

H. G. Wells Sees World-Wide "Empire" With English Races Leading the Way And Riches of Earth Open To All Men

Further Progress in Transport
and Communication Will
Bring New Order.

EUROPE IS PASSING

Europe's Political Ideas Are
Obsolete and Traditions
Worn Out.

By H. G. WELLS.

I will begin with something that is more than a mere verbal quibble. I wish that this political system could have some other name than empire, because it is not properly an empire at all. It is a complex association of at least three different types of territory and the word empire is endlessly misleading and mischievous in connection with it.

In the last few years, for purposes that need not now concern us, I have had to study a certain amount of history and a number of historians. Many men of commanding intelligence have been historians, and I offer no comparison between the intellectual quality of historians and that of scientific men as such. But trained as I was in the clear, subtle and beautiful disciplines of comparative anatomy, I found myself amazed at the easy carelessness of the average historian's habitual terminology. His slovenly parallelisms and reckless assumptions. A large part of his work is the study of human communities and political associations. Yet I found him without any intelligible classification of political com-

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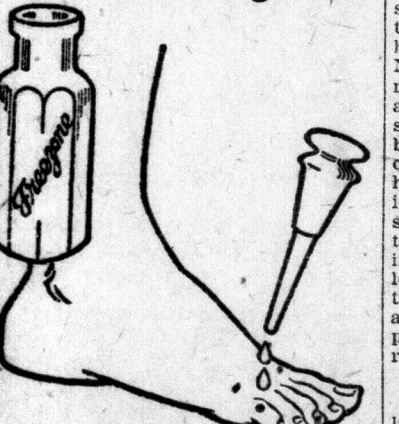
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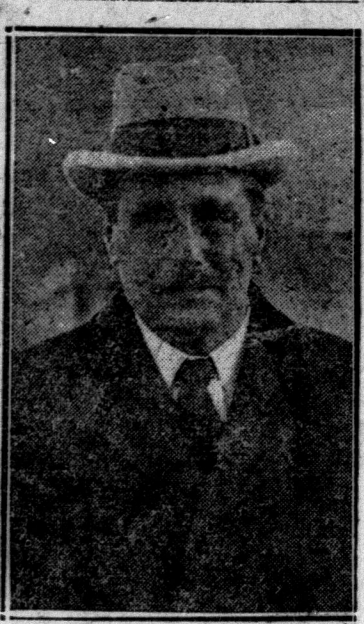
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H. G. WELLS.

who draws on the fund of his historical knowledge to analyze the world of today and to forecast a new social organization of mankind. Mr. Wells predicts a world-wide state within the next two centuries. (Copyright by Underwood & Underwood.)

binations, any real sense of grades and structural differences between one community and another. He slopes the word "empire" over the whole face of history; Athenian Empire and Aztec Empire, Shan Empire and Sung Empire, Empire of Alexander and Roman Empire, Mongol Empire and Hittite Empire, British Empire and Brazilian Empire; it's all the same thing to him. "Cats is dogs, as the porter said, 'rabbits is poultry, but a parrot is a passenger.'" As a consequence the historian argues from the most atrocious analogies. And though there is a considerable and pretentious literature of political science, there does not yet exist in all political and historical literature any attempt at a clear analysis of the differences and affinities of all these various human complexes. Yet to make such an analysis would be a most attractive and fruitful task. Historical and political science has still to find a language. History until that happens, remains a slough of terminological confusion and the ideas of ordinary educated man drown in that ordinary confusion.

There has indeed only been one real empire in the world, this that centered upon Rome and the Mediterranean. Britain played a certain part in this empire, Henry VIII. for example was imperial candidate against Charles V. and of absolute population, but the role of Britain there has generally been a marginal one. The importance of England to mankind began only when it turned its face from the empire and from thoughts of the empire to the ocean. What we call today the British Empire is a new thing, and a different thing than the Roman Empire, created by new and greater forces and deserving an entirely distinctive name.

Progress of Inventions.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a great process of change in human conditions that has been going on until the present time. From the point of view of one who discusses political or economic agglomerations the most important thing in that great revolution has been the development of new means of communication between man and man. That revolution began with the appearance of the ocean-going sailing ship and of printed paper; it reached its climax nowadays in wireless telegraphy and the aeroplane.

It is now a commonplace, though for many historians and scholars it is quite a recent discovery that any change in communications involves new economic, strategic and political adjustments. For a score of centuries the horse-drawn vehicle, the hand-made highroad, the parchment document, the public speaker and vocal teacher and a feeble coastal shipping had been the limiting conditions of statecraft. Under these conditions the idea of the empire had been the highest political idea in men's minds. Now, however, in that age of renaissance, the ocean which had been an ultimate barrier became almost suddenly a highway and the printed book and presently the newspaper quickened masses in the community, hitherto politically ineffective, into informed activity. The politics and statecraft of Europe obsessed—still to this day obsessed—by the doomed imperial tradition, began nevertheless a clumsy slow adaptation to this process of material change, unable to ignore its pressures and compulsions, but evidently indisposed to recognize its nature.

Europe Not the World.

Continental Europe is being desolated and destroyed by intellectual incapacity, by the failure to recognize the obsolescence of its political ideas and traditions. But Europe is not the world nor will its decline and fall be the end of the human story. In the United States of America, in this so-called British Empire, and now in the United States of Russia, we must recognize a breaking away from tradition complete as when the Roman Empire broke away from the forms

Britain the Heart of Huge
Imperial System Cover-
ing the World.

BREAK FROM INDIA

Wells Would Have Britain Dis-
entangle in East and Approach
America.

and traditions of any previous political synthesis. These new systems arise not to inherit but to supersede. The United States of America, the Spanish, Dutch and British colonial empires of the eighteenth century, the Russian empire and the second British empire of the nineteenth century, the British empire of the present, must all from the angle of this conception be seen as things experimental and transient, destined to be the most extensive coalescence, readjustments and modifications in a few score years.

World Peace Foreseen.

The form to which these synthetic material forces, this constant abolition of distance between state and state and man and man, are driving us all, even in spite of ourselves, is a common pax mundi, a world commonwealth, a federal suppression of the national, a federal money system, a federal postal system, a federal control of the production and distribution of staple products, a federal direction of main-line sea and land transport and of the movements of population. To these things it seems to me human affairs trend now inexorably. The economic and financial world net grows tighter and closer; war becomes so intimate and inconclusive and destructive as to become impossible. The old ideas may hold our race in a bloody and

wasteful subjection for two or three centuries yet; but the pax mundi waits at the end of the passage.

A man holding these opinions must necessarily judge the present British empire without any fanatical loyalty, critically as a possible half-way house or a possible obstacle to a more comprehensive and enduring synthesis. It is not really the same thing as the British "empire" of 1823, which was a string of trading posts and areas of economic predominance about the world, plus John Company's fantastic acquisition of the Ganges valley. The bulk of the present British "empire" was created and held together by the steamship. This rendered possible the transfer of considerable masses of population to new territories, and the importation of bulky staples, of such things as wheat and cattle, across great stretches of ocean. The dominions were made by the steamship and the telegraphic cables, and they constitute the freest, most peculiar feature of the present British imperial system. Colonies the world has known before, but neither the Greek nor Phoenician colonies of the Old World, nor the American colonies of the eighteenth century, were linked closely and abundantly enough to the mother country to prevent a final estrangement and detachment. The British dominions today are, on the contrary, kept in touch, and more effectively kept in touch, with each other and the mother country. Their mutual relationships are unprecedented. Their unity may be enduring.

India Different Problem.

But when we turn the relationship of Great Britain and these dominions on the one hand to India on the other, we find something entirely different, a new growth also, but of absolutely different structure and different capabilities, something accidental and precarious, a makeshift, a makeshift, a makeshift. A London company running a system of trading stations, acquired almost inadvertently amidst a wild political welter in India, the empire of the Great Mogul. Great Britain has taken over this company's position to the mother country, and it is a peace and a certain unity, educated her people, but not widely nor sufficiently, developed her resources, but not very generously, and manifestly has but the vaguest ideas of her future. The educational and intellectual development of the British

people has not kept pace with this rapid expansion of British responsibilities. Our world responsibilities have increased a hundredfold in the last century, but our educated class, our supply of potential rulers, directors and the like, our university organizations, have not increased tenfold.

It is an open question whether on the whole we have most hampered or benefited India. Or vice versa. But at any rate it must be clear that the association of the Indian system with the dominion system is an accidental and transitory association. They both happen to be parts of the British Empire, but there is no necessary connection. The two move at different rates and in divergent directions. A man may be—I know Australians who are—what I may call a dominion-imperialist, but not an Indian-imperialist. He may believe, as I do, in the need for a sedulous preservation and intensification of the intellectual community of the English-speaking peoples and in an active care for every possibility of understanding and sympathetic co-operation with the United States of America and at the same time he may be as convinced as I am of our duty and obligation to educate and organize India as speedily as possible for separation, for a friendly and independent existence within the world commonwealth of peoples.

"Draw Nearer to America."

We British have not sufficient natural moral and intellectual superiority to the Indian peoples, we have not a sufficiently organized educational system nor a sufficient production of highly-educated men to justify our continued assumption of India's right to think out and work out its own role in the confederation of mankind. And we are different from these dusky peoples, we do not work with them easily; we hamper them and they hamper us intolerably. But released from our entanglement with a population six or seven times as numerous as our own, our enlargement with this great mix-up of temperamental and racial elements, the British and the associated English-speaking communities scattered throughout the earth, extending their educational organization and developing their still crude intellectual and political possibilities, may play a modest and yet leading part in that great synthesis which will ultimately give the world enduring peace. "Dis-

entangle from India, draw nearer to America, come out of and keep out of ententes and alliances upon the continent of Europe"; these are the broad lines upon which I conceive the British system may best serve itself and mankind.

Tariff a Form of War.

The Americans decided a century and a half ago that one necessary condition of existence for a federal union of sovereign states was universal free trade. All interference with the free movement of another community's trade, all tariff barriers and the like, are a mild form of war. It must be plain to everyone that the present division of Africa is extremely unstable and that if the system of competitive powers in Europe is to go on, it is only a question of how long it will take France to feel secure enough against Germany to set about fighting for the whole raw material Africa. The organized peace of the world, the coming world civilization, demands not only a cessation of armaments, but a cessation of commercial discrimination and such like material injuries.

It is part of the fantastic nationalism that still plays so astonishing a part in the political life of the world, to hold that every definable region of the earth's surface belongs, from sky to center, to the inhabitants it supports. But with every increase in facilities of movement this becomes constantly more impossible. It would, for example, place the vast minerals of Labrador at the disposal of a few hundred wandering Red Indians.

The English Races.

In any world federation that may arise in the course of the next century or so, the English-speaking communities, which already number over two hundred million people, must necessarily play a leading part. How far it will be the leading part depends very much upon the educational and creative energy of these communities during the years immediately before us and upon their power of casting aside crippling prejudices and outworn traditions, needs no impossible effort to make the English language even now the lingua franca of India and China, and the creative imagination embodied in English literature a fertilizing power throughout the earth.

As a consistent republican I find little joy in being a subject of a king-emperor, and if I find much of

our British imperialism repulsively base, narrow, short-sighted and suicidal, that is rather because I overestimate than underestimate the share that our English language and civilization and peoples may play in the future of mankind.

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