

# TRIUMPHANT PLUTOCRACY

The Story of  
American Public Life  
from 1870 to 1920

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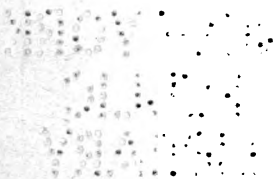
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### XXXIII. THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION

Perhaps I can say more effectively what I tried to write in the last chapter by means of an allegory which tells, in simple form, the story of our blunders.

One hundred years ago a colony of English farm laborers, one hundred in number, composed of men, women and children—old and young—chartered a ship and started for Australia. They were inspired to go by the promise of free land—they and their ancestors having been tenants upon an English estate.

The ship was a sailing ship and the colonists loaded it with their second-hand furniture, second-hand bedding and second-hand farm implements. They also obtained some seeds from a charitable person who was willing to await the success of the colony for the return of his investment; and, with the seeds and agricultural implements, they started from England for Australia by way of Cape Horn. The voyage across the Atlantic was successfully made; the cape was rounded and the ship stretched her sails as she moved away into the broad Pacific. The colonist, who knew little of sailing routes soon got off from the ordinary track of vessels and, when well out in the Pacific Ocean, ran their ship aground upon a sunken reef which stove a hole in the bottom and placed it beyond repair.

Consternation prevailed among the passengers. Some fainted. Others ran up and down the decks, nearly insane from fear. The cooler heads soon restored order however, and all hands were organized to save what they could out of the wreck. When it became evident that the ship was in no immediate danger of sinking, the faint-hearted regained courage and all went to work with a will.

There were two young men—healthy and strong—who seemed to take no interest in the salvage plans, but busied themselves with trying to release from its lashings the only life-boat upon the ship—a very small boat, which was all that the colonists, out of their meagre funds, could afford.

A study of the situation showed the leaders of the party that their condition was by no means hopeless. The ship did not fill rapidly and about ten miles south of the wreck, land could be made out. There was no wind, the sea was calm. Their one boat was too small to be of any great use, so the voyagers decided to build a raft out of the ship and try to reach the land south of them. So they all started to work—with the exception of the two young men—constructed their raft on the leeward side of the ship and began loading it with their belongings. Before they had gone far with the loading, they found that the raft would not carry over one-half of the colony. So they took the old and the helpless and the children, and half of the most able-bodied, and proceeded to propel the raft to the land, while the others were picking up and putting in shape the remainder of the cargo and the stores.

The occupants of the raft landed upon the island without difficulty. Apparently, so far as they could see, it was a complete and absolute desert. They had noticed, before they left the ship, that the two young men, who had been hanging around the life-boat had disappeared, and that the life-boat, as well as all the arms and munitions on the ship had disappeared with them. These men had rendered no assistance whatever in rescuing their fellow-beings from the wreck, and they had deserted the ship at the critical moment, with the only seaworthy craft that the colonists possessed.

After the first raft cargo had been landed, a few of the men returned with the raft to the ship, loaded their implements and the remainder of the food and taking aboard the rest of the colony, returned to the island.

For the next day or two, the shipwrecked colonists gave their attention to stripping the ship taking such parts as they could detach, to the island, and constructing temporary shelter. After all that could be moved was taken to the camping place they had selected, three of the company were chosen to explore the island,

while others were detailed to manufacture a temporary boat in order to see if there were eatable fish in the waters surrounding the island.

Those who had been sent to explore the island soon returned with the report that they had found a body of very fertile land several miles in the interior of the island, that this land was about three thousand acres in extent; that there was a large spring of water in the centre of it, and that it appeared to be the only cultivatable land upon the whole island. They reported further that the two young men, who had abandoned their fellows were there in possession of the fertile land, and that when the committee proposed to bring all the other people up to the spring of fresh water and the fertile land, the two young men replied that they, having discovered the oasis, were the lawful owners and they proposed to stand upon their right to retain it. When the committee insisted that the land should not be privately owned but should be the common property of all—as man was a land animal and fertile soil was absolutely essential to his existence—the two young men who had in their possession all of the arms on the ship, first argued that the committee must not undertake to discourage individual initiative—that it would be ruinous to civilization not to encourage individual enterprise and that the land belonged to them by right of discovery. But, when the committee pressed the point and urged the rights of man, the two young men said: “We have all the arms and ammunition that are on this island, and if you undertake to force possession of this land, we shall fire upon you.”

After hearing the report of their Committee, the colonists held a meeting and decided that it would be a great mistake to discourage individual enterprise or in any way throttle individual ambition. They and their ancestors had always paid rent to a landlord; they had been taught to believe that it was the rights of property that were sacred and not the rights of man,

and so they resolved to move on to the three thousand fertile acres and pay rent for the use of them. So they gathered together the old and the helpless and the little children and moved them first, and then they moved all of their belongings, including their supply of food and seed and implements, without any help whatever from the two young men who were busily guarding the results of their enterprise.

The Colonists set to work at once to cultivate the land and put in a crop. The two young men married the two most likely young women on the island, and the two young women and their relatives esteemed it a great catch.

After the first crop was harvested, the young men, by promising a little reduction in rent, put the whole laboring population at work building them a house that corresponded with the importance of their position. The workers hewed, with their rough tools, the coral rock out of the barren portions of the island and constructed a very splendid residence for the ruling classes. After the house was finished and the workers had manufactured as best they could, out of the wood obtained from the ship, furniture with which to stock it, they began to construct hovels of stone and earth for themselves and their children, and their aged and their sick.

So matters went on for several years, during which about two thousand acres of the fertile land were brought under cultivation. Meanwhile, the population had increased and their labor had made a beautiful park out of the remaining thousand acres which surrounded the residence of their lords. They had also built a heavy wall around the thousand acres so as to protect the park from encroachment.

The leaders of the colony still dreamed of resuming their journey to Australia, and in the little spare time they had between planting, harvesting and building, they explored the island. On the end farthest removed from the oasis, they found a deep and rugged ravine,

containing some scrubby vegetation, and coming down from a considerable elevation that suggested volcanic origin. In the ravine they discovered gold in great quantities and immediately began to extract it from the soil. It was placer gold and came out in big and small nuggets.

After gold was discovered, the oldest of the two colonists, who had appropriated all of the fertile land upon the island, took the title of Lord Goldfield, and the whole population turned out for a holiday to celebrate the event. They attended services in their churches and were told by their spiritual advisers that it was a great providence of God's which had bestowed upon them so kind and beneficent a ruler as the lord of the province; that, in fact, their lord had received his title direct from God; that it was of divine origin and was sent especially to them by the great Ruler of the universe because of his loving care.

In addition to the gold, some of the colonists discovered at the headwaters of the stream upon the banks of which the gold was found, a small band of wild goats. The goats were very thin and their hair was not of the finest quality; but immediately upon the discovery of the goats the lords of the palace had them removed to the one thousand acres which they had walled in as a park around their mansion, and great care was exercised in their breeding so that only the best qualities were reproduced. These efforts met with great success. The inferior goats were sterilized and only those allowed to reproduce who were of the very best quality. The animals became strong and large and covered with a woolly coat, and were thus suitable for beasts of burden, and to furnish wool for cloth, and milk for the children of the rich.

As a result of this achievement, the other young man took a title—the title of Lord Angora, in honor of the discovery of the goats. And again ceremonies were held and a holiday proclaimed and the population instructed in the divine origin of this title.

But while birth control was exercised with regard to the goats, and great care taken to see that they were properly fed, the common people of the colony were taught that it was wicked to interfere with the processes of nature, and as the population had brought with them the usual diseases common to the sexes in Great Britain, there were increasing numbers constantly among the inhabitants of those who were diseased and of those who were mentally defective; in fact, a very large number of dependents had grown up and the slums had appeared, and as they took no care with regard to sanitary affairs, epidemic diseases—the result of the poisoning of the population by their own filth—spread among them and reduced the population from time to time. And the people were taught that this was a visitation by Providence to punish them for their failure to appreciate the glory and goodness of God; that they should read the Bible every day and observe Sunday and attend Church and above all, contribute to the support of the Church and God's representative—the preacher, who had ordered a day of fasting and prayer to appease the anger of the Deity. And the preacher chanted—"God is great and God is good; He provideth our daily food; by His hand we are all fed; give us now our daily bread." And the people cried "Halleluliah, Glory to God." But God's wrath was so great that He would not hear, and the epidemic ran its full course. The preacher then told the people that the only way to prevent future epidemics was to be more devout and that God, above all things, loved a cheerful giver.

The rulers of the island had planned and directed the construction of large warehouses which were used to store the products of the land. Many colonists were improvident. They would sell off what they produced and use up the returns so that they would not have enough to last them until the next crop. As the population grew and life became less bearable the number of the improvident increased. The two thousand



acres under cultivation yielded three crops a year; was intensely cultivated and produced an abundance of supplies. The ruling classes, who owned the gold mines as well as the fertile land, knowing that the value of money depended upon its quantity, decided that the nuggets of gold should have a value in proportion to their weight or size, and, of course, they decreed that the unit should be pounds, shillings and pence. They also manipulated the money so that, when the crop was harvested, the money was very scarce and therefore, the prices were very low. They would buy the products of the land and store them in their warehouses and, when the next crop was fairly in the ground and improvident members of the community were entirely out of food, they would make the volume of money exceedingly abundant, prices would rise and they could thus charge several times what they paid for the products of the laborer of the land. They soon found that this was unnecessary for, as they were the only owners of money and had the only warehouses that there were, they could arbitrarily fix the price and thus exploit the population to the full extent of their desire, through their trust control.

But a new problem had arisen. Malthus's theory that population would outrun subsistence had come true. The two thousand acres would no longer produce food enough to supply the population and the serfs began to wonder how they would overcome the difficulty. They never thought of encroaching upon the park because that was private property belonging to God and the descendants of the two young men who had, by their private enterprise, discovered and taken possession of it; and the descendants of these young men never, for a moment, thought of plowing up the park, and they insisted that the miserable population would have enough if they would exercise frugality and industry and would educate themselves; but they were ignorant and many of them were idle and of but little consequence.

So a committee was appointed to explore the neighboring seas with the hope of finding land. The expedition discovered some small islands, almost entirely barren. On one of them, however, they found a human being, clothed in palm leaves, who fled upon their approach; but they called to him and to their astonishment and joy he responded in the English tongue. He had been upon the island for ten years, the only survivor of a shipwreck and had subsisted upon roots, scant vegetation, and the products of the sea, clothing himself with palm leaves.

Of course he went home with the colonists and after he had fully recovered, began to preach the doctrine of Socialism. He said the rights of man were sacred and not the rights of property. He said that every man should have all that his labor produces—that man was a land animal and that the land was essential to his very existence, and that no person should own more land than he could use and that, for the idle to demand rent for the use of the land—the common inheritance of all—was immoral and dishonest, and that they should immediately take possession of the thousand acres in the park and put those acres into crops. And many of the people endorsed his views.

But the ruling classes were not idle. They had watched his movements; they sent their paid retainers, their lawyers, among the people and argued that to take the park and not pay for it would be confiscation and robbery; that the present owner had inherited it from ancestors who had acquired it by thrift and industry and enterprise. That if the public appropriated it to the good of all it would destroy all incentive to individual enterprise and stop the wheels of progress and discourage ambition and return the world to barbarism; and they also wanted to know if they proposed to rob widows and orphans.

The ruler had also organized a standing army of trained men under the plea that the colony might be invaded by savages from some unknown island in the



sea, and that an army was needed for protection. The army was officered by men who had been brought up from childhood as trained soldiers and taught that they must obey their superior officers even unto shooting their own brothers and sisters, if commanded to do so by the officer over them. And, as the commander-in-chief of their standing army was by law the oldest son of the oldest of the two men who had discovered the fertile land, the army was ordered out, and they captured the socialist in the interest of law and order, and stood him up against the wall which surrounded the one thousand acres, and fired a volley into him and threw his body into the moat.

Civil war at once commenced; the population divided almost equally on the great question of the sacred rights of property, and they began killing each other until half of the people were disposed of. But as the trained men with their guns were on the side of the owner of the property, the people that remained alive stopped the unequal contest, and right and might prevailed; law and order triumphed; the congestion was relieved; the park was saved; the people agreed to continue to pay rent, and Christian civilization pursued its peaceful and solemn course.