

Stupidus and Sapiens

By D. G. McKenzie.

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THE vista opened out by the patient research of the archaeologist the ethnologist and the biologist in the attempt to unravel the unwritten history of man is one in which the most exuberant fancy can revel endlessly. Gradually there has been unfolded to us picture after picture until we see, far in the past, beyond even the earliest tradition, man first emerging from the forest gloom of primeval days. Low of brow, long of arm, short legged, huge muscled, grim of aspect, the direct forbear of the human race, yet lacking all vestige of aught we are accustomed to associate with humanity. Dwelling as the beasts of the forest, wandering through the day in search of food, grubbing for roots, climbing for fruits or nuts, crouching at night in a cave or on the limbs of a tree; mating as the beast. A beast in all things, naked and unashamed. Where do we find in him any of that human nature we speak of so glibly? Where any conception of good or evil, of decency, of morality, or faith, hope and charity. Where is the soul which has been source of so much anxiety to his posterity? Where the habits and customs, where the laws, human and "divine?"

As says our Haji:

"What reck'd he, say, of Good or Ill,
Who in the hill hole made his lair;
The blood fed rav'ning beast of prey,
Wilder than wildest wolf or bear?
"How long in man's pre-Adamite days
To feed and swill, to sleep and breed,
Were the Brute-biped's only life,
A perfect life sans Code or Creed

Yet, this is a man, blood of our blood, and bone of our bone. Our relationship to him is undeniable, and its closeness a mere matter of a few hundred thousand years. A long time? Not it! A mere turn of the glass compared to the ages between that ancestor of ours and his faraway forbear, the slimy, formless amoeba.

That man, urged onward by the same mute irresistible forces that have brought him to the threshold of manhood, passes over that threshold, and, generation by generation, approaches us of today, just as we are pressed onward to the tomorrow we know not. At the stern mandate of necessity he adapts himself to new conditions, devises new means of gaining his livelihood, creates tools and weapons, and ever improves upon them.

"Yet, as long ages rolled he learned
From beaver, ape and ant to build
Shelter for sire and dam and brood,
From blast and blaze that hurt and killed"

Age by age, we can trace the march of our fathers towards us, ever, as they come, profiting painfully and slowly by the accumulated experience of past generations; growing in knowledge, growing greater in brain and less brutish in body. Ever impelled by the stern necessity of obtaining a better hold upon the means of life. Improving their dwellings, their boats, their clothing, their tools and weapons. Discarding the rough stone weapon for the polished, that for the flint, thence to copper, to bronze, to iron.

Free, wandering, warring, hunting, lawless, propertyless, "ignorant" savages. Living thus for nigh three hundred thousand years before the first dawn of barbarism even. Then, finding a new source of food supply in the cultivation of the soil, swinging open the gates of Eden and passing out on the way that led to labor and to slavery, to progress and to civilization.

That ancient forbear of ours, the child of the man-ape, the scientists call "homo stupidus"—stupid man. Us they call "homo sapiens"—wise man. Oh, fond conceit! Wise man! We, who revere the antiquity of a civilization barely ten thousand years old, and that with lapses. Who invest with a halo of heaven-born sanctity a mushroom system of property of little better than a century's growth. Who bow before the altars of "eternal" deities discovered but yesterday. Who crystalize our miserable modern characteristics as "human nature"—as it was in the beginning and always shall be. Who elevate to the ludicrous dignity of divine law an upstart moral code co-eval with shop-keeping. Who conceitedly plume ourselves upon the possession of a higher ethical sense than our rude forbears, and daily and habitually stoop to practices which the most untutored savage would abhor. Who lie, and cheat, and thief, and prey upon one another. Who rob, ravish and oppress the weak and eringe before the strong; who pander to lust and prostitute for a pittance; who traffic, traffic, traffic in all things—in manly "honor," in womanly "virtue," in childish defencelessness, in the flesh and blood of kith and kin, in the holiest of holies or in the abomination of abominations; and who crown our achievements by pouring over the festering heap of our iniquities the leprous, foetid slime of hypocrisy.

Wise man! Wonderful creature! Lord of creation! Hub of the universe! For whose uses all things, the quick and the dead, were especially created; the stars and the planets, the sun by day and the moon by night to light him; the earth, the seasons, the winds, the rain, the waters, the lightning, the metals, the mountains, the plains, the valleys, the forests, the fruits, the beasts, the fishes, the birds, the bees, the fleas and the flies and the corned beef and cabbage.

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About Russia

IN a note dated December 24th, 1918, one of the many offers of peace addressed by the Soviet Government to its enemies, Maxim Litvinov stated clearly the alternatives then open to the capitalist powers. One choice, he said, was "to come to an understanding with the Soviet Government, to withdraw foreign troops from Russian territory, to raise the economic blockade, to help Russia to regain her own sources of supply, and to give her technical advice how to exploit her natural richness in the most effective way, for the benefit of all countries badly in need of foodstuffs and raw materials." The other alternative was "continued open or disguised intervention on the present or on a still larger scale, which means prolongation of war, further embitterment of the Russian masses, intensification of internal strife, unexampled bloodshed." The choice has always been open and still remains open. So long, indeed, as the imperialist leaders are permitted the power to make any choice, these alternatives remain open to them: peace with Soviet Russia for the benefit of all people, or war. During the nineteen months that have elapsed since Litvinov stated the case, the imperialists have held their power and have made always the same choice. Under one pretext or another, by dint of every imaginable intrigue and conspiracy, they have managed to keep up the war. It was no easy task. They have had to lie to their own peoples, they have had to lie to one another, they have, we do not doubt it, even had to lie to themselves, in order that the rest for slaughter and destruction should not lag. The peoples sickened of carnage, and the need for foodstuffs and raw materials grew month by month. From Soviet Russia came repeated offers of peace, over and over again, to every nation, to every ruler, to all peoples. But the choice remained for war. While there was still a man to be conscripted or a puppet state to be thrust into the fire of nationalist ambitions, the leaders held to their course.

The truth is, of course, that they never seriously considered the alternative of peace; nor will these leaders ever voluntarily choose the way of peace while the power remains to them to make war. Soviet Russia again offers them the alternative. But if there are still men who can be summoned or driven to fight against the Workers' Republic, and if there are still other men who will make munitions and transport them to the battle, we know that the choice of capitalist rulers will be as before. The war will go on. But if at last the decision is for peace, we shall know what that means. We shall see these same leaders hiding their impotence and chagrin under a false masquerade of statesmanship and diplomacy. But we shall know that they have made peace only because they no longer had the power to make war.—"Soviet Russia."

Mr. Lloyd George's policy, deals with Europe as a condition rather than as a theory. He does not like the Bolsheviki and says so; yet he admits that the Poles made an unjustified attack upon the Russians, and he does not attempt to duck the too obvious parallel between Soviet terms to Poland and Entente terms to Germany. He says in effect that England will not interfere unless the Russians attempt to enforce severer terms upon the Poles than the Entente did upon the Germans. And when he rose to speak in the House of Commons, he was probably already aware that the Soviet terms to Poland—rapid demobilization of the Polish army to 60,000 men, cessation of foreign military support, surrender of surplus munitions and arms, a commercial outlet to the Baltic, and distribution of Polish land to Polish soldiers—were very much more generous and humane terms than those which the Entente imposed upon Germany. For the benefit of his Tory majority in the House of Commons, of course, he had to do a certain amount of ranting against the Bolsheviki. We cannot praise Mr. Lloyd George's principles, for if he has any he has concealed or violated them as often as he has upheld them, but we are glad that there is one Entente statesman with sufficient political adaptability to face the fact that the Bolsheviki are the Russian government today, and must be dealt with.—"The Nation" (New York).