

CHAPTER XIII

SEVEN PERILS OF HUMANITY—NUMBER TWO. THE SPANISH-PORTUGUESE PERIL

INSTEAD of the good ship *Earth*, let us suppose it were only our associations on the *Mauretania* or the *Olympic* of which we have to think. We sail on, first-cabin, second-cabin and saloon passengers getting along finely. None of them thinks of the massed steerage passengers, for their condition is of no consequence. They are cut off from the rest of us. We are in another world.

But suppose the decks of the great ship should suddenly become permeable, so that saloon, cabin—first and second—and steerage no longer kept their classes separate? We should all at once realize that it is a matter of the utmost moment what sort of people are in the steerage.

Great Britain and Ireland, France and Ger-

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many, Austria, Switzerland, and the Low Countries, Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, and British South Africa are the saloon, and first and second cabins of the good ship *Earth*. There are found on the average and among the masses of the people the maximum of intellect, luxury and comfort, and the minimum of poverty—though enough of that is found everywhere in all conscience. The steerage passengers surge like a sea all about these select-club nations. Just now we spoke of the Mohammedans—220,000,000 of them, who occupy the mountains and deserts from which they may one day descend and emerge, following the green flag of Islam in holy wars that shall shake the world again.

Let us now consider another danger to humanity—one scarcely recognized with any concreteness—the Spanish-Portuguese factor among the steerage passengers in the good ship *Earth*.

The Spanish and Portuguese at their best are among the finest of races. They are brave,

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poetic, hardy, industrious and efficient. But for some reason, they have never learned the lesson of justice and democracy. They do not know how to govern, to educate, to dwell together on terms of equity. They do not know how to establish liberty of the press or of speech. They have not the gift of kindly feeling and mercy to the lowly or to beasts. They are the most rapacious landlords, and the cruelest slave-drivers in the world.

And because they were bold soldiers and magnificent sailors and fighters four hundred years ago, they now have possession of the best portions of the good ship *Earth*. I shall say nothing of Spanish North Africa, or of the Spain-dominated Philippines, or Guam, or Portuguese empires in Africa, but shall consider only the wonderful and sinister manner in which the evils of four hundred years ago live yet in the Spanish-Portuguese control of America.

Sixty-five millions of people in the new world live under Spanish and Portuguese republics. But their numbers are small, com-

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pared with what they monopolize. From the Rio Grande south as far as the world extends it is all theirs. They hold sway over nearly 9,000,000 square miles of the Americas—more than a sixth of the land surface of the world. They possess half a dozen Californias, and at least three Mississippi valleys. In their mountain regions are Utahs and Colorados almost unnumbered. Two-thirds of the western hemisphere are theirs as against one-third owned by the English-speaking peoples, and these two-thirds comprise not less than three-fourths of the richness, the capacity to support population of the western world.

Brazil is Portuguese, and all the rest Spanish. But in the danger that lies in these peoples for the welfare of the good ship *Earth*, there is nothing to choose between these two branches of the Iberian tree.

In all these great nations the common people are debauched in superstition and crushed by tyranny. Cruel sports and cruel customs hold them down to the level of beasts as far as such things can do so. In Mexico, while

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families average five or six children, the infant death-rate is fifty per cent. So population grows slowly, if at all. The people neglect their children and live insanitary lives. They are slaves through peonage. With Diaz, or Madero, or Orozco, it is all the same with them.

In Central America the birth-rate is high and population increases with great rapidity—between wars. But the people are ignorant and enslaved. Through all South America—a continent so huge and so wonderful in capacity for supporting population that the imagination fails to measure it—the story is the same.

Everywhere Spanish and Portuguese medieval ideals rule. The lands are monopolized by landlords, some of whom own millions of acres. The common people are peonized and ground down. In rich, rich Paraguay, while the common people are rather free from poverty, the grossest ignorance and superstition prevail. In Chili the death-rate among in-

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fants is seventy-six per cent. In Bolivia the devils of cruelty and greed seem loosed. Not even in more sophisticated Argentina and Brazil do we find conditions much better. The whole of this great part of the good ship *Earth* is given over to land monopoly, peonage, ignorance and immorality. The percentage of illegitimate births in all these nations runs from twenty per cent. to fifty per cent.

It is not necessary to say that this indictment can not be made to lie against all the people of these nations. Here, as everywhere, there are many who stand for the highest ideals, and live lives of purity, altruism and idealism. And even in their faults, we of the less backward races have no right to look down on them; for they stand in the place we occupied not so very long ago; and among us are millions who now rank with their lowest. But the depressing thing about them is that the forces of evil and oppression seem to be in almost undisputed control, and the justifica-

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tion for any optimistic forecast for them is not apparent.

There is a world peril in this. The other passengers will need to move into these fertile wastes one day and will find them "owned" by such influences as I have described. What will happen then? No one can prophesy—certainly no one can prophesy peace.

The passing of a part of the *Earth* into such hands is a dreadful thing. It would have been far better had the lands now occupied by the Spanish and Portuguese republics been left in the hands of their Indian aborigines until now. The worst thing that could happen would be for these peoples to obtain scientific education and fail to gain democracy. For with sanitation and modern medical practise their birth-rate would fill up the land in a few centuries with a race of slaves as dense in population as are the Chinese, and with war-like blood in their veins which might make them the war-lords of the world.

Let us hope that these oppressed peoples

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may gain the reality, of which they all have the shadow—real democracy, and with it emancipation from landlords, from superstition, from ignorance. Until they do this the rest of the passengers must look askance at the Portuguese and Spanish Americans.