

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 6, NO. 58.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 1905.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

ON THE ANXIOUS SEAT.

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CARTOONS, as well as “special correspondences” from Oyster Bay are depicting the President in strenuous poses. The former have him grinding his teeth, stamping the ground and yelling: “We MUST have peace!” The latter have him “busily at work”; “unflagging in his efforts”; “giving all his thoughts to Portsmouth”; in constant telegraphic communication with St. Petersburg and Tokio”; “uneasy, yet hopeful”; etc.; etc. It is more than likely that in this instance the cartoonists are not “indulging their crayons”, nor the special correspondents the fancies for which they are known. It is quite likely that the ones and the others have caught the correct mental and physical poise of the subject of their descriptions. In all probability President Roosevelt is really on the anxious seat in the matter of the war in the Far East. He wants peace: the continuance of the war perturbs him. “Why these weeps”?

In Europe turmoil in one State has ever caused uneasiness to the rulers in the other States. This has been especially the case in instances of turmoil in Italy, and more particularly in France. The eddies of political earthquakes in Paris have, for over a century, rolled rumblingly over the other European States; more than once they shook and caused thrones to totter; not even the English Channel could quite stop them: many a concession, wrung from the British feudal lords by the British bourgeois radicals, was but the distant after-clap of these French “disturbances”. No European ruling class contemplates “troubles” in France with equanimity. These dreaded disturbances, however, have always been of a revolutionary temper. Foreign wars, whether France was involved or not, did not so affect the neutral States. Suddenly a startling innovation is experienced. It is brought about by the war in the Far East. The innovation is crass. For one thing, the “trouble” is not in France; for another, it is not an internal disturbance: it is a war between two States;

for yet a third, the shock of arms is in a separate continent. And yet, there is not today—with the possible exception of ever over-confident England—a single ruler or ruling class in Europe whom the doings in Manchuria do not disquiet. The crowning feature of the startling innovation is that the volcanic action has begun to take in its sweep the ruling class of America also,—and the rumblings come rolling both under the Pacific and the Atlantic, till they reach Oyster Bay, and make the furniture on Sagamore Hill to rattle.

The war in Manchuria has had unforeseen results. The disgrace heaped upon the Russian arms has had the effect of an electric spark that struck in and exploded a powder magazine in Russia. Neither the feudal-bourgeois ruling class of Europe, leastways our own American bourgeois, who go on all fours, saw any particular objection to that; some of them, our own bourgeois in particular, even liked it: it sounded “liberal”, besides giving promise of brisker business. But a powder magazine can not explode without other and contiguous powder-magazines taking the infection. The powder-magazines of Poland, of Hungary, of Germany, of France, of Italy, even of as far north as Norway—some purely political, others social revolutionary—started to get hot. The vast American Labor powder-magazine of accumulating discontent, resentment at outrage and waxing experience and enlightenment could not fail to respond to the touch. It did—blindly in many places, intelligently, as in Chicago, at the convention of the Industrial Workers of the World. Nor can it be doubted that the sight of a nation, taken to be “backward” and “inferior”, suddenly stepping up in all the majesty that the Japanese have done, has added temper to the revolutionary pulse. The dull scent of dull Sammy Gompers may probably not apprehend the full import of the Chicago Convention of the I.W.W.; he may scent danger only to the bread-and-cake basket of his silly self and boon companions; and that may be the cause of all his present excitement and the funny sputterings of his Social Democratic placemen and manikins. But keener far is the scent of America’s plutocrat-capitalist hedgehog. Nor does the warning reach the beast through his nostrils only. Also his eyes and ears are avenues of information. He knows what is now going on in the land; and the knowledge is not conducive to sleep. He wants peace in Manchuria; he wants it earnestly. He wants it as a cessation of the cause that originally set the train on fire; he wants it because

he wishes the Russian army back in Russia, where he expects that the whipped Russian officers will seek to wipe out their disgrace in the blood of the Russian workingman, as the vanquished soldiers of Napoleon III. “wiped out their disgrace” in the blood of the Parisian workingmen in 1871; he wants peace, in short, with the expectation that it will snuff out the Revolution in Russia, and with the fatuous notion that the expected acquiescence of the Russian people in the yoke of the Tsar implies the acquiescence of the American Working Class in the continued peaceful plunder by the Capitalist Class.

Aye, President Roosevelt is on the anxious seat for peace, all the more anxious seeing the Chinese boycott of American goods looms up threateningly from the West as the latest effect of the war in Manchuria. Thus caught between two fires, who is there who would not be having a “strenuous time”, and feel “uneasy, yet hopeful”?

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Uploaded February 2008

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