

Imperialism

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(Concluded from last issue)

WE have, however, diverged from the gist of our story, and must needs return to Egbert, King of Wessex. No sooner was he on the throne than the Danes attacked his country: for awhile they were defeated by Alfred, the Great, but eventually in 1017 they conquered and afterwards held it until 1042; then followed a quarter of a century of English rule. At that time, according to the 'Public School History' England was a "land of small country villages, the old 'tuns' or townships where people lived by tilling the soil . . . but the village was no longer the community of the independent freeman described by Tacitus: now the little wooden houses of the tillers of the soil afterwards called 'villeins' were grouped about the larger house of the chief man later known as the lord of the manor: to him they owed certain services, and from him they received protection. These villages or manors were grouped into larger divisions called 'hundreds'. Many hundreds made up a shire: each shire had its shire reeve or sheriff, who was the king's representative, and watched over his interests; over all were the king and the Witan. He was in general, the lawgiver, the leader of the army and the judge."—Public School History, page 31.

It remained for William, the Conqueror, in 1066 to transform these institutions into organs of the Feudal System, a system that had already much vogue in Europe. William became owner of nearly all England by declaring forfeited the lands of those who had fought against him. The barons were granted large tracts by the king, and the knights smaller portions by the barons: less important holders still were the villeins who tilled the soil.

For these privileges, the barons supplied the king with a certain number of warriors when occasion required, while they themselves expected similar service from the knights. The barons paid homage to the king; the knights to the barons and the king.

From this system were born the traditional ideals that pervade the environment of the civilized world of today; yet centuries ago the power of the baron was broken by the effective weapon of trade so much despised by him. The legendary king has degenerated into a figurehead whose office of military leader, a judge, and law-giver is a mere tradition of the past. Generations ago the Feudal System, with all its appurtenances, lapsed into desuetude. Its work has been accomplished. It welded the industrial factors, mainly agricultural, of the several countries in which it had vogue, into a consolidated whole. Its traditions are still powerful and necessarily reactionary. The pseudo conception of respectability founded mainly on the ability to escape from manual labor and to play the unconscious part of a toady, has world-wide vogue in all classes of society today, and is a direct inheritance from the universal flunkiness that pervaded the atmosphere of Europe as a result of the homage that prevailed on that continent when the feudal system was in flower: hence we delight to invest the whole world in the royal robes of feudal respectability, and to shout vociferously for one king, one flag, and one empire.

It might be that this would not be a bad slogan if the people regarded it as of temporary duration: but that is precisely what they don't do. The feudal instincts are still very strong. The world has not yet awakened to the fact that the realities that gave rise to its ideals, are dead, and that from their ashes, phoenix like, have arisen analogous realities, which in turn have given birth to a universal conception of a world government in the making—a government in line with the process of historical evolution, and therefore the greatest government possible at this stage of man's development.

The doom of monarchial supremacy was sealed by Oliver Cromwell. The institutions created to suit the everlasting sameness in the manner of landlord

exploitation were altogether incompatible with the needs of a constantly increasing expansion in trade and commerce, and from that time until the present, the bourgeois have been wringing concessions from the prejudiced guardians of feudal institutions. The reasons for these demands became patent to the world as soon as its people began to depend on the use of steam and coal in the daily production of commodities. Men realized that in the new form of production on a large scale in factories, labor had become socialized. They felt that its regulation also called for social effort in the political arena. It was to the needs born of these conditions that we may attribute the agitations that finally led up to the passage of the various reform and ballot acts of the last century: and if by the acquisitions of these, men did not become anything like as strong socially or politically as one would expect, yet with respect to their former helpless state their condition was greatly improved since in the ballot was involved that potential strength that only needed as a stimulant for its realization the inevitable unemployment and misery that followed in the wake of the development of capitalism: nevertheless this improvement was not so much as to enable them to escape from the semi-slavery incidental to the necessity of using the means of life on suffrage, and to the possibilities involved in that situation, the shrewd employer soon became wide awake. The ballots of his men were needed for the capture of political power held by the landlord class—political power entrenched in outworn institutions and customs that were now an encumbrance on the body politic.

At that time also factory towns with thousands of inhabitants had no representatives in parliament, while 'rotten' boroughs with hardly any population, and in one case with none at all, were allowed two members who represented one man, the owner of the property in the said borough. (See Public School History, page 263.)

These details we mention, not as news, but to show that at the bottom of all these changes economic determinism was continually active: but economic determinism was not confined to masculine activities; alas! it has long ago entered the home where woman—lovely woman, is supposed to reign on a metaphorical pedestal of peace and happiness.

It was economic determinism that routed her from this last make believe of feudal tradition—we won't discuss the thousands that have been driven by sweat-shop conditions of so-called respectable business establishments to seek public homes in modern Babylon. We shall refer to the honest horny-handed reputable daughters of toil who are supposed to be queens of wage-slave castles, (as the houses of modern Britons are entitled to be called) but who, with their married sisters, are often forced by circumstances to act as perennial locumtenens for those skilled "lords of creation," who before the introduction of modern machinery, made by hand such articles as window frames and panelled doors. The woman learned the business of turning a wheel in a few hours while her lord and master of yesterday took several years as an apprentice to learn how to do the work that is now accomplished by her through the mediumship of the machine: thus does economic determinism upset all our out-of-date plans for the future. In like manner economic determinism must make any plans of the I.O.D.E. that are not in-line with historical evolution null and void: nevertheless we do not advise the I.O.D.E. to take up arms or to enter the realms of direct action, or engage in political sabotage of any description. We would merely point out that a thorough examination of this subject will soon convince the sorority that they are leaning on a broken reed when they rest their hopes on the development of empire. We might also add in emphasizing this fact, that our empire offers no more guarantee of safety than any of the others: like the others it is in the clutches of an economic determinism by reason of which the require-

ments of trade and commerce call for markets and natural resources. We cannot, under the present system of production and distribution get sufficient of the former within the limits of our national boundaries, and in reference to this point the gist of an article in the British Columbia Federationist for June 6th, might very aptly be discussed. It is recorded there that we were told lately in the House of Commons, by one, Gardiner, M.P., for Medicine Hat, that the average payment to the workers in salaries and wages for the whole of the Dominion of Canada, was 42 cents for every dollar's worth of wealth produced. This, in accordance with the law of competition by reason of which employers are able to buy efficient labour power in the cheapest market, would be about sufficient to sustain a family according to the lowest standard of living that a sufficient number of men to do the work are willing to tolerate: but these recipients of salaries and wages constitute the vast majority of buyers in the home market, and in that market others must be for sale, after spending a reasonable percentage for repairs of machinery and other expenses, commodities approximating in value the amount paid in wages: and what we want to know is this: How could any reasonable person expect people receiving only 42 cents to buy back something like 84 cents worth of commodities? A little thought will show how ridiculously absurd it is to suppose that this surplus product could be disposed of in the home market of any industrially-developed country. How then could we dispose of it within the limits of our national boundaries? And if we cannot dispose of it, within these limits, are not "the problems which confront our empire" connected with the other fellow's empire? and if we would "forward every good work for the betterment of the colonies and the people" must we not impress upon the latter a knowledge of their dependence on the good will of other colonies and other peoples, if in the competition for markets, we try to avoid the real danger of plunging all parties into the horrors of war?

To say this, is much easier than to do it. We know that self-preservation is not only the first law of nature, but of empire also. The object of its existence therefore, under conditions of world-wide rivalry for naval and military supremacy, is the acquisition of the greatest power possible, which in turn is impossible without access to an unlimited amount of oil and iron. Myriad millions therefore must be spent on war and defence that ought to be spent on education.

The ineffable stupidity of this may be imagined when we consider that "in modern war the explosion of a single shell, even if it hits nothing destroys labour and material roughly equivalent to a comfortable cottage or a year's holiday for a man. If the shell hits anything, then that further destruction must be added to the diminution of consumable goods. Every shell that burst in the recent war diminished by a little fraction the purchasing power of every coin in the world": Well's Outline of History, page 889.

A colossal sum for defence, even in times of peace, must be contributed in taxes by the citizens of the various would be imperialistic states of today.

This means that the infinitely magnificent potentialities of the mass mind of humanity are kept in a state of stagnation by the myth of imperialistic advantages: a myth that serves to hide the nature of the metaphorical explosive that lies in the continued diplomatic rivalry that exists between the representatives of the financial interests of the several countries and a myth, that will probably remain hidden in insidious propaganda until the day arrives when the somnambulist multitude are awakened to the stern realities of life such as in the late war caused the Red Cross Man to exclaim:

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