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THE OLD WORLD IN THE NEW

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THE OLD WORLD IN THE NEW.

At a French dinner-table, a few years ago, I found myself opposite a genial English clergyman who was somewhat disturbed by the local tendency to quote values and spaces in terms of francs and centimes, metres and centimetres, instead of in the old-established and well-approved pounds, shillings, and pence, feet and inches. Some attempt was made to interest him in the practical convenience of the decimal system, and he gave polite and patient hearing; but the seed fell upon stony ground, where was no deepness of earth, and its first fair promise soon withered away before an appeal to the common consciousness of man. "I think," said the Englishman, addressing his international audience, "everybody will have noticed that when one has small sums to pay, francs and centimes or dollars and cents do well enough; but if any large sum is involved, one is always forced, in order really to appreciate the amount, to reduce it to pounds, shillings, and pence."

Socrates, in the *Phædo*, compares the people of his day, who thought their world about the *Ægean* to be the whole, to ants and frogs about a marshy pool. The ants and the frogs we have ever with us. They are antiquarians of Copenhagen to whom Danish history is the history of the world. They are the school committee men who insist that Kansas schools should teach only Kansas history and Kansas geography and Kansas weather. They are the political historians who make the world start

afresh with the Declaration of Independence. They are the financial experts who ignore the existence of international values. They are the three wise men of Gotham who went to sea in a bowl. All those who do not know that the experience of the race is one continuous whole, in which dates and boundaries are only guide-posts, and not barriers, are the ants and frogs of Socrates. Without life perspective and historical perspective there can be no sound political judgment, — least of all in these days, when mighty world forces are twirling the millstones of the gods, and the garnerings of the ages are pouring into the hopper.

We are living in great times. Forces that have been silently at work for centuries are just finding their expression. The closing years of the nineteenth century are engaged in a process of historical liquidation by which the debtors and creditors of the ages are coming to their due. Scarcely have the echoes of the last contest died away on the shores of the *Ægean*, where has been the battle-ground and ultimate clearing-house of old world issues, when the new world issues take their shape and choose their battle-ground by the Chinese Ocean. Through the trans-Siberian railway Russia this year finds for the first time an outlet to the open sea, and enters the lists for the empire of the world. The bayonets which in the seventies established a German Empire are now, under cover of an understanding with Russia,

opening a way for German small wares in a conquest whose menace is toward England. Ill-mated France shares with Russia and Germany their policy of restricted colonial markets, and toys with colonizing schemes for which she has more money and ambition than men. The worn-out states and peoples of the old world are passing through bankruptcy. Africa is being rapidly apportioned as spoil. The English Empire, in consciousness of isolation and peril, draws its own bonds closer, and awakes to tardy recognition of its Western kinsmen, of their strength and of their kinship of purpose. The United States of America find themselves forced, whether they will or not, to transmute their policy of resisting intrusion into one of assuming the positive responsibilities of a moral hegemony in the West. Within three years the entire strategic map of international politics has been made anew. Alsace-Lorraine and Constantinople no longer represent the burning questions of diplomacy. New issues and vastly larger fields of action have been opened. Three years ago, we felt that our own international issues, so far as they existed, had little relation to the great world's worry. To-day, we are, for good or bad, in the midst of it all.

Intercommunication and rapid transit have been steadily drawing the ends of the earth together. Silent, mighty forces have long been assembling to the melting-pot the stubborn forms and patterns of the older world. Suddenly the fire is lighted.

Lord Rosebery, while Premier of England, made in Parliament the following statement: "We have hitherto been favored with one Eastern Question, which we have always endeavored to lull as something too portentous for our imagination; but of late a Far Eastern Question has been superadded, which, I confess, to my apprehension is in the dim vistas of futurity infinitely graver than even that question of which we have hitherto

known." Four years are not past, and "the dim vistas of futurity" have become the arena of the present, and the Far Eastern Question is at the doors of England and at our own. It is a question in which all the world is involved. The centre of disturbance may be now in China, now in Cuba, now in the Philippines, but the disturbances are all in sympathy. It is a question in which the whole history of our race is involved. Its tangled movements viewed simply in their shifting surface phases yield, however, no intelligible statement. They concern too vast an area, too long a tradition; they cannot be understood from the levels of the present. One must seek high ground, for they tell their meaning, they betray the outlines of their plot, only in terms of the world labor,—the drama of the history of the race. For great areas and mighty upheavals the geologist must run the gamut from Archæan and Cambrian to Pleistocene. To-day, in a sense that never before was true, the old, the oldest world of man is sole competent interpreter of the new.

When in the year 326 B. C. Alexander the Great stayed his eastward march in northwestern India at the Sutlej, and turned his course down the Indus to seek the sea, a boundary line was fixed and set which proved to mean for the history of the human race more than any ever created by the act of man. The eastern boundary of Alexander's empire, running from the Jaxartes River, a tributary of the Sea of Aral, southward along the Pamir ranges, "the roof of the world," to the Indus, and then on to the Indian Ocean, divided the world and its history into two utterly distinct parts.

The portion which lay to the east with its two great centres, India and China, and which to-day includes a little over half the population of the globe, had no lot nor share in the life and history of the western part, which we may call our Nearer World. In the long process of mixture and fermentation which history

has suffered since Alexander's time, all the elements within this Nearer World, stretching from Afghanistan and Persia to the shores of western Europe, have yielded their contribution, small or great, to the civilization upon which our modern life is based. The history which we study, whether of events, institutions, ideas, or religions, has all been a history of this Nearer World.

India and China went their own way. The Nearer World knew little of them, gave little to them, received little from them, until after the discovery of the route around the Cape of Good Hope. The intercourse opened by that narrow way is, in the twentieth century, to tread the three broad highways of the Suez Canal, the trans-Siberian railway, the Pacific route, which represent, respectively, England, Russia, America. England, by the Canadian Pacific, shares the Pacific route, and she must soon open another by rail from the Mediterranean to the head of the Persian Gulf.

Alexander's boundary was not a boundary of race. It ran across the bands of blood. A section of the Aryan race, isolated behind its barriers, became the dominant caste and the rulers of India, and developed or administered there a form of life and thought utterly distinct from any other product of the Aryan temper. It was a boundary set in the historic life of man. How real it was the distribution of the great religious faiths of the world will tell. Political institutions and boundaries fade and shift; nothing human yields so permanent a map as faith. The conquests of religions are chiefly those of name and outward form. Unless the population changes, the faith in substance abides.

To the east of Alexander's boundary will be found Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism; to the west, two systems born out of the soil of Alexander's empire, one of the west, Christianity, the other of the east, Mohammedanism, — both of them, in history and outward guise of

statement, the products of Semitism. If a map of the world should be colored so as to represent the predominant religions of different regions, it would appear that Mohammedanism reaches its eastern frontier essentially at the line drawn from the Jaxartes along the "roof of the world" and down the course of the Indus; that is, at Alexander's old frontier. Its territory represents the oriental or non-occidental portion of Alexander's empire. It is itself merely a second growth on western Asiatic soil, a revival and reassertion of orientalism in the reaction from European conquest. And yet, when compared with the fundamental thought of the systems grown in India and China, it shows itself a creation of our world, and not of the remoter one.

Upon our colored map we should find, further, that the territory of Eastern Christianity corresponds in general to the sphere of influence of ancient Athens and Byzantium; that the territory of Roman Catholicism corresponds to the domain of the Western Roman Empire, — Italy, the Spanish Peninsula, France, and the Rhine and Danube valleys of Central Europe; while the old Germani, who withstood the legions of Drusus and Varus, are represented still by the individualistic Protestants of the north.

The civilization of the Nearer World had its birth in the two centres Egypt and Babylonia. It was in the long river valleys of the Nile and the Euphrates that the two types of ordered life we call by the names Egyptian and Assyrian gained their strength and their individuality. Their meeting-place and agora was the eastern Mediterranean, its coast lands and islands. Here the resultant of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations united as a female principle with the virility of European occidentalism, and the fruit was that civilization upon which European history, and all the history we have hitherto cared for, is based.

Consciousness of the power of individual initiative has been throughout the characteristic feature in occidentalism; passive conformity to the ordinance of fate and the settled order of the world, the spirit of orientalism. The West is aggressive, the East passive; the West finds the source of creation and action in the individual, the East in the governing power, be it state or fate. The West looks outward, and seeks to comprehend and control the material universe of its environment; the East looks within, and, learning from the winds and the stars only the lessons of moral order and the mandates of destiny imposed upon the soul, seeks to know and control the things of the spirit.

In this fabric of the Nearer World joined of the West and the East, the East supplied the informing spirit, the ordered life, the civilization; the West, the moving will and the arm of power. First Greece, then Rome, then in their turn the peoples of the north, assumed the leadership. Fresh blood of will and empire was drawn constantly from the north. But, however empire might change, the old frontier between the West and the nearer East tended to maintain itself where it was when history dawned, — at the *Ægean* and the *Bosporus*. Two years ago all eyes were turned toward the *Ægean*. Crete, Greece, Constantinople, and the Turk were words on every lip. All issues of international politics were quoted solely in terms of the old *Bosporus* question. The history of the Nearer World had simply gone back for another bout on the old field, — the field on which the first contests were fought, and to which most of the contests since have been referred in real or spectred battle.

Viewing history in the large, we cannot fail to see that the world we live in is essentially a Mediterranean world. All its fundamental forms and moulds for law and government, art, architecture, and literature, thought and faith,

were created beside the Mediterranean; all its political and religious struggles, all its wars, were the fighting over of old Mediterranean questions; and as a system of types and forms, it never can be really understood and known except as it be reduced to Mediterranean terms, and studied in the perspective of a Roman, Greek, or Syrian horizon.

Such was the life habit of the Nearer World. To-day all this has changed. Suddenly the centre of interest has shifted from the *Ægean* to the Yellow Sea. A class of questions has arisen, overwhelming, in the magnitude of the issues they involve, all the great questions of earlier days, and none of them admits solution in terms of the Mediterranean; none of them concerns the Mediterranean, or its peoples, or its history. That which the silent course of events has long been preparing, now in the fullness of time is come. Almost without a sign of warning we are transferred from the history of the Nearer World to the history of the Great World, and to that history the life and the interests of the great dominant peoples of the earth will hereafter belong.

To no people is the transition of more profound and fundamental importance than to the people of the United States. It involves for them nothing less than a rethinking of the entire problem of national purpose, destiny, and duty.

The old history, which we have called the history of the Nearer World, dealt with the antagonisms and the blending of its two component factors, occidentalism and orientalism; the new history will record the process of assimilation which follows the uniting of the two halves of the whole world. There can be no question as to which of the two will conquer and control, according to the external forms of conquest; but it is idle for us, in the light of historical experience, to imagine that the blending is to mean nothing more than the absorption of the East by the West, — nothing

more than the exploitation of China and India by the greed and power, or even the enlightenment, of Western nations. Rome conquered Greece, but was conquered by its art, its manners, and its thought. Europe, in the form of Greece, and then of Rome, subjugated Asia; but Asiatic wealth and luxury reshaped European life, and Europe has its religion from the conquered people. We may easily underestimate the solidity of these civilizations we confront, and the permanence of their forms of life and of their moulds of thought. The economic conditions, the political ideas, and the fundamental religious and philosophic thought of our world cannot and will not escape, in the great leveling that is to come, the most far-reaching and momentous transformation. England has touched yet only the surface of India, merely the hem of the garment; but her commerce, the equipment of her life, her governmental mechanism and ideals, have already been radically influenced, and the marvelous effect which acquaintance with Hindu thought is exercising upon men's fundamental thought of the world has spread far beyond the circles of the learned and of the faddists, and, I am persuaded, can be estimated in its profound importance only by the historians of later days.

Both India and China embody types of life and forms of thought which, strange and incomprehensible as they may be to us, have been shapen and polished in the mills of a human experience representing in composite the experience of more human souls than have elsewhere shared a common life.

India is the land of the vast and the boundless, the true motherland of the romantic. Endlessly prolific, she sets no restraint on the imagination. So India lacks that which was to the Greek, as the representative occidental, the supremest virtue, temperate control, — "naught to excess." The tumid, redundant forms of her art, as of her literature and her thought, attest the absence of that sense

of due economy and fitness which made the creations of the Greek eternal models of restraint and harmony. To the aggressive occidental, time is the opportunity of action, time is money; for the Hindu, there were no days or years, and hence no history.

The occidental is a pluralist; personalities, individual psyches, are for him the starting-points, the prime factors of the universe; to enforce personality and make it effective is the mission of life. The Hindu is a monist; the world-all is the starting-point; personality is an aberration from it; to bring this personality back to rest, absorbed into accord with the world-all, is the toil and mission of life. Knowledge is the recipe of salvation; ignorance is the sin.

China is another cosmos. It is pre-eminently the land of the practical. Its world is the established social order of men fixed in forms and conventions, whose authority is absolute, as their reasons are past finding out. Life is a drama. Men merely play parts. The "look-see" (appearance) and the "make-see" (delusive persuasion) constitute the substance of life. The starting-point and whole of things is neither the world-all nor the individual soul, but the stage and scenery and plot into which the individual must fit the action of his part, and within which take his rôle. There is no truth, no real.

With the Greek it is intemperance or "slopping over" which is the sin, with the Hindu ignorance, with the Chinaman innovation. The purpose of education is, for the Greek, to give personality its maximum of effectiveness; for the Hindu, to endow it with a knowledge that shall reveal the hindrances to union with the world-all; for the Chinaman, to force the individuality, like a Chinese girl's foot into a shoe, into the fixed rôle or craft it must use in this present life. The Greek education is frankly the liberal education; the Chinese, frankly professional and technical.

China has perhaps one fourth the population of the globe, but no one suspects it of schemes of imperial conquest. The "yellow danger" menacing the world comes not from the thrifty tradesmen and peasants of China. China is a nation without a fist. Its people are lacking in any idea or motive around which could be assembled the sentiments of patriotism. Devotion to the honoring of ancestors and solicitude for private gain are the two sentiments of a people who constitute, not a nation nor a state, but a scheme of living.

The new history is to be concerned, then, with the assimilation of these two strange and mutually diverse elements of the farther world to the substance of the nearer world, — just as the old world history involved an assimilation of West and East. With the parallel goes also a contrast. The old history centred about an inland sea. All its issues had their ultimate home by the Mediterranean. In the new history the world is turned wrong side out. The outer ocean is the agora. Power is estimated in terms of navies rather than of armies. Coal is king, and coaling-stations mark the bonds of empire as the Roman military roads did of old. The pattern of the world has been turned inside out. The old world, like an ancient house, was built toward the inside and its colonnaded court; the new is built toward the outside, with windows and veranda.

The old history had its Eastern Question; the new has its Easternmost Question. In the later phases of the old, Turkey was the "sick man;" in the new, it is China; and where the carcass is, there are the eagles gathered together. The old involved the constant query who should be the leader of the occident, — Greece, Rome, France, Germany, England, Russia? The new asks who shall hold the empire and lead the civilization of the world; shall it be the Slav, the Teuton, or the Latin?

The aggressiveness shown by France

in colonial enterprise is scarcely more than artificial; it represents no inner need or impulse except as it be a yearning for bonds and shares. France is really smitten with the palsy of her own prudence and thrift. Families are small. Sons are not put through the school of self-reliance. A nation lacking men who know how to take risks and assume the responsibility of their own choices cannot compete for leadership among the peoples. French is the language of a diplomacy which lives on in the close atmosphere of the old Mediterranean controversies; out in the breezy ocean world, the greater world, the medium of international intercourse tends to be English.

A colder-blooded people than any of the Latin race will win the contest, in these days of organization and calculation and mechanism and coal. The German is patient enough and practical enough. He is, like his Anglo-Saxon brother by nature, a stout champion of individual freedom, but he lacks something his brother possesses. This something it is not easy to describe, but the lack of it allows him to tolerate the yoke of Cæsarism, imported from the Latin world; gives him ready adaptability to the institutions of other peoples, so that he is quickly absorbed; and, most characteristic of all, forbids his appreciation of a game like football.

The character in which the Englishman asserts his right to rule an empire is the character demanded by this most truly Anglo-Saxon sport. It is made up of roughness, willingness to risk, absence of supersensitiveness, fearful directness, and a sublime devotion to fair play. The typical Englishman believes in venturing, hard hitting, blunt truth-telling, equal justice, and personal cleanliness.

England had the start of Continental Europe in preparing for the issues of the new history, in that the English Channel enabled her to free herself early from the more baneful entanglements of the Mediterranean quarrels. England has

long been living in the world whose agora is the open seas. Not until these last days of the nineteenth century, however, has her one prospective rival, Russia, been able to find a way out into the world. This vast power, spanning at the north half the globe, was until this year pent up as an inland state. Archangel and the Baltic ports are ice-blocked for a portion of the year. Vladivostok, founded in 1858, and afterward selected as a terminus for the Siberian railway, is closed to navigation four months in each year. Odessa is blocked at the Bosphorus.

England has diligently kept the barriers up between Russia and the sea. In 1878 she checked her at the gates of Constantinople; in 1886, when Russia was in control of the passes of the Hindu-Kush, and could see her way out to the ocean by way of Afghanistan, British power again raised the dykes, and since then the occupation by England of the Mekran and the Chitral valley has set a double rampart against Russian advance. It remains yet for England to occupy the Persian Gulf, and join it by rail to the coast where Beaconsfield set Cyprus on guard.

The events attending the Chinese-Japanese war were of most serious consequence to England's policy and interest. Before the war began, she was the trusted adviser of China, and her protector against Russian aggression. Before the war ended, England found herself identified with Japan, a nation she had underestimated too long, and suddenly came to appreciate. Russia, supported by her associates, Germany and France, assumed the rôle of protecting friend discarded by England, checked and nullified the victory of Japan, and China is now almost her vassal. That which it has been the constant aim of English diplomacy and power for years to prevent has come about within this year. Russia has a harbor in the Yellow Sea, has gained a foothold on the shore of the iceless ocean. The astute-

ness of Li Hung Chang, on the other hand, has seen the way for bringing the product of Chinese industry to the Western world by the overland route, and China is to be introduced to the West by help and intermediation of Russia. Herein lies the *quid pro quo*.

Russia's strength is in her geographic position. Unmenaced in the rear, spanning Europe and Asia, and knowing no difference between them, she bides her time, and slowly pushes her way south like a mighty glacier. Gradually the barriers give way. Germany, which once held her in check at the west, is now — thanks to Bismarck's anti-English policy, continued by the young Emperor — in league with her and in commercial war with England. In Continental diplomacy she is supreme arbiter. Panslavism and the Eastern Church have carried her around Constantinople almost to the shores of the Ægean, and the first opportunity of England's preoccupation will give her exit through the Bosphorus. Steadily she works her way into Central Asia, where the half-oriental temper of her people makes her government peculiarly acceptable, and her administration in general fortunate and wise.

Entered in the lists for the world empire are, then, these two. The conflict is set for which generations have been preparing. Where is our place? Russia is our old-time friend. Whenever we have been at issue with England, Russia has lost no opportunity to show sympathy with us. England is a mother who has constantly ignored or underestimated us. With a blindness of vision almost unparalleled in all the stupidities of statesmanship, her ruling class have committed wrong after wrong against us, in slight and misjudgment and selfishness, all culminating in the attitude toward us during the war for the preservation of the Union. But the heart of the great English middle class has always been right. The English common man, with a fine consciousness of

affinity, regards us as his own, and rejoices in the American states as a creation and vindication of his own kind. The English country squire is fading away, and the plain commoner is coming to a hearing. And we are of one kind. When the battle is set between the Slav and the Anglo-Saxon, our hearts prove us inheritors of more than Anglo-Saxon blood: we are inheritors of the principles embodied in Anglo-Saxon life.

The Slav stands for government which has the sanctions of its authority from above and without; the Anglo-Saxon, for one whose authority has its source in the governed themselves. One follows the rule of expediencies, and holds that what succeeds is right; the other builds solid achievement on the things that are real, and believes in the blunt word of truth. One raises the barriers of restricted privilege; the other opens the markets and the courts of the world to equal opportunity and even justice. One builds on the distrust of the purposes and the intelligence of men; the other, upon the high optimism of democracy. To one the state is a prison or strait-jacket; to the other it is the training school of the race, where responsibility begets character, and free opportunity begets content.

There can be no doubt of our sympathy, — what is our duty? Has the new order of the world brought us new obligations of duty? The old world lingering in the meshes of Mediterraneanism afforded us no interests but such as we might well wish to shun with all their “*entangling alliances.*” The barrier of the ocean removed us from the old world gathered about its inland sea, and set us apart in the far West at one side of the earth. The utilization of this barrier has afforded us the opportunity for establishing ourselves in possession and use of our soil, and for developing our resources and our system of government.

But now the old world has passed. History is turned inside out. The outer

ocean is the agora; the whole world, not half, is involved; and instead of being, as in the old order of things, far at one side, we stand full in the midst, — midway between Europe and its goal in the Farther East. Sooner than any prophet could have foreseen, the question is upon us.

Our old-time policy of resisting arbitrary European interference in the affairs of American peoples has been extended, under the pressure of what we believe is a genuine humanitarian sentiment, into intervention against a European misgovernment in Cuba which had passed the limits of toleration, and, having ceased to be government, had become a case of arbitrary interference in the course of American events.

The moment we took this step we became involved in the great world problems. England's position in the Far East hurried her to our side, and gave us her welcome to participation in wider responsibilities for the order of the world. England and America, alienated in terms of the Nearer World's life, have found each other on the field of the Greater World. They belong together, and their union means not only a check to the Russian menace, but peace and the orderly development of civilization in the world.

Many of us deplored the Spanish war; many of us now look forward with anxious solicitude concerning the effect of victory on the victor; but still, as we survey the movements of human history in the large, we cannot fail to see in all that is occurring the inevitable grist of the mills of the gods and the irrefragable judgments of the *Weltgericht*. Spain and the Middle Ages could not tarry in the West. We, on the other hand, could not shut ourselves within the walled gardens of our pleasant domesticity, and shun responsibilities that the commerce and intercourse of the larger world exact of those who stand for order and equal justice in the affairs of men.

While, then, we may well be called

upon now to readjust our conception of national purpose and duty to the new order and our new position, we dare not be false to ourselves or our past. Our charter and creed we must interpret, if no longer in the letter, then all the more scrupulously in the spirit. However the letter and the form may fade and vanish away, there are some things that must needs abide. A nation proclaiming government of the people and for the people cannot impose on conquered peoples a foreign sway, or one that finds its supreme motive in the benefits accruing to others than the governed. We must stand as we were founded, a nation that draws diverse interests and diverse communities into peaceful cooperation under

recognition of the rights of the individual man, and the self-government of peoples and states.

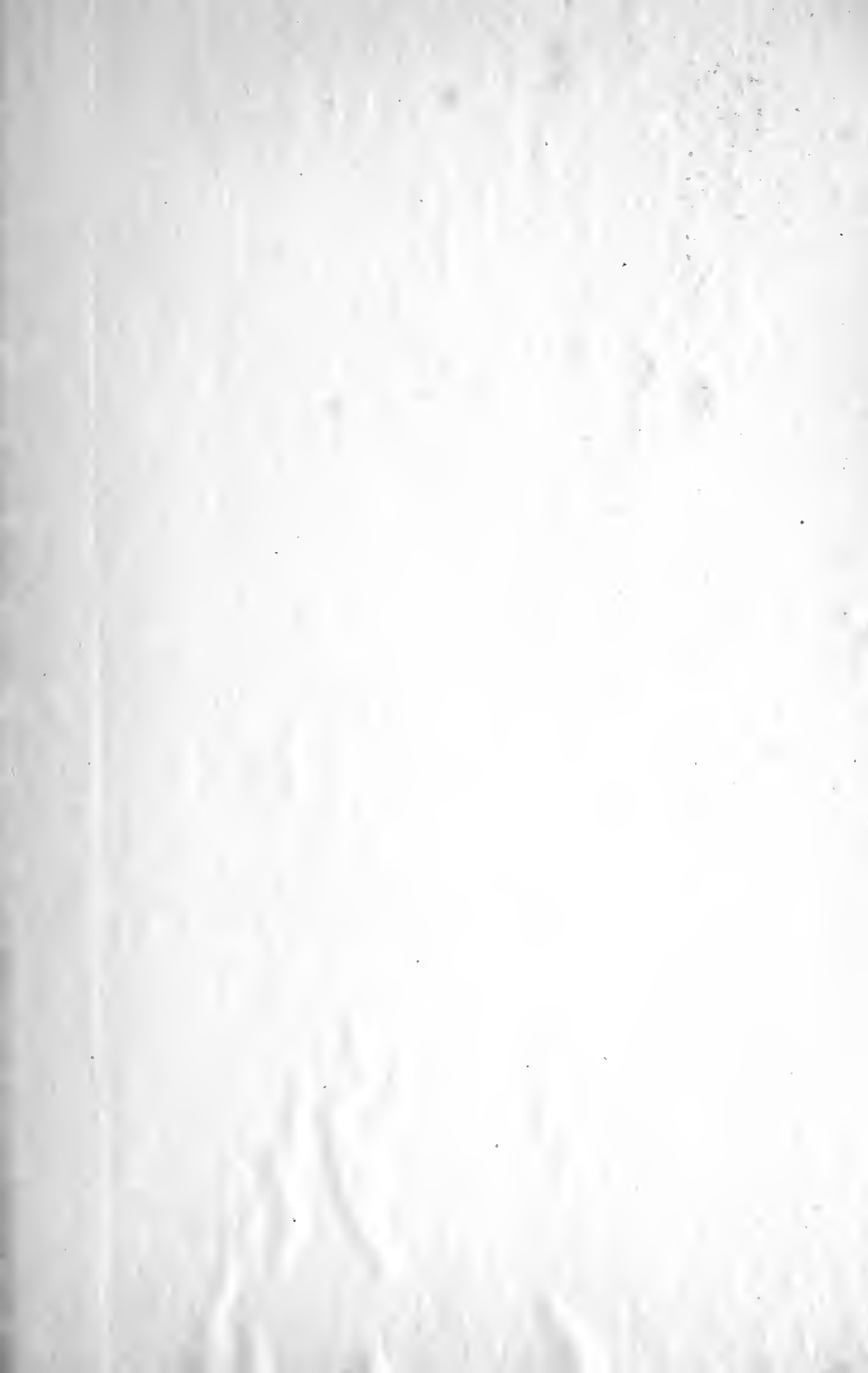
Conquest and empire, and all that belongs thereto both of method and of idea, are utterly abhorrent to the theory of those institutions through which America has aspired to enlighten the world, and utterly foreign to the structure our fathers reared out of their stony griefs and cemented with their faith.

It is character that counts in nations as in individuals. Only in loyalty to the old can we serve the new; only in understanding of the past can we interpret and use the present; for history is not made, but unfolded, and the old world entire is ever present in the new.

Benjamin Ide Wheeler.







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