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Do You Believe That Might Makes Right?

We are advancing

as I think, at a pace that is leaving the radicals of the old school long leagues behind. The Utopian formulas are dead, and well dead, for they had no root in actual fact. The war raging in Europe; the upheaval in Mexico—probably even now only in its first stage; the unrest that is shaking all the world; all these combined are graciously forgiving of all us to face true realities. I don't know how many articles I have written for this paper during the last few years with one single refrain, "It cannot last." I cannot remember how often I prophesied a big smash, of which the Mexican Revolution was the forerunner and let it never be forgotten, the peaceful encouragement. When a single corner of the house trembles violently the whole building is in danger.

It took no special talent to make those prophesies, but only the patient observation and recording of patent facts. Arthur Young, who traversed France shortly before the outbreak of the great French Revolution, was not a brilliant thinker, but he kept a methodical observer and wrote a careful diary. When he declared an upheaval inevitable he was greeted with shouts of derision. Ten years later the derisions were in exile.

Norbell, editor and proprietor of the London "Times" and other influential journals, is a man of marked and proved talent. He is an English peer and all his associations are with aristocracy, privilege and wealth. But he is also a newspaper man, with an exceptionally wide outlook and altogether unusual opportunities for gathering and assimilating facts. Quite recently he repeated and re-emphasized his declaration, made at the outbreak of the war, that it marked the beginning of "a long period of upheaval which the world, as yet, does not understand." A few days ago he gave out an interview in which he stated that a revolution in the United States was imminent, and he gave the reason for his belief, straight and terse. They were that this country could not by any possibility escape the influence of the effects now shaking Europe, and that conditions here also had become unbearable. He added that he was very familiar with the slums of New York and Chicago.

My own contention is that we are much nearer an upheaval than most radicals suppose. Indeed I consider "radicals" as a rule, the blindest of all for they are stuck fast in their special rut, are welded to their own antiquated propaganda, are members of their own newly-created churches and have their saints whom they worship with all the fanaticism of Early Christians. I read the "Lives of the Saints" years ago and formed a poor opinion of them.

No, at present the revolutionary movement is merely thrashing around in dishonorable impotence; incapable of making up its mind as to any single one of the great issues which events have shoved under its nose; unwilling see Malatesta's endless articles for example, that now we can only discuss. And such discussion! We who used to give our life conservatives for crying peace when there was no peace, now whimper that we can't make out the rights and wrongs of these great conflicts, but that we

are for peace and always have been. It is positively disgraceful. Furthermore, it is shameful to proclaim for years solidarity with the people in all their struggles and to draw back into one's shell when the real struggles come along. Alleged revolutionists who stand indifferently toward the Mexican upheaval do precisely that. Alleged revolutionists who stand indifferent toward what has taken place in Europe do even worse than that; and when, as is most noticeably the case with many editors and agitators, they refuse to take a side through fear of offending their supporters they write themselves down the rankiest kind of cowards and the most corrupt of politicians.

It is necessary to speak out with brutal frankness. It is necessary to acknowledge courageously that the revolutionary movement has proved wanting in the hour of trial; and it is necessary to probe for the causes of the delusions which have been sown broadcast by propagandists who add to their determination to live off the movement an ambition to pose as persons of talent and original views. These original views should always be distrustful. Our movement has its roots in the every-day facts of daily life; in the plain, homely common sense that guides men and nations toward success or, if ignored, brings them to tragic ruin.

First among the delusions sown is the detestable fallacy that might makes right; a fallacy no healthy people ever harbored. History is one long record of the fact that nations which have not the courage to stand up for what they believe is right fall into hopeless decay and are trampled under foot by competitors of a more virile breed. Our daily life bears bitter testimony to being the inevitable rule that he who is notoriously indifferent to right and wrong becomes universally mistrusted and loses whatever influence he may have had. All pursuit of knowledge, have only this one aim—the disentangling right from wrong. All our ascent from savagery is nothing more than that.

Instead of yelling that might is right, we, of all people, should be loudest in our protests that the reign of wrong must cease. Above all, we who feel so strongly on the iniquities of the State have to attack it chiefly on the ground that it degrades man from a potential angel to an actual fiend; robs him of his power to discriminate between good and ill, and reduces him to the contemptible level of a conscienceless automaton. That is the indictment we should bring, and this is the very point where we should press it hardest. I know of no greater moral tragedy on record than that of Kaiser-worshipping Germany as she stands today, and we are cowards if we flinch from interpreting its meaning. Never can we hope to make a successful movement out of cowardice.

Every thinking man knows well that the triumph of Germany will usher in a reign of militarism that will force every country, however pacific may be its natural inclination, to convert itself into a barracks. There is not the least doubt about that; and the fear of Germany's triumph is at this very moment compelling the world to arm as it never armed, or dreamed of arming, before. All this clamor for "preparedness," all this marshaling of arms, is nothing else but a contemptory following of the shameful lead Germany, dominated by

Prussian thought, has set. What do we mean by giving such a program the dishonoring indorsement of our shivering silence? We who have written pamphlets and delivered lectures by the tens of thousands, to express our conviction that the soldier is a mere slaughtering machine operated by that most soulless of all human institutions, the State? For years I myself have exhausted such eloquence as I possess on that same subject. Am I to retire into silence at this crucial moment and thereby suggest that I regard this growing shadow of the sword as no concern of ours?

If might makes right, as scap-boxers of the Elizabeth Gurley Flynn type so strenuously maintain by what show of reason? Do they complain when the State sends agitators to prison, or the scaffold? It might makes right we act absurdly when we protest that Olney, Rangel and the other Mexicans now incarcerated in Texas have not received due justice. If might makes right Porfirio Diaz was a saint, the Kaiser truly, as he so rancorously maintains, the special minister of God; and all time to come the Genchis Khan should have the adoration of mankind. What good is a theory that leads to such absurdities?

Do I deny the existence or necessity of force? Of course, I do not. The universe is based on it; but force is progressive or reactionary, ennobling or degrading according to the cause on behalf of which it is employed. Have we become so muddle-headed, as the result of years wasted in splitting hairs and chopping logic, that we cannot grasp that the simple fact? Are we, who know that we must move the masses, so insane as to imagine that we can win them to us on the theory that there is no difference between right and wrong, and that the distinction between tyrants and liberators is all moonshine? Are we proposing to rewrite all history and literature; and do we really think that a literature, even existed, or ever can exist, which the mean and the heroic, the foul and the pure, the cowardly and the courageous, are held up as deserving of equal admiration?

No; such a theory is a monstrous delusion, and one that even now is deluging the world with blood and threatening it most seriously, as I believe, with the worst slavery it yet has known. It must be recognized as the most dangerous of delusions, and with it there must go another and equally dangerous delusion, viz. that the working class, as a class, is ever going to rule. It never has; it never will; it never should. The world is not moving toward the replacement of one ruling class, which has brought it to ruin; by another which will repeat the operation. The world is moving toward freedom, which is the direct opposite of rule. It is growing too experienced—at least one hopes so—to repeat the hopeless experiment of putting Jacobins in the seats of power previously occupied by heartless nobles, and Napoleons in those which equally heartless and more incompetent Jacobins had befouled, and so on round the dreary circle. It is learning rapidly—especially in these United States—that if the monopolist is a bad taskmaster the politician is even worse, and the labor politician the worst of all. In all such futile changes there is less than nothing. As we shift the hot alternately from shoulder to shoulder the weight

grows heavier.

The central fact is that, confronted by a world crisis of unprecedented violence, the revolutionary movement today stands helpless. Several years ago I wrote in these columns that the international Socialist movement seemed to have rescued itself from a peace party, or everywhere it seemed to have rescued itself from a perpetual series of anti-war conventions. And to what did all that activity amount? As against the few who really would world politics, and in the grip of the world-shaking events those few chose to precipitate, the Socialists and the huge army of non-descript "reformers" who worked with them were about as effective as I should be if I threw a pebble into Niagara Falls in the attempt to stem its current. They were helplessness personified, and the great war now bathing Europe in blood has at least the virtue of showing us the real machinery of our social structure and reminding us, in terms which there is no mistaking, of Who is Who. With men who in this stirring life have no ambition to make some account my sympathy is almost non-existent. With movements that resign themselves to impotence it is absolutely so.

Trade Unions and a host of so-called organizers will tell you that the Trades Union movement was never stronger than it is today; but they are untested witnesses and the real evidence is that Trades Unionism has no more effect on the remuneratory forces now at work remodelling society than the fly has on the chariot wheel which carries him along. Who could it be otherwise? Trades Unionism has no philosophy of life, possesses no economics founded on basic facts, is frankly and just short-sighted opportunity; it is merely a business makeshift for the temporary protection of the workers, just as Merchants and Manufacturers' Associations are business makeshifts for the temporary protection of employers. And the dividing bodies, neither of which even pretends to be guided by considerations other than those of the needs of the immediate moment, are represented as a great evolutionary process and dignified with the name of the "Class Struggle". What a palpable delusion!

Obviously oppressive institutions, rooted in a distant past, fortified by tradition and supported by the enormous weight of habit, can be overthrown only by a people furiously indignant with the injustice they work in a society entirely different from that of the Middle Ages or Roman Empire; a people so furiously indignant that it has determined to install a new and better order, no matter what the cost may be. Goitners, followers, assuredly have one of that high spirit; for they are conservative working-men who barely accept society as it is, and desperately try to make the best of it. In the revolutionary changes now going on they do not and cannot play a part; and I feel confident that the Magons, for example, have exercised within a few short years a far greater influence on the history of Mexico than the entire American Federation of Labor, during all its long existence, has exercised on the history of the United States. Why waste our time? Politicians flatter Organized Labor because they hope to buy its vote—with money, directly, and indirectly, with promises of positions on the police force and even in the presidential cabinet. Socialist and Anarchist agitators flatter it because they want audiences and subscribers, with the dollars they contribute. Before one knows it such agitators compromise the revolutionary movement by whitening down its principles to suit the prejudices of a non-revolutionary but

buying job. Before one knows it they have committed the whole movement to a strategy and tactics suitable enough for contests between two business organizations, each of which is striving for supremacy, but totally unsuitable for a propaganda devoted to the abolition of artificial premises and pledged to the securing of equal opportunities for all. Such a propaganda is necessarily rotten to the core, and with the first real storm it goes to pieces, as it has gone today. How came it that millions of alleged revolutionists pinned their faith, for instance, to Syndicalism, which is a semi-dead archaism, poisoned with the delusion that the workers eventually will rule? That is obviously contrary to every principle of Anarchism, yet many an old-time Anarchist was bitterly disappointed when Syndicalism also proved to be nothing better than another house of cards. What time and effort we waste by abandoning principles to throw ourselves into the arms of that worst of prostitutes, Expediency! How many enthusiasts founder on that fatal rock! What thousands of eager listeners we lose because their ears at once detect the false note in our siren song!

The Single Taxers apparently dream that they can wrench the land from the clutches of monopoly by wheeling into their board wagon Prohibitionists, State Socialists, Progressives and all the motley crowd that has the reform bee in its bonnet and is afflicted with the hysterical itch to talk. They forget that the land question is a question of individual liberty—Joseph Henry George most eloquently showed them that—and they forget that individual liberty is the last thing such reformers have in view, for all of them have the patented straight-jackets into which they hope to clap mankind.

At the root of all these stupidities and failures lies the delusion that might makes right; that somehow, if you can but get the power of a majority behind you, you will be able to trample with impunity on natural law and the great central facts of life; that you will be able to govern better than do those unfortunates who do not possess your wisdom; that you will wield the rod more justly than do our present tyrants; that you are the true prophets of the one and only Good (which is the modern way of spelling God), and, by divine right, the ruling priesthood of the future. But that leads us straight to militarism of the most deadly type. That leads us directly for religious wars far bloodier than were the Crusades. That foreshadows new Dark Ages of fanaticism during which man's intellect will pass into more gloom eclipse. The outlook is most threatening, and our only hope of steering safely through the gathering storm lies in loyalty to principle; in teaching, alike by word and deed, that with freedom all heights are possible, while without it we shall plunge into even deeper depths of hell.

My own experience is that I can be happy only when I am allowed to be myself; to be what I am, working with the tools of evolution and through centuries of inheritance, has made me. Thus only, as I find, can I be happy; and thus only, as I think, can other men and women be happy. Thus only can Belgium be happy, and never under German rule. Thus only can Poland be happy, and never under the alien domination of Germany, Austria or Russia. Thus only can India be happy, and never under the British yoke. Thus only can Mexico be happy, and never under the control of the United States. Finally, and as a matter of course, the disinherited of the world cannot possibly be happy until they have freed themselves from the clutches of special privilege and have come

to dwell and be themselves. The whole thing hangs together, and the pity or it is that man's evolution to individual freedom has still to make its way through rivers of blood and seas of scalding tears.

WM. C. OWEN.

that voice will speak forth in tones which no man can doubt and dare gainsay or resist." How about the breaking of treaties and Hague conventions which Wilson's administration has found it politic to accept in silence? How about the Lusitania? How about—well, Roosevelt has expressed a pretty good opinion on the manner in which the United States met those "definite challenges."

JOTTED DOWN

Jose Orozco, cousin of the late Gen. Pascual Orozco and now a prisoner at El Paso, U. S. A., is reported as having made a full confession as to the plot to restore Huerta to power. His statement is that there was—\$11,000,000 behind the movement, which had the backing of—the Roman Catholic church. How characteristic!

It is now claimed that Carranza obtained recognition by the United States through the making of promises he intended to break, and a speech delivered by his Minister of Justice, Rogelio Estrada, in Mexico City, October 28, is cited in proof. Therein Estrada is reported as having said, in substance, that the Carranza government will recognize no "established rights" that conflict with "revolutionary justice," but "will strike the last blow at the old established interests." We ourselves have reported faithfully the above promises Carranza made, and we now express the opinion that an alleged revolutionist who did not hesitate to give such pledges is likely to hesitate still less about ignoring them. What we feel certain of is that by counting the intervention of a foreign Power, and especially the United States, has lost at a single stroke the confidence of the great masses of the people. The Mexicans dread the prohibitions of their aggressive neighbor on the North, and what men dread they hate.

Now comes the Governor of Kansas and bitterly attacks President Wilson's program of military "preparedness," declaring that it will rouse all Central and South America to arms and reproduce in this hemisphere a conflict similar to that now scourging Europe. He emphasizes the latent hostility of all the Latin peoples, who universally regard this country as bent on conquest.

Having read and re-read carefully the carefully prepared address in which President Wilson introduced his plans for a Citizen Army of 400,000 men, we are left in astonishment at the contrast between the lofty claims set forth and the ugly, the exceedingly ugly, facts that give those claims flat contradiction. Meditating on the extermination of the Indians, the annexation of about a third of Mexico, the crowding of Spain into a war which cost her the Philippines and much other territory, the invasion of Vera Cruz and the present intervention on behalf of Carranza, what, do you suppose, is an intelligent Mexican's opinion of such a sentence as the following?—"We shall, I confidently believe, never again take another foot of territory by conquest. We shall never in any circumstances seek to make an independent people subject to our dominion; because we believe, we passionately believe, in the right of every people to choose their own allegiance and be free of masters altogether."

Then came a passionate appeal to the people of the United States to notify the world that "she is prepared to maintain her own great position," and this sentence which the papers promptly capitalized: "I do not doubt that upon the first occasion, upon the first opportunity, upon the first definite challenge,

LACONICS OF LIBERTY

From Charles T. Spradling's book LIBERTY AND THE GREAT LIBERTARIANS

OVER AGAINST Nature stands the man, and deep in his heart is the passion for liberty. For the passion for liberty is only another name for life itself. Liberty is a word of much sophistication, but it means, when it means anything, an opportunity to live one's own life in one's own way. The only indignity of the world is not contempt for arbitrary laws, but respect for them. —REV. CHARLES FENIMORE.

IT WILL be found an unjust and unwise jealousy to deprive a man of his natural liberty upon a supposition he may abuse it. —CROMWELL.

—The personification is a good answer to those who claim that the Republic was founded by the people. —J. S. HAYDEN.

IF LIFE is short, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death! —PATRICK HENRY.

ALL TRUTH is safe, and nothing false is safe, and he who keeps back true truth or withholds it from men, from motives of expediency, is either a coward, or a criminal, or both. —MAX MULLER.

DO THE mass of men know the actual selfishness and injustice of their rulers, nor a government would stand a year: the world would ferment with revolution. —THEODORE PARKER.

IT ISN'T given down again to see soldiers off to the war. But ye'll see me at the depot with a brass band while the men that comes war starts 'r' the scene is carriage. —J.R. COOLEY.

TO ARGUE against any breach of liberty from the ill use that be made of it, is to argue against liberty itself, since all is capable of being abused. —LORD LITTLETON.

IT IS NOT the desecration, but the physical; it is the pernicious hand of government alone, which can reduce a whole people to despair. —JUNES.

IT IS DOUBTful whether any tyranny can be worse than that exercised in the name of the sovereignty of the people. —GEORGE L. SCHERER.