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These Days of Plots

ONE can scarcely pick up a newspaper these days without being confronted with the discovery of some plot.

On October 18th the papers very seriously inform us that the ex-Kaiser of Germany talks loud enough to a personal friend so that a cross Atlantic newspaper service agent has no difficulty in over hearing the whole plot. It will be remembered that not so long ago this terrible Kaiser was to be hung publicly in England or somewhere, but perhaps Lloyd George or Clemenceau got mixed up in some plot by which it was discovered this "scapegoat" was not such a public nuisance as his detractors imagined. At any rate, basing our deductions from newspaper methods, there must have been some plot somewhere. Everything is done by plotting nowadays. The greatest "plot" of all, though, is the Social Revolution. This is the most dire plot of all history. In fact, the press gives one the impression that the revolutionary stage upon which we have entered is a regular epidemic of plots breaking out in a sort of "Red" rash, accompanied by bomb explosions and fiery illuminations around buildings, holding cotton, sugar and such like commodities that evince a falling tendency in their price relations with other commodities. The terrible plots of Lenin and Trotsky to overthrow a system that we all allegedly desire perpetuated will prove a veritable mine of humor for the moving picture producers of the future. No doubt we shall hear of the great plot in connection with the British coal strike before many days, despite the fact that publicity has not been withheld as to the causes bringing about this crisis in British industry.

It must always be borne in mind these days that our newspapers are organized for propaganda. The forces of the State have to be presented to the people as the saviours of society. There is always a menace, either from without or within. When there is a menace from without it is the danger of encroachment from another State,—a foreign nation. Today such a menace is trade competition, which is naturally backed up by force in the event of a challenge. If there is a menace from within it is evident that it is the people confined within a territory under the sway of a certain form of State Power—republic, empire, &c. To call upon the forces of the State to "save" society implies some one or some group that feels a need of protection from some one or some group that menaces it. Where there is no feeling of insecurity there is no shouting, as a rule. It also becomes noticeable that it is "society" that is threatened according to the screams for help. In other words, it is always presented on the surface as though the failure to succor the oppressed was sure to be a calamity of a social nature. Evidently the police force are not sufficient,—the other forces of the State that "save" society periodically must be utilized. Now, these forces are made up of human beings, who are brought up in the confines of a certain territory imbued with ideas of various kinds, depending on the environment in which they live and work, the traditions handed down from the past, and with a more or less ability to adjust their movements to the forces that impel them to hang on to life. The army, navy, the police, the judiciary, &c., are all recruited from the people of the country. The control of such human forces that must be used to sup-

press other human forces within a definite territory must be in the hands of those who can distinguish the "real" cries for help and so send the required assistance. It is also desirable that the individuals sent in vast numbers on punitive measures do not question the sanctity of their mission,—Law and Order. Before the days of popular education this was very simple. Things have changed somewhat of late years. The missions of the State powers have been somewhat tarnished to such an extent indeed, that an individual holding high office in any branch of the State service is suspected of having sacrificed his personal honor in some way—in popular parlance, he has been bought or sold, as the case may be. That the latter statement is not an exaggeration the reader can compare the popular esteem in which the following names were held some years ago to what prevails today: Lloyd George, in Britain; Clemenceau, in France; Sir Arthur Currie, in Canada; Premier Hughes, in Australia. The corruptive powers of capitalism are directed with special force on its executive state functionaries,—and those are the ones who feel the necessity of "saving" themselves, or rather "society," which means for them their masters and themselves—naturally the most important part of society to them.

On the other hand, the individuals who are to be suppressed and whose clamor has developed into threatening proportions, come into direct collision with the powers of suppression. As these are all human beings, the reciprocal actions of suppressing and being suppressed are bound to have an effect on the peoples involved. The competitive wage system has placed at the disposal of capitalist States an army and navy that are generally recruited in large numbers during periods of industrial depression. It therefore brings into the forces of State repression many men who have had their hopes destroyed in the industrial system. The conscript systems of Europe helped to cover up this disturbing feature to the individual brought up in a State that had always to be prepared for invasion. It is obvious that such an army is a dubious factor in the event of civil war. The insecurity of the lower paid employees in government service is somewhat similar to the industrial wage worker, and the fact that attempts are made to throttle any political activity in the ranks of government employees, is sufficient evidence that the growth of intelligence and understanding is not a prerequisite for State employment. Loyalty and understanding are not birds of the same color.

The overthrow of the State, however, must appear as a "social" calamity. Not only the positions of the higher functionaries but all the smaller ones are involved. A great proportion of the executive positions are filled from the ranks of what is called the Middle Class. They always consider themselves the "saviours of society," and what better function can they perform than at the head of salvage corps in the wreckage of the storm of 1914-1918. They have been navigating for some time, and when everything appeared to be going all right with the antiquated charts they went by, they prided themselves on their wisdom and farsightedness, but now with mutinous crews aboard and a strong sea now with mutinous crews aboard and a strong sea around, what can it mean but a plot,—a distardly "Red" plot, for above the turmoil the singing of the "Red Flag" is heard. Out with the slogans of

the old social order—Property, Family, Religion, Order—society must be saved against the "enemies of society."

The whole trouble with these so-called plots is that they are discovered by those who imagine them. The great plot discovered in Canada to usher in a revolution will go down in history as a remarkable proof of the "law of double discovery" in the realm of political science, on the condition that it can be shown that this wonderful discovery of plots for social revolution has originated without collusion on the part of those who made the same discovery in other parts of the world. It may happen in the future that those who fail to sell their stories to critical publishers on the strength of weak plots may be consoled by the fact that every modern State now possesses Home and Foreign Offices where such fiction may be sold at a handsome figure, on the understanding that the author waives all objection to international copyright, and providing that some other employee has not already divulged a similar plot. The essence of a plot is secrecy,—the details of which are confined to a few. A social revolution cannot be secret,—it is a public and general occurrence—not a matter of days, but of years. Its growth is gradual, but none the less perceivable to those who see. To those who did not notice its growth, its reality may cause them (who imagine it was a fiction) to look around for those they think responsible for the plot, to scare them.

There is one peculiar thing about developing a plot and that is that the end in view becomes apparent. A social revolution cannot be accomplished by means of a plot to change the framework of society behind the back of society, i.e., against the wishes of society. Any plots, real and imaginary, could only be confined to a few individuals, and the secrecy necessary for a plot cannot have a widespread effect of sufficient power to induce a social movement unless backed by a force at least equal to the forces to be overthrown, or able to affect other forces to give the plotters sufficient power to threaten the likely opposition. The so-called plots in vogue through competitive business operations bring into operation forces that the individuals scheming behind the backs of society at large do not anticipate. The causes of the resulting conditions are vague to the general mass, and this mass moves along the line of least resistance. The instability of social conditions only indicates that something has gone wrong with the social mechanism. Not knowing what the trouble is, those who feel uneasy as to the development may turn to plots, but such efforts are futile. A knowledge of the machinery is necessary to know what to do, and if the damage is irreparable the machine is replaced. The understanding of this fact brings into play the necessary activity to attempt the solution of the problem. Imaginary plots are simply an indication of fears bred by ignorance, and it must be admitted there are also those who profit by exploiting these fears. The fate of plots to overthrow a social order in Russia, which did not have the backing of a sufficient social force, are worth consideration by those who depend on plots for development. Plotters have eventually to come into the light of day and woe to those whom the darkness deceived.

The present attempt to get away from the effect
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