

THE GIANT AND THE PROBLEM.

(For the Review.)

By B. H. NADAL

A colossal figure stands with one foot planted in the Atlantic, the other in the Pacific, his cerulean coat tails flapping in the Gulf and dyeing it a still deeper blue. One hand is upon the Hawaiian Islands, the other grasps the far distant Phillipines and the fur on his bell-crowned hat scrapes Orion and the Milky Way. Forgetting his outlying possessions he places his hand upon his knees and stooping down bends over the mountain and hill-wrinkled map beneath him with an intent and perplexed look upon his shrewd and kindly face, meanwhile slowly chewing a quid half the size of the Cuban Republic and from time to time liberally deluging with its expressed juices his southern dominions. Over his submerged feet converge like the handle of a fan the liquid highways from all parts of the world.

Now he looks upon the fertile cotton fields and the red clay hills of the south, now upon the lake-besprinkled and deer-haunted forests of the north. Now his eyes travel the breadth of the continent to the store house of the blizzard or milder Oregon, or sweeping southward, he studies the arid, sunbaked regions of the southwest.

But most solicitously and most intently does he look upon that central region extending far westward from the Atlantic, crowded with cities great and small, with rivers, lakes and mines, fertile with grain and fruits where the net-work of railroad and telegraph lines is the thickest and where the millions toil most unceasingly and thread their way restlessly from city to city.

He sees many of the most prosperous of his people carrying about with them a book which they believe to be the cause of their own and the country's prosperity. This is the Jungle Book, or U. S. Tariff, an intricate maze of specific and advalorem duties upon almost everything that can be manufactured, grown, mined or found. It is a system of painless taxation as indefinable as malaria and so complex and far-reaching in its effect that no man ever did understand it.

Some time ago many learned, sincere and dignified men, most of whom abhor the Jungle Book, walked about with a roll of parchment under their arms. It is the U. S. Constitution. From time to time they put the roll to their eyes like a telescope and look anxiously at the Gulf of Mexico. Suddenly a vessel starts from under the giant's coat-tails and heads for Panama. The learned men become intensely excited and shout to the Captain: "You can't land there. You have committed an 'act of war.'" But the vessel goes on and as it nears the land thrusts out a plank called International Eminent Domain,—a little too thin perhaps—but Teddy, the Headstrong and the Extra Constitutional gets under it and keeps it from breaking and the learned men throw up their hands in despair and prophesy dire things.

The giant turned about and spitting over his shoulder into the Gulf until it is the color of the St. John's River, looked at Panama and scratched his head. He was sorry for the learned men and the Constitution but he did want that canal dug.

He turns again to the populous north, the gravity and perplexity of his look deepening as he studies the mass of humanity upon the map beneath him.

His mind reverts to the past when the nation was born. He remembers the comparative simplicity of existence in those days when the extremes of great wealth and great poverty were little known. People were born, lived and died, with rare exceptions, in the same community. It was not so difficult to live the simple life in those days.

The young republic grew rapidly. Wave after wave of immigration swept westward, seizing upon new lands, consuming the forests and driving back the Indian, until intoxicated by its rapid growth and its boundless opportunities, it became vain glorious and boastful. But a great civil war rended it and shook its very foundations. Matured by this colossal strife it started again upon its course until at last it stood an empire and a world power at whose eccentricities and youthful boastings the older nations had ceased to smile.

But it was the effect of this vast material growth upon the character, habits and fortunes of his people that now perplexed the giant. Succeeding the Civil War was a period of inflation and wild extravagance. The comparative simplicity of living had largely disappeared. The energy, the aggressiveness, the individual initiative that had done so much for the republic was now to be acted upon by new conditions.

The perfecting and extension of the telegraph, the railway and the steam engine, the rapid interchange of information and commodities, the growth of great cities, the giving away of franchises, the rapid rise of land values—all this succeeding to the colossal and careless expenditures of the war, had opened to the individual innumerable avenues to wealth. The young man not only discarded the admonition to be content in that sphere to which God had called him, believing he had been called to where he could get, but he wanted to get there quickly, and was too often not particular as to the means he chose.

As a result individual initiative for personal gain stopped at nothing. Vast fortunes were accumulated with amazing quickness, by honesty and ability, by blind luck and by every kind of trickery and sharp practice. There were bandits who held up trains in the West and capitalists and shrewd lawyers who held up entire roads in the East. And the capitalists and lawyers thought the bandits bad men, and they were, and they got into jail. The bandits, not the capitalists or lawyers.

Out of this riot of uncurbed individual propensity there had at last come a certain order where here and there a supreme individual or a combination of interest stood upon a mountain of stocks and bonds.

While many new fortunes had been lost and made he saw that for the most part the great fortunes of the day had been founded at that time. In many cases by rapid accretions they had grown until each original fortune had sub-

divided into a group of fortunes, the by-products of which even might be counted in the millions.

He felt a kindly interest in the founders of these fortunes where they had kept decently within the law and had bought legislatures and boards of aldermen under protest. It seemed almost as excusable as International Eminent Domain if their pockets did bulge with franchises and wealth which the people did not have the sense to keep. Many of these men were believers in the simple life and were not altogether happy in their brown stone palaces. They had not forgotten the people and made many plans and gave large sums for their benefit. One worthy man especially interested him. An emigrant, he had accumulated under the beneficent laws of this country hundreds of millions of dollars. He believed in the simple life and is reported as saying that it would be a disgrace for any man to die rich. He always carried a copy of the *Jungle Book* and wrote another book that is almost as much of a *Jungle*, about his country and his own experience and bound the two together and called it *Triumphant Democracy*. He wanted to educate the people and stood at his door calling *Cit-Cit-Cit-Cit*. Immediately many cities, little and big, came running like a flock of chickens and swallowed the libraries he threw out of his basket; though the ten per cent supporting clause sometimes stuck in their throats.

This good man not only believed in the Simple Life, but said his children should be reared so that they would not know they were different from other children. To that end he bought a castle in the land of his birth and built a great palace in the land of his adoption, and travelled back and forth with a great retinue of servants and gave his children lions and other things to throw to the people. The giant approved the good man, but smiled at his simplicity.

Then he remembered another good man who kept his son on a Spartan allowance and preached the simple life to him as he walked about in the splendor of his palace, multiplied many times by countless square yards of plate glass mirrors. But when he died his son, though not a bad youth, thought little of founding hospitals and colleges as his father did, but treated himself to a palace in town, to country seats and breeding farms and ocean going yachts. But chiefly he liked to tear about the country in a blue devil or white ghost. Going through the city one day, at a mad pace, a bicycle cop famed for his speed chased him and ordered him under arrest, but the young man pointed a glittering tube at him. "My friend, you are going too fast. Go lead a simple life," said he, as he squirted ammonia in his face and the cop collapsed on his wheel and walked home.

The moral of this seemed to the giant to be that the doctrine that a rich man was the trustee for the wealth his neighbor didn't get was antiquated nonsense. That the average man was just the average man and if you give him great possessions he will use them selfishly.

These vast fortunes and the great luxury perplexed him as much as the extreme poverty and the crime. While every one admitted the undesirability of the latter most people insisted that great wealth was a good thing.

In forty years, he reflected, we have paid but a part of the national debt, and yet we have been rich enough to put a quarter or some say half that sum in the pockets of one man. It was evident that instead of the people using the talents of this and other able men for the public good, they had given to these men the property of the people and a power greater than that of many kings, to be handed down to those unfit to use it. Many of these able men returned large sums to the people. They were not ashamed of their humble beginning and would willingly have adopted a pickaxe or shovel with the legend, "I done it," as their crest. But their children and grand-children, however estimable, were for the most part moneyed aristocrats who regarded their entrenched fortunes as sacred. One of these men after a seven years absence returned to find that his real estate holdings had increased in value \$20,000,000. What must be the attitude of mind of an intelligent man, such as this one is, who can regard this increase with complaisance.

If he is proud of his country and attached to her people must it not be that of the kind old lady who was showing the visitors a flock of young chickens who were busily fattening themselves for the market. "Ah!" said the old lady, "the dear things will soon be broilers."

The President speaking of the Simple Life says that in this country there must be no classes. A useless remark, it seemed to the giant, if he approve conditions that produce them as surely as water will make ice if the mercury be at zero. No two classes can be further removed than the extreme of poverty and the extreme of opulence that has no responsibility such as has been the lot of the lords of the past.

The giant saw that the notoriety based entirely on wealth and extreme luxury was not good for these people, and the argument that they were benefiting the people by their lavish expenditure in any true sense seemed fallacious and misleading. That inevitably there must follow in their wake an army of people who fed upon them with evil results to both. As one of these men said to a plain citizen, "You can trust your friends, I can't."

Then these palaces and castles meant an army of trained and imported flunkies who imperceptibly effected the manners and characters of many of his people. The tradesmen who came within the shadow of these palaces must bribe the retainers to sell their goods. Thousands or tens of thousands of the children of men whose sturdy independence would have scorned a tip, now fawned for it or insolently demanded it. The man who said to the Duke, "Be you the man that wants to go to Jones' Corners. Well, I'm the gentlemen as is to drive you," now tips his hat and pockets his tip.

It is said that \$50,000,000 are given in tips yearly in New York City.

It seemed to the giant, that great wealth vested in individuals, was good neither for those that had it nor those that lacked it, whatever may have been its value in the past. But it was as wrong to find fault with a man for acquiring riches under the law or for being born to it as it was to blame him for being a child of the slums. How to give it away without doing harm was a problem for the wisest and best of them.

So he did not smile, but he frowned, when he looked down into the palaces and saw bits of human pulp whose tiny hands clasped like a rattle pieces of paper which represented a right to tax the productive power of thousands of his people.

"We laugh," muttered he, "at the divine right of kings to their thrones. Isn't it time we laughed at the divine right of babies to their millions." He did not smile when he saw the long line of palaces in every great city and contrasted them with the countless reeking tenements. He did not smile when he saw the mobs of prosperous men juggling with values and the vast buildings in and out of which ran unceasingly thousands of percentage-eating human ants. How many were useful and to what extent?

Nor did he smile when he was told that the ratio of criminals to the population had increased six fold in fifty years.

And so we might go on giving many items in the vexatious problem before him.

Many said that it was an old story, as old as human nature. Nothing could be done. That it wasn't wise to talk about it. The dear things who would soon be broilers must not be enlightened.

It might excite discontent.

Some pointed out that wealth per capita had increased by so much. "Why don't you live in Blizzardville," retorted a man. "The average temperature is delightful—only 75." "Yes," said another, "but its 110° in summer and 40 below in winter." And the giant smiled and deluged an iceberg off the coast of Labrador.

Oh, yes, he knew all the arguments. It was the most glorious and prosperous, the freest country in the world. But it wasn't free enough for him. The most prosperous, yes, but why should the prosperity break out like a disease? Why was it that, with inexhaustible resources and the most ingenious and energetic people in the world, there should be recurring periods of hard times.

The giant couldn't retire to his palace or an idyllic spot in the country and ignore it all. He must see it all and all the time. When people told him that nothing could be done he did not believe them. The very rapidity with which the new phases of the world-old problem had developed themselves seemed hopeful to him. He saw how quickly the average man responded to changed economic and social conditions. He firmly believed that the heart of his people was sound.

"We must alter conditions—alter conditions," he muttered to himself. "So long as we give to individuals and corporations the property of the people whether it be in franchises or land values or anything else, so long will these conditions last. We may have to drop the Tariff in the Atlantic Ocean or amend the Constitution until the learned men expire with indignation and 'the forefathers rise to protest.' The Constitution was made for the people, not the people for the Constitution."

Some time ago a worthy man came from abroad with a good book, not new, but is there anything new? It was called the "Simple Life," and treated

of simplicity in all its phases, rightly saying it did not depend upon any certain economic and social conditions. True enough of those few who are strong enough to ignore or control conditions. Entirely untrue of the average man who always has been and always will be what economic and social conditions make him. The good man converted a studious millionaire who took him sailing in his yacht and gave him a costly banquet in his palace. He told a group of luxurious grandsons of their grandfathers, that they were not leading the Simple Life, but they squirted ammonia in his face. He lectured from the gallery of the Stock Exchange, but when they found Simple Life wasn't a mine or a horse they lost interest. He preached it in the slums, in Hell's Kitchen, in Sing Sing, in the mines of Pennsylvania and the far West, but they didn't understand him. Finally he handed it to the giant who was posing over the problem before him.

The giant absent mindedly slipped the book in his pocket and deluged another iceberg off the coast of Labrador, saying:

"Good book! good book. Come back in a hundred years and we may do something for you." And straightway forgot all about the good man in the absorbing problem before him. Solution there must be. But how to begin. When he thought of the myriad industries fostered and buttressed by the Tariff, when he thought of the whole interlocking system of trade and finance and private interests, of the dead weight of the conservative, of the inconsiderate haste of the radical, of the devotion of each reformer to his pet remedy, and the difficulty of making any remedy effective without throwing the complex machinery into hopeless confusion, his brow contracted with still deeper wrinkles. "But it can. It must be done. The people are ready. See how they rush wildly from one side to the other, looking for the man and the plan as if Government were a gigantic game of See Saw."

Dark though the prospect may be, and distant the goal many hopeful signs appear to his watchful eye. The good man who had given so many libraries; and so many millions began to suspect that the Democracy that had produced him and his millions was not so triumphant as he had thought. He began to speak with absolute disrespect of the Jungle Book and its advocates. He also admitted that the claims of the radicals were just though he still held that the millionaires or honey bees as he called them were most useful persons because they made all the little honey bees hustle for them. Well, perhaps!

The richest man, who had staggered for so many years like Christian under his burden, was extremely anxious to drop it into the lap of the people.

The partner of the greatest financier retired to give his life to the solution of the Giant's problem. Straws perhaps, but most significant ones. Now the giant began taking from his pockets many volumes, tossing them with unerring aim into the most populous centres of his land. People picked them up and pored over them, but now and then an elderly man would throw the book down and walk off exclaiming Chestnut! Chestnut! But the younger men, unprejudiced and open minded, realized that a chestnut might be a most

palatable and nutritious thing. The Book was *Progress and Poverty*, by Henry George.

"Ah!" exclaimed the giant, "if my people would only try the **Single Tax**. I believe it would be as insidious for good as the **Tariff** is for evil, the **Painless Parker of Economic Reform**." Try it, my children, try it."

As he tossed a copy into the heart of Manhattan a paper fluttered from his hand and he muttered, "Ah, my children! as achievement, how splendid—but of true Democracy, of justice, how little!"

The verses seem based on an interview with a famous pugilist on the accession of an English King to the throne.

What in the hell, said great John L
Has this man ever done,
On Easy Street this King may dwell,
But where's the belt he won?

I won the belt, cried great John L.,
By brain and brawn I won it,
On Easy Street this King may dwell,
But I'm the man what done it.

Why, sure he never won no crown,
Though his high head may don it,
On Easy Street fate laid it down,
And dropped a crown upon it.

Most truly said, oh, man of might,
Our uncrowned, "cur de lion,"
Much belted Knight in many a fight,
Whose fame shall be undyin'.

'Tis true, most true, oh, mighty man,
We're all of that opinion,
To him who can' tis nature's plan
To give fame and dominion.

But is this all, oh, man of might,
Democracy can teach us,
Both luck and might can strangle right,
Another gospel preach us!

Not brain, nor brawn, nor form of might,
Vice, virtue, luck nor cunning,
Nor legal wrong, nor vested right,
Can stop that Day's sure coming.

When frowning on ignoble strife
To wrest gain from our brothers,
We'll cease to drink the wine of life,
And throw the dregs to others!