

## DEMOCRACY OR DEGENERACY?

**I**F THE Prussian tide reaches Paris and Calais, effecting a separation of the British and French forces the "mailed fist" will close around the neck of Demos in Europe and plutocracy, under pretense of military necessity, will stamp out every revolutionary tendency in America; every present hope for Man as against Privilege will be crushed, every chance of men, women and children rating higher than property will be forfeited, every practical tendency toward common freedom and social justice will be palsied, delayed, forgotten—for how many decades?—who can guess?

It were madness for any friend of the human cause, anyone who hopes for real human betterment, not to look this situation squarely in the face. This now is radicalism's, liberalism's, humanism's war. It is at last, quite clearly, a war of human beings, their equal freedom, against privilege, caste, profiteerism, plutocracy, militarism—Greed!

No one hates war more than I do, nor sees its stark idiocy more clearly. None has written, I venture, more drastically, biting, contemptuously against war and the trade of soldiery than I have. If you doubt it, read "War Lines" in Songs of The Great Adventure, which is withdrawn from sale for the period of this war—but you, as a student, may have a copy for the asking if you care for it, so long as Uncle Sam doesn't interdict it. Nothing within its covers applies to this war since our entry into it—and I am wondering now whether any of the verses were timely. I was stubborn, with the "radical" rather than the human viewpoint. Radicalism has its conventions.

I saw Kropotkin turn to the war, then Owen, Tucker, George Herron, Clarence Darrow—men whose human love could not be questioned. They saw a terrible menace in a threatened German supremacy, where I could see only the international profiteer. Then Woodrow Wilson turned!—who had kept us out of war against weak and easily-conquered Mexico, the man who has stood for human rights against property and privilege as no other occupant of the White House since Lincoln's day. Sheer gratitude for Wilson's courage and strength against all the pressure of the world's allied exploiters hungry to enslave the inoffensive human beings of Mexico, heirs of one of the most beautiful civilizations known to history; sheer gratitude to the manliness of Wilson, president of a plutocracy, would make a plastic brain think a little. Maybe "radicalism" holds not all the truth in the world, sees

not every circumstance fraught with human good most clearly. Maybe the German really can reach Paris. Perhaps militarism is a worse enemy after all than plutocracy!—and, at all events, only the end of landlordism can bring the end of war!

But now it is obvious to the dullest, even to me, that this is a holy war, if ever there was one. It is not a war of nations, but of Man against Privilege. The alignment was not so clear at first, but since the Russian revolution, Trotzky's and Upton Sinclair's candid statement that the only hope of a German revolution is the defeat of Prussian militarism; since the re-invasion of Russia and the steady advance of militarism on Paris and Calais after a year's chance for the allies to mass troops against it, can the meaning of this war be hidden any longer to the blindest?

Nothing that you or I or anyone in the world can write or say or do will end war while land monopoly remains. I don't know that I want it to end until the land is free—but, any way a still reasoning mind looks at it, the only possible chance of ending or even decreasing war, is to remove its economic cause, which is the private appropriation of the people's means of subsistence.

It was not clear to me in 1914 or even two years later that any one of the belligerent forces contained an element of real human sympathy. I looked upon it as a tradesman's war and frankly said so. I doubted Kropotkin's, Owen's, Herron's, Darrow's clarity of vision. I thought they were impelled by race prejudice. I couldn't see that under modern militarism; with even the partial success of German imperialism; the people's cause would be crushed and helpless.

Then Woodrow Wilson entered the lists, and this country followed him, reluctantly at first. He is no "radical." He could not be president if he were. He is, however, considerable of a Man—and when radicals lend their strength or sympathy against him they are aligning themselves with Wall Street. They are impossibilists. They may be martyrs—but that is "old stuff" and gets nowhere. It doesn't feed the hungry children of Today, and I am only interested in this generation.

As matters stood before the German offensive began a month ago, plutocracy read its doom; its only powerful protector, German imperialism, was tottering to its yawning tomb, and these recent New York after-dinner remarks of Charles M. Schwab, the steel billionaire, seemed about to come true:

We are at the threshold of a new social era. This new order of things may work great hardship for many of us. It is going to come upon us sooner than we expect. It is the social renaissance of the whole world. Some people call it socialism, others call it Bolshevism. It means but one thing, and that is that the man who labors with his hands, who does not possess property, is the one who is going to dominate the affairs of this world; not merely Russia, Germany and the United States, but the whole world.

This great change is going to be a social adjustment. I repeat that it will be a great hardship to those who control property, but perhaps in the end it will work inestimably to the good of us all. Therefore, it is our duty not to oppose, but to instruct, to meet and to mingle with the view of others.

The translation from the old to the new order of things will be so gradual that we will hardly realize that it has occurred. The pendulum will swing so far that you and I may find it hard for a time, but there will be an adjustment.

The aristocracy of the future is not going to be the aristocracy of wealth; it is going to be the aristocracy of men who have done something for their country and for the world at large. Such men will be true aristocrats.

I am not sure that this coming change in society will be better for you or me, but whether it will or will not, we must be prepared to accept it, for it is coming, and it is nearer than we think.

Mr. Schwab's optimism is heartening, but against it is the hundred-mile wall of steel closing in on Paris, Calais, and Dunkirk, and at this writing, after a month of unchecked offensive, there doesn't seem to be a chance of turning the tide. The unexpected may occur before these lines are printed. Paris may not be occupied—fervent hope! But nothing short of an earthquake that should swallow up the German hosts could stay the terrible menace if not the quick reality of Prussian militarism clutching all of Europe.

If militarism becomes supreme in Europe, plutocracy will be unrestrained in North and South America, the rising wave of economic democracy will be swept back, perhaps for a century, there will come another time like the decadent years of Rome, and it may well be that the supremacy of the white races shall be lost in a few decades of unceasing war, syphilis and slavery.

The flame lit in Russia will be stamped out by the iron heel of militarism. The ascending labor party in England will be suppressed by the tories. A reactionary congress will override Woodrow Wilson—unless perchance, it is the barest possibility, radicalism in the United States could endow Wilson with its tremendous unified latent strength, open the earth of the nation to production and thus enable the rushing of millions of troops to Europe immediately to push back the German wall of steel and hate before it has made a secure juncture with English aristocracy and American plutocracy.

Land monopoly is the only obstacle to an

army of ten million men—if so many were needed—crossing the Atlantic in a year. Three million there now would save the world for Democracy. The men are ready to serve—twice that number. Hundreds of thousands are “champing at their bits” in the training camps. Why are they not in France?

Lack of ships! We've been a year at ship building already. Look at the Hog Island land speculation scandal. Look at San Pedro—workmen turned away from waiting jobs on troop-carrying ships until they consented to mortgage themselves to the land sharks—“buy a lot on installments and you can have a job!” It was all told in the press. They pay “high wages” at the shipyards, yet the men must strike for more, because food prices rise twenty times faster than wages.

Lack of food and equipment, even more than lack of ships is retarding the movement of American troops—and Five Hundred Million acres of arable land lie utterly idle, as speculative toys in which profiteers invest their surplus wealth to evade the war tax!

Oil, iron, and coal are short. Coal was so short that thousands of babies froze to death in Chicago and New York a couple months ago—and not half the coal deposits in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Colorado being worked. Idle coal mines and idle, freezing people—so that the privileged owners can pile up millions of war profits!

Now as never before the bare ribs of land monopoly are exposed. Causes are obvious. A few people own the land and resources of the United States, and speculate with them.

That's why the American troops are not now in France. That will be the basic reason, should it so fall, as now seems probable, that our forces will not reach Europe in time to prevent the capture of Paris and the channel parts.

Will just money get the troops there, and feed them? Will they ever reach France in large enough numbers to be of any avail until the land and resources are open to production?

Do the profiteers and land monopolists of the United States want the Teuton line driven back?

A quick, decisive Prussian defeat means a revolution in Germany and Austria, an economic, actual, tangible revolution like that in Russia, that shall destroy privilege, caste, plutocracy; it means the quick rise of social democracy all over Europe, particularly in England; and the stabilizing of the Bolsheviks in Russia. It means the ascending of Human Beings over Privilege and Property all over the world. Quick defeat of Hindenburg means the realization of Mr. Schwab's prophecy—Now.

The ascendancy of Prussian militarism will be a lurch downward to the darkest abyss from which the human family has emerged in known history. It will mean the triumph and the general prevalence of Gobineau's, Nietzsche's, and Oscar Levy's tinsel aristocracy of the middle ages, whose lords and ladies "shone resplendant against a background of universal slavery"—intensified a thousand times by modern mechanisms and diseases.

Plutocracy and aristocracy, privilege, caste, profiteerism—all the institutions that have grown out of the dogma of original sin, the bone-bred Anglo-Saxon belief that some men are born of finer clay than others, which still inheres in rationalism as in orthodoxy, which indeed is as much disputed in the church as anywhere—

All these institutions rooted in the divine right of kings, but maintained as securely on the rationalistic concepts of separate interests, "mass stupidity," cultural superiority, and the unwarranted extension of the evolutionary theory to human relations—

These institutions which exaggerate and intensify all the petty and restrictive impulses, arising out of our thoughtless assent to the validity of paper land titles and resulting in a demoniac orgy of speculation, gambling, with the necessities of human life—preserved by our superficial mechanistic ideas that one, or a group of humans can function alone, can enjoy or suffer regardless of others; that it is actually possible for one to "get there" or "play safe" while the mass is in agony; that deny the deep spiritual unity of the crowd—

These—Aristocracy in Europe, Privilege in America are fighting for their lives and seem to have the world almost in grip.

This is at last the Armageddon, the world battle between the forces of Light and of Night. Already militarism is entrenched at least for some years, until American millions can reach Europe.

The hope of Man was a German and Austrian revolution. That hope is gone. Germany has made advance enough in the last month to revive the lust of world-dominion in the social democrats and knit them closer than ever to the dynasty that promises to achieve it. Germany has won at least a draw and if Paris falls—already under gun range!—how long will Greed sit the saddle of western civilization?

Mr. Schwab is a good "Marxian evolutionist"—or was his New York banquet speech uttered as a warning to his class instead of as a prophecy? And was the warning heeded—by Greed's forces in this country and in Europe? Is that the down deep inner reason of the steady German advance?—to prevent the German and Austrian revolution, which plutocracy and aristocracy well knew would be Economic as well as political?

Would English aristocracy and American privilege favor Demos or favor Hapsburg?

Why, after all these months of waiting, were the allies unprepared, unequipped, unable to withstand the rush of the central powers? Why were they out-numbered? Such a thing as the "fortune of battle" might explain and excuse the failure to whip Germany to its knees—but to do that would mean the release of the People, everywhere, and the destruction of Greed's last intrenchment and only powerful protector, the German ruling dynasty. It was not done, and tho its failure might be attributed to inability rather than unwillingness, what but collusion itself can account for the steady German advance?—the collusion of English aristocracy and American privilege in hindering the adequate massing and equipment of allied forces in France?

If Mr. Schwab was merely philosophizing and prophesying, instead of warning, then I should say he is too easily comforted with current journalistic ideas of evolution when he says, "The translation from the old to the new order of things will be so gradual that we will hardly realize that it has occurred."

That is Darwinism misapplied to the course of Human events. Or it is Hindu anthropogenesis misapplied to concrete social relations. Either way it is the western foolishness of measuring human beings by abstractions. And there isn't a thing in human history to warrant

it. The theory of evolution is not applicable to individual, social, national, or international human conduct, because it necessarily omits consideration of that unknown, plastic, never stable Thing, the Soul, the I am!—takes no account of Consciousness and Feeling.

Man is more than an evolved animal. Wrote Wallace, Darwin's co-discoverer of evolution:

But so soon as man appeared on earth, even in the earliest periods at which we have any proofs of his existence, or in the lowest state of barbarism in which we are now able to study him, we find him able to use and act upon the forces of nature, and to modify his environment, both inorganic and organic, in ways which formed a completely new departure in the entire organic world.

This is from "Social Environment and Moral Progress," published in 1913, in which the great evolutionist concludes, after marshalling much proof, "that the higher intellectual and moral nature of man has been approximately stationary during the whole period of human history"!

Man is not slowly evolving from low to high, from bad to good, from ignorance to wisdom, from slavery to freedom. There is no gradual

evolutionary process that will some day land the human family in paradise willy nilly. That is newspaper philosophy, to keep the masses slumbering—as misleading as the labored attempts of the press to belittle the significance of the steady German advance. Human history is not an ascending straight line up from barbarism to civilization. It is a terribly jagged, zigzag, saw-tooth course, full of deep pits and heights—and some of the loftiest heights are behind us.

The new social era will not come so gradually that Mr. Schwab will be unable to perceive it, nor will it dawn of its own accord. It will only come if and when Manhood brings it. There is no mechanical process of nature to convert slaves into freemen while they slumber. The price of freedom is daring, courage, action!—right action that will strike at the root of the evil. Will Mr. Schwab pay?

He will find that ships are not built of money, but of materials that come out of the earth and by human labor that must have food.

## THE GERRIT JOHNSON LETTERS

These Gerrit Johnson letters have proven the biggest events thus far of the 1918 campaign for a free earth in California. They have awakened the single tax world as nothing else did or seemingly could. They have elicited answers, if not always cash, from such busy men as George Bernard Shaw, William Marlon Reedy, Bliss Carmen, A. Felix du Pont, many government officials, hundreds of business men, and have scared the Anti Single Tax leagues of California and their helpers, into strenuous and devious activities.

With much hesitancy they are given publicity in Everyman, because of their personal allusions. It is only fair to the memory of Herman Kuehn (and justice to myself) to say that the first letter was mailed to quite a few names before we knew of it. Our position had always been, and mine still is, that there is only one reason why anyone should support The Great Adventure in California, i. e., that he desired with all his heart to see Single Tax Enacted. It is also fair to the now famous author of these letters to say that he has not only written to ask others for support, but has given of his own cash generously, considerably—and more than all, he has given his time, his thought, his experience, his rare talents and himself!—LUKE NORTH.

MY DEAR FRIEND: You may not know the writer. As an introduction allow me to say I have been a so-called single taxer for thirty years. Thought about it, gave it a spare dollar now and then, but never took it seriously. I thought Henry George's beautiful dream was for future generations—but some times things happen over night. I am frank to say that last election when The Great Adventure group tried for the adoption of single tax, I was lukewarm, but when they mustered 263,000 votes I got a clearer vision.

The writer started in business at twenty-five without a dollar, and at fifty-three retired; now spending his winters in California. I do not mention this as a boast, but I want you to know I am no dreamer like Luke North and his co-workers. To be a successful business man one cannot sacrifice his bread and butter for his ideals. But single tax is no longer a dream. It is within our reach—a reality.

I wish you could have attended a meeting at The Great Adventure office Saturday evening, February 2nd. There were socialists, anarchists, many who had been leaders in the Equity Tax league, straight singletaxers, men and women with all kinds of ideas. They probably differed on all else, but they agreed that the land must be free. You should have seen them in that ill-lighted room with its furniture and fixtures probably not worth ten dollars; but their earnestness gave a real glow to the place. If I were

spiritually inclined I would say that it seemed as though the spirit of Henry George, of Tom L. Johnson and of Joseph Fels were hovering about the place, whispering words of encouragement and urging them on.

I sometimes wonder how much of the outside single tax world really knows of the privation, or let me call it starvation, endured by this little group The Great Adventure, for the single tax cause.

Although the first struggle was fierce they are now getting ready for its second stage with the same handicap of No Funds. Did you ever see a group of politicians spend all the money that comes in for propaganda, and themselves go without the necessities of life, having deliberately cut themselves off from sources of personal income to which their training and capabilities give them unstinted access? This is not politics with these men and women—it is a religion. It is so unusual that I'm afraid you won't get my viewpoint. As you know, the single tax heretofore has always been a respectable business—good salaries, commodious offices, Pullman cars, best hotels. Can you imagine men with talents like Luke North and Herman Kuehn living in the cheapest little cottages outside of the city—excluding their books a second-hand man wouldn't accept their worldly goods for the taking. Their co-workers are all living on about the same plane. Take it from me