

At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYE

WORD comes from Italy that in an old muniment chest stored in the crypt of the Church of St. Carlo Borromeo in Milan there has been discovered recently a role of parchment manuscript giving in Latin an account of the trial for heresy and other high crimes and misdemeanors of the famous Prospero, Duke of Milan, known for hundreds of years as the hero of Shakspeare's comedy of *The Tempest*. It appears that after the return of Duke Prospero and his train from the Island in the New World many varying accounts of his wonderful adventures began to circulate throughout Italy, and it was not long before the Inquisition became busy endeavoring to discover what truth there was in the report that the suspect Prospero was an adept in the magical arts and hence an enemy to the Church and to true religion. Prospero, in spite of his eminent position, was at length accused and cited before the Inquisition. His defense was, first, that any magic he might have practised he had forever foresworn and relinquished, and secondly, that the aforesaid magic was of the "white" variety. The indictment claimed however that said magic was undoubtedly "black" and altogether devilish, whereupon the prosecutor was for applying to the prisoner the torture known as "peine forte et dure," and it would have gone hard with his Highness the Duke but for the timely appearance of his family treasures. Relieved at last from the hands of the Inquisition, Prospero fell into further trouble, on the score that he had claimed as "his island" what belonged either personally to his Holiness the Pope, or as an appendage to the Apostolic See. This was indeed a serious charge to overcome; for the claim of the Church by every right human and divine to the ownership and dominion of the entire Western World, inclusive of all continents and islands therein, together with the souls, labor products and other appurtenances of the inhabitants thereon, was supported by every ruling of the canon law and was not to be successfully opposed by the counterclaim of any mere Duke, no matter with what family connections he might come into court. The upshot of which was, according to the discovered records aforementioned, that Prospero was forced to sign over to His Holiness all right and title to the ownership of "his" island which he had previously claimed by reason of his discovery and occupation thereof, and moreover was mulcted in a sum of ducats large enough to include both the costs of the action and a very heavy fine besides. No doubt literary and ecclesiastical historians will be obliged to us for bringing this curious matter to their knowledge.

S. P. Q. R.

In one of those lofty tenements in the Rome of the Republic known as *insulae* or "islands," built by rich speculating landlords to accommodate the onrush of evicted families from farms in the provinces, lived an aged woman, a widow, whose only son was a common soldier of the City garrison. This particular "island" was the last one of a group that clustered on one side of the Esquiline Hill, at that time a sort of potter's field for the burial of the outcast and the poor. It was the close of a turbulent day. The greater City knew by this hour the circumstances of the overthrow and the ignominious death of Tiberius Gracchus, and with the rising of the moon indistinct murmurs drifted hitherward from the direction of the Capitol, the Campus Martius and the Tiber. But old Rhea's hearing was none of the best and she went on with her preparations for the evening meal, peeling her onions and making ready her eggs, oblivious of what had taken place. She had somehow understood that the Tribune's fortunes has recently taken a turn for the worse—for which she was deeply distressed, feeling as she did that he was the one great man in Rome who cared for the poor and the disinherited. What if he could succeed in his plans to restore people like herself to their former happy homes amid the fields and vineyards from which they had been ruthlessly driven by rich schemers and land-grabbers? He *would* succeed—he would give them back their land and farms. Had he not faced and defied the powerful patricians of the Senate? He was indeed the savior of the common people. Might all the Gods protect and favor him! And as she thought of her happy past and contrasted it with her present surroundings tears fell from her eyes.

At that moment a sound of rattling steel resounded up the narrow concrete stairway. "It must be Gaius," murmured the old woman. "He's a good son to come see his old mother. What, Gaius, is it you? Come in, boy, and have a bite with me." Gaius lurched noisily into the room and dropped into a settle against the wall. "What have you got to drink?" he demanded between hiccoughs. "I've had a day's work. Gimme some wine. If you want money to buy some with take this," and he threw to the floor a pouch of coins which he had taken from his girdle. Then he unloosened his belt and threw it and his sword beside him. "It was a great day, a great day. It was death to tyrants and traitors and death to Tiberius Gracchus." Old Rhea turned sharply to him in alarm. "Why should you say that?" she cried. "Be-

cause he's dead, dead, and his body thrown in the River. If you find me a drink I'll tell you more. Only hurry up about it." After hesitating, old Rhea went to a shelf and taking down a flagon of red wine poured from it into a copper cup which she handed to the drunken man. He gulped down the draught, smacking his lips. "Yes, it was sport and no mistake. I don't know how it all began, but somewhere near the Temple of Vesta our captain was approached by a brother officer, who whispered something in his ear and handed him a bag of money. Then looking toward the Capitol in the distance we saw a great mob of excited people streaming in our direction. 'Down with him!' they shouted. 'The pretender, the disturber, on with him to the Tiber!' Our captain quickly opened the bag and handed a fistful of coins to each one of us. 'See to it,' he ordered, 'that these good people coming are unmolested. Let them pass.'" Old Rhea kept rocking her body to and fro, listening in alarm. "On they came and soon our fellows were caught in the crush and carried along with the others. We drew our swords and whipped the air, as tho we were opposing them. Presently wedged and packed in appeared the figure of the traitor, a sorry sight, all bloody and spattered with mud. He did not resist, he just stumbled along. A moment more and he fell. There was terrible confusion. One or two of us rushed into the crowd and caught him by the arms and dragged him along, for he could not stand." "Eheu, ehueu," moaned old Rhea, "how dreadful! He, the great Tribune of the people, to be treated like that." "He was a traitor, I tell you; you know nothing about it. If you want me to go on, shut your mouth." And he took another long drink of the red wine. "All this time we fellows from our camp pretended to be helping the prisoner. 'Make way for Gracchus,' we cried, 'stand aside!' Some half dozen of us soldiers were now hauling, shoving, kicking his body along. He was about dead already when, turning a corner near the River, a spike in a stick of timber caught him in the belly and ripped him open. Then we hurried on to the River and cast him in, while the mob shouted their approval."

Old Rhea was trembling with grief and horror. "You murderer, you dog, you are no more son of mine!" "What's all that?" returned Gaius with a leer, "what do you suppose a soldier's for but to obey orders, especially when the job is well paid for? What's killing to us?" said he, reaching out with his foot and kicking away the purse of coins that still lay untouched on the floor. "All afternoon we fellows have been making a round of the wine-shops. I felt so good I thought I'd come see you. You see I didn't spend it all." Looking at his mother with his bleary eyes, "Take that money," he hiccupped, and go down to the sausage-shop below and buy me some supper." The old woman's rage sought an object to vent

itself upon. Suddenly stooping and catching up the pouch, "take that, you hound, and begone!" she shouted, and in an instant she had hurled the hard bag at the soldier, catching him full in the face. Stung to sudden anger Gaius grasped his sword from the settle and made a sweeping lunge toward the old woman. "Take that," he echoed in his blind rage. The blade caught the chain that hung from the ceiling supporting an oil lamp which dimly lighted the place. The lamp and oil were scattered to the floor. Glancing off the chain the keen steel reached across to where Rhea stood and took her over the breast with its point, tearing her cruelly. With a groan she sank to the floor, while Gaius, astonished at the outcome, grabbed his belt, staggered to the door and half fell, half slid down the stairs to the street, faces of the "island's" tenants appearing at various landings on the way seeking an explanation of the racket above. At length the soldier reached the street and unmolested started on his way back to his camp. The moonlight streamed in over the body of old Rhea, and the rest of the night the dogs in the cemetery near by kept up their baying and howling as usual.

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It has come to our knowledge that at least three of our friends of the Cat and the Fiddle availed themselves of the invitation extended to the public by the Policy Committee of the American Peace Award to express themselves by letter.

Mrs. Livingston (née Steinfeld) who keeps the delicatessen shop near our headquarters told us that she was averse to sending in a vote, but that she finally did so because Livingston said she should show it an example of public interest to the children. "Besides," she remarked to us, "Livingston, which voted the Single Taxers' ticket last November ('a hoy and a half that ticket brings to us', I said to him) wanted me to write instead of him, for he said he knew he'd be impolite to the lady which reads the letters. 'Dear Miss Lape, Madam,' I wrote it, 'what I say is between ladies. I am not opposed to the League of Nations, if it includes also a World Court, and this Court should pass a law preventing so-called gentlemen like Mr. Meyers our landlord (which comes in so sweet and smiling every day with his dog) from doing what he done to us last month. 'Oi, I said to Livingston, look out, it's coming.' Meyers had just asked me to get a few bits of broken dog-cake for his dog, and then went on to say, most friendly, 'Mrs. Livingston, I am again compelled to ask you for a raise in your rent.' 'What, again!' I cried it pretending, to faint, 'and what's the reason, Mr. Meyers?' I asks coolly, coming to. 'If you was a landlord in my place,' Mr. Meyers replied, 'you would do it the same.' And he commenced to talk about his income tax and the cost of repairs and all that. 'Maybe I would,' I says, 'still, when there is children to support its hard when the rent is raised over your head every time you put by a hundred dollars, ain't it?' 'My God,' I says to Livingston only last night, 'I'm

not going to blame you no more for joining up with the Order of the Fiddles and the Cats. Those Single Taxer people see it what's wrong.' And Miss Lape, Madam, if I had my way the days of Mr. Meyers and landlords like him would be numbered. I would rather see the Fiddles and the Cats and their idea of 'the Earth for all, and no Taxes' a success than the success of Mr. Bok's idea of a League of Nations. As I said to Livingston, the Fiddles and the Cat idea comes nearer home to us poor people than Mr. Bok's idea does. Respectfully yours,

Sarah Steinfeld Livingston.

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Royal Andrews is a near-Single Taxer who sees the cat as through a jungle. But he has an instinctive sense of right and wrong, and we of the Cat and the Fiddle have a high regard for him. He showed us a copy of what he had written to the Committee:

"Hon'able Committee, gemmen, excuse me, but yo is Boking up de wrong tree. You all hasn't included de cullud people in yo League, an twill yo does and shows 'em more consideration yo will never arrive nowhere. Dis is a very wide question. We done left de South case we wasn't wanted dere no longer. We is a polite people and don't care to include ourselves. But son, now dey's beggin' us to come back to our old home. An' de change in manners have come quicker'n yo could bat yo eye. Only give de cullud people a part of God's earth to live on (I reckon dey don't want so much of it nuther) an' dey is de most friendliest, obsequious people in de world. Now, Mr. Bok, what yo want to go foolin' with dem slick gemmen over dere in Europe for, when we done got gumption nough right here to settle our affairs by ourself? So, yo Hon'able Committee, I just says its wastin' valuable time what yo all is tryin' to do. Trust in de Lord. De Lord is trusty. He give to people dis and dat—His *friends* he feeds on 'possum fat. What we all needs is a square deal, an' speakin' for de cullud people dey is certainly out to git some of dat fat. Yo respectfull

Royal Andrews.

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Adèle Bonnyclabber sent the following. My dear Miss Lape—You doubtless note that I have written "personal" on the envelope enclosing this, for I did so want to ask you if you are related to my dear friend, Lily Lape of Savannah? Lily and I are both Daughters of the Revolution and Colonial Dames, so this will help you to place us. Of course, speaking of dear Mr. Bok's splendid Competition, one learns to fight shy of competitions, though in this instance the list of judges is so distinguished as to leave no room for captious criticism. I do so hope that a woman will win the prize! Don't you think that by nature we are better adapted than men to visualize and render concrete those far reaching, vague yearnings and ideals of the race, one of which, it seems to me, is the world-wide, almost cosmic struggle for peace? The struggle for peace ever

since the close of the Great War has been a case in point. I had intended formulating the results of my studies and observations and sending them in, but I am just returned from Europe quite used up by my efforts in aiding some friends of mine who stood for parliament in the recent English election, and who, alas, were beaten by those rowdy Labor people over there. It was such a shock to one's nerves that I've been upset ever since, and this will explain to Mr. Bok why at least one of his ardent admirers has not been able to respond. Hoping to hear that Lily and you are related, I remain, my dear Miss Lape,

Yours very cordially,

Adèle Bonnyclabber

Third Parties

THE longer a political party remains a going concern, the less it remembers the principles and truth that called it into being and the more it tends to rely on the vast accumulation of patronage, the tradition of the voter to continue voting the same ticket and on the growing pork barrel blackmailed from vested wrongs based on some special privilege.

Revolt from "progressives," from within and attack from new parties from without challenge all the mediocre generalship of the old guard to maintain control. When the new movement represents merely a superficial reform and does not seriously threaten vested wrongs like the bi-metalism of a Bryan or the tariff reform of a Cleveland, the old guard compromises with the new force and backfires against it after election. When the new movement represents a fundamental attack on vested wrong, like the abolition of chattel slavery, the old guard "stands pat" and refuses to compromise, in fact compromise now becomes impossible. The fight goes to a finish, and the new party is born like the birth of the Republican Party prior to the Civil War.

The Lovejoys, Garrisons and Harriet Beecher Stowe and others like them, had already stung chattel slavery to its death, so it remained for the new party to dig the grave and attend to the obsequies, but that did not prevent the old guard in the Republican Party from claiming the entire credit or from waiving the trophies won long before the party was born. The trophies now became the totem poles to hold the voter in line while the new slavery to vested wrongs was being formed.

So, too, Thomas Jefferson sponsored the "direct tax" of the Federal Constitution, and which (excepting that it be apportioned among states according to population) is the SINGLE TAX of today, but so far has the old guard in the Democratic Party drifted away from the principles of Jefferson that they now regard and frequently charge the Single Taxer with being "red." This drifting away from fundamental democracy has no effect in shaming the old guard from lifting the memory and traditions of Thomas