

EDWARD EVERETT HALE

TORCH BEARER

First of a Series of Articles on "Helpful Americans"

By **JOHN HUBERT GREUSEL**

IT was going on midnight, and still the little group lingered before the fireplace. The log had burned itself to ashes, now all but dead and cold. One after another the friends had said something of the venerable sage of Boston, Dr. Edward Everett Hale, whose humanities shine like a star,—Hale, who for I know not how many years has been helping everybody this wide world over; maintaining, through his "Lend a Hand" clubs, an open doorway, that with all reverence may be called a clearing house for the woes and sorrows of mankind; paying large dividends not in the current coin but in the fine gold of charity,—Hale, poet, orator, historian, preacher, citizen, octogenarian;—and then I heard these words:

"It's too bad that you've not seen the Alpine monastery of St. Bernard, and the hospice, as it is called, where travelers rescued from death in the terrible snow storms find food, drink, and shelter. The beggar, the drunkard, the thief,—no matter,—each is welcomed as a brother; and as you pass the night in this desolate Alpine fastness, and reflect on the broad charity, a strange feeling creeps over you,—the frailties of mankind take on a new aspect, pity rather than condemnation,—and you realize that these monks, self exiled, self condemned, are among the first real soldiers of religion, exemplifying in their daily lives the true brotherhood of mankind."

The speaker, pausing a moment, added, "When you meet Dr. Hale, you will see, I am sure, a true brother of the Alpine pass. In his case, you do not need to go on a long journey to study a great man. He lives at Roxbury, Boston, within ten miles of this house."

His Sermon at Wellesley

SUNDAY morning dawned bright and beautiful, a rare autumnal day, and I went out to Wellesley to hear Dr. Hale preach. On the platform in the Gothic chapel sat an aged man in a simple black robe. He had the aspect of the patriarch,—long gray hair, gray beard, face serious and kindly. Before him, in sharp contrast, were seated fifteen hundred young women in their new autumn hats and dresses, a picture of life's spring-time. The sage was sitting in a massive golden-oak chair, and behind him streamed the mellow light through the pale orange windows. Here then were the spirit and the theme, earth and heaven, the man and his message.

His sermon was more like the kindly injunction of a father talking to his children. "My dear young friends," he called them, and they sang Cowper's hymn, "The Spirit Breathes Upon the Word." There is something inspiring in hymnal music by fifteen hundred feminine voices, and Dr. Hale told me afterward that he was deeply affected as he joined in the refrain:

Till glory breaks upon my view
In brighter world above.

Then the aged preacher, trembling with the weight of his eighty-five years, slowly stood up and opening his Bible glanced right and left, and bowed reverently to the young lives as much as to say, "You are the promise of your country; the spring-time of the coming generation which I shall not see but which I shall try to help." His eyes sought the

brass letters on the wall, "I come not to be ministered unto, but to minister"; and upon that text he preached that morning, in a clear voice, with simplicity, with infinite humanity. He talked of God the Father, and of man the child. He knew, he said, no life divided from the Lord. Religion, after all, was a very simple matter. For instance, "Our Father," and if you wish you may add, "who art." Thus, putting the two ideas together, you get the complete essence. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men." I have read these words many times, but never was impressed with them until I heard venerable Dr. Hale.

After the sermon, I went with him on the train

from care should be his only thought. But that would not be Dr. Hale, who coined and sent round the world the phrase, "Lend a hand."

The Man in His Home

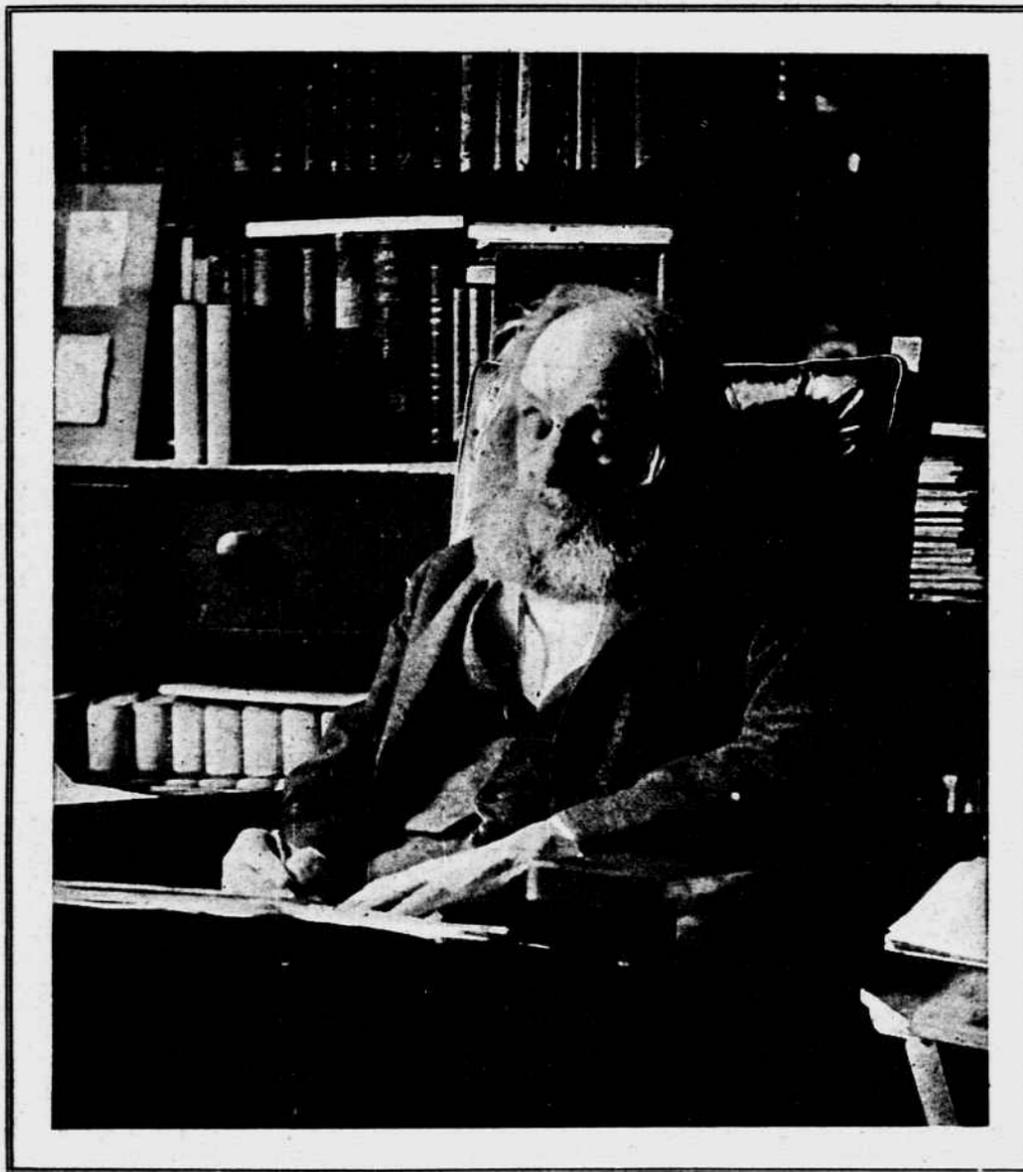
NEXT day I went to Roxbury, to talk with Dr. Hale again. I found the house without difficulty,—a street gamin, a mile away, told me to look for the house with the big porch. I entered a dooryard with a patch of green lawn; and there is a gigantic elm beside the gate; the porch is overrun with vines, screening the lower part of the immense pillars; an old colonial homestead, built on honor by a generation dead and gone these many years; large, roomy, rambling; hall in the middle; quaint mahogany furniture, marbles, antiques; books everywhere; a literary man's home. Dr. Hale's study is to the right in the rear, reached by a side hall that is dark, with alcoves and doors leading here and there in a way that excites one's curiosity. You recall houses in Hawthorne's books.

I found the venerable philosopher in his big Morris chair; and a few steps away is the broad couch on which, when he is tired, he takes his nap; for a man at eighty-five has to be extremely careful of his strength, must rest often to get through the day. "Sit down," he said, "and make yourself at home. Excuse me a moment," he added. "I am looking for a letter. Excuse me, won't you?"

As, without rising from his chair, he went through the papers beside him, I took a look about. What a quaint study!—two rooms made into one,—no, three,—and still others, behind closed doors; walls in terracotta, old dull, harmonizing with the air of venerable repose; a bookish workshop used these forty years and more; where things are untouched and papers and books accumulate in delightful confusion; to the right, three broad windows with old fashioned panes, opening on a small dooryard, with an elm tree whose nodding lower branches almost touch the window beside Dr. Hale; to the

left, an alcove made by walling in an old veranda, holding, I learned afterward, thousands of pamphlets, newspaper clippings and letters,—from the days of the Stamp Act to the Czar's recent personal letter to Dr. Hale on universal peace. At the far end of the study is a wide brick fireplace, and over it the motto, "Olde woode to burne; olde bookes to read; olde friendes to trust." Old rose settees, built in, flank the sides of the fireplace; Grandfather Throop's mahogany writing desk, style of 1750, is at Dr. Hale's right; brass candlesticks; old rose chairs; book shelves reaching to the ceiling; books, old and new, by the thousand; portraits of Revolutionary leaders,—a quaint, cluttered study, very quiet, very sleepy,—and near the fireplace a young woman, who also acts as secretary, was filling in a few moments sewing. And in the deep silence I heard a clock ticking from another part of the house.

"Ah, yes, here is the missing letter." Dr. Hale



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Dr. Hale in His Study.

to Boston. I met him at the station, and he was leaning on his staff; and though the day was as balmy as spring, he wore a heavy overcoat, and his daughter, who was with him, took his arm whenever he moved a few steps. In the train, after we had chatted awhile, his daughter said, "Now you will have to excuse father; he has to take his nap or he may not be well to-morrow." The old man leaned his head against the car window and prepared to go to sleep. I remembered his words at that moment,—why I know not,—"God is the Father, and we are all His children."

The train rumbled through the beautiful New England country, aflame with the colors of autumn; beside the placid river Charles, of historic memories; and the tired old man fell into a light broken slumber. He reminded me of some heroic figure by Michelangelo; a prophet, very old, the last link between colonial times and the present,—a voice from the long vanished past.