

FOREWORD

We called him "Bus" as a nickname of endearment. It had been his attempt to say "Russell" when learning to talk. Our most constant reaction to him was affection. Next to this feeling and not appreciably inferior to it was something like respectful wonder at his quality and his gifts. Without analyzing them we knew them for more than talent. They were always flashing upon us in unpredictable ways, which lit up our duller insights and slower understandings. We talked of genius, but what we meant by the word we did not know. Will anybody ever know?

But we knew some things that we could always count on finding in Smith's character and in his mind. On the scientific side his intellect was a steel trap. It clicked. Its accuracy was uncanny. Yet he knew the limitations of science; what it is and what it is not. He knew where knowledge begins and ends, and it did not suffice him. Beyond knowledge lie the infinite and eternal mysteries, and before these he was the reverent but never the mystical philosopher who fools himself with meaningless phrases. Smith was content to look into the unknown with agnostic humility and let it go at that. To beauty his sensitiveness was exquisite. Poetry and art were the substance of his life, and for felicity of expression he had unbounded regard. What was worth saying was worth

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saying in a beautiful way, which to him meant an illuminating way, and at any cost a simple, accurate, unpretentious way.

His courage was great, his fortitude unailing. When America went into the World War, Smith was among the first to volunteer. Assigned to duty in a southern camp and hospital, prostrated by influenza, he was stricken. From the initial attack he recovered only to go down quickly to apparently inevitable death from tuberculosis. Officers, nurses, and medical experts reported that he was doomed. Then a devoted mother took him in hand. She nursed him back to life and a semblance of health.

The years that followed brought a succession of torturing operations, with months now and then of respite. Mind and soul grew though body faltered. Painfully he wrote when strength permitted. With heroic will he returned to Columbia University to resume candidacy for the doctor's degree.

An instructor was wanted in Columbia College to give undergraduates a foundation course in sociology. Smith was persuaded to undertake it.

Then came amazing revelation of his intellectual and spiritual power. He met a restless assemblage of young men, curious as to what they were in his lecture room for. Instantaneously (no other word applies) he "got" them, thrilled them, and held them. At the end of the hour they did not know what had happened to them except that they meant never to lose any word that he should have to offer them. In a few days their homage had become devotion. And yet they knew and claimed

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him as one of themselves. They understood such a relationship in athletic affairs; compelling experience of it in the classroom was new.

The outpouring of vitality which went into that teaching would have drained a strong constitution. To Smith it was fatal. A succession of warning breakdowns, and presently operations more dreadful than those which had come before, precluded hope that routine work could ever be resumed.

When the end came it was believed that more than an extraordinary life had gone out in night. A partially fulfilled promise would be remembered for a time and then forgotten as music of the virtuoso who has left no compositions. We knew of the weary hours which he had given to writing but supposed that his manuscripts were little more than drafts of chapters of a sociological treatise, destined never to be completed. That he had left also an enduring record of his marvelous talks with his boys, and that it was alive as his talks were with "beauty, laughter, and love," with illuminating knowledge and with sane philosophy, could not then have been believed. Yet here it is.

Probably the pages were sketched from day to day before meeting students, but certainly they were afterwards worked over with all that sensitive feeling for word and phrase which made his sentences so nearly perfect, never pretentious, or labored, but simple, truthful, and right. As I have read them, I have felt the gratitude of one who loved him, that "Bus" as an inspiration and a teacher is not dead and will not die for generations to come. The mind which was genius,

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the soul which was beauty, laughter, love, and fortitude, live and will go on living.

I have let myself go in expression of feeling. I could not do otherwise. But now let me try as a lifelong student of the subject to which my comrade and quondam pupil also was devoted, to set down a judgment. This book is the best introduction to sociology that has ever been written. Fortunate will be the college boy or girl into whose hands it falls before wits have been addled by confusion worse confounded, or antagonized by stupidity. It is not a treatise, an exposition. It is a perception, an insight. It awakens, it drives. It makes clear what sociology is, and reveals its value, for thought and for life, for discrimination, for appraisal, for fulfillment of the Miltonic injunction: "Nor love thy life nor hate, but what thou livest live well."

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