

**THE CONFESSION
OF A HYPHENATED
AMERICAN**

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The Confession of a Hyphenated American by Edward A. Steiner

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The Confession of a Hyphenated American

DR. OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, who was as much metaphysician as physician, declared that every man has a blind spot. If he were living in these war-clouded days he would say—if he were capable of reasoning at a time when the whole world has gone mad—that every man has a seeing spot, and that all the rest of him is blind. He might declare a large portion of humanity stone-blind; for even the wisest and the fairest among us are in that happy frame of mind in which we believe that we alone have retained vision, now that the world has gone back to the "*Tohu Vavohu*" which reigned before the Creator said: "Let there be light."

Living as we are, at a time when we have lost faith in one another's intellectual

TO VINDI
ALBIONIA'S
THE CONFESSION

integrity, it is as difficult to speak clearly and dispassionately as it is to listen patiently. Both processes become doubly difficult, if the speaker belongs to that class of citizens upon whom a famous phrase-maker has bestowed the now malodorous title, "Hyphenated Americans."

The word "hyphenated" has led a very honourable and innocent existence in the ample bosom of Webster's dictionary ever since that volume became the longer catechism of a large portion of the English-speaking world; and, according to that authority, it means "something which is united by hyphens." The hyphen itself, which boasts of Greek lineage, means, in that classic language, "under one, into one, or together." Even where it is used to separate two words it indicates that they belong together, although they have a distinct origin. Evidently the aforementioned phrase-maker permitted his mood to influence his definition of the hyphen, with the result that the short, very innocent and proper dash has by

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brooding over it become an elongated, damnable damn. So that which had the same significance as the ring at a wedding ceremony has suddenly become the symbol of divorce, and is being given the same place in the sphere of patriotism that adultery has in married life.

CONFESSING THE HYPHEN

I am in the enviable position, denied most of my kind, in which, before my peers, I can present my cause; and I plead guilty to the charge of being a hyphenated American according to Webster—not according to Roosevelt. I am proud of the fact and happy in it; just as proud and happy as I am in being a married man, rather than a divorced man. That I was born in another country, subject of a monarch, I was, for certain well-established reasons, unable to avoid. To my credit be it stated that as soon as I discovered my deplorable condition I sought to make amends in the only way I knew: the way taken by millions before and after me—emigrating to a coun-