

EDITORIAL

THE ITCH OF RULE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHILE sycophants of royalty have no intention other than to flatter their rulers by harping on the string that “King Edward, dying, still governed,” what they do, in fact, is to lay their finger upon a disease very much resembling an itch, and which may be termed the “Itch of Rule.”

Like all diseases the Itch of Rule is one of the manifestations of the ills that the flesh is prone to, under favorable conditions. Cervantes, though neither a physician nor a sociologist, first discovered the ailment, and recorded its ravages on the mind of the immortal Sancho Panza.

Sancho was the exact opposite of his master. While Don Quixote pursued a life of abnegation, living in a world of his own imaginings, his lackey Sancho was of the earth{—}earthy, with a dash that not infrequently accompanies such makeups—the dash of low cunning. A certain nobleman having quickly sized up both master and man, decided to play a prank upon Sancho. His master had often promised him the lordship of some vast domains, which he confidently expected some day to take as the spoils of battle from some wicked giant or other. The nobleman in question perceived that Sancho—a robust eater and sound sleeper—was impatient for the ease and comforts of the promised possessions. He arranged with his subalterns that a deputation was to appear before Don Quixote and lay at his feet the “Insula of Barataria,” the estate of one of the wicked knights whom the dauntless Don Quixote had overcome. Don Quixote transferred the property to his lackey, and Sancho departed to take command of Barataria.

The hoax was carried out to perfection. Sancho was treated like a Pasha, surrounded by obsequious servitors, who, however, in the profoundness of their reverence, made the fellow’s life a burden to him. He, a voracious eater, was allowed by the court physician none but the sparsest of diet—“lest His Majesty’s valuable

health be impaired.” He, a hearty sleeper, was allowed by the court attendants hardly any time for rest—so anxious were they to derive full benefit from “His Majesty’s wisdom” in deciding a thousand and one knotty cases. And so forth. Finally one night, just as the exhausted Sancho was congratulating himself that he was allowed to fall asleep, a frightful noise broke out. Yells and screams were heard: “The enemy is upon us!” Whereupon Sancho’s attendants broke into the room calling upon him to lead them to battle; and, without listening to his protests, rigged him up for the fray which was raging with great clatter. All lights were extinguished; Sancho was thrown down; the hosts of “vanquishers” and “vanquished” trampled over his prostrate body; until, these having had their fill of fun, shouts of “Victory!” “Victorious is our brave Governor of Barataria!” were heard. Lights were re-lighted. Sancho was picked up more dead than alive. He remained unresponsive to all the flattering remarks upon his bravery, or to the reports of the thousands whom he slew, except sullenly to observe: “The enemies whom I slew may be nailed on my forehead.” Finally, having recovered his legs, Sancho ordered his dutiful subjects to stand aside; walked out into the stable whither his ass had been consigned; kissed him; saddled him; and, remarking: “Poor we came to this government, poor we go out again,” he resigned his rule, and rode out, light-hearted back to his master.

But not for long. Sancho had not been long on the road before he hearkened back to the days of his glory, and sadness overcame him—“that thing of commanding and being obeyed is so nice!” All his trials were forgotten; only the glamour of rule remained. The Itch of Rule broke out all over Sancho Panza.

And so with the dying Edward VII. It is a fierce malady, this Itch of Rule—a malady which,—as the Black Plague of the middle ages was throttled to death only when hygienic conditions deprived the disease of its breeding ground—will continue to afflict the human race until the advent of true Democracy, that is, of popular economic freedom.

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