

to British Columbia in general been placed on his individual shoulders? Why had he been selected? Was it any of his affair the fate of the country or the wars it might get mixed up in? No, it was nothing of the kind. He did not mind assisting in a general way, but to assume more than his share was rubbing it in. The province wanted population, let it finance the scheme. Let it encourage large families with bonuses or otherwise.

What an expense a family had been to Jim—what a sacrifice! It had been an endless slavery that had led him nowhere. They had bled him almost to death. The government wanted native population, yet it put every conceivable obstacle in the way of natural increase—the head tax at birth, the head tax at death in the form of enormous funeral expenses to get them out of the country did they chance to die. Where did the father of a large family get off at?

And, above all this, there was the call to arms in times of war when the government might at will conscript all fit members of a family that had been reared at the sole expense of one father with one wage. Where was the justice of the thing? Should the State not bonus parents instead of penalizing them?

He thought of his friend Jack again. He had only one child—a girl. Jack had done practically nothing for the country; Jim had done a great deal—for nothing. Jack had escaped the expenses of births and funerals. He had avoided the expense of raising a family, and he would contribute nothing towards the protection of the country in the event of war. By his piker methods he had become rich. Was it not penalizing the desirable and bonusing the undesirable? Could you beat it?

Jim wondered now how birth control could be censured even should it lead to race suicide. No, for the cost of raising children under present methods was too great, especially under the risk of their being taken away to be food for cannon by a State which had contributed nothing towards their support.

For many years Jim had suspected that all was not well with the human social system. He realized now that it was creepy with flaws.

There was the cry for more population, for larger families. But the families were getting smaller and smaller as the years went by, because they were being legislated out of existence. A habit was being formed that might never be overcome.

What a fool Jim had been! Common sense and simple sums in mathematics should have told him that a family was impossible from many viewpoints. That night in bed he turned the thing over and over in his fevered brain, and fell asleep having arrived nowhere.

In the morning he told his wife of the wonderful discovery he had made in connection with the Empire's social system, and he was greeted with the same warm sympathy:

"We should worry!" she said.

"But fancy us squandering all our substance all those years raising children for the use of the State, and perhaps for cannon fodder," he continued to rave. "It was a job for the government, not for us. It owes us thousands and thousands of dollars."

"Yes, and a fat chance you have of getting any of it," she sympathized.

"It's not right," Jim continued to complain.

"I wouldn't have any old government raising MY family," replied the wife, indignantly peeved.

"And why not?"

"They might take them all away from us. Then what?"

"They may take them anyway," he persisted, "if the war lasts much longer."

"Yes, but let's hope it don't."

"If I had known as much as I know now," Jim warned, "we wouldn't have had so many."

"JIM!"

Just at that critical moment two of the children came in and saved the situation for a time.

When they had gone again, Mrs. Jim returned to the attack:

"Jim," she said, "I want you to take that back."

"All right, dear; just as you say. But it won't adjust the thing."

"You should be the happiest man," Mrs. Jim led on. "You have a large family—such a family!—you have done your duty; you are rich!"

"Rich!" with something like a sneer. "At our own expense; our own expense! Fancy!"

Nevertheless Jim laughed.

(Next story, "Professor Agnew," a sequel to "The Fifty-Fiftys.")

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