

SLAVERY AND THE AMERICAN STORE

TALKS TO AMERICA

BY G. K. CHESTERTON

I N re-reading the first and by far the best of the modern books on the comedy of childhood, "Helen's Babies," I note once more that you call a place a "store" when we should call it a "shop." Ours is much the more vulgar phrase. You can put into a poem "The peasant's simple store." You cannot put into a poem, "The peasant's simple shop." Not even if you are Mr. Masfield. But I mention this for quite a different purpose.

You know it is always said that America and England are chiefly united by the tie of language. You also know that this is a great mistake. England is united to the continent of America by exactly the same ties which unite her to the continent of Europe. The continent of Europe is inhabited by Latins, Germans, Jews, Slavs, Scandinavians, and Celts. The continent of America is also inhabited by Latins, Germans, Jews, Slavs, Scandinavians, and Celts. America does not in the least belong to England; I thought the military operations round Saratoga had settled that in comparatively recent times. But America does belong to Europe, because the Italians and the Irish and the Jews and the Scotch crofters come from Europe, and could not have come from anywhere else. We English are tied to America by those very real bonds which tie us to Russia. What they are is very soon discovered when the Russian meets a Japanese in the East or when a Californian meets him in the West.

'But on the language I have long ceased to build much hope. My reason is that both the languages strike me as being languages. American is not bad English; it is good American. In that lovely lyric of which the refrain is, "O God! O Montreal," occurs, if I remember right, the couplet: "Thou callest trousers pants

whereas I call them trousers. Therefore thou art in Hell fire, and may the Lord pity thee." This seems to me a slightly narrow, nay, a nearly heretical, view of the judgment upon sin. The poet should have asked himself, in a spirit of Christian humility and self-examination, *why* he called them trousers and *why* his transatlantic cousin called them pants. If he had done so, he would, I think, have found the two words were really symbols of the souls of two nations. First, if he, as an Englishman, had asked himself why he used the word trousers, he would have found that he did not know. That is the first great fact about the living tradition and living literature of England. That is the first grand and solid advantage of living in a very historic and protected community. I do not know where the word "trousers" comes from. I should guess it came from the French *trousser*, and had something to do with what was called "trussing the points" of the old trunk-hose. But this is only a guess, and a guess which it would bore me beyond words to verify. I do not know or care where the word trousers came from. But here exactly is the division of the nations. The Americans do know where the word "pants" came from. Obviously, it came from pantaloons, and was quite deliberately shortened for quite practical purposes. If English words are mysterious, it is because they like to wander away from their original meaning; and are thus slowly changed. If American words are mysterious, it is because they go straight to their meaning, and are thus impatiently shortened. I think it was Charles V who said that fine thing, "Whenever I learn a new language, I feel as if I had a new soul." If he had had to learn American as well, to say nothing of Esperanto, he

might have had more souls than he could save. But the man who could make that remark would have known that there really is a soul of America.

It is not a mere jest drawn from the instance of pants and trousers. I could show the same thing in many other Anglo-American differences of phrase. In the charming American domestic tales I read in my boyhood, the thing that we call a railway-station was always called a depot. Well, there is a great deal of national temperament in the two terms. An Englishman calls it a station because his instinct is to think of it as something stationary. He regards the village station as he does the village green or the village church, first, as an object in a local landscape; second, as an agreeable place where one has nothing to do. A railway train is a mere interruption in an English railway-station. But this illogicality and localism is not possible in the dry light and eager clearness of the American intelligence. The American calls it a depot because he realizes that the whole business is in its nature hurried and temporary; that it is a place where things and people are deposited for a short time. The American reserves his antiquarianism for things that are really antique; he keeps his veneration for things that are really venerable. He does so with equal ease, whether the object of his respect be the lost classicism of the Parthenon or the almost equally lost classicism of the Bunker Hill Monument. But the English have a sort of appetite for making things old and comfortable as quickly as possible. We shall soon be encouraging ivy on our railway-stations, as we encourage it on our parish churches. In a very little while the London hansom-cab will be quite literally as romantic as the Venetian gondola.

But the strongest case is that difference between shop and store, which I have already mentioned. The American store may be as small as the smallest English shop. The English shop may be (and if certain modern trends continue, will be) as large as the largest American store. Nevertheless, the difference is national, that is, natural. The abstract and ideal shopkeeper is a small shopkeeper. The abstract and ideal storekeeper is the manager of something like Harrod's Stores. You can

have, as Napoleon said, a nation of shopkeepers. You cannot have a nation of storekeepers. They must of their nature tend to be the managers of most other men; that is, the managers of most of the nation. It is in this respect, and this respect only, that I think that the influence of your country upon mine has really been unfortunate.

I should really like to know how you feel about this; for I think you know I am above the mere prejudice of patriotism, or the worse prejudice of anti-patriotism, or, worst of all, the utterly blinded prejudice of the cosmopolitan. All the colors are alike to the cosmopolitan. All colors always are alike to the man in the dark. And there is no darkness like that outer darkness, that heathen and homeless darkness, in which the cosmopolitan dwells. But, speaking as man to man, and therefore as nation to nation, don't you think there is something in my fear that your big businesses are providing us with the wrong model? And all the more because it is a working model.

We talk cheaply here of America as without ancient history. But, indeed, there is more really ancient history in America than in England, and that because the republic of the United States started its career with two of the oldest and simplest institutions on this earth, of both of which England had been ignorant for centuries. Of course I mean war and slavery.

We will toss away the topic of war. I will only ask you whether you do not notice in the big shops the return of the idea of slavery. Can you think of any real difference between the workmen and the slaves, except that the slaves were free? Already the employer is fining his workmen: on all rational grounds of comparison he may soon be flogging his workmen. The big businesses are becoming independent states, as in the Dark Ages. They are becoming despotic states, as in the Dark Ages. The one healthy and heroic civil war of modern times was fought in your country. Half a century ago you fought to resist the rise of an independent republic. Will you not fight to resist the rise of all these independent monarchies?

THE OLD WORLD IN THE NEW

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF IMMIGRATION

BY EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS

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THIS paper on the economic aspects of our present kind of immigration and the economic consequences of its continuance has the authority of experienced scholarship applied practically to a subject which can only be clearly seen in the perspective of many years of elaborate statistics. But Professor Ross, whose reputation as a sociologist is world-wide, has done far more than scientifically analyze and elaborately interpret the Immigration Commission's thirty-nine volumes and the Census Report; he has personally traced this immigration to its Old World sources, and has followed it, through many months of roaming, into the centers of immigrant life in America, using keen and practical eyes, and quizzing social settlement people, charity workers, social workers, labor leaders, employees, immigration officials, priests, bishops, educators, and leaders of the foreign born.

In succeeding months, Professor Ross will consider this question from other and even more important points of view. He has so invested the subject with his wonderfully penetrating vision and fascinating personality as to impart to this and succeeding papers a rare quality of human interest.—THE EDITOR.

MORE and more immigration is an economic matter, a flow of men rather than of families, seeking gain rather than religious and political liberty. Those who bring anything but their hands are a very small and diminishing contingent. Most of the money the immigrant shows on landing has been supplied him for that purpose. In 1882, when the old immigration reached its height, the public domain was being carved up at a tremendous rate, and the home-seeker predominated. A quarter of a century later, when the crest of the new immigration arrived, free land was gone forever, and the job-seeker predominated. Formerly the idea of wandering oversea sprang up naturally among the intelligent and restless; now the idea is sown broadcast by thousands of steamship agents and their runners. In the tavern, knee to knee with the yokels, sits the runner, and paints an El Dorado. The poor fellows will believe him if he tells them the trees of America bear golden leaves. When the "American fever" seizes upon the peasant, it is the obliging runner who suggests mortgaging his home for the passage-money or who finds a buyer for his cows.

Common laborers who have been in America are hired to go about among the peasants, flash money, clink glasses, and tell of the wonderful wages awaiting them. The decoy thus gets together a group who elect him leader and pay him so much per head to guide them to America. Little do the poor sheep suspect that their bell-wether is paid by the steamship agent for forming the group and by the employer to whom he delivers them. A forwarding business exists for sending penniless laborers to America as if they were commercial ware. Each leaves at home some relative under bonds that the laborer will within a year pay a certain sum as cost and profit of bringing him here. Parties, through-billed from their native village by a professional money-lender, are met at the right points by his confederates, coached in three lessons on what answers to make at Ellis Island, and delivered finally to the Pittsburgh "boarding-boss," or the Chicago saloon-keeper, who is recruiting labor on commission for a steel mill or a construction gang.

The emigration of 50,000 Rumanian Jews between January and August, 1900, was brought about by steamship agents,