

CHAPTER XXI

THE EVILS OF GOOD GOVERNMENT

THE notion of a fusion of all nations, the end of independent nationality, is not a new one. It is more complete than formerly, for we know the shape of the great air-ship on which we sail, and its size. The ancients did not. But Alexander the Great set out to conquer the whole earth. He did not expect to subdue the monsters that lived in the Greek imagination to the east and the west. And to the north were the Hyperboreans and the ice, and to the south were seas that boiled with heat. These were not in the world of Alexander, but all he knew, he conquered.

So it was with other conquerors of the ancient world. What they knew they tried to seize. The world trust was in their minds, just as it is in the minds of the Socialists now—but in diametrically different form. In the one

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case it was the centralized rule of a conqueror and a tyrant; in the other it is the centralized rule of the majority.

The dream of world power seems to have passed away for a while from the minds of kings and emperors. The government trust, if one is making, is at the stage of the splitting of the government business into huge blocks. Russia, China, Japan and England control most of Asia and are absorbing the rest. England and the United States govern most of North America, and are gradually absorbing the rest. England, France, Holland, Brazil and Argentina govern most of South America, and are kept from absorbing the rest only by the Monroe-Doctrine overlordship of the United States. England, Holland, Germany, France and the United States rule most of the great islands of the East and West Indies. England, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Italy rule Africa with negligible exceptions. Europe is ruled by two groups—England, France and Russia in the Triple Entente, and Germany, Austria and Italy in

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the Triple Alliance. Thus is the good ship *Earth* in the hands of a certain great community of interest in government. It is for all the world like the system of interlocking directorates by which Wall Street parcels out the industrial rulership of the United States.

Now this system of spheres of influence works against the little country and the little peoples. It works in various ways in relation to self-government. In the English speaking dominions of the British empire, it works for local self-government and democracy. There are no better governments than those of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. In the dominions of the other members of the government combine, it works against democracy. Over most of the colored and backward races, this dominion, which is mostly a white man's dominion, is frankly cruel and tyrannical at its worst, like the rule of Japan in Korea or Italy in Tripolitania, or at its best, is paternalistic like British rule in India or ours in the Philippines. And this latter phase of the problem leads us to the

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question of the perils of enforced good government.

There is an almost general feeling that we justify our conquest of a free people when we give that people what we call "good government." This is of all things most fallacious. In the first place, of course, our good government usually turns out the worst in the world even from our own viewpoint. England's dominions are well governed only in those cases where she has abandoned the attempt to rule and turned the government over to the people. Her rule in India, like ours in the Philippines, is highly praised, but is also bitterly condemned by good judges.

It is perfectly true, however, that an enlightened conqueror may, and frequently does, impose on a backward people a better government, judged solely by present-day results, than they could give themselves in their present stage of development. We may give the Filipinos railways, public baths, sewers and a health bureau which will fight the tropic plagues and the insanitary practises of trop-

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ical ignorance and depravity. England may do the same in her empire. So may each of the members of the great earthly government combine. This is what Kipling means when he urges the British—for he never speaks to any audience wider than the white society of the empire—to “take up the White Man’s Burden.” “Go bind your sons to exile,” he sings, “to serve your captives’ need!” These “captives” are the “new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child.”

In spite of these fine rantings, however, the real danger to the world in the imperialisms of the government combine, lies quite as much in the success which Kipling claims for England in India, and demands everywhere, as in the failures which Belgium makes in the Kongo and Russia in the Caucasus. Bad and cruel government of the tyrant over the conquered may exterminate an undeveloped people, but a “good” government, accomplishing for a people through compulsion all the outward ameliorations which they should win for themselves may produce a result much

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worse for the good ship *Earth* than the extermination of any people.

Good government, to be worth anything, must be won through the evolution of popular government. The winning of it develops the power to perpetuate it. We learn to govern ourselves by governing ourselves—it can be done in no other way. Mexico may be far from democracy, but she is nearer it for her ninety years of effort than she would have been by submission to Spain—and the same is true of all the Spanish-American republics. They are falling down, but learning to walk. India will never learn to govern herself under present conditions, nor will the Philippines, nor Porto Rico, nor any “pacified” colony denied self-government and its perils.

But the worst danger in enforced good government lies not so much in the paralysis of development in the people, as in its effect on the increase and multiplication of the unfit. Good government tends to make its most rapid progress in the saving of life—especially infant life—through sanitation, vaccines, serums

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—preventive medicine—and surgery. This is true not only in colonies, of course, but in empires and republics called self-governing.

The revolution which is taking place in the healing art has already transformed it, and has only begun. Its finest manifestation is to be seen in the changed mental attitude of the medical profession toward the problems of health. Science has made the medical profession honest, just as it is making the whole world honest. The physician of the olden time did business on the strength of secret potions and marvelous lotions and unguents. His stock in trade was his closely-guarded formulas. The present-day medical man is in disgrace as soon as he refuses to tell the whole world his discovery. The first duty of an investigator is to publish abroad what he has learned. In fact, as soon as a medical researcher has found something significant, even though it be the result of one step only in his investigation, he is called upon by the ethics of his profession to make it public, to the end that others may be encouraged to join in the

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work or that they may receive light on some of their own peculiar problems.

The result is a sort of teamwork that is accomplishing wonders. We have found out that many of our ills are caused by minute animals or plants which find their way into our bodies. Disease thus becomes a mere matter of fact. There is nothing more mysterious about a thousand billions of little plants infesting the body as a germ disease than there is in the matter of a part of one plant thrust into it in the form of a sliver in the finger. The problem is more complex, that is all.

Drugs are becoming obsolete, except as they justify themselves in the rays of the new light. Nature is consulted. How does the body naturally deal with these intruders? That our bodies have adjusted themselves to the old warfare with germs is shown by the fact of immunity. We do not always contract diseases when exposed to them; and we have found out why. The body has means of fighting the germs. When we have had certain diseases we are immune to them. A very in-

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genious but not altogether satisfactory theory of immunity has been built up, and progress in sanitation is largely dependent on the fact—not the theory—of immunity. Vaccines and antitoxins are merely man's additions to the strength of nature's forces. They have already won in the contest with smallpox, diphtheria (which has been identified with membranous croup), typhoid fever, cerebro-spinal meningitis, tetanus, and to a very large degree with cholera, bubonic plague, hydrophobia and some others of the worst diseases. The prospects are that cancer and leprosy will soon yield. As this is written the world is filled with hope that the Friedman antitoxin for tuberculosis will do what Koch's seemed to have accomplished a quarter of a century ago but failed.

Even in the matter of medication, great progress has been made. Salvarsan and neo-salvarsan are almost specifics for syphilis—or seem to be. Quinine as a drug takes place with smallpox vaccine as old and accidental discoveries of things which modern science

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finds good—the former as a cure for malaria, and the latter as an attenuated virus for the prevention of smallpox. The study of the causes of diseases opens to governmental action tremendous possibilities in the way of stamping them out. We know that malaria and yellow fever, for instance, come to human beings through the bites of mosquitoes and in no other way. So that by the extermination of mosquitoes, or their avoidance, we can do away with the necessity of quinine as a cure for malaria, and make up for our lack of a vaccine or antitoxin for yellow fever—one or the other we may expect to be discovered at any time.

The work of Stiles on hook-worm is perhaps the most brilliant ever performed in this great field of brilliant work, and has resulted in a cheap and simple cure by means of a medicine for this plague, which probably accounts for more of the torpor, lassitude and lack of enterprise of the peoples of warm climates than we have yet suspected. Spotted fever has been traced to the tick and its host,

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the rodent; bubonic plague to the fleas carried by rats, squirrels and other small animals, and the hunt is on for the probable insect or animal carriers of pellagra, leprosy and many other diseases. There is no contagious or infectious disease which is not under surveillance by these skilled detectives of science, and the hopeful thing is that they all have clues. The hunt is an intelligent hunt, now, whereas all through the ages of the past it has been a mere matter of groping in the dark. Man is in the field against disease armed with weapons which will surely give him the victory.

Marching ahead of the physician, has gone the surgeon with aseptic surgery, and anesthetics. These things relate largely to the mechanics of the healing art; and their history is a tale of wonders with which the average mind is more familiar than with the more complex matters of immunity, anti-bodies, phagocytosis and opsonins which forbid most of us to pry into the new medicine. But surgery is scarcely less important in the cure of

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disease than its coordinate branch of the healing art.

Now, no people can voluntarily take advantage of these things in the absence of intelligence. The developed man will not have hook-worm; the undeveloped and untaught will never avoid it. Savages may be told about the causes of bubonic plague, malaria, yellow fever, sleeping sickness, smallpox, diphtheria and the like, and may have the cures or preventives placed in their hands, and the result will be negligible. Nothing but a "beneficent" tyranny can impose these things upon such people. I am firmly of the opinion that such a well-meant coercion, in so far as it could be made effective, would be a bad thing for the world.

It is an iron law of the world's welfare that only those ought to be saved who can accomplish their own salvation. Educate the people of all lands in sanitation, preventive medicine, all phases of the healing art; but except perhaps in the case of a salvable minority lagging

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behind the national march of intellect, the practise of these arts should be left to the people themselves. When they have so far progressed that they understand these things, believe in them and practise them voluntarily, they will have become fit for salvation from pestilence and insanitary lives. Not before.

Enforced good government—good government carried ahead of the people's development by governing classes of educated people tends to an undue multiplication of the passengers on the good ship *Earth*—and of those least fit to survive.

Seven out of every ten Chinese babies die in infancy. The same is more or less true in India, in Russia, and wherever poverty and ignorance are found on a fertile soil. The birth-rate among the poor in Mexico, Central America and South America is enormous. To enforce on these peoples governments which would allow the birth-rate to express itself in multiplication would not be a good thing, but a great evil.

When people win good government for

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themselves, they do so by a process of education, struggle, development and evolution which immensely complicates their lives. Our own case and that of the educated and enlightened classes everywhere are instances in point. This increase in the complexity of life, the freeing of women, the long period of education—in fact, civilization—makes a high birth-rate impossible. The imperialists demand that the benefits of civilization be conferred on these peoples in advance of their development. This is not truly kind to them, and it is a peril to the world. Let us help these peoples through education, missionary effort, every freely-offered stimulus to development—and stop there.

Their high birth-rate and their shocking death-rate come from the same causes. To remove one result by force and leave the other unaffected would be a crime against the civilization of the world.