



"This is but the dawn. We stand in the vestibule of the temple. The achievements of the past will pale into insignificance before the completed glory of the century to come."

—JOHN J. INGALLS.

CHAPTER XIX

THE KANSAS SPIRIT

Kansas is a great State; great in size and wealth, great in industries and resources, and great in what it has accomplished. But there are states that are larger, others that are wealthier, and many that have larger cities, greater population, a longer history, and more splendid memorials, so it is not for these things that Kansas is especially noted among the states. The quality that is the mark of its distinction is the character of its history and of its people.

Any people is, in large part, the product of its thinking, its beliefs, and its hopes and desires. This is the lesson of Hawthorne's story, "The Great Stone Face." Through all the years Ernest studied the face on the mountain and pondered the thoughts that he read there. In time he came to resemble the great face, both in its features and in the character it expressed. In the same way the people of Kansas have become what they are to-day because of their thoughts, their experiences and their ideals. We often hear it said concerning some act or some effort toward progress, "That is the Kansas spirit," which means that the thing done shows what kind of people the Kansans are; it is characteristic of them. If, then, we would understand what this Kansas spirit is, we must know what thoughts and experiences and ideals have had a part in producing it.

Certain characteristics of the people of Kansas are

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largely due to the fact that this was so recently a frontier state. Pioneer life, wherever it exists, develops the qualities of independence, courage, resourcefulness, endurance, and democracy. The pioneer has only himself to lean on; he learns to take chances, he laughs at adversity, he adapts himself to circumstances, and he lives in the future.

Pioneer qualities

These characteristics are not, however, peculiar to the Kansas people, for the early settlers of other states lived on the frontier and developed these same qualities. But Kansas had a Territorial history which was very different from that of any other state and which has left its impress upon the people. Other pioneers have had the great task of making a state out of a wilderness, but Kansas pioneers had a second great task, that of making a free state in the face of the most determined opposition. They came to Kansas as the Puritans came to America, in the name of liberty. They were stern, unyielding, purposeful men and women, sure of the presence of divine leadership, and their character has deeply influenced the Kansas people. This influence has made them hate oppression; it has made them demand justice and fair play; it has made them value people for their personal worth; it has made them believe in the equality of human rights, and in the ability of the people to govern themselves. These are characteristics of every true Kansan and the qualities that make the Kansas spirit.

This spirit is evident in many phases of the life and progress of our people, but it is nowhere more apparent than in their political affairs and in their laws. The spirit that made the pioneers refuse to submit to the "Bogus Legislature" also impelled them to send more than their share

Manifestations of the Kansas spirit

of soldiers to the Civil War. Later, the same spirit led the Kansas people to adopt the prohibition amendment and to grant to women the full right of suffrage. It caused the farmers and other laboring people to form organizations for the better protection of their rights. In short, the Kansas spirit has manifested itself whenever the people have made an effort to overcome difficulties, whenever they have tried to secure more justice or liberty for themselves. These efforts have sometimes been so radical, and the plans offered for the betterment of conditions so new and startling as to attract much attention in the rest of the country. But Kansas has continued to believe in the worth and possibilities of her people and to make every effort to bring about conditions that will give them the opportunity to rise to the full measure of their nature.

All over the United States there is a growing tendency on the part of the people to exercise a more direct control of their government; to take more and more authority into their own hands. This means that the people must be interested, active and well-informed. For us, it means that the quality of Kansas government depends upon the quality of Kansas citizenship. While the task of the pioneers was a heavy one, ours to-day is no less great, though it is different. Their struggle was to get the soil under cultivation, ours to see that it does not become worn out; theirs to get the railroads, ours to use and regulate them; theirs to develop new industries, ours to see that they are carried on with justice to all; theirs to establish schools, ours to make them more efficient; in general, theirs to build up, ours to use wisely.

Kansas history is not made; it is in the making. We study the past that we may learn how to make the present

The task confronting the Kansas of to-day

better. Great things have been accomplished but there is much yet to be done. The pioneers solved their problems, and if we are worthy of the Kansas they have given us we will strive to solve ours. We will keep alive the Kansas spirit.

SUMMARY

The Kansas people have developed the same pioneer qualities as have the people of other states; but, in addition, their peculiar Territorial history has made them believe in a marked degree in liberty, justice, equality, and democracy. These characteristics have given rise to what is called "the Kansas spirit." This spirit is especially evident in the political movements through which the people have taken more and more of the control of government into their own hands.

REFERENCES

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QUESTIONS

1. In what things is Kansas great? Name other states that are greater in any of these things. What quality distinguishes Kansas?
2. How can the lesson in the story of "The Great Stone Face" be applied to Kansas?
3. Why does pioneer life develop courage? Independence? Resourcefulness?
4. What effect has the Territorial history of Kansas had on the people?
5. What is meant by the Kansas spirit? What are some of the ways in which it has been shown? Discuss each.
6. Discuss the responsibilities of the Kansas people of to-day.