

The Washington Historical Quarterly

EDMOND S. MEANY: THE VALUE OF A MAN

We are met today to do honor to the memory of Edmond Stephen Meany.¹ We are gathered together most appropriately on the campus, every tree of which knew his loving touch, and in the building which, by force of student opinion, bore his name even through the late years of his life. The tone of our assembly should not be one of sorrow. Death is as natural as life and who would really want to stay the healing hand of death when it comes after a full life abundantly lived? No, our mood, so it seems to me, might well be that which comes from the intimacy of a chat about the fire; of tales touching on those homely episodes that are always tied up with a clean, vigorous and helpful life. This is not just a University assembly, although we are proud to act as host. No, this life was too full for any one group of people to call him its own. So here are gathered his colleagues, some of whom have marched side by side with him for more than a generation; former students, and pioneers of the days when this great western land was densely clothed with tall firs. All come with common impulse, to speak, even though the ears of him of whom we speak are forever sealed, of our affection, our pride, our love. Such speaking will do us good, even as does prayer.

I must leave to old friends the privilege of recounting the intimate things of Edmond Meany's life, for it was given to me to share with him less than a year. Therefore may I not dwell on this kindly life as a symbol of that which makes any institution to which such a life is devoted, a great and worthy achievement.

In our more prosaic hours we citizens of this country enumerate our sources of wealth. We look at our fisheries and at our trees, and we find them good. We find therein these things we call wealth. And so with our minerals, our agriculture, and our industrial de-

¹ Professor Edmond S. Meany, Executive head of the Department of History in the University of Washington since 1897, and Founder and Editor of the *Washington Historical Quarterly* died suddenly on the morning of April 22, 1935. Funeral services were observed in Seattle on April 26, and on Sunday, May 5, a Memorial service was held by the University of Washington. The three addresses delivered by his colleagues on that occasion are here printed. These are followed by three tributes from readers of the *Quarterly*.

velopment, do we reckon up our possessions, and find them good. But who shall say of how much worth to us is a fine young man or a womanly young girl, each of them refined and shaped in their impressionable years by great men like Edmond Meany? Is our state, with all its physical wealth, of any good to us, if we do not see to it that these young people who are later to care for this wealth, are wisely taught by precept and example to know gold from gilt, to love and respect their country, to learn how to use their minds to think straight in a devious world, to become—and this is most important—patriotic, kindly, generous and wise? This training of the young was Professor Meany's job, and it is the job of every last one of us in this great University. If we reckon up the wealth of our State solely in physical terms, we are never going to balance our books. This greater wealth, this far greater wealth, is that which comes from people. If our trees are worth many millions, at what figure should we capitalize such men as the one whose memory we are honoring today? Can anyone tell me?

In closing, then, I say that I am using this fine life as a text for my short sermon. In our colleges are other men of this kind. They are loyal servants of a state, which in the stress of business affairs, is prone to forget how vital such teachers are. If we do not build the minds and the characters of our young, we are starting on the long slow road to dissolution. What is the value of a man? What has been the value of that man who left us a short while ago? Your hearts and your heads will tell you the answer.

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