

The Papers of Charles Hamlin (mss24661)

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Hamlin, Charles S., Miscellany, Printed Matter, "Reflections at Seventy-Five," By Josephus Daniels, May 1937

CHARLES HAMLIN

Miscellany

PAPERS

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PRINTED MATTER --

"REFLECTIONS AT SEVENTY-FIVE," By
JOSEPHUS DANIELS, MAY 1937

REFLECTIONS AT SEVENTY-FIVE

AMBASSADOR JOSEPHUS DANIELS REPLIES TO INQUIRY AS TO HOW AT SEVENTY-FIVE (May 18th, 1937) HE CAN DO AS MUCH AS WHEN TWENTY-FIVE.

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You ask me to name ten rules that have governed my life. I am not conscious of having at any time adopted rules of guidance which are responsible for the fact that my eyesight is as good and my general health and ability to work at seventy-five are about the same as they were when I was twenty-five, and which have enabled me to achieve some measure of success. However, sub-consciously my life may have been influenced by the following practices or rules of conduct:

- 1.- Like Livingston, I have ever been ready to go anywhere provided it is forward. My fundamental optimism has been justified by long experience. I have seen the growth of a new conception of social justice which convinces me that the world is on the threshold of a fairer distribution of the fruits of man's efforts. I hope to live to see the coming day when there will be no under-privileged, no slums, no denial of equality. I am confident that they are on the way and that future generations will fail to understand how our generation tolerated semi-feudalism and child labor and excessive hours, as we cannot understand how our ancestors tolerated slavery, duelling, and economic injustices. As a publisher-employer and as Secretary of the Navy, I endeavored to adopt standards that would recognize the right of collective bargaining and a fair day's wage for a fair day's work.
- 2.- My habits have been regular, with long working hours and plenty of time for sleep. I have never used stimulants of any kind. I early sensed the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin, who said: "Temperance puts wood on the fire, meal in the barrel, flour in the tubs, money in the purse, credits in the country, contentment in the house, clothes on the children, vigor in the body, intelligence in the brain, and spirit in the whole constitution."
- 3.- As a boy I was passionately fond of baseball and almost slept with a ball and bat. I can prove by Connie Mack that I still love it. However, in my early days as a youthful country publisher, I obtained all the exercise I needed without time out for play. I had no need for exercise after using my legs in reportorial activity in soliciting subscriptions and advertisements and in collecting for the same, in sometimes propelling the ink roller of an old-time Washington hand

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press, and in other handy jobs in a country newspaper establishment. Later, when I might have found time for sports, I had forgotten how to play and have thought it wiser to reserve all my strength for my serious duties. I violate all the accepted rules that prescribe a certain part of every day for physical exercise. During the World War I recall that Walter Camp volunteered to keep the Cabinet and other officials fit by superintending their exercise, giving his scientific "daily dozen". I told him I needed every ounce of strength for my daily tasks and could not join his classes. He predicted I would break down under the war strain unless I exercised daily. Some of my colleagues, who joined his class, later went to hospitals. I did not lose a day or an hour from my official duties during the World War. This demonstrated that keeping fit for work did not require devoting time to prescribed exercise. In that respect I may be an exception to sound rules. I do not advise this course for others. Quite the contrary, I'd like the thrill of knocking a home run or kicking a goal.

- 4.- Because getting angry and losing control of temper injures one's disposition and retards efficiency, I have sought to keep myself free from giving way to wrath. Temper is a blessing if kept under control. When it is master of a man it destroys his happiness and usefulness. For selfish reasons I have tried, but not always with success, to maintain equanimity of life and speech in personal intercourse with my fellows.
- 5.- As a journalist I early learned the wisdom of the declaration of a notable editor, who said that no man could measure up to his duty as an editor unless, as he read in his morning paper of the wrongs and injustices in the world, he was so stirred with indignation that he became animated by a high resolve to do all in his power to redress the wrongs and bring about justice. The paper that is not a prosecutor of evil deeds and evil men falls short of its public responsibility. Righteous wrath is as essential to editorial influence as keen interest in all that goes on in the world.
- 6.- I have always placed loyalty as a supreme virtue and as the very mud-sill of character. Without loyalty to convictions, to friends, to principles, to good causes, to religious faith, to party, no man may hope to achieve his highest goal. Loyalty, however, is a virtue that may degenerate if it causes one to condone wrong in friends or makes one a slave

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to party.

- 7.- I have always been indifferent to money or its accumulation or the power it confers. I have never tried to make money or been actively associated with any enterprise established for profit. I have always been too busy with other things. Love of money may not be the root of all evil, but it is sure to canker the soul, dry up generous impulses, and corrupt the public service.
- 8.- I have always been in close association with youth and with men of youthful and forward-looking ideas. My closest associates have been my four sons, the young men on the staff of my paper, and older men who believe "the best is yet to be". For many years I taught a Sunday school class of college students. That experience was the best receipt for looking at things from the standpoint of tomorrow. These associations, following the guidance of a wise mother and the blessing of a true helpmeet wife, have crowned my life with happiness and a large measure of satisfaction. My faith in the wisdom of these two women early influenced my advocacy of giving the ballot to women and opening wider doors to them.
- 9.- From early boyhood I had deep interest in politics, but resolved when a young editor never to become a candidate for public office. I was not willing to risk the temptation of writing with a view to getting votes for myself, or of being exposed to the suspicion that editorial utterance was influenced by personal ambition. I have regarded editorial duty as public service as truly as holding office. In the positions I have held I have endeavored to live up to the Cleveland creed: "Public office is a public trust."
- 10.- A man is as old as his arteries and his interests. If he permits his economic, religious, or social arteries to harden, or loses interest in whatever concerns mankind, he will lose faith in his fellows and in his world, thereby becoming prematurely old and will need only six feet of earth. If he maintains active interest in the affairs of his home town, his state, his republic, and the world in which he lives, and seeks in every way in his power to improve the welfare of his fellow men, particularly those who may not be able to help themselves, he will realize the wisdom of St. Simon: "The golden age is before us, not behind us." And if he accepts the philosophy of Cuyler as I have tried to do: "Every step toward Christ kills a doubt; every thought, word and deed for Him carries you away from discouragement", I am persuaded that there is no sere or yellow leaf as one moves toward the sunset.

Mexico, D. F.