

## MEANY, THE ROAD MAKER

We are met today to give thanks for the career, prolonged in ample powers beyond the allotted span of human life, and closed with a dramatic timeliness such as must arouse the envy of many and the admiration of all. To die, as Edmond Meany died, with the music of the Easter songs still in his ears and the manifestations of Nature's annual Easter miracle all about him in the campus he loved, in the office he had filled with the accumulated treasures of a long life of research, and with the familiar din of changing classes all around him as of wont—how can we esteem this other than as the crowning gift of a gracious and merciful Providence?

To attempt any sort of a survey of a life so rich and various would be so futile as to be ridiculous. Fortunately I am spared such futility not only by the limits of my time but also by all that has so beautifully been said by others during these past few days. Also it is not difficult for me to choose what I should say today, however difficult it be to say it. For every aspect of the career of Professor Meany, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, finds a focal point in that single-minded devotion to this University which we particularly celebrate today. Men have praised his Americanism, and that Americanism was as undisguised as it was free from blatancy or chauvinism. But it was specially an Americanism nurtured in loyalty to the Northwest he so uniquely knew—the larger loyalty mirrored in the lesser as the sky is reflected in the pool. When he joined in the words of our National Hymn:

I love thy rocks and rills,  
Thy woods and templed hills,

his heart was upon the mountains he had so often climbed, and the woods through which he had wandered in days when it was bliss to be alive and to be young was very heaven. But we may also say that his affection for the Northwest, never a narrow provincialism, was itself focussed in that central shrine, the University, which he had done so much to create, and to which that affection flowed centripetally even as centrifugally his influence had radiated forth to the state, the nation, and the lands beyond.

I may be wrong, but I have always thought of Edmond Meany as in the best sense the pioneer, who beginning with an instinctive love of the woods and mountains found in their very wildness the

call to the man who should blaze a way through their entanglements and build roads by means of which the youth of the land might find its way to those open spaces in which to live on the large and generous scale.

When I first knew him, not far short of forty years ago, I confess I thought of Mr. Meany as the budding naturalist rather than as the coming historian. He seemed then to me to live with his gaze upon the forests and the hills, as though he dreamed:

So may I grow as pines upon her heights,  
And flow with all her rivers to the sea,  
And fall on her like dew on summer nights,  
And love and serve her for eternity.

But he passed as easily by way of his love of nature to his love of mankind as our Campus passed from the stage of virgin forest to become in due time the arena for the life of crowded youth. As a great artist finds his landscape after all but the background for some significant human figures, so, carrying all the while the calm, the zest, the energy of primeval nature, he found his full development in the love of his fellows. That is in large part the reason why, in putting aside of necessity most of the thoughts which have crowded upon me these last days, I have chosen to stress this one thought of Edmond Meany as the maker of roads.

Some years ago a member of this faculty wrote a little poem in which he pointed out that, though our campus paths are planned by engineers and approved by the administration, the ultimate roads are made by the students themselves in the search for short cuts. Physically there is much truth in this, but in the spiritual realm our university paths are the work of a comparatively few, and of these of Edmond Meany in a very unique way.

It was this spirit of the pioneer with a vision and with purposeful energy to realise the vision which made him the student who derived his knowledge so much less from the pages of arid text-books and so largely from contact with the living and breathing world around him.

It was this which made him the inspiring teacher, not one of those witless shepherds who drive a flock that is not athirst to a pool which is disliked, but one who constantly evoked from the dead or dying past the spirits of men made familiar and approachable, companions with us on the highway of life.

It was this which made him the historian who touched with warm human hands every detail of the subjects concerning which he wrote, and the more lovingly as these details seemed slipping from the memory of men and receding into that oblivion whence no memory could recall them.

It was this above all which gave to the man that form and substance and quality we call character, the character which manifested itself in a simplicity at once childlike and sublime, and which was carried through all his avatars as student, journalist, legislator, and educator to the very end. It filled his teaching with jets of almost emotional appeal, an appeal to some anything but academic, but which nevertheless drew around him the unstable population of a Campus even as the heaped waves follow the moon. So men came at last to see in him not so much the maker of tradition as tradition itself, not so much the representative of an institution as himself the institution embodied, a kind of moral order seen through the medium of an individual life.

The question is sometimes asked: What constitutes a University? The answers are various enough. Buildings? Yes. Students? Yes. Teachers trained to learn and apt to teach? Yes. But back of all there must always be that subtle and undefinable thing we call Personality, the personal character such as in the old days filled "the street of straw" with ardent youth and reared a spiritual fabric of which the most venerable and majestic buildings were but the impermanent and material vesture.

Sometimes this personality was of the sort which dazzles for a time and then declines; sometimes it was of the enduring sort which grows the greater as generation succeeds to generation. In this second category I place Edmond Meany for the reason that he not only gave unstintedly a long life of service but also in the giving made roads which beginning as footpaths were bound in time to become traditions. By this I am not thinking of campus customs but of higher things. For example, he knew what it was to love "whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely." He knew how to rebuke with flashing glance whatever was mean and unworthy. He could stop criticism with his presence, forestall unkindness with kindness, evoke love by giving love. He knew how much better it was to fight for the good than to rail at the ill. He was never so taken up with his own affairs as to resent the intrusion of quite

unimportant people, nor so wrapped up in a large vision as to be unmindful of the small courtesies of life. All this we come to feel the more now that we have "laid the groping hand away and see no longer blinded by our eyes."

There are three ways in which men live after the death of their mortal bodies.

First, in the memory of men. Memory is a frail vessel but the memory of friends is a precious vase which, even when broken, fills the house with the odor of the ointment it held.

Secondly, in the works which we leave behind. In this case it is a harvest rich and rare and ripe, and one continually resowing itself for the benefit of those who come after us.

Thirdly, in that survival of spiritual values which it is the mission of the Christian faith at this season to proclaim and which makes it hard to believe that the life thus far hewn out of the primeval should end pitifully in a *cul-de-sac*.

Every year, even when physical disability made it difficult, Edmond Meany was wont to seek strength in the mountain calm and the mountain glory. On these occasions he never failed to send, doubtless to many others beside myself, a little sprig of heather as a kind of pledge telling of some new altitude attained. Today we have no expectation of any tangible spray to fall among us, as the rose petals fell from the martyred St. Cecilia upon her lover. But I feel sure that many among us will catch some faint echo of the shout of the triumphant mountaineer who has reached his last height and found it no blind summit, some dim sight of those purer peaks touched with unearthlier fire, in sudden vision virginally new, from which his brooding spirit surveys those of us who stand at the lower levels.

Now we are called upon not only to aspire but to follow, to climb and to attain. There is a beautiful little episode in the life of Robert Louis Stevenson which tells how the grateful inhabitants of Samoa made and presented to their friend what they called "The Road of Gratitude." "Considering the great love of Tusitala, in his loving care for our distress, we have prepared this splendid gift. It shall never be muddy, it shall endure forever, this road which we have built."

We are all makers as well as users of roads. May God grant that we may keep open and clean the road Edmond Meany has made for us all. May it beckon us towards those serener heights he has

at length attained, till, as the weary soldiers of Xenophon caught sight of the sea and knew their journey ended, so we may catch sight of that immortal sea into which all earth's currents turn at last and to which at such moments as this our eyes are turned:

I stand upon the summit of my life;  
Behind the camp, the court, the field, the grove,  
The battle and the burden; vast, afar,  
Beyond these weary ways behold, the sea.  
The sea o'erswept by clouds and wings and winds,  
By thoughts and wishes manifold, whose breath  
Is freshness and whose mighty pulse is peace.  
Palter no thought of the horizon dim;  
Cut loose the bark, such voyage itself is peace,  
Majestic motion, unimpeded scope,  
Eternity, deliverance, promise, rest;  
Time-tired souls salute you from the shore.

HERBERT H. GOWEN