham and artificiality; his rugged honesty and sterling character; his commonness. His actions and speeches told the world that here nature made a man; and that is the only true man. There can be no manly man who does not follow his natural and

innate sense in the problems of life. No man can be powerful and try to shape his conduct according to the dictates of the world. He must shape it and he alone. Abraham Lincoln was a product of exactly the same conditions that confronted our early settlers. His strong self-reliant character was shaped by these same conditions. The struggle with primeval nature brought forth in him all his latent resources and made him the strong, honest, God-fearing man that he was.

NATIONS THE SAME AS MEN

And, as I say, those conditions made of our pioneers natural men, as I term them, powerful men. Let us see what the pages of history record concerning nations of all history formed under such conditions. History shows us that the only great nations, the only nations that have tended to make the world better and to advance its civilization have been agricultural people. Then great colonizing nations, the nations that have educated the savage portions of the globe and have carried Christianity into its darkest depths, were people who lived as our pioneers lived, deriving their living from the soil. The only stable nations have been such. Why have these nations been the greatest and endured the longest upon history's page? Because such a life more than any other tends to produce the natural man. A man cannot spend his life out of doors in close communion with nature and be unnatural.

If then history records that the only great and powerful nations in all history have been agricultural peoples, is it any wonder that our old settlers were the men of power that they were? They conquered these stubborn prairies and conquered the storms by making shelters that defied them. Such conflict and such overcoming of obstacles made natural men, honest men, great men. One only needs to look about him to convince himself that our old settlers were great men.

When one thinks that not more than fifty years ago these beautiful fields and these prosperous towns and cities scattered over this great state were nothing but naked prairie, and that all this has been brought about in such a short space of time, it would seem as though it must have been accomplished by a Divine rather than human hands. Yet, for all these conditions, and for all we have today we must thank our settlers. To more intelligently understand what has been brought about by his efforts, and the many things we have to thank him for, let us contrast the Iowa of fifty years ago and the Iowa of today. Where fifty years ago stood a large prairie lake, now stands that bountiful cornfield; where formerly was the bare prairie, now stands that prosperous city; where formerly there was a mere trail across the prairie with its slow plodding ox carts, is now the railway with its trains tearing across the country at the rate of sixty and seventy miles an hour; and where formerly it took weeks to get any word from a friend, now you talk to him instantly through your telephone.

And so I might go on enumerating the many changes. Incredible to believe that all this took place in fifty years. And whose hand produced this change, was it some miracle by hand Divine, truly it was a miracle yet it was fashioned by hands of our honored old settlers. He it is who has changed these bare prairies of yesterday into the paradise of today. And when we think of the trials and hardships undergone by these pioneers in order to produce such a garden of Eden of this country, ought we not to honor them? Ought we not to revere them?

DOES THE PRESENT GENERATION APPRECIATE

Those bleak prairies, but yesterday the home of the Indians and the wolves, the early settlers changed into the beautiful fields and pleasant homes of today. I doubt if we of the present generation properly appreciate the sacrifices and the sufferings of the pioneers who have

made for us the ease and plenty which we now enjoy. In truth to those of us who have never experienced the trials of frontier life it is well nigh impossible. How would any of the present generation enjoy living far out on the prairie, miles from any other habitation, with few and scanty supplies except what was wrested from the stubborn prairie by their own labor? There everything was toil, toil to break up the prairie, toil tending the crops, toil fighting prairie fires and all the while cut off from the civilized world almost as completely as if on another planet. And how, when the snows of winter would come with the extreme cold, the scanty supplies would run short and miles and miles of country made impassable by the snow, between them and relief.

Such things seem to us of the present generation only as mythical tales from some far country. Yet, just such conditions existed here and just such hardships were endured by the old settlers in producing this land of plenty for the present generation. And while as I say, we of the present generation may not be able to adequately realize what has been done for us, yet it does lie within our power to express in measure, at least, the gratitude we feel to these sturdy pioneers upon such an occasion as this. There is no greater pleasure in the world than to feel that sacrifice has produced pleasure for others and it must afford to these pioneers here assembled on such an occasion as this, at this most happy reunion, a feeling of profound satisfaction to look back over work well done and to see its beneficent results in everything about them. They endured and suffered that this country might be in its present condition today, and certainly this beautiful state is a commonwealth of which they and we, also may feel justly proud.

Let us look further at this Iowa of today, the product of the old settlers' labors. We have a song in Iowa which you have all heard in which are the words, "Iowa beautiful land." Certainly Iowa is a beautiful land. Stand upon any elevation in Iowa and look about you over the

broad rolling fields of waving corn dotted here and there with the golden color of the oat fields, looking like some gigantic checkerboard of beautiful colors, with here and there a little wooded stream making its cheerful way to the larger water course. And so looking would it take much persuasion to make you believe that Iowa was the original garden of Eden, that this was the favored spot of the Almighty?

Iowa beautiful land and great and bountiful in its wealth and power; producing enough to feed the world and growing richer year by year. It was Mr. Blaine, I think, who said to the men having in charge the private train which was to convey a party of titled foreigners across the United States, "Be sure and arrange your schedule so you can cross Iowa in the daylight." Cross Iowa in the daylight! Mr. Blaine was right; he knew that the sight Iowa presented to the eye when in the full bloom of its crop season was a sight equalled nowhere else upon the earth. He knew that there was not a state from New York to California that would compare with old Iowa in the beauty of her fields or in the abundance of her prosperity. Search the wide world over and nowhere will you find another place on earth where the people are so uniformly happy, so uniformly prosperous and where absolute want is virtually unknown.

IOWA'S RARE LOCATION

Iowa lies almost in the center of the United States in the richest valley, in the richest nation in the world. She has the best soil, bountiful rains, and good climate. Iowa produces within her own borders nearly all the necessities and most of the luxuries of life. Iowa is rich, great and powerful, yet she is only in her infancy. Less than fifty years ago the prairie wolves held nightly concerts upon the spot we are now standing. Iowa is only beginning to feel her power and to arouse and stretch herself like some child first realizing its strength.

Look where you will, in the honored positions of the nation, in the high position of the industrial world, in the journalistic fields, everywhere you find Iowa's sons. Look in the national house and senate, in the cabinet of the president, in all the honored places in the nation, there stand Iowa's sons honored and respected. We are proud of the Iowa of today; we are proud of her history; we are proud of her war record; we are proud of her all. And upon whose brow should be placed the laurel for producing the Iowa of today? Upon the brow of the old settler in whose honor we are here assembled today. Upon such a foundation as he built could repose nothing other than a powerful and mighty state. Upon such a foundation the greatest things may be built.

Such being the Iowa of the present day, and such being the foundation laid by our old settlers for coming generations to build upon, what may we not expect in the future; what are the possibilities for Iowa? Draw upon the imagination as you will, yet who can foretell the advance of Iowa in the coming fifty years. The most extravagant statements would probably fall far short of the reality. Yet, let me make a few prophecies of what will be seen in Iowa in the near future.

How long will it be before Iowa will have manufacturing establishments scattered over all this broad state to convert her raw materials into the finished product? It is an absolute certainty that large packing establishments and large manufactories will be located here. It is an absurdity for us to do as we do now, pay the freight on our raw material to the eastern factory or packing plant and then pay freight back on the finished product. Within the near future Iowa will be able to take care of all her own produce and make it into the finished article within her own borders.

THE NATIONS CAPITAL

And did you ever realize that it is most peculiar that the capital of the United States should stand far out on

an exposed sea coast, an open mark for any nation that happens to be at war with us. It was placed there when the nation was but in its infancy, when only a few states along the sea coast were in existence to send their representatives to the seat of the government. Now representatives from Oregon, California and Washington must travel the width of a continent in order to represent their states. Where should the capital of the nation logically stand? Nowhere better than somewhere in the Mississippi valley, in what is really the heart of the nation, sheltered and protected on all sides. And if in the Mississippi valley why not in Iowa, the most beautiful spot in the most beautiful country in the world?

And so, I might continue stating possibilities of the future of our state. Iowa state is but in its dawning; Iowa but in the morning of her existence! Great has been her history, great is its present and greater beyond all anticipation will be its future! Iowa will tower high in the nation, vigorous and powerful in her strength, and build upon a substantial foundation that will never weaken or deteriorate. And when in future generations the history of Iowa's magnificent growth shall be unfolded to the world, starting as the foundation of her greatness, as the keystone of her prosperity and as the basis of her strength, will be seen the pioneers of the early days, our honored old settlers.

POLITICS AND THE ARMY

"Sir: The President has thought proper to announce that he will regard all partisan or active interference in elections, and the contribution of any assessment on salaries or official emoluments for party purposes, by officers or agents under the control of the Federal Government, an abuse which he will correct by removal from office . . ."—From a printed circular sent to all United States Army officers by Secretary of War Bell, under date of March 23, 1841.

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