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WM. U. COTTON, B.A., B.C.L., Editor

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WE FIGHT THE BATTLE OF THE PLAIN PEOPLE

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THE LINCOLN CENTENNIAL

On the 12th of February of the present year, there will be celebrated in the United States the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. Great preparations are being made for the fitting observance of this event. The corner stone of a memorial building in his honor will be laid on the site of his birthplace in old Kentucky. The whole American nation will unite to do homage to the martyr President and much money will be spent in the process.

Old Abe was a man of the people. His tall ungainly figure spoke of rugged strength and hard work. His seamed and wrinkled face spoke of strong suffering and patient endurance. He carried the weight of a nation's suffering on his shoulders. He carried that nation through a great war and saw the slave walk free. He was vilified and his actions were misrepresented. He saw men around him who were ready to seek large gains from the tortures of a torn nation and through it all he kept watch and ward, pure and undefiled, over the nation's destinies.

Now the people gather to do him homage and no doubt money that was made by self seekers in the opportunities offered during the War of Secession will be spent to do honor to the man who remained true to the nation's interests while the fortune hunters were seeking profit.

SHOULD OLD ABE COME BACK

We wonder how honest old Abe, should he revisit the scene of his earthly endurance, would view all the fuss and excitement that is being put forth presumably in his honor. The grave kindly eyes would twinkle and the homely mouth would utter some common words that would express his practical views upon rendering homage to those who are not there to appreciate the honor.

New occasions teach new duties. The problems of Lincoln's days are not the problems of our times. Were Lincoln called back for a few moments to deliver an address at his own centennial, and were he familiar with present day problems, he would deliver an address that would stir the American nation to its deepest depths.

There is oppression of the down trodden. There are homeless men seeking a resting place. There are strong men seeking work and not finding it. There is corruption in high places, and his homely commonsense would, no doubt, point to the folly of wasting money on the heroes of the past while money is needed to fight the battles of the oppressed of the present day.

There is little sense in sentimentalizing over the dead heroes while strong men and strong actions are necessary to carry on the spirit of old Abe's endeavors, even though the hero honored be Abraham Lincoln himself.

ROOSEVELT AND TILLMAN.

Roosevelt has declared that Senator Tillman has been connected with an Oregon land deal. Some Senators have been convicted on a land deal in that state and Senator Tillman does not like it when President Roosevelt mentions land Oregon and Senator Tillman in the same sentence.

A United States Senator receives seven thousand dollars a year salary. In the past it was a poor stick of a senator who could not make his official position yield him an income of sixty thousand dollars a year on the side. Senators who did not employ their inside knowledge of coming legislation to the benefit of their own private pockets were accounted fools, and keen observers are under the impression that the majority of the senators took particular pains not to be reckoned in that class.

Today conditions are changed. Senators still hanker after their large incomes, but the American citizens are getting their eye-teeth cut and they keep a close eye on their senators. At the present time a senator who is caught grafting is relegated to private life. The vision may be some day realized of a U. S. Senator earning his income by hard work for his country and actually being honest and living on it.

ENGLISH LABOR

The British Labor party at its annual meeting will discuss many drastic reforms. The British old age pension scheme is not satisfactory to the laborers. They want the pension to begin at fifty-five years of age for the ordinary workman and to begin at the age of thirty for those who are incapacitated and cannot work. They want also to tax all large incomes out of existence.

The English Labor party is conservative in policy. In these days of ultra radicalism a proposal to do away with all incomes of over five hundred thousand dollars a year is conservative in the extreme.

Money is power, and any individual who is possessed of much money has much power. Too great wealth possessed by one man means great damage to the state. Rockefeller, Harriman, and Ryan are the disturbing factors in American politics.

If the state wishes to remain supreme in its own domain, it must not allow a few individuals to obtain too great a hold on the country through their immense holdings of factories and railroads which produce and distribute the necessities of life. One very crude way of preventing this accumulation in the hands of the few is the state confiscation of large incomes.

THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

W. R. SHIER

The International Socialist Movement is without a doubt the most important movement of these times. Beside it all other movements sink into insignificance. It is important not so much from the dimension it has already attained, but from its class character, revolutionary aims and wonderful vitality. Forty years ago the voting strength of the international social-democracy did not exceed thirty thousand. Today it is over eight million. In the United States the Socialist vote has increased from 2,064 in 1888 to 425,588 in 1908. Tho' the vote of 1908 shows very little advance over the vote of 1904, the party has increased its membership two-and-half times in these four years, increased the circulation of its papers and the sale of its books to even a greater extent and become a factor that can no longer be ignored. Moreover, the vote last year was a straight socialist vote, Bryan, Hisgen and Chafin getting the support of various radical but non-socialist elements that in 1904 voted for Debs. Thus, notwithstanding that a comparison of the socialist vote in 1908 with that of 1904 would indicate the contrary, Socialism is making great headway here in America. This it must continue to do, if not in its present form, then in some other, for all the social, ethical, political, psychological and economic tendencies of the age are favorable to its propaganda.

LIBERTY, FRATERNITY, EQUALITY

Confucius, who lived in China some five hundred years before Christ, and who enumerated a grand moral system, taught the doctrine of the Golden Rule. Five hundred years later Christ came to the world and taught the doctrine, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

This is a good maxim and, to be interpreted correctly, must be so interpreted as to be universally applicable. We come therefore to Kant's dogma, "So act that your conduct may be a rule of universal application."

These universal maxims have been the heirloom of ages and they have been made popularly known by the French Revolution. Liberty, fraternity, equality were the guiding ideas of that great upheaval. Liberty is a great word. All men seek liberty, but that liberty must take account of other people's rights. With humanity, the idea of the brotherhood of man, fraternity. Beyond this idea comes the idea that we should all be given the same opportunities of life, that there should be equality. These three ideas have been the motive force of reform legislation during the past hundred years. The same ideas are likely to be a still greater motive force in the near future.

A STRANGE WILL

The following beautiful and pathetic lines were the only possessions of an insane lawyer who died some years ago in the ward for the insane at the Chicago poor-house, where after his death they were found in his ragged coat. Some members of the Chicago Bar Association came into possession of the paper, and the Association passed a resolution ordering the probate of the strange will, and it was probated in due form and spread upon the records of Cook County, Illinois. Mr. Jessie B. Boote, Montana bar, while in Chicago, copied the record.

I, Charles Lounsbury, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, do hereby make and publish this my last will and testament, in order, as justly as may be, to distribute my interest in the world among succeeding men.

That part of my interests which is known in law and recognized in the sheep-bound volumes as my property, being inconsiderable and of none account, I make no disposition of in this my will. My right to live, being but a life estate, is not at my disposal, but, these things excepted, all else in the world I now proceed to devise and bequeath.

Item: I give to good fathers and mothers, in trust for their children, all good little words of praise and encouragement and all quaint pet names and endearments, and I charge said parents to use them justly, but generously, as the needs of their children shall require.

Item: I leave to children inclusively but only for the term of their childhood, all and every the flowers of the fields and the blossoms of the woods, with the right to play among them freely according to the customs of children, warning them at the same time against the thistles and thorns. And I devise to children the banks of the brooks and the golden sands beneath the waters thereof, and the odors of the willows that dip therein, and the white clouds that float high over the giant trees.

And I leave the children the long, long days to be merry in, in a thousand ways, and the night and the train of the Milky way to wonder at, but subject, nevertheless, to the rights herein-after given to lovers.

Item: I devise to boys, jointly, all the useful, idle fields and commons where ball may be played, all pleasant waters where one may swim, all snow-clad hills where one may coast, and all streams and ponds where one may fish or where, when grim winter comes, one may skate, to hold the same for the period of their boyhood. And all meadows, with the clover blossoms and butterflies thereof; the woods with their appurtenances; the squirrels and the birds and echoes and strange noises, and all distant places which may be visited, together with adventures there found. And I give to said boys each his own place at the fireside at night, with all pictures that may be seen in the burning wood, to enjoy without let or hindrance and without any incumbence or care.

Item: To lovers I devise their imaginary world, with whatever they may need, as the stars of the sky, the red roses by the wall, the bloom of the hawthorn, the sweet strains of music, and ought else they may desire to figure to each other the lastingness and beauty of their love.

Item: To young men jointly, I devise and bequeath all boisterous, inspiring sports or rivalry, and I give to them the disdain of weakness, and undaunted confidence in their own strength. Though they are rude, I leave to them the power to make lasting friendships and of possessing companions, and to them exclusively I give all merry songs and grave choruses to sing with lusty voices.

Item: And to those who are no longer children or youths or lovers, I leave memory; and bequeath to them the volumes of the poems of Burns and Shakespeare and of other poets, if there be others, to the end that they may live the old days over again, freely and fully without tithe or diminution.

Item: To our loved ones with snowy crowns, I bequeath the happiness of old age, the love and gratitude of their children until they fall asleep.

CENTRAL IDEA OF REFORM

Socialism has been defined as being the co-operative commonwealth. Its aim is the public ownership and control of the means of production and distribution, democratically managed. The public stand aghast at this idea and aim, while they do not perceive that all the modern reform legislation is moving towards the one central aim of Socialism.

President Baer of the Reading Railroad Company, a few years ago, declared that he owned his coal fields and his railway by the right of might and he was responsible to none but God. President Baer later modified his views on the subject and became more amenable to public opinion. The landlords of England thought they owned their land of right to do as they pleased with it. They are being made to see and to fear that their land will be taxed away from them.

Modern governments, as representing the people, are taking more and more of the private wealth in the shape of succession duties and they take this private wealth for the public good. Our own railroad commission has just abrogated the high charges of Canadian express companies. United States Courts are interfering with the charges of electric lighting and gas companies. All along the line governments are interfering more and more in industrial affairs and are curbing excessive profits and are making people carry on their businesses less and less for private profit and more and more for the general good.

THE SOCIALIST POSITION

The Socialist are frequently told that their scheme of a co-operative commonwealth is impracticable. They are told that they are visionary revolutionists. They are advised not to waste their time and energy in such a fruitless pursuit but to get active in some practical and radical reform.

The Socialists either smile at such advice or they become provoked at the stupidity of the advisers. It depends upon the character of the individual Socialist. The most of them, having their cause deep at heart, become provoked.

Why should the Socialists bend their energies in the direction of apparent and patient reforms. The radicals are working away on those reforms and moreover, the revolutionary socialists are already at the centre of the reform movement. They uncompromisingly demand the fulfilment of the central idea towards which all the radical reforms are tending. The capitalist class and the radicals may fight over incidents. The capitalist class will have to yield on those incidents; and the more the Socialists can awaken the actual workers of the world to their true interests, the more the capitalists will have to yield.

The Socialists are looking forward to a social organization where useful productive labor will be the only standard of value. The Socialist are the central nucleus of all reform movements. They would be foolish to abandon their central position of advantage. The capitalist class may rest assured that the Socialists know where they are going and they are on the way.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF CAPITALS

There is an enervating and soothing atmosphere that hangs like a pall over the various capitals of the world. Members of Parliament go from their country constituencies with proud hearts and confident mien. They have made numerous pledges to the voters who have elected them. They go to Ottawa, or Washington, or Berlin, with the idea firm in their minds that, in the night of their fresh opinions and in the strength of their untired courage, they will do wonders in the way of banishing the bribery and corruption that fasten like barnacles upon all governments.

When they strike their capital, they strike the soothing atmosphere. Old campaigners, who would have played the game for years, will smile indulgently at their fresh young hopes. The member begins to doubt. Lobbyists, who are old at the game of managing youthful members and of break-

ing them into the service of the corporations which they represent, will take the young recruit in hand. The member's constituency is afar off; the delights of the capital are near. Man is human and prone to evil. The Lobbyists, the old campaigners and the hangers-on of the capital know the ropes. The soothing, seductive and enervating atmosphere enters the very marrow of the young man. It takes a hard headed old man, like Dan Meigs for instance, or a fiery enthusiast like Victor Grayson, to escape the influence of the atmosphere. The only thing to do, so long as our present system continues, is for the voters to know what they want, to keep a firm grip on their member, and to make him obey the will of the people to get it.

SUFFRAGETTES GETTING BUSY

The suffragettes are in danger. The Canadian Suffrage Association will present a petition to the Canadian governments humbly praying those august bodies to enfranchise all women whether married, widowed or spinster, on the same terms as man.

The Canadian Suffrage Association is to be a highly respectable body who will do things or attempt to do them, in a highly conventional and constitutional manner. There is, however, to be, another organization known as the Woman's Political Club which will represent the sex militant. This latter body will adopt any means by which the tyranny of man over woman may be overthrown. The members of this club will form the real body of the suffragettes.

If humanity is constantly advancing to newer ideas and to better modes of living, the suffrage movement distinctly represents one phase of advance. Any system that does not recognize that women have as many rights as men is defective. Mohammedanism possesses many admirable qualities; but Mohammedan civilizations are based on the principle of the inferiority, mentally morally and physically of the woman. This basic defect weakens the whole structure. In Turkey this system is becoming renovated and woman's sphere is becoming elevated and is being put more on an equality with that of man.

We sincerely hope and trust that the Suffragettes will render the lives of our political leaders uneasy to such an extent as to extort from our various Cabinets the rights to vote for women.

MOVEMENTS UNIVERSAL

It is a unexplainable phenomenon that mankind moves to one spirit. When a reform wave strikes one country it strikes another. To-day the nations are awaking from their sleep. Russia, Japan, China, India, Persia, Turkey are moved with a new spirit. Austria, Italy, France, Germany, England, America are touched with the same breath.

Ancient philosophers endeavored to explain this mass movements of the intellects of humanity. They considered that man was influenced by the phases of the moon, Luna. Whence we get the modern expression loony. Some philosophers have endeavored to explain the phenomenon on the principal that we are all invisibly united to the spirit of the universe and invisible mental nerves run from the central spirit to each little intellectual spark that lights the human during life. All religions have prayer which is the endeavor on the part of the human individual to make his needs known to the central intelligence.

Whatever may be the explanation, the fact remains. Timid people are afraid of innovations. They are afraid that new spiritual expressions will disorganize spiritual relations. If the innovations be in economic matters they are afraid the new ideas and modes will disarrange the business world. Let these timid creatures remember that movements are world wide and innovations in one country mean innovations in many countries.

A Toronto clergyman declares that Toronto children are profane, saucy and idle. We always thought that Toronto was so good.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

There must be freedom, but there must be freedom through law.

Environment moulds character. The slums produce a weak and hollow-chested race of people. Abolish slum life and you would abolish the slum type of manhood.

Thaw is to have a new trial and a chance to prove his sanity. There has been no new big case in New York, lately so the lawyers will suck the same old plum.

Milo A. Root, who was a judge of the Supreme Court at Seattle, Washington, used to let the great Northern Railway Company's officials write his decisions for him. No wonder Americans do not trust their courts.

The U. S. President is to get a salary of a hundred thousand dollars a year. Abraham Lincoln, who carried America safely through a great war, got twenty-five thousand dollars, but then Old Abe is a back number compared to Big Bill Taft, Teddy's chum.

King Edward VII is becoming frugal. He has been giving away as presents the Indian shawls given his mother in days past. King Edward has his ear close to the political ground and knows that modern peoples do not care for lavish display on the part of their Sovereigns.

A Toronto clergyman said that the children of Ontario are young ruffians while the children of Quebec are little gentlemen. If we know anything about the children of Quebec, we would say that if the children of Quebec act like little gentlemen they are little hypocrites.

Baron Edmund de Rothschild has donated ten thousand dollars to the poor. As the poor pay millions of dollars to Edmund in the shape of dividends Edmund can well afford the ten thousand. Besides Edmund gets his name in all the papers, as being generous. It is a cheap ad. for him.

Any foreigner except a Chinaman can become a citizen of the United States of America. The Americans wonder why the Chinese boycott their goods and do not like them. The Americans are supposed to be bright people, but in their wonderment over Chinese hostility they are as simple as children.

Mankind never rests still. The human race is ever pushing forward to some new experiment in government and science. They are the prophets who can from present tendencies foresee and foretell the future.

Of the great men of the world but one out of fifty have risen from the ranks of the workers. The rest have come from the comparatively small class of those who have been raised above the necessity of work.

Economic conditions and economic production of goods are in a state of transition and revolution. Conditions are changing under our eyes. Some persons deny it, but there are none so blind as those who will not see.

The day is coming when the public intelligence will not allow capitalists to make a profit by owning the homes of the workers. Men and women are crowded together in tenements so that other men and women may live in ease and do nothing.

Man advances by the discovery of some new invention or by the discovery of some new combination of old conditions. Man advances in so far as he can subdue the forces of nature to his will. Man becomes powerful and great in so far as he can use his will and intelligence to bend himself and the forces of nature to his needs.