

workers in medical science must travel. Although there were many trials and many errors in the treatment of human ills, it was these guide-posts which ultimately led to the most outstanding achievements in therapeutics and sanitation.

In Government: The principle imbedded in the United States Constitution that there shall be no duties levied by any state against the importation of goods from any other state of the Union, has been of incalculable benefit in the development and prosperity of this nation. Never before in history has there been free and unrestricted trade over so large an area with so great diversity of climate as in the United States. This provision of the Constitution has been accepted so complacently that its great influence in promoting our prosperity and unity of interest has been overlooked. Other provisions of the Constitution have been questioned, amendments proposed and adopted. In this one phase of our growth "trial and error, feel and fumble" have been eliminated. Imagine, if one can, our condition if this principle had not been recognized and fixed in our basic law—forty-eight states, if they had ever grown to that number, with their forty-eight varieties of "trial and error." We are getting a slight insight into such possibilities by the effort that some of the states are making to discourage the purchase of goods made in other states by the imposition of "use taxes" and by the restrictions being placed upon some of the movements of freight by truck, in interstate commerce. If it were not for the profound influence of this principle of the Constitution, this tendency to set up barriers would be much more serious.

Much of the foregoing seems so obvious that statement of it seems superfluous, but as Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "We need education in the obvious." As the "Cult of the Insoluble" is so widespread, and some of its leaders men of high position, it would seem that any effort to chart a course away from this Sargasso Sea of social thought would be justified.

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One of the outstanding contributions in support of the idea of insolubility was an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* for May, 1935, "So Conceived and So Dedicated" by Professor William F. Russell. In compliance with his own suggestion of "free, frank and open discussion" and because of some statements which can only add to the bewilderment of the average reader, it seems fitting to offer some comment affecting the general theme.

Giving the historical background of the ideal of liberty, Professor Russell evokes an impressive list of the world's great thinkers from Roger Bacon to Adam Smith. His background of the ideal of equality begins with John Ball, Wat Tyler and Jack Straw. Later it was dignified with the names of Locke, Helvetius and Rousseau. "In America it had a home only on the frontier and in the minds of a few leaders like Thomas Jefferson." Much

of the argument provokes the question: Because the idea of liberty is advocated at one period of history or by one group, and the idea of equality at another period or by another group, is it any evidence that there is any essential antagonism or incompatibility in them? Is it not rather that they present two facets of the gem of truth varying in brilliance for different observers, each reflecting the light of its own time and circumstance? Many of these names could be included, with perfect justice, in both lists. Jefferson's work in many of the movements of his time could be arrayed under the banner of liberty as well as that of equality. It is apparent that many of these thinkers believed the two ideas to be interdependent, that they rise or fall together.

Periods of extravagant living and corruption on the part of those in high places, when contrasted with the debasing poverty of the lower ranks of society, have always given rise to the demand for greater equality. This was the condition which led to the "Peasants' Revolt" in England. It was the condition which led to the French Revolution. Both were the occasion for demands for certain rights and liberties for the lower ranks of society. These demands have a reasonable place in the name of liberty, equality, justice, or just plain righteousness. It would seem that any distinction is no more than an arbitrary distinction. *A privileged class restricts the liberty of others; if it were not so, there would be no advantage in privilege.* The plea for liberty is an attack on privilege. The plea for equality is an attack on privilege. In both is involved the demand for justice.

Wat Tyler opposed the Poll Tax which expressed the only equality the rulers were willing to recognize; for the purpose of this tax all men were equal. In this very practical sense the rulers were the equalitarians. Wat Tyler demanded the repeal of the "Statute of Laborers" and the abolition of serfdom. In this he was a libertarian. The same conjunction of ideas prevailed in the French Revolution. The stumbling block seems to be the assumption that "whatever is, is right"; that existing privilege is right and that any attempt to change the system must be considered as artificial leveling—when in fact, the system of privilege is the artificial condition the removal of which would tend to restore the natural order.

Professor Russell says we could "trace the idea of liberty in industry, agriculture and commerce by following the Physiocrats, Quesnay and Turgot." In another paragraph, speaking of organizations in the United States which prefer equality to liberty, he classes together "Coxey's Army, I.W.W.'s, Non-Partisan Leaguers, and Single Taxers." If the Professor could trace the idea of liberty through the Physiocrats, Quesnay and Turgot, how did he lose it in reaching the Single Taxers? The Physiocrats are the Eighteenth Century prototype of the Nineteenth Century Single Taxers. Their proposal was, in principle

the same; their "Impot Unique" is the Single Tax. Professor Russell's idea of the Single Tax must have been gained by a fleeting audience with a soap box orator; it certainly could not have been obtained by a reading of Henry George, for nowhere in all literature can be found a purer call for liberty, letting equality develop as it may, than in the works of Henry George.

Professor Russell tells us that our only hope is to "provide that curb on selfishness and greed which only a good education can provide" and that "we must continue to feel and fumble as we have for a hundred and fifty years," implying that in those years we have learned something. It must be apparent that in matters of taxation, which is the very core of every economic question, we are in a worse mess than at any time in our history—the National Government, the State Governments and every other taxing unit with their hodge-podge of income taxes, sales taxes, excess profits tax, taxes on use, taxes according to ability to pay, taxes and license fees upon everything without any knowledge of what the effect will be beyond the collection of a fund. The "incidence of taxation" is never considered. No principle is recognized. Such a condition is the inevitable outcome of a policy of "feel and fumble" which makes the plea of one group as effective as that of another; and in obtaining revenue with the least irritation of Mr. Voter, the opportunist who says "Let's try this" will oftentimes win in opposition to the one who says "Let's try that," and by the time the error is discovered they are ready to advocate another trial. It may be truly said that this only shows the inability of the average voter to conduct the affairs of his government sensibly. This may be true but it does not excuse our leaders of thought for seeking to rationalize such a system and for promoting a belief that there is no better way. If we must feel and fumble, let us do so with an intelligent desire to find a principle to guide us or a bedrock on which to build, instead of trusting to the shifting sands of political expediency or commercial and blind selfishness.

It may be pertinent to inquire why it is that the nation "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" has achieved no more of these ideals. Can it be that in the feel and fumble, the rough and tumble of a hundred and fifty years they have killed each other? It is more likely that the reason for this failure is that from the beginning the emphasis has been placed on political liberty and political equality, with little thought or no understanding of economic liberty or equality. It was thought that by abolishing the rule of kings and prohibiting titles of nobility, liberty of action could be achieved, equality before the law and equality of opportunity maintained. The fact was overlooked that by keeping the economic system of the Old World they were keeping the foundation for an aristocracy of wealth instead of birth. They did not see that the owner

of a large part of Manhattan Island would have as much power and would levy as much tribute as if he were called "Duke of Manhattan"; that such conditions prevailing over this continent would restrict life, interfere with liberty and put as many obstacles to the pursuit of happiness as any titled class could.

The method of trial and error reminds one of the medieval polypharmacy when the Theriac was prescribed in the treatment of disease in the belief that some of the three score or more ingredients would surely effect a cure! As the Theriac was superseded by methods in which the forces of nature were recognized and reinforced in the cure and prevention of disease, so it would seem to be reasonable to place less reliance on trial and error and seek to bring about a wider recognition of natural law in social relations, with more effort to bring those relations into harmony with natural forces. The greatest advances the world has ever made have been by learning to utilize the forces of nature, varying as much in efficiency as the heliograph and the radio. The man or nation that works in harmony with the laws of nature enlists the aid of a force that works with him and achieves the highest possible results.

Had Colonel Gorgas been satisfied to "feel and fumble" instead of using acquired knowledge, the Panama Canal could not have been built at that time. When he undertook the task of making the Canal Zone safe from the ravages of yellow fever, the knowledge of the disease gained by the work and sacrifices of Walter Reed and associates was available to anyone capable of accepting a new truth, but the attitude of the Canal authorities was another instance of the "unintelligence of the educated." Colonel Gorgas knew what measures to adopt for achieving his purpose but his superiors in office, insisting on old time-honored methods, almost nullified his efforts and possibly would have done so had he not been able to enlist the active support of the President.

Of course, we must expect to have agnostics in economics and dilettantes in social theory as in other phases of life. Some minds would hesitate to accept the validity of a chemical formula on the ground that the atom has not as yet been divided; that if and when the atom is divided the formula may have to be rewritten!

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Dr. James Truslow Adams in an article in the *New York Times* entitled "Parties and Panics, What Link?" tells us that the cycles of boom and depression are psychological in origin and will change only as human nature changes, that they are the "by-products of the workings of human nature" in its desire for speculation. Would it not be reasonable to say that the desire for speculation is the by-product of a system of law and custom which makes speculation profitable? Such "workings of human nature" are but the inevitable response to the oppor-