

CHAPTER XI

THE KIND OF PASSENGERS THAT MULTIPLY

FATHER NOAH, on the Ark, fortunately had a voyage so short that the tendency of his live stock—human and brute—to swarm and increase in numbers, probably gave him no trouble.

But we on board the good ship *Earth* are doomed to a voyage of *infinite* length. It is an awful truth that every living thing on board tends to multiply, and that plants and animals all do multiply until their further increase is stopped by lack of food—which is famine; by encroachments on their increasing numbers—which is war, or by parasites and pests—which is pestilence.

We know, too, that man tends to multiply—the Noah family already numbers thirty-two people to every square mile of land on our old Ark, *Earth*, counting in desert, swamp, rock and sand, as well as arable.

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And this human swarm is growing faster than ever. There are great authorities who declare that war, pestilence and famine are as inherent in the frame of human society, as in that of wolves, rabbits, worms and fishes.

All we can say is that if this is not true, man is the only living thing of which it is not true.

But if it is true, what shall we say of a God who placed us here, with the urge upon us to multiply so coercive that it has filled the Orient with three thousand people to the square mile?

Two of the most virile minds in the world are Theodore Roosevelt and Rudyard Kipling. In many ways they are alike. Both are something in the Berserker line—stark savage men, each with a bushel of brains. Each has his ideas on this matter of population—and they seem to be opposite ideas. In a recent story Kipling, prophesying of the year 2000, sees the population of the world decreasing to six hundred million, five hundred, and then to four hundred and fifty. “The planet,” says one of his characters, “has taken

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all precautions against crowds for the past hundred years." "Anyhow," says another, "men live a century apiece on the average, now." "We are all rich and happy," says another, "because we are so few and live so long." In this story Kipling sees human powers so far increased that a girl runs a cultivator by means of an electric switch in the house. So, if I have got his meaning, prophecies Rudyard Kipling.

Roosevelt, on the other hand, seems to fear evil from a decreasing birth-rate. He cries out against what he calls race suicide. I do not think he has uttered his full thought in the premises, perhaps for reasons of policy. I suspect that there be people whom he would like to see having fewer children, and those whom he would fain see rear more.

This brings us passengers on the good ship *Earth* to a consideration of the kind of passengers who do multiply, and the sort, if any, who do not. If there is a sort which do not, are they better or worse passengers than those who do? If we are to stay on this spinning air-ship

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as it shoots through space—if we can not get off save by death, and if our descendants are to sail on after we have been absorbed back into the decks from which we rose, the question must be of interest. If we really think, must it not be the one of the most interesting of all questions?

The Chinese have an annual birth-rate of between fifty and sixty to the thousand. In Russia it is forty-nine. In French Canada it is probably equal to the Russian rate. In Japan it is only a little, if any, less. In Germany it is thirty-five. In German Austria and Spain it is thirty-four. In Italy, Holland and Finland it is about thirty-three. In Norway, Denmark, England, Scotland and Belgium it is about twenty-nine. In the United States as a whole it is probably about the same. In Australia and New Zealand it is about twenty-five. In Ireland it is twenty-three. In France it is twenty-one.

Look at it! Russians, Chinese, Japanese and such similar populations, already swarming as those of Hungary, growing like genera-

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tions of midges as compared with the Yankees, Irish, British, French and the British Colonials!

Note this, too—wherever there is a high average of intelligence, the birth-rate is low. This is true within the limits of every society. We must not imagine that all classes in Russia, China, Hungary, French Canada or elsewhere are so astonishingly prolific. We may be sure that there, as here, the huge families are found mainly in the tiny homes of the ignorant. Is there not here a glimpse of the two courses open to the world—widely disseminated high intelligence and a low birth-rate, as against a high birth-rate and general and widespread ignorance?

We are here looking into the very core of the riddle of the Sphinx.

It is of importance, too, to every passenger on the good ship *Earth* to take notice of the fact that while we are animals, the conditions which are favorable to the multiplication of all other animals do not seem to affect the human race in the same way. This is some-

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thing which we are only just beginning to realize. Herbert Spencer denied it. But the facts show that man in the conditions determining his tendency to multiply is different in some respects from all other animals.

All other animals multiply faster when they have plenty of food and adequate shelter—in other words, when they are in vigorous condition physically, and when life is easy. But look at the facts as to man.

Sir J. A. Baines says that in France “general well-being reaches probably a lower depth in the community than in any other part of Europe”—in other words, France has the highest general average of comfort. She has the lowest birth-rate in the world.

There are some special reasons for the low Irish birth-rate, but the principal ones are the high comparative intelligence and prosperity of the island.

The poorest people in North America north of the Spanish nations are the French Canadians, and the most illiterate—and their birth-rate is the highest. The thrifty and in-

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tellectual Yankees, of New England, probably have the lowest birth-rate on this continent.

The Boers, of South Africa, have a very high birth-rate and are very prosperous—but they are extremely ignorant.

The Russian peasants, degraded, ignorant, besotted, illiterate and poverty-stricken, are almost as prolific as the Chinese. The Hungarians belong to the Central European group of oppressed peasantries whose high birth-rate helps to keep them in bondage.

The Colonials, of New Zealand and Australia, are among the most intellectual and prosperous people embarked on the good ship *Earth*, and their babies scarcely suffice to keep their numbers good, though they have a continent to occupy.

After one of Colonel Roosevelt's outbursts against "race suicide," Mr. Dooley observed that "race suicide," like the tariff, is a local question. They might be troubled by it on the Lake Shore Drive, but it was the least of their worries on the Archey Road. So it is all over the world. The poor and the unedu-

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cated multiply. The well-to-do and the intellectual do not. China and Russia, French Canada and Japan are the Archey Roads of the world. Australia, Great Britain, France, the United States and the nations of Europe generally are its Lake Shore Drives. One of the deepest truths in human thought is in the old saying, "A poor man for children."

Maud Muller's case is one which shows the insight of the poet. In one couplet Whittier compresses the whole philosophy of population.

"She wedded a man unlearned and poor,
And many children played round her door."

This is more comprehensive than the maxim "A poor man for children;" for small families are the rule in many communities among the poor as well as the rich. But where the people are both ignorant—or "unlearned"—and poor, large families abound. The Boers are well-to-do, but they are very illiterate and unprogressive—and prolific. The French

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Canadians are not poor in the slum sense, perhaps, but they are not strivers after wealth as a race, still maintaining the happy-go-lucky attitude toward the rearing of children which we Yankees maintained when we had, as they have, a wilderness at our doors in which we might freely live. They are illiterate, and very prolific. The Russians and the Central European peasantry generally, are both poor and ignorant.

The rule is this. The simple life produces large families. The complex life cuts down the birth-rate. As the good ship *Earth* "spins down the ringing grooves of change", if human beings are not to make their lives on her decks a hell through the miseries of poverty, they must live more and more the complex life, and less and less the simple life. This is the solution of the riddle of population.

There must be no poverty. Some way must be found to eliminate the injustices which make the inequalities that doom so many millions, even in our sparsely peopled land, to lives

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of simple, stark, dead struggle for existence. Such a state of freedom from poverty is possible in the western world for ages to come, and if attained before the people are ground down into "the simple life" will forever save us from a swarming existence of poverty from which, once completely plunged into it, we shall have no way of escaping—fulfilling the sordid law of Malthus, and carrying us down into that "amorphous gulf," "that gulf of anarchy whose pit is hell." There must be a way found through which all men may escape from poverty.

The case of the simple life vs. the complex life is another way of stating the old struggle which Spencer describes of individuation vs. genesis. The complete, perfect and complex individual does not multiply as does the simple, small and limited individual. The house-fly is credited with the power to produce 199,000,000,000,000,000 of young in a season, if all her eggs hatch, and all her young go "unswatted." The very fact of size carries with it the gift of more complex life.

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The elephant is committed by his very weight to a struggle with gravity—he can not carry about such a body and keep it nourished, and still have left the vital force to multiply like the house-fly. So the birth-rate of the elephant is low and that of the house-fly high, just as one lives on a high plane, and the other on a low one.

Small birds breed faster than large ones of the same genus. The golden eagle has fewer young than does the sparrow hawk. The tapir is a slow breeder, while the peccary swarms. These things are not accidental. They inhere in the principles of biology. Organisms are restricted in producing progeny as soon as they begin to do anything else.

But no merely brute life compares in its capacity for becoming complex with human life. The bushman lives a simple life for a man, but the gorilla reduces existence to still lower terms.

Let us contrast the simple life of the Chinese peasant with that of a struggling American family. The American boy goes to school,

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the Chinese boy works—bowed down to serve the rice. The American boy goes to high school; the Chinese boy at the same age takes a wife, and becomes a father. He is repeatedly becoming a father, while the American boy goes to college, or spends years becoming “able to marry.” Out of a thousand American boys a great many will take up studies or apprenticeships or other complexities of life which will defer their marriages—and if they do not their sweethearts will. Nothing of the sort in China in one case in a hundred thousand.

The difference between Gladys and Tzi is even greater. Tzi has her feet bound and suffers the tortures of hell for years, and this is the only complexity entering into her life. At last it only makes life simpler and confines her more closely to her sole business of motherhood as it keeps her vegetating in the hovel she calls home. At thirteen she is given in marriage, and while Gladys is working through the grades at school, Tzi is having babies. If her husband is able he hires a wet

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nurse for the babies, so that Tzi may become a mother oftener.

Tzi and Ching marry in their early teens; Willie and Gladys wait—and in waiting may be change their minds. Tzi and Ching, living the simple life, couch in a hovel with their parents and relatives; Willie and Gladys must have a home of their own. Gladys's mother insists that her daughter "shall have a few years of just being a girl;" the mother of Tzi hands her over to the father of Tzi to give away to a husband who has never seen Tzi's face.

And when Willie and Gladys marry, they have their social work, their church work, and their clubs and societies to take care of; but Tzi and Ching have babies only—babies and awful grinding work. Willie and Gladys must have a piano; Tzi and Ching have babies. Willie and Gladys must have rugs and bathrooms and a bungalow at some lake. Tzi and Ching know nothing but work and babies. Willie and Gladys want to know something about this great universe of ours, they reach

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out after the stars, they delve into the mysteries of knowledge; but as for Tzi and Ching,

“Slaves of the wheel of labor, what to them
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?”

Ross says of Tzi and Ching's country, stripped to the bare machinery of production as it is: “The founts of inspiration and poetry dry up, and life sinks to a dull sordid round of food-getting and begetting.”

And again, these variations are not accidental. Here also they inhere in the very principles of biology. All the things done by Willie and Gladys in addition to the simple labors of Ching and Tzi take time and vital force. Human beings, like animals, but to a degree infinitely greater, are inhibited from multiplying to the exact extent, on the average, to which they exercise their powers to do anything else. This must be so. It is possible for a horse to trot a mile in just a little more than two minutes. It is possible for the same horse to draw a ton. But it is not possible for

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the same horse to do the two things at the same time.

Jesus came to earth that we might have life, and that more abundantly. This must mean a more complex life, more needs, more gratifications, more desires. Like the daughters of the horse leech we cry, "Give, give!" to nature and to life. And this is right. Give us a more complex life, not a simpler one; better children, even though they be fewer; and women with unbound feet, unbound minds, with freedom to develop in every way a freedom and development which will make their children great, whether they be many or not. Thus will the ship be saved from over-peopling.

This is the application to political economy of the universal law of the conflict between individuation and genesis. It reconciles the law of evolution with the law of justice, and transforms the evolutionary principle from a sentence of social death to a gospel, like that of the Nazarene, of "good tidings to the poor". It recognizes the truth in

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the doctrines of those who have preached diminishing returns, redundancy of population, the struggle for existence, and the survival of the fittest, as reasons for poverty. It takes cognizance of the truth in those other writings which assure us that there is something in man's mentality which takes him out of the operation of the Iron Statute of the universal tendency of all living things to out-multiply their means of living. It identifies that redemptive Something. It shows that in this respect, as in all others, man must work out his own salvation. He was naked, and clothed himself. He was shelterless, and he learned to build. He taught the beasts to give their increase for his food, the fields to bring forth for him. In all these cases man finds himself within some saving natural law as soon as he rises to its level. This principle of the conflict between individuation and genesis takes him out of the operation of the law of fecundity, as soon as he rises to the moral and intellectual heights to which, unless by his own sociological failure his development is frus-

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trated, he is destined. He rises above this law, not alone by any Malthusian "prudential" or "preventive" check on population; but by the force of natural law which works in plant and beast as well as in man. In the process of evolution, man steps upon the stage a savage, but with the complex life which half solves the great riddle. In civilized man, under conditions of justice, freedom and enlightenment, the law of multiplication gives way to the law of complex, full, manifold and absorbing life. Redundancy of offspring is supplanted by redundancy of life.

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? . . . But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."