

East Carolina Teachers College.

Address by Mr. R. H. Wright, President.

October 18th, 1923.

Scripture lesson- 33rd Psalm

I have read in your hearing this morning a passage of scripture that shows that Jehovah shapes the destiny of practically every nation on earth. That God saved the King and not the army of the King. I selected this passage of scripture because of the many references of that nature, and because I wanted to talk to you to-day, and two or three other mornings perhaps on the spirit of a nation. We have been studying in our Sunday School lesson something about the spirit of the Jews; how they were God's chosen people for a very definite mission; how they brought into the world a true concept of Jehovah; how they brought to the peoples of the earth a knowledge of the Great Spirit, the Supreme Being.

Some times we fail to realize that there is a national spirit, or to put it in other words a spirit of the nation, but there is just such a spirit. Every college also has the spirit of the college, every church has the spirit of the church, and there is just a little bit of difference in the spirit of colleges and the spirit of churches. I mean a difference in spirit of the individual churches in the same denomination. There is the spirit of a community. Take the town of Greenville, they worked out a slogan that is expressive of the spirit of this community. "Our Greenville, yours if you come." The best slogan I ever saw, because it expresses one of the finest kind of community spirits. There is the spirit of a hundred different counties in this state. Then there is a state spirit, there is the national spirit and that is the thing I want to talk to you about. What is the spirit of the American people and how is it made.

Now I want to talk to you one or two mornings on how that spirit is made. Some of the determining factors that enter into the making up of the spirit of the American people, and this morning for a few minutes that I have left I want to talk to you about the press. The spirit of the people is determined in a large measure by what they see, hear and say. In other words it is made up out of the things that we read, that we talk about. I am not at all sure but what the last one might be left out or put in as the interpretation of our individual spirit. The spirit of the state comes out of the individual spirits in the state. You know every human being has what Marie Correlli calls, human magnetism. Something that radiates out from the individual when you come in the presence of them. That is the individual spirit. I don't know how to define it but it is there just the same. Oh! you may say I don't believe that. All right. Did you ever walk along with any one, and all at once both of you begin to sing the same song with any one saying a word about it

out

and that we talk

radiated out of one life and the other life picked it up. This thing of wireless has been going on ever since mankind has been here, and we have had sending and receiving stations but we didn't know it. Each human being is made up of a distributing station, and also a receiving station. Now what we read does enter into the way we look at things, it becomes a part of us, a part of our knowledge, and from that knowledge we act. Therefore those people who print newspapers and magazines and periodicals ^{have} ~~have~~ all kinds of a wonderful influence in this country of ours in the shaping of the spirit of the American people. It is one of the most important positions occupied by any American citizen, to be an editor, to be in charge of the material that goes into a newspaper for example. His is one of the most important positions held by any citizen in this republic of ours. We have been taught all of our lives and our fathers before us, our ancestors before us that American people must have the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. Now that is all right, but every liberty that an individual has carries with it just that much more responsibility, and we do have, unfortunately, in this great country of ours a number of people who are conducting periodicals who really and truly are not fit to be engaged in that responsible work.

I can remember when if it was printed I knew it was the truth. It didn't make any difference what it was if it was printed it was true. Did you ever go through that state. If it is of enough importance to be put in print then it must be true, but unfortunately that position that I held at one time in my life is not true. We have young folks who are not trained, young folks with a very limited amount of education running daily and weekly papers, and you can spell that weekly any way you please. Some of them come out once in seven days, and they are so weak they can hardly crawl, but they are shaping the spirit of the American people under that principle of the freedom of speech. I mean the freedom of the press. They are giving to people ideas that are not true, and if we get enough of those ideas into the American people, then the spirit of the American people will be false. The world found that out back there in the great war, and there are propagandas to-day who are spreading false ideas and spending millions to spread those false ideas through the press.

We ^{do} ~~did~~ not know the truth about Russia. A religious body no so very long ago sent a very competent man into Russia to study the situation, and he came back and made a report of what he found, and it was so adverse to what public opinion was that his denomination howled him down, and said why, he has been bought over. In other words they had such a false idea of the conditions in Russia that they would not believe the truth when one of their own number went and found it and brought it back to them. You and I do not know the truth from the press about conditions in the near East, nor the conditions in the far East. You and I do not know conditions, if we read the Press, in Philadelphia. We don't have to go outside of the United States, especially if you read the Democratic Press, about the Republican city of Philadelphia. If they can misrepresent it they will do it, and

the Democrats are just as good as the Republicans, and the Republicans just as good as the democrats.

I am not saying something partisan. The people in New England have been taught to believe that the conditions in the mountains of North Carolina are absolutely horrible, and that we didn't treat our own people with ordinary courtesy, and the people in Pennsylvania have been taught to believe that the people of North Carolina wouldn't give the negro a fair trial, and they turned right around and ran all the negroes out of a town in Pennsylvania, and then we began to say something about the Pennsylvanians. The point is this, the Press doesn't give the folks the truth, and in so far as it fails to do ~~it~~ that it is creating a wrong spirit in the American people.