

EARTH HUNGER OR THE PHILOSOPHY OF LAND GRABBING

[1896]

The most important limiting condition on the status of human societies is the ratio of the number of their members to the amount of land at their disposal. It is this ratio of population to land which determines what are the possibilities of human development or the limits of what man can attain in civilization and comfort.

Unoccupied land has been regarded by at least one economist as a demand for men, using "demand" in the technical economic sense. I should not like to be understood as accepting that view. Wild land or nature cannot be personified as wanting labor — it is not even an intelligible figure of speech. Much less can we think of economic demand as predicable of land or nature. Economic demand is a phenomenon of a market, and it is unreal unless it is sustained by a supply offered in the market in exchange for the thing demanded. If it is really nature that we have in mind, then the globe rolled on through space for centuries on centuries without a laborer upon it. The bare expanse of its surface was the scene of growth, change, and destruction in endless series, and nature was perfectly satisfied. Nature means nothing but the drama of forces in action, and it is only a part of our vain anthropomorphism that we think of its operation as "progressive" in proportion as they tend towards a state of things which will suit us men better than some other state. It is an excessive manifestation of the same sentiment to talk

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of wild land as a demand for men. The desert of Sahara makes no demand for men; but nature is fully as well satisfied to make a Sahara, where such is the product of her operations, as to make the wheat fields of Iowa or Dakota. Even in Iowa and Dakota, nature offers men no wages for labor. There are the land, the sunshine, and the rain. If the men know how to use those elements to get wheat there, and if they will work hard enough for it, they can get it and enjoy it; if not, they can lie down and die there on the fertile prairie, as many a man did before the industrial organization had expanded widely enough to embrace those districts. Nature went on her way without a throb of emotion or a deviation by a hair's breadth from the sequence of her processes.

It is by no means in the sense of any such rhetorical flourish or aberration that I say that the widest and most controlling condition of our status on earth is the ratio of our numbers to the land at our disposal. This ratio is changing all the time on account of changes which come about either in the numbers of the men or in the amount of the land. The amount of the land, again, is not a simple arithmetical quantity. As we make improvements in the arts a single acre is multiplied by a new factor and is able to support more people. All the improvements in the arts, of whatever kind they are, have this effect, and it is by means of it that, other things remaining the same, they open wider chances for the successive generations of mankind to attain to comfort and well-being on earth. All our sciences tell on the same ratio in the same way. Their effect is that by widening our knowledge of the earth on which we live, they increase our power to interpose in the play of the forces of nature and to modify it to suit our purposes and preferences. All the developments of our social organization have the same effect.

We are led by scientific knowledge, or driven by instinct, to combine our efforts by co-operation so that we can make them more efficient, — and “more efficient” means getting more subsistence out of an acre, so that we can support more people, or support the same number on a higher grade of comfort. This alternative must be borne in mind throughout the entire discussion of our subject. When we have won a certain power of production, we can distribute it in one of two ways: we can support a greater number or we can support the same number better; or we can divide it between the two ways, employing a part in each way.

Here comes in what we call the “standard of living.” A population of high intelligence, great social ambition, and social self-respect or vanity will use increased economic power to increase the average grade of comfort, not to increase the numbers. The standard of living is a grand social phenomenon, but the phrase has been greatly abused by glib orators and philosophers. The standard of living does not mean simply that we all vote, that we are fine fellows and deserve grand houses, fine clothes, and good food, simply as a tribute to our nobility. The men who start out with the notion that the world owes them a living generally find that the world pays its debt in the penitentiary or the poorhouse. Neither is the standard of living an engine which economists and reformers can seize upon and employ for their purposes. The standard of living is a kind of industrial honor. It costs a great deal to produce it and perhaps still more to maintain it. It is the fine flower of a high and pure civilization and is itself a product or result, not an instrumentality. If by careful education and refined living a man has really acquired a high sense of honor, you can appeal to it, it is true, and by its response it furnishes

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a most effective security for wide-reaching principles of action and modes of behavior; but the more anyone appreciates honor in character, the less he likes to invoke it loudly or frequently. It is too delicate to be in use every day. It is too modest to be talked about much. If a man brags of his honor you know that he has not got much, or that it is not of the right kind.

It is so with the standard of living. The social philosopher who realizes what it is, knows that he must not use it up. It is not to be employed as a means for economic results. On the contrary, to cultivate a high standard of living is the highest end for which economic means can be employed. For a high standard of living costs, and it costs what it is hardest for men to pay, that is, self-denial. It is not a high standard of living for a man to be so proud that he will not let his children go barefoot, incurring debts for shoes which he never intends to pay for; the question is whether he will go without tobacco himself in order to buy them. The standard of living is, therefore, an ethical product; and a study of the way in which it is produced out of social and economic conditions is useful to sweep away a vast amount of easy and empty rhetoric about the relations of ethical and economic phenomena, by which we are pestered in these days. The standard of living reacts on the social organism in the most effective manner, not by any mystical or transcendental operation, but in a positive way and as a scientific fact. It touches the relation of marriage and the family and through them modifies the numbers of the population; that is, it acts upon that side of the population-to-land ratio which we are considering.

Let us not fail to note, in passing, how economic, ethical, and social forces act and react upon each other. It is only for academical purposes that we try to separate

them; in reality they are inextricably interwoven. The economic system and the family system are in the closest relation to each other and there is a give and take between them at every point. What we call "ethical principles" and try to elevate into predominating rules for family and economic life are themselves only vague and inconclusive generalizations to which we have been led, often unconsciously, by superficial and incompetent reflection on the experiences which family and economic life, acting far above and beyond our criticism or control, have suggested to us.

So far we have seen that all the discoveries and inventions by which we find out the forces of Nature and subjugate them to our use, in effect increase the supporting power of the land, and that the standard of living, by intelligently ordering the way in which we use our added power, prevents the dispersion of it in the mere maintenance of a greater number.

It must further be noticed that all our ignorances, follies, and mistakes lessen the supporting power of the land. They do not prevent numbers from being born, but they lessen the fund on which those who are born must live, or they prevent us from winning and enjoying what the means at our disposal are really able to produce. All discord, quarreling, and war in a society have this effect. It is legitimate to think of Nature as a hard mistress against whom we are maintaining the struggle for existence. All our science and art are victories over her, but when we quarrel amongst ourselves we lose the fruits of our victory just as certainly as we should if she were a human opponent. All plunder and robbery squander the fund which has been produced by society for the support of society. It makes no difference whether the plunder and robbery are legal or illegal in form. Every violation of

security of property and of such rights as are recognized in society has the same effect. All mistakes in legislation, whether sincere and innocent or dictated by selfish ambition and sordid greed, have the same effect. They rob the people of goods that were fairly theirs upon the stage of civilization on which they stood. All abuses of political power, all perversion of institutions, all party combinations for anti-social ends have the same effect. All false philosophies and mistaken doctrines, although it may take a long time to find out which ones are false, still have the same effect. They make us cast away bread and seize a stone.

All the old institutions which have outlived their usefulness and become a cover for abuses and an excuse for error, so that the wars and revolutions which overthrow them are a comparative good, must also be regarded as clogs which fetter us in our attempts to grasp what our knowledge and labor have brought within our reach. In short, all these evils and errors bring upon us penalties which consist in this: that while with the amount of land at our disposal, its productiveness being what it is, and the power of our arts being what it is, and our numbers being what they are, we might reach a certain standard of well-being, yet we have fallen short of it by just so much as the effect of our ignorances, follies, and errors may be. We can express the effect of our mis-doing and mis-thinking by regarding it as so much subtracted from the resources and apparatus with which we are carrying on the struggle for existence. We make the mistakes, in large part, because we cannot convince ourselves what is error and what is truth. The element of loss and penalty which I have described is the true premium which is offered us for finding out where the truth lies. The greatest good we can expect from our scientific investi-

gations and from our education is to free us from these errors and to save us from these blunders. In this view, it is certain that a correct apprehension of social facts and laws would advance the happiness of mankind far more than any discovery of truth about the order of physical nature which we could possibly make.

From one point of view, history may be regarded as showing the fluctuations in the ratio of the population to the land. The population of Greece underwent a very great reduction, during the three centuries before the Christian era, from the numbers which lived in great prosperity in the heroic period of the fifth century before Christ. The reasons for this have never been very satisfactorily ascertained, but it may have been through the laziness and general worthlessness of the population. The population of the Italian peninsula decreased at a high ratio during the period of the Roman empire, and great areas of land went out of cultivation. The Roman system, after stimulating the whole Roman world to high prosperity by giving peace and security, next used up and exhausted the whole world, including Italy. In western Europe, the cultivated area and the population increased and decreased together during the whole feudal period, according as anarchy and violence or peace and security prevailed for periods and over areas. We may regard the maintenance of a great number in high comfort on a given area as the standard towards which success in solving economic and social problems is carrying us, or from which we are falling away when we fail to solve the problems of the time correctly. Taking wide sweeps of history, it is possible to see the "tides in the affairs of men" which are marked by these ebbs and flows of the population against the areas of waste land.

It was the existence of waste land in the countries of

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western Europe during the Middle Ages that was all the time influencing the fate of the servile classes. The waste had high importance in the manor system; but as slow improvements were brought about in agriculture, the importance of the waste declined. The lord desired to increase his income by reducing it to tillage, and for this purpose he created tenures upon it on behalf of young men of the servile class, the terms of which were easier than those of the ancient and traditional tenures; or he allowed tenants to create petty holdings out of the waste on special terms which gave them a chance to win capital. However slight the claims were which the servile classes had upon the waste by law and custom, nevertheless the mass of wild land existing in and through the country was in fact a patrimony of theirs; its economic effect upon their status and future was a thing which no laws or customs could cut off. The wars, famines, and pestilences which decimated their ranks were a blessing to those who survived and who found themselves possessed of a monopoly of labor over against a superabundance of land. That is the economic status which gives the laborer control of the market and command of the situation.

It was this state of things which freed the servile classes of France, England, and northern Italy. An advance in the arts by several great inventions greatly assisted the movement. The rise of the dynastic states, establishing civil institutions with greater security, peace, and order, worked in the same direction. The Church had been preaching doctrines for a dozen centuries which were distinctly unfavorable to servitude, and which did avail to produce conscientious misgivings and erratic acts hostile to servitude. The influence of these teachings is not to be denied, but it was trifling compared with the great economic changes which have been mentioned, in

bringing about the emancipation of the servile classes. Here we have the reason for the earth hunger of the mass of mankind. It is that the condition of things which favors the masses, always assuming that the guarantees of peace and order allow of industrial development, is one in which the area of land is large in proportion to the population. The servile classes contributed little to their own emancipation except a dull and instinctive pushing or shirking by which they were enabled to win whatever amelioration of their status the changes in motion might bring to them. Often their prejudices, ignorance, and stupidity led them to oppose their own interest and welfare. It was the educated and middle classes which, by thought and teaching, wrought out all the better knowledge and, so far as human wit had anything to do with it, — which indeed was not to any great extent — broke the way for a new order of things; and these classes, too, acted in general selfishly or short-sightedly.

In any true philosophy of the great social changes, especially the emancipation of the servile classes at the end of the Middle Ages in the leading nations of western Europe, we must look upon the new power of production of the means of subsistence from the soil, in proportion to the numbers who were to share it, as the true explanation of those changes. The living men had won new power, new command over the conditions of life. They might abuse or waste that power, but when they had it, their greater welfare could be no great mystery. The expansion of life in every social domain did upset ideas and philosophies. It produced a religious and ecclesiastical revolution and entailed upon the civilized world religious wars which produced a vast squandering of the new power — for all history teaches us that it is idle to hope that added power will be employed simply to go

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forward to simple and direct blessing of mankind. On the contrary, men are sure to go to fighting over it in one relation or another. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were full of wars which are interpreted in one way or another according to their immediate aspects, but which really were struggles of men, families, classes, and parties for the possession, control, and advantage of the new economic power. It is, however, a great and instructive fact to notice that, although the labor class knew least about the case, had least share in it, and were least considered by the active parties in it, they won the most by it. Everybody was working for them, not out of love for them, or out of intention, but because it was not possible to help it.

Here we must be on our guard against a fallacy which is almost universal in connection with this matter. It is constantly denied, especially by reformers and revolutionists, that the labor class has won anything by the developments of modern civilization. It appears that the basis for this assertion is the fact that there were peasant, labor, and pauper classes centuries ago and that there are such still. A moment's reflection shows that this is no proof. It would be necessary to show that these classes are now the descendants of persons who formed the same classes in former centuries. Such is not the case. The merchants and bankers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were of humble origin. As they came out of the towns of that period, there is every reason to believe that, if their ancestry were traceable, we should find that they had sprung, two or three centuries earlier, from servile or menial origin. After enriching themselves, they bought land and "founded families." They formed alliances, as soon as possible, with offshoots of the feudal nobility. The modern nobility of England and France

has never been feudal. It is really a class of enriched citizens who have retired and become landholders, so that their power is in wealth. They have, therefore, with few exceptions, come up from the lower, and in the great majority of cases from the lowest, classes, as would be seen if the ancestral stream were followed far enough back. Having once passed the barrier, they are counted and count themselves amongst the nobles; and since the noble class, as a class, has continued, the movement of emancipation, enfranchisement, and enrichment, which has been acting on the labor class through its most efficient families, is lost sight of. There has been a counter-movement which is also almost universally unknown or ignored — that of impoverished families and persons of the nobility down into the ranks of trade and labor.

In the enumeration of the great forces of class change which operated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I have reserved one for more special attention. The adventurous voyagers who began to explore the outlying parts of the earth in the fifteenth century thought little and cared less about the peasants and artisans at home; but it was they more than any others who were fighting for the fortunes of those classes in the future. The very greatest, but, so far as I have seen, least noticed significance of the discovery of America was the winning of a new continent for the labor class. This effect was not distinctly visible until the nineteenth century, because this new patrimony of the labor class was not available until the arts of transportation were improved up to the requisite point at which the movement of men and products could be easily accomplished. Then, as we have seen in our time, the movement of men one way and food the other developed to great proportions. Is it not true,

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then, that this is the great significance of the discovery of America, and that we have as yet barely come to the point where we can see its significance? It is only later that the colonization of Australia has become important, and it is only at this moment that the colonization of Africa is beginning to intensify the same effect. What is that effect? It is that when the pressure of population on land in western Europe was becoming great, the later improvements in the arts — above all the use of steam and the opening of the outlying continents — have, in two ways at the same time, relieved that pressure. This combination has produced an industrial revolution, which is bringing in its train revolutions in philosophy, ethics, religion, politics, and all other relations of human society; for whenever you touch economic and industrial causes, you touch those which underlie all the others and whose consequences will inevitably ramify through all the others. The philosophers and all the resolution-makers of every grade come running together and shouting paeans of victory to the rising power and the coming glory; and, therefore, they claim that they have made it all. It is totally false. They are themselves but the product of the forces, and all their philosophies and resolutions are as idle as the waving of banners on the breezes. Democracy itself, the pet superstition of the age, is only a phase of the all-compelling movement. If you have abundance of land and few men to share it, the men will all be equal. Each landholder will be his own tenant and his own laborer. Social classes disappear. Wages are high. The mass of men, apart from laziness, folly, and vice, are well off. No philosophy of politics or ethics makes them prosperous. Their prosperity makes their political philosophy and all their other creeds. It also makes all their vices, and imposes on them a set of fallacies produced

out of itself. It is only necessary to look about us in the world of to-day to see how true this all is.

We may be very sure that the wheat from America has had far more effect on ideas in Europe than the ideas from America, and that the Old World aristocracies need care little for American notions if only American competition would not lower the rent of land. For the outlying continents affect not only those who go to them but also the whole labor class who stay at home. Even while they stay there the pressure of the whole reachable land-supply weighs upon the labor market and the land market at home; and it makes wages high, food cheap, and the rent of land low, all at once. That is what exalts the laborer and abases the landed aristocrat, working both ways in behalf of democracy and equality. To it we can trace the wild passion for equality and all the leveling philosophy of the age. This is what makes that passion and that philosophy so irresistible, whether for the weal or the woe of the human race. For each man to have a wide area at his disposal, whether actually or only by economic effect spreading through the industrial organization, means that he has the conditions of existence within his control, that he is not ground down by poverty, that he is forced to seek no man's protection, that he is cowed by no fear, that he is independent and "free," that he can provide for his family without care and can accumulate capital too. If you ask him the reasons for all this, he will probably begin to talk about institutions and doctrines; but if you will study the case, you will find that the same forces made him and the institutions too; and his faith in the institutions is like that of a savage who thinks that he would not have had success in hunting but for the fetish around his neck.

We may now see the real philosophy of colonization.

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It is not simply because an old habitat becomes too crowded, although it is true that there is a kind of inertia, consisting of habit, love of home, fear of the unknown, differences of language, and so on, which keeps population settled until stress is felt. There is a great economic advantage in spreading such population as there is over all the land there is, although they cover it but thinly. This economic advantage is accompanied by a great social disadvantage. In a scattered population the social organization is low and the social activities are weak. Such institutions as churches, schools, libraries, and museums, which flourish only in great centers of population, are feeble or non-existent. The spread of population over a great area of land, however, puts the first absolute necessities of existence within easy reach of those who have nothing but muscular strength at their disposal. The internal movement of population in the United States has illustrated all this most obviously. The social inertia which has been mentioned is less effective in our old states to keep people from going to the new states than it is in Europe to prevent emigration to the new countries. Hence we find that Iowa has been largely settled by emigrants from Illinois, and Montana is now being settled by emigrants from Iowa. This is the phenomenon of earth hunger, the apparently insatiable desire to get more land; and the reason for it lies in the facts which have been mentioned. With more land, there are higher wages, because no one will work for wages which are convertible into less goods than the laborer could get out of the land when used in the most lavish and wasteful manner. With more land, the manual unskilled laborer is raised in comparison with the skilled and educated laborer, that is, the masses are raised in comparison with the classes. When there is plenty of land, the penalties

of all social follies, vices, and ignorance are light. Each man has plenty of the "rights of man" because he need only *be*, in order to be a valuable member of society; he does not need high training and education, as he would in an old and crowded society with a strict organization, high discipline, intense competition, and weighty sanctions upon success or failure.

These facts of the social order are of the most fundamental and far-reaching importance. They are the facts which control the fate of the human race and produce the great phenomena which mark ages of history. They are the facts which, since the great geographical explorations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have spread the population of the European nations over the globe. The most enterprising nations seized the advantage first and have pushed it farthest. The movements of population have been accelerated by all the inventions which have facilitated transportation and communication.

The only peoples who are affected by this redistribution of population are those who are enlightened enough to feel the forces which are bringing it about. In spreading over the globe, they have come in contact with the old populations which already occupied the outlying regions and who were on lower stages of civilization. The earth hunger of the civilized men has produced a collision of the civilized and the uncivilized, in which the latter have often perished. Up to the present time, only one of the outlying nations — Japan — has appeared able, as a nation, to fall into its place in the new order of things and to march on with it. The inevitable doom of those who cannot or will not come into the new world system is that they must perish. Philanthropy may delay their fate, and it certainly can prevent any wanton and cruel hastening of it; but it cannot avert it because it is brought

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on by forces which carry us all along like dust upon a whirlwind.

Here we have reached a point at which an important distinction must be made. So far I have spoken of those phenomena of earth hunger which are economic and social. Men want more land without assignable limit, because in that way they get a good living more easily and improve their class position. Let us call this economic earth hunger to distinguish it from political earth hunger, which will now demand our attention; for no sooner have men begun to spread over the earth and colonize it than the question of political jurisdiction over the new countries must arise. Is this jurisdiction a care and a burden; or is it an enjoyable good and a means of glory? This question has not yet been answered. I hope to throw some light on it. Hitherto great colonies and dependencies and vast possessions in outlying territories have been regarded as producing national greatness and ministering to national glory; and to this day the civilized nations are acting as if it were the simplest common sense to seize more territory if at any time it was possible. By political earth hunger, therefore, I mean the appetite of states for territorial extension as a gratification of national vanity.

The distinction between economic earth hunger and political earth hunger is to be very carefully noted. If there is good wheat land in Manitoba, the people of Minnesota and Iowa will want to go there and get the use of it. It is not because they have not enough where they are — there is no such conception as enough when more can be had. It is because they find an economic advantage in spreading over more. If they did not, they would not go. This is economic earth hunger. There is, however, in Manitoba, a civilized government with law, rights, and police; such being the case, there is no need

that those who emigrate thither should assume the civil jurisdiction. In the case of Texas, on the other hand, in the early days of its settlement there was such need; the political extension was needed to support the economic extension, because Mexico was not furnishing the guarantees of peace and order. Everything in connection with that matter was construed by its bearings on slavery; and that meant, on the distribution of political power in our own body politic. The people of New England then denounced the economic earth hunger as well as the political earth hunger. In a calmer view of the retrospect, both appear justifiable in that case. The later aggression on Mexico and the appropriation of her territory was another matter. Still again, when, in our recent war flurry, it was proposed to conquer Canada, it was a case of genuine political earth hunger, which had no justification in anything, but was a project of pure outrage, cruelty, and aggression.

There are two very different modes of exploiting the outlying regions of the globe, which need to be distinguished one from the other. Civilized men may go out to spend a few years winning such wealth as they can, with the intention of returning and enjoying it at home; or they may go to establish new homes, expecting that their descendants will reside in the new countries. The latter class alone are colonists, in the proper sense of the term. The English have far surpassed all other nations in the extent to which they have been true colonists, and that is the reason why they have held a more secure foothold in a greater number of places than any other European nation. We must count our own country into their achievements in this respect. The same energy and enterprise which made them open this country to settlement has made them open others, the jurisdiction of which

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they still retain. "Land grabbing" is only a more colloquial expression for earth hunger; but it must be admitted that to grab land for the purpose of settling and colonizing is to perform a far greater service to our race than to grab it for the sake of exploiting its riches and then leaving it in order to spend the product in European luxury.

Rodbertus, the German socialist, interpreted the last three hundred years of exploration and colonization as an exploitation and consumption of the outlying parts of the globe by the old centers of civilization. In this observation he gave proof of a more philosophical view of the phenomena than anyone else had taken. Let us see how far it was true. We have already had occasion to notice that the Roman empire was a grand system of exhaustion and consumption of all the rest of the world by the Roman city. It was the study of this fact which led Rodbertus to the observation which has been quoted; he regarded the modern movements of world-commerce and colonization as having the same character. If the people of the civilized nations of Europe go out to the ends of the earth only to exploit them in the way which I have described, and if, in that process, they exterminate the aborigines, then the view which Rodbertus suggests has a great deal of truth in it. If the European nations carve up the globe into sections which they appropriate and govern with a view to their own interests only, maintaining the political jurisdiction for that purpose only, and fighting with each other for the plunder, then his view is the right one; and the whole extension of commerce and colonization for three hundred years past has been a system of extortion, oppression, and greed. If, on the other hand, the system of commerce and colonization has consisted in planting and building up commonwealths in

America, Australia, and South Africa, to become independent centers of civilization, self-governing communities, developing their own powers for their own interests and entering into the world's commerce, by which all the people of the globe share all the resources of the globe, then the observation of Rodbertus is a calumny and not the truth.

As a fact of history, we know that the former of these systems of relation between Europe and the outlying continents did prevail until the present century. It is not extinct yet. Spain to a considerable degree and France to a less degree still cling to the notion of dependent colonies as things worth having for what the mother country, in antagonism to their own interest and certainly in antagonism to that of any other European nation, can get out of them. Germany has only entered upon colonial enterprise within this generation, and she seems to be disposed to develop her colonial policy quite upon the old lines. The policy of England in this entire matter is so much more enlightened than that of any other nation that it stands upon a separate plane and conforms to the second of the two systems which I have described above as completely as if Canada, Australia, and South Africa were actually independent commonwealths like the United States. In regard to all these outlying states, the European hegemony of the globe is entirely broken, and they constitute, with the leading European states, a great family of equal commonwealths which, taken in its entirety, constitutes civilized society. In this aspect earth hunger appears less sordid than in the days of the colonial system. It is only a name for the process by which the human race occupies its patrimony, and by which civilization overcomes barbarism throughout the earth. He who supposes, however, that this process can

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go on smoothly and peacefully must be little versed in history or in human nature.

Two systems of relation between the old centers of population and the outlying continents have been distinguished: one of which was created by the European states as soon as the outlying continents were opened; the other of which was introduced by the revolt of these North American colonies in 1775 and has been further built up by the English colonies and the United States since. The former system was the "colonial system." According to that, Europe was the head of the globe, in relation to which all the outlying parts were placed as subordinate members. The statesmen and diplomats of Europe around their council tables quarreled and strove with each other and allotted amongst themselves the divisions which they made. The colonists participated in these strifes. Our colonists, as we well know, had a "policy" as long as the French owned Canada, the Spaniards Florida, and the Dutch New York. War was always welcome in Europe because it gave a chance to seize another country's outlying possessions; war was always welcome here because it gave the colonists a chance to try to drive the French off the continent. Our historians accept this policy as sound and approve of it; but what did the colonists gain by driving the French out of Canada, or what harm would it have done, politically speaking, if they had stayed there until this day? Economically Canada would not probably have been as rapidly or wisely developed as it has been. In the Revolutionary War, that habit of looking at things which had become traditional in the colonies made it seem a matter of the first necessity to conquer Canada or to force her to join the revolt, although she chose not to do so. The only effects of the fact that she has been outside which are dis-

cernible, are that we have been free from some race and religious discords which would have tormented us if she had been in, and that we have not been allowed to have free trade with her as we should have had if she had been in. Our congressional and newspaper statesmen agree that this latter has been a great gain to us, or that free trade with Canada would have been a great harm; but within a few months they have manifested an eager disposition to conquer Canada, as if free trade with her would be a great blessing, provided that we could get at it through a war of conquest and could impose it by compulsion, and provided also that we could, by absorbing her, get the race war and the religious war added to our political burdens at the same time. These are the paradoxes and follies of earth hunger on its political side. On the south we quarreled with Spain as long as she held Florida and Louisiana; then we quarreled with Mexico until we had taken Texas and California. We have inherited our full share of the appetite which I have called political earth hunger. Internal troubles and the time required to digest the last meal have allayed it for a period, but it will awaken again.

Earth hunger is the wildest craving of modern nations. They will shed their life blood to appease it. It gratifies national vanity and economic expansion both at once. No reasoning can arrest it and no arguments satisfy it. At the present moment the states of Europe are carving up Africa as they carved up America in the eighteenth century. They set about the process ten years ago with most commendable deliberation, and with an attempt to establish rules of order for the process; but they are already snarling and growling at each other over the process, like hungry tigers over their prey. Germany and Italy, the two latest colonizers and the two whose domestic

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burdens and conditions fit them least for colonial enterprise, are the most eager and rapacious of all.¹ The notion is that colonies are glory. The truth is that colonies are burdens — unless they are plundered, and then they are enemies. Russia is spreading her control over central Asia, although the internal cohesion of her empire is so weak that it will probably break in pieces under any great strain. France, after enormous losses in Tonkin, has just conquered Madagascar and joined England in carving up Siam.

The confusion between the economic use and the political jurisdiction is one of the strongest and most mischievous with which we have to deal. The best thing which could happen, from our point of view, is that England should “grab” all the land on the globe which is not owned by some first-class power. She would govern it all well, on the most enlightened and liberal principles, and we could all go to it for pleasure or gain as our interests might dictate. She would then have all the trouble, care, and responsibility, and we should all share the advantages. If there is a gold mine in Guiana and if England gets the political jurisdiction of it, the English nation or exchequer will not get a grain of gold from the mine; if Englishmen get some of it, they can only do so by going to the mine and digging as individuals. Individuals of any other nationality can go there and do the same; if any Americans want to go there, they will undoubtedly have better chances if the civil jurisdiction of the district is English than if it is Venezuelan.

¹ In the few days since this paper was written, Italy has suffered a defeat in her colonial extension, which not only proves that she is forcing it as pure aggression against a local power competent to maintain a state, but also puts her face to face with a fatal alternative: she must either abandon her colonial enterprise, or she must prosecute it by new sacrifices which will bring her to bankruptcy, and perhaps to anarchy.

So we see that, although the grossest errors and abuses of the old colonial system have been abandoned, the point of view and the philosophy of that system are by no means abandoned. Earth hunger in its political aspect is as strong as ever. The political philosophy of the colonial system—against which the Americans revolted in 1775 — is as fully accepted in our Congress now as it was in the English Parliament in 1775. The doctrines of that system were all repeated in the debate on the proposition to annex Hawaii two years ago, and the debates of this winter have been full of them. The one argument which threatened for a time to carry the annexation of Hawaii was that if we did not take it, England would. That was an eighteenth century argument, and its strength showed how little advance we have made in having our own doctrines. The English statesmen declared that they would not take it if they could possibly help it and that they wished that we would take it and govern it. That was a nineteenth century argument.

Now let us not exaggerate, especially by ignoring what is sound and true in the old doctrines. Our own contests with Spain in Florida and Louisiana were unavoidable; she was not competent to govern her dependencies in a way to make them safe neighbors; she did not fulfil her duties in international law and comity. In Louisiana she held the mouth of the Mississippi River and tried to use her position to make the river and the Gulf of Mexico Spanish waters. Such pretensions were inadmissible. They rested on obsolete doctrines. She did not accept or fulfil the duties which would have devolved upon her in consistency with her own doctrines. Her claims were based on abstract rights which she alleged and which, if they had been admitted, would have been purely dogmatic. They did not rest on facts, or relations, or an adjustment

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of mutual interests; and they were not maintained with due responsibility such as must always go with a claim of right. The case was one, therefore, in which a civilized state of inferior rank could not maintain its hold on territory against a civilized state of higher rank. It was only another phase of the case presented by uncivilized tribes which try to hold territory against civilized colonists. There is, therefore, some truth to be admitted in the doctrine of "manifest destiny," although the doctrine is, like most doctrines in politics, a glib and convenient means of giving an appearance of rationality to an exercise of superior force. The truth in the doctrine is that an incompetent holder will not be able, as a matter of fact and in the long run, to maintain possession of territory when another nation which will develop it according to its capacity is ready to take it. A contemporary instance is furnished by the Transvaal, where the Boers certainly cannot maintain their independence and authority unless they prove themselves competent to maintain such civil institutions as are adequate to further the development of the territory.

Furthermore, civilized nations may find themselves face to face with the necessity of assuming the jurisdiction over territory occupied by uncivilized people, in order to police it and give local peace, order, and security, so that industry and commerce may be prosecuted there. The European nations now have this necessity in Africa. The fact remains, however, that the use of the land for production and the political jurisdiction of the territory are two entirely different things. What men want is to get at the land so as to till it and otherwise use it for industrial purposes; the political jurisdiction is a burden which is just so much of a drawback from the gain of using the land. If the industrial use could be got without taking

the political jurisdiction, it would be far better. In other words, if the natives of any territory could maintain the customs and institutions which are necessary in order that peaceful industry and commerce may go on, that is a state of things which is far more desirable than that there should be any supersession of the native authority by any civilized state. The latter step is an irksome and harmful necessity for the state which makes it.

As illustrations of the principles here suggested, we may notice the following cases. There can be no need for any civilized state to assume the government of Japan, while it is very possible that there may soon be need for superseding the native government of China. There is need for superseding the native government of Turkey, and nothing prevents it but the jealousy of the Christian governments towards each other. There was need a few years ago for superseding the native government of Egypt; the country was in anarchy and its position on the road to India made that unendurable. It has been, is, and will be necessary for states to extend their political jurisdiction over outlying territory, whether they do it willingly or unwillingly. Nothing that has been said about the political aspect of earth hunger should be understood as denying or ignoring that; but this necessity is presented as an unwelcome burden and not in the least as a glorious achievement of prosperity and profit.

The most striking instance of all is that of Cuba as our statesmen are now forcing it upon us. It is possible that the island may fall into anarchy and that it might become necessary for us to take it under our control; but measures are now proposed which would set in train a movement for us to take it as an appropriation of a property supposed to be valuable; that is, as a satisfaction of greed, not as submission to an unwelcome duty. If we should

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so take it, we should find ourselves face to face with an alternative: either to hold it as a dependency or to take it into our Union and let it help to govern us. One branch of the dilemma is as appalling as the other. The fathers of this republic created a peculiar form of confederated state formed of democratic republics. They meant to secure us a chance to live in peace, happiness, and prosperity, free from the social burdens which had cursed the civilized nations of the Old World. We were to be free from war, feudalism, state church, balance of power, heavy taxation, and what Benjamin Franklin called the "pest of glory." We were to have none of the traditions which made a nation's "greatness" depend on the pomp and ceremony of courts and the luxury of great officers. We were to have no grand diplomacy and no "high politics," as the French and Germans call it. High politics are those great questions of national policy which are reserved for royal persons and great dignitaries of church and state to decide. They might also be called so because they "come high" to the common people. But if we are to have what the fathers of the republic planned for us, we must submit to the limitations which are inevitable in the plan; and one of them is that we can never have an imperial policy and can hold no subject dependencies. There is no place for them in the system, and the attempt to hold and administer them would produce corruption which would react on our system and destroy it. On the other hand, the old Federalists were right when they insisted that we could not carry on our confederacy unless the members of it were approximately on a level of political and industrial development. We are suffering at present from a proof of it in the position and power of the Rocky Mountain states, which are certainly as foreign to democracy as anything can possibly

be. To admit Senators from Cuba, whether they were natives or carpet-bag Americans, would be to prove that we had lost that political sense which has always characterized our people and which is our chief political reliance.

These instances go to show that the question of territorial extension is a question of expediency, and that it depends upon the occasion and upon the circumstances of the nation itself whether it is wise to extend territorial jurisdiction and responsibilities or not. In any case, those states only are prepared for colonization and foreign responsibilities whose internal cohesion is intense; for every extension of territory brings with it a strain upon the internal organism. If we had never taken Texas and northern Mexico, we never should have had any secession.

Let us now turn our attention back to the historical development for a few moments, in order to notice the effects of the independence from Europe which was won first by these North American colonies and afterwards by those of Spain.

In the disruption of the colonial system the position of the former Spanish colonies of South and Central America has been peculiar; they passed out of the domination of Spain, yet they have never won good standing as independent states in the family of nations. In the early twenties of this century, their status became an object of interest to Great Britain and the United States, and the relation of the United States to them became a subject of political contention here. The Panama Congress was an attempt to organize the states of the western continent under the hegemony of the United States for the purpose of declaring the independence of the western continent of European control. It was really a revolt against the old colonial system such as has been above described, and it might properly be regarded as the sequel to the revolt of the

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thirteen North American colonies and a completion of the revolution which that revolt began in the relations between Europe and the outlying continents. The Panama Congress was, therefore, an act of political policy and, in that light, far more important than two vague dogmatic utterances in Monroe's message which attempted to formulate the view of those relations which the independent states of the New World had adopted in place of the old notion of Europe as the head and governor of the civilized nations of the whole globe.

If the Panama Congress had been carried out to a conclusive result, its effects might have been important. It became a matter of contest between parties here in one of the bitterest party fights in our political history — that between the Adams administration and the Jackson opposition. The confused and imperfect results left material for endless wrangling about interpretations of the Monroe doctrine. These interpretations are a mine of rhetorical wealth to the political dogmatizer. He can get out of it any great principle that he wants; and when a political dogmatizer gets a great principle, he is equipped for any logical necessity which he may encounter. He builds deduction on deduction, and if he finds that his foundation is after all too narrow for the needs of his argument, he can always go back to it and develop the fundamental principle, as he calls it, or tack on a logical deduction which he says was implicit in it. The history of theological doctrine and of all social and political principle-spinning shows what a facile and futile process this is. History contains instances enough to show us the frightful burden which a doctrine may be. It comes with the prestige of tradition, antiquity, and perhaps a great name, to take away from the living generation the right to do their own thinking and to compel them to sacrifice

their lives and happiness against their will and without the consent of their own reason and conscience.

In his message of December 17, 1895, President Cleveland referred to the balance-of-power doctrine as a parallel of the Monroe doctrine. The example was unfortunate if the parallel had been true. What oceans of blood and mountains of treasure have been spent for the balance-of-power doctrine! And what result is there to show for it all? We have had in our history many doctrines: America for the English; no taxation without representation; state rights; separation of purse and sword; manifest destiny; the self-expanding power of the Constitution; God's purpose to civilize the earth by African slavery; and I know not how many others. Some of them are obsolete or forgotten. Others it has cost us frightful sacrifices to set aside. Inasmuch as a United States Senator has referred to the doctrine of Washington's "Farewell Address," that we should avoid entangling alliances with foreign nations, as the "Washington fetish," I may perhaps be allowed to call the Monroe doctrine the "Monroe fetish." We should do best to declare our emancipation from all doctrines, to do our own thinking on all our own questions, and to act according to our own reason and conscience, not according to anybody's traditional formula. There is all the more reason for this because you will observe that the men who are trying to force us to do what they advocate, by shouting "Monroe" at us, all drop the Monroe doctrine as soon as their use of it is proved false in history and by the record — but they do not drop the plans they propose on that account. If, then, they do not abide by Monroe, but only use his name as a club with which to stun us, let us repudiate Monroe at the outset, so that we may stand on an even footing. If I were an educated young man now growing up, I would not

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allow anybody to entail any formula on me that would fetter my judgment of questions and cases which may arise.

There is, however, a parallel to the Monroe doctrine which is far closer both in history and philosophy than the balance-of-power doctrine, and that is the colonial policy as it has been described in this paper. It has been shown how, historically and in obedience to the strongest forces which work upon the social and industrial organization, the opening-up of the outlying continents produced great movements of commerce and great redistributions of population. The colonial policy of the governments was an application of statecraft and diplomacy to the situation. The earth was drenched in blood through the eighteenth century in obedience to that policy. It has also been shown how the Monroe doctrine and the Panama Congress were parts of a grand movement which marked the definite end of the colonial policy as to America. So far, good; but now out of the end of that period springs up a source of new woe. The Monroe doctrine as often interpreted really amounts to a new doctrine that the globe is to be divided into two independent halves, the eastern and the western. This doctrine is to take the place of the doctrine that the globe is a unit ruled from and by Europe.

Is the new doctrine any better than the old one? Is it any more tenable? Is it not certain to take the place of the old one as the fetish for which our children must spend their blood and their property as our fathers did for the old colonial system? Is it anything but an affectation, a pose which cannot be maintained except for a time and for a purpose, to say that we will control this continent and refrain from meddling in the other? Does the United States intend to abstain from forming relations of all kinds with the nations of the eastern continents as her interests

and affairs may dictate? Have we not within a year been forced to protect our citizens in China and Armenia, and were we able to hold aloof from the war between China and Japan? Does the United States intend to deny that the states of South America are independent states open to access by any other nations and liable to have any kind of friendly or unfriendly relations with European states such as any two independent states may have with each other? Does the United States hold aloof from the present development of Africa, assuming that Americans will never engage in commerce there or never have interests there; or does the United States assume that, when civilized powers are in control, it will be possible for everyone to carry on trade and industry there with peace and security? It is evident that if the answers to these questions are given which a great many people in this country have recently seemed disposed to give, the new doctrine of dual division of the globe is to take the place of the colonial doctrine of European headship of the world, as the cause of strife, bloodshed, and waste to the whole human race.

We are already living under a regime created by manipulation of import duties, by which prices for all the great manufactured products are raised here from twenty-five to fifty per cent above the prices in other civilized countries. The ground alleged for this policy is that wages are high here. Undoubtedly they are higher here than in western Europe, at least for unskilled laborers; this situation is accounted for by the facts about the land-supply which I discussed in the beginning of this essay. It is now proposed to restrict immigration into this country, and the favorite reason alleged is to close our labor market and make wages high. Then there is another proposition earnestly advocated; that is, to cut this continent off from

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the rest of the world and to give it a monetary system of its own. I say nothing now of the absurdity and impossibility of these propositions, in which respect no one of them is worse than either of the others, when examined by a student of political economy — they have a certain coherence and consistency in their error, although they are mutually destructive of each other. What I now desire to do is, by putting these things together and connecting them with the doctrine of political isolation of the western continent, to show the fallacy and absurdity, as well as the extravagance, of this whole set of notions. Try to imagine this western continent politically separated from intercourse with the rest of mankind; with commerce interdicted by taxes in order to produce industrial independence; with immigration forbidden in order to make and maintain a rate of wages here having no relation to the rate of wages elsewhere; and with an independent monetary system planned to make prices here independent of those in the rest of the world. You will see how preposterous such a program is, and what a satire it is on our boasted intelligence that we are forced to give it serious attention.

There is another view of the political organization of the globe which we had supposed to be already well on towards realization. It has been mentioned above. It is the view of the states of the globe as forming a great family of nations, united by a growing body of international law, creating institutions as they are needed to regulate international relations, bound together in community of interest by free commerce, communicating to one another the triumphs won by each in science and art, sharing their thoughts by a common literature in which the barriers of language are made as little effectual as possible, and thus creating one society of the enlightened

nations independent of state boundaries. Such an idea need only be expressed to show that it is the only conception of the relation of nations to each other which fits the enlightenment of our day. It is not in the least an ideal or a dream. It is only a construction of facts such as our international law already recognizes and rests upon. It does not preclude war between these nations, for nothing can preclude war; but it reduces the chances of it by extending the sway of reason and introducing into international relations ideas and institutions with which all enlightened nations are already familiar. Such a conception of international relations does not quench earth hunger. Nothing can quench that; for, as we have seen, it is the impulse which drives the human race to enter upon and enjoy its patrimony, the earth; but such a conception of the civilized races of the world in their relation to each other would bring into a clear light the difference between the extension of industry and commerce on the one side and political aggrandizement on the other. This distinction is no new thing; it is recognized and acted upon by all the most enlightened economists, publicists, and statesmen in the world. Neither is there anything new in the view of history and of the conflicts of policy which have here been presented; but if that view is true, then the Monroe doctrine, or the doctrine of the dual political organization of the nations of the earth, is a barbaric stumbling-block in the way of enlightened international policy.

The United States enjoys a privileged position such as no other community of men ever has occupied in the world's history. European statesmen live under a constant strain, day and night, to avoid war, while our statesmen can afford to trifle with the notion of war and to talk recklessly without danger of consequences. We have no

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strong neighbors. We are under no obligation to maintain great armaments. We have no heavy debt. If we are heavily taxed, it is our own choice. No enemy will attack us. We can live in prosperity and enjoy our security if we choose. Our earth hunger is satisfied for the present, and we can enjoy its satisfaction. It is also provided for far into the future. Here, then, the propertyless classes can live in comfort and acquire property. Our government is also the only one which has ever been founded with provision, in its political theories and institutions, against political earth hunger. We may turn around in our folly, if we choose, and ask: "What is all this worth?" We may throw it away and run in chase of all the old baubles of glory, and vanity, and passion. If we do, we shall only add another to the long list of cases in which mankind has sacrificed the greatest blessings in pursuit of the greatest follies.