

The Ford International Weekly
**THE DEARBORN
 INDEPENDENT**

Published by
THE DEARBORN PUBLISHING CO.
 Dearborn, Michigan

HENRY FORD, President.
 C. J. FORD, Vice President.
 E. B. FORD, Secretary-Treasurer.
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Twenty-first Year, Number 50, October 8, 1921.

The subscription price in the United States, its dependencies, Cuba, Mexico and Canada is \$1.50 a year, payable in U. S. funds; foreign countries, subscription rates on request. Single Copy Ten Cents.

Entered as Second-Class Matter at the Post Office at Dearborn, Michigan, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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Arbuckle and the Newspapers

HOLLYWOOD always was a horror to those who really knew it. Long before the recent troubles of the fat so-called comedian, whose "party" is now the sensation of newspaper readers, there was always an accompaniment of horror in the whole commercialized motion picture business. It has always been tainted and now it is ruined, for reasons which are well known to readers of THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT'S recent exposé of the control of motion pictures.

The attempt to centralize attention on Fatty Arbuckle and make him the sacrificial offering may succeed. But the Arbuckle party was not the first, nor the hundred and first; nor is it the first with tragic accompaniments. It is not the first evidence the authorities had of what was going on. It is not the first information the newspapers have had of what the life of the motion picture colony really was. What has happened out of the ordinary is that the victim this time was a rather well-known picture star. The case of Fatty Arbuckle and Virginia Rappe is only one of many eruptions upon a body wholly rotten.

It was rather amusing to observe how well-informed the newspapers proved themselves to be immediately following the Arbuckle-Rappe sensation. They knew the very same day, that life at Hollywood was rotten; they knew that Arbuckle was anything but what the deceived motion picture public thought him to be; they knew that decent entertainment could not come out of such an atmosphere as Hollywood fostered. But they had never before told their readers!

Only a few weeks ago, when earnest men and women were sounding a warning against conditions in the motion picture industry, these newspapers which became suddenly so wise, were printing the most scathing editorials against the "reformers" and were carrying on a cartoon propaganda against those whom they portrayed as propagating blue laws. If what they say now is true, what they said then was false; it was in direct obedience to the advertising influence exercised by the motion picture industry, and was not the expression of editorial conviction.

No one cares how much prestige the motion pictures lose, but the loss of confidence in the newspapers is a public calamity. Cannot the newspapers see how regularly they have been let in for just such reversals as the present one? No one believed that the defense of the motion picture industry previous to the Arbuckle trouble, represented the true feeling of the staffs of our newspapers, just as no one believes today that the propaganda patter in favor of liquor is the expression of honest editorial conviction. Both are "by order" and are considered as an unwritten but clearly understood part of advertising contracts. The newspapers who can afford to divulge their knowledge when bestiality and violence have torn the lid off, can more profitably afford to divulge their knowledge before the lid is torn off. Prevention is more useful than post-mortem denunciation.

The regrettable thing is not the San Francisco hotel tragedy. In the very nature of the case, these things must come, and have come, and will come again as long as present conditions last. The regrettable thing is that American newspapers permitted themselves to be apologists for the makers of the conditions, to the extent of palliating them right up to the eve of the Arbuckle case.

An Honorable Compromise

IT IS already apparent that if the Washington Conference for the Limitation of Armaments is to bring about the result for which the world hopes, the negotiators must have that flexibility of mind which makes agreement through compromise possible. For many Americans, the word "compromise" in itself has unfortunate and distasteful associations. We are a

positive people. "Compromise" often suggests lack of moral fiber and some weakening of will in holding out for a principle. We think of William Lloyd Garrison's heroic declaration in his fight against chattel slavery: "To die prepared, but not an inch to yield."

There are, of course, occasions when compromise may imply surrender, and even betrayal, of principle. But oftener an attitude of extreme rigidity in the name of principle is simply a blind stubbornness that in reality imperils the triumph of the vaunted principle and sacrifices substantial gain. So entirely honest and high-minded a statesman as Gladstone once declared that all political progress came through wise and timely compromise.

Of this sort, possibly, is the compromise Lloyd George now suggests in regard to such a modification of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as would make it a tripartite affair to include the United States. He finds himself in a difficult position as between the Conservatives in his coalition insisting on a renewal of the old dual alliance as of paramount importance to British interests, especially in India, and the more liberal opinion of leaders, like Viscount Grey and Lord Bryce, who sincerely regard a friendly, even if indefinite, understanding and co-operation with the United States as the more important desideratum.

The first view is supported not only by foreign office traditions, but also by British naval opinion, as represented by Winston Churchill and Lord Lee of Fareham. These leaders are much more impressed with the power of the Japanese Navy than with that of our own navy in Far Eastern waters. The second view, besides commanding Liberal and Labor support in Britain, is strongly urged by the spokesmen of the great self-governing Overseas Dominions.

An Anglo-American-Japanese understanding, such as the British premier now suggests, may make possible the successful steering of a middle course which will prove satisfactory all round. So with Japan's feeling that if she is to accept as a permanency the present inferiority of her naval strength to that of either America or Britain, then we should be willing to cease the virtual increase of armament involved in our program for the further establishment and strengthening of naval bases and fortifications in our Pacific insular possessions.

An hospitable attitude toward any proposition that will make distinctly for the prime object of the conference: the lessening of possibilities of future wars and of consequent need of armaments is the one essential in considering such compromises.

Government by Gunmen

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For all the orderly processes of law in a modern democratic community these corporations seem to have succeeded (in the regions that were in insurrection and controlled by the mine-owners) in substituting the rule of gunmen, of hired thugs and mercenaries, assassins and plug-uglies furnished by a private detective agency and imported from outside the state. In the districts in which the mine-owners play the part of dictators, the local governments are on record as pliant tools of their will and mere auxiliaries of the gunmen.

This on one side of the question. On the other it is charged that similarly anarchistic combinations of working miners inaugurated a reign of lawlessness in the regions that were actually in their hands. Any attempt to apportion blame between the warring interests of mine-owners and mine-workers is entirely beside the great main issue. This is nothing less than the imperative necessity of restoring an American form of government in the state of West Virginia. Now that the legally constituted state authorities have abdicated in favor of the Federal Government, opportunity and duty synchronize. It is high time, indeed, for a decisive cleaning up of the state.

We are asking the nations to disarm in the name of humanity and civilization. Let us be consistent enough to ban the irresponsible desperadoes to whom the disputants of West Virginia have delegated the task of settling with revolver and shotgun their differences. Let it be understood that the substitution of privately controlled armed forces for the law of the land, constitutes high treason.

Not until anarchy is ended and its chief cause and incitement abolished by the will of the people, backed and aided with all the resources of the Federal Government, will West Virginia once more vindicate its right to the proud motto of the state: "*Montani Semper Liberi*"—Mountaineers Are Ever Freemen.

Capitalism and Communism

THERE is much significance in the rapid abandonment of communism and the return to a régime of individual enterprise in Soviet Russia. Largely in consequence of the contracts made with the outside world for the facilitating of famine relief, even the Moscow theaters and picture shows are being turned over to private enterprise. Factories are being leased to individuals and groups. Just as soon as the bars began to be let down, applications for such leases poured into Petrograd by the score and they now number more than 100. Five per cent of the product is offered to the government by 35 former owners who want to re-establish stocking and glove factories. Agricultural machinery works have been leased in Odessa and saw-mills in Gomel. Twenty-four small samovar makers have started up operations in Tula.

Parenthetically, American and English manufacturers would certainly consider a five per cent tax as light indeed. Our congressional committees, which are now wrestling with the taxation problem, may well wonder if they have not something to learn from Russia: The possibility, for instance, that it may not be an unalloyed blessing to rely wholly on taxes in providing government revenue.

As to the changed trend in the direction of "capitalism," observers long ago became convinced by the logic of events that those responsible for the Bolshevik bouleversement do not object so much to the capitalistic system as to Gentile control of capital. In fact, the very eleventh-hour change of front heralded in the opening up of Russia to trade with the world, and the concessions being granted by Lenin for the "capitalistic" exploitation of Russia's rich natural resources (always for a consideration), lend color to the suspicion that, with a certain racial subtlety, "communism" has been simply a tool for the transfer of the capital of that unhappy country from Russian to un-Russian control. Czarist absolutism was doomed to assassination not by reason of any Bolshevik hatred of absolutism, but because it blocked that transfer.

Man's True Inheritance

THE supposition that tuberculosis is an hereditary disease was long ago exploded by the medical science of our day. Some lingering vestiges of its long sway over the public mind appears in the current discussion in the European press anent the recent celebration of his eighty-sixth birthday by M. Camille Saint-Saëns, the French composer. It is recalled that his father died of consumption several months before the birth of the future celebrity on October 9, 1835. "What have the old-fashioned eugenists to say to this fact?" it is asked.

Undoubtedly, Francis Galton, the "father of eugenics," has much to answer for. Soon after the appearance of his book on "Heredity" English and American novelists were prone to utilize his theme for the construction of plots in which noble and self-sacrificing heroes or heroines refuse to marry because of a presumed taint in the blood derived from an ancestor who had died of consumption. The prevalence of this belief indeed caused many a youth and many a maiden to regard themselves as doomed because of such a "family history," and so mentally to magnify the symptoms of a cough or cold and to induce the very negative conditions of depression and despair in which a slight cough may be developed into a serious pulmonary degeneration.

The present concensus of medical opinion, based on extended study and research in actual cases, is to the effect that the direct "inheritance" of consumption is extremely rare; the existence of families especially liable to develop tuberculosis and to die from it is doubtful. At most, one may inherit general conditions of health or lack of health that indicate a "tendency" to tuberculous disease. Such a tendency means simply that special care in the matter of sanitation and diet is called for to overcome the tendency. Instances are numerous in which weaklings, facing and fighting the evil tendency, have developed into unusually strong, vital and long-lived men and women.

And a big help in the fight is remembrance that our greater inheritance in the matter of health conditions is derived from our earlier ancestors who roamed the hills and the plains and sailed the seas, living sane, normal lives, one with nature. Health is a more invincible fact than is disease.