

— THE SOCIETY OF —
THE FRIENDLY SONS OF ST. PATRICK
— FOR THE RELIEF OF EMIGRANTS FROM IRELAND —

A look back in History: The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick – Philadelphia

Joseph P. Heenan October 29, 2019

From the records of the Society, March 17, 1938

81 years ago, on March 17, 1938

America at this point in time was still deep into the Great Depression, World War I had ended only 20 years prior and in a little more than three years America would be entering World War II.

Rear Admiral Wat Tyler Cluverius Jr. attending the Society's 167th Annual Gala Dinner, addressed the members and guests of the Philadelphia Friendly Sons of St. Patrick with the "Toast to The United States"



Rear Admiral Wat Tyler Cluverius Jr. (12 December 1874 – 28 October 1952) was an admiral in the United States Navy and president of Worcester Polytechnic Institute. When he died, he was the last surviving officer of the sinking of USS Maine

Society President Roland S. Morris:

Now I turn to the less formal and silent toasts of this evening, which you will find on the programme, and the first of our speakers I am happy and proud to say is the Commandant of our Navy Yard here in Philadelphia. I think it is interesting for us to know that he entered the Navy and almost immediately faced one of the most exciting and historical episodes in the history of our country, whose repercussions are continuing from year to year and from the days of the Spanish War, because I think I am right, Admiral, in saying that you are the only surviving active man in the service that was on the "Maine" when she was blown up in the Harbor of Havana.

(Applause.)

The Admiral will speak to the Toast of the United States,
so, I present Rear Admiral Wat T. Cluverius.

Rear Admiral Wat T. Cluverius:

Mr. President, Gentlemen of this splendid Society and its
Guests: Added to the pleasure of finding myself in this attrac-
tive company this evening is the honor conferred upon me in
responding to the toast to our beloved country.

I should like first to express my personal appreciation of the
hospitality of this hour. As a naval officer, already I feel at
home for there are no more splendid units in the Fleet of the
United States than the MONAGHAN, the MAHAN, the Mac-
DONOUGH, the McLANAHAN, the O'RION, the battle-
ship O'REGON and the cruiser OMAHA! The first captain
of that ship which bears a Celtic name told me that the only
regret he had (and he was Captain Hanrahan) was that the
only man on the ship without an Irish name was the bugler
named Cohen, but he was a good bugler. (Laughter.) And I
feel almost, too, that I am again at "Barry Day" down at
Independence Hall. 'The ceremonies should have ended that
day beautifully with darkness, but even the darkness of eventide
did not exhaust the glories and beauties of the Emerald Isle
as set forth by the most eloquent score of speakers in the city
of Philadelphia.

So that, gentlemen, to respond to the toast to the United
States causes me to consider for a moment with you our
country standing today in the midst of a war-torn world which
is challenging our democracy on all sides. Others say to us,
"Can this great democracy survive the conditions that surround
us while we are yet uncertain and distressed within our own
borders?" 'They say, "Will this great democracy"--wherein is
written the right of individuals in the basic law and the only
democracy where these are so written--'survive the history
of former democracies or eventually disappear from the face
of the world as did they?" 'Can the American citizen"--they
ask us--"bear properly the individual responsibility which our
form of government entails?"

Well, these questions persist, but, thank God, there exist throughout the United States such splendid examples of solidarity and of loyalty and intelligence in this and similar societies (Applause) founded at the time that our liberty was first proclaimed in this sovereign city of Philadelphia, to help those who could leave persecution abroad and come to us to be good citizens. So great were these efforts of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in the past, so marked was its contribution to the progress of citizenship, that much of the share of the responsibility of the future rests still upon its shoulders. Knowing the idealistic yet constructive thought of those of Celtic origin, there is no question that its share, in the interest of future citizenship, will be borne.

It has been said that the chief dependence of a democracy is placed in a strong and virile electorate, trained in habits of self-help and self-reliance, and I ask you, as we look within our borders today, are we that strong nation to which the rest of the world looks for help and for succor as it did in 1914 and thereafter? Are we imbued with the importance of our American citizenship and the privileges it has conferred upon us since the days of the Founders, and will we transmit these high principles to those who will follow us?

I submit that we have a long way to go yet in order to get back the things that were paramount in men's hearts when the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick was first founded. I believe that, in so far as we here are concerned, that the stuff that is broadcast in our streets and the nonsense that we read in our papers about the challenge that is given us, is beneath our notice except as it may affect others. Up and down our land are those who decry the narrowness of our nationalism, A real nationalism is, as a matter of fact, concerned only with developing a nation's resources and capacities to maximum extent, and, thus, being able first to help our own people and then the rest of the world, as was done when this Society was founded.

I believe, too, that those who talk of an out-moded patriotism have not the slightest idea of what it is all about. Those who do as they please throughout the world and rush to the folds of our flag for protection are those who keep us in hottest water. But the practical patriot, as we see it and you know it, is the man who learning his country's needs, helps to meet them: a good citizen and patriot are one. Oaths are being taken not

to support this nation in the hour of her stress. Well, it has been truly said that patriotism is unequivocal; a man may devoutly desire world peace and work for it and still be a patriot ; but no patriot can take an oath that he will not again answer his country's call. (Applause.)

We are not concerned with what others think of us as long as we can be that strong factor of world stability which the First President said that we are certainly to be. Right here in Philadelphia where all these things started there should be stimulus enough, certainly to this organization, to carry out this intention. America, a place where men may come, learn of our citizenship, accept our citizenship and relish the privileges that it gives. Where they should be permitted to work and to enjoy the fruit of their labors. Work has been dignified in this land of opportunity. 'That is all we are interested in, and as a people we are far away from that now. Hundreds of thousands of unemployed, a federal government attempting to relieve the stress and the troubles within, not yet succeeding. There are those who say that ours is no longer a democracy-- which God forbid. We of the Navy, who come from beyond the horizon, know that whatever it is, it is a better government than anyone else has in this world of ours. (Applause.)

You may be sure, gentlemen, that in so far as the Fleet of the United States is concerned, that fleet is ready for service in peace or otherwise. (Applause.) What it does in peace is well-known. We are, as our country is and as this Society is, a great humanitarian factor and how well it has performed that function, you know. In our country's wars, the history of the Navy records what has been done. We are proud of every page of that history. All we ask is that in training our young men they become first loyal and self-reliant citizens ; then, good man-of-wars' men. They will always give a good account of themselves. We are not one bit worried about that. In the midst of the confusion that surrounds us, the Fleet of the United States is not disturbed. At this moment our ships are on the high seas training to be even more efficient, splendid young men representative of every part of our beloved land.

So that in responding, gentlemen, to the Toast of the United States, let me say that a democracy is just as strong or just as weak as is the individual citizen. When all of our citizens can be loyal, honest and self-reliant, again standing on their

own feet, there need be no more question as to whether this government will prevail. But, if they continue to lean heavily on the central government of a democracy, which is the people themselves, there is grave danger. I would say then to you men of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, that, having through all these years assisted those who come to these shores to stand on their own feet, keep up that work. It is needed. It is needed more than ever before, because there are many within our borders who are seeking, from ulterior motives, to disaffect others who are honestly concerned with maintaining peace, just as much concerned with peace as are we in the Fleet whose duty is to maintain it at all hazards. We must expect partisanship within, but it is essential that looking outward across both oceans, we must be a strong and united America, looking with friendliness if possible upon the rest of the world, yet being sure that we maintain our self-respect as a nation. Naught else will keep war from us. (Applause.)

It was my pleasure, gentlemen, to know a good American citizen in the city of Chicago. A citizen typical of all that citizenship should be to a man. One of the last things I heard him say was this; he was referring to a newly-arising land wherein there was happiness once more: "This, then, is my hope for our future--that we may be rich without forgetting to be righteous ; that we may be powerful without being offensively proud; that we may be nationally minded without being narrow minded; and, finally, that we may live in a world of fact without surrendering our faith." That was Melvin Traylor, a citizen of the United States. (Applause.)

Gentlemen, I say to you now that faith is absolutely essential in those things that are concerned with the American system of government. In the Fleet, our trust is in the Constitution that keeps us free. We have glorious traditions that have been handed down to us in a shorter space of time than in any other nation in the world. Here, in this city of Philadelphia, they are everywhere about us and they serve constantly to stimulate every true-hearted American to further endeavor. Faith that there was given to us this fair land by a Divine Providence to be our heritage forever. Yesterday, a struggling colony ; today, a nation of one hundred and thirty million souls.

May we ever be worthy of that heritage and be proud to say,
"Thank God, I am an American." (Applause.)