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Britain's Appeal to the Gods

BY

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BRITAIN'S APPEAL TO THE GODS

Extract from Author's Letter to Editor.

' My aim has been to show your countrymen how absurdly grasping they are, how *unreasonable*. Never has the world seen such a nation, and there is much excuse for the feeling that Britain is entitled to continue to inherit the earth. She still wants more, when what surprises every one conversant with her position is how she ever succeeded in getting and doing so much. I am impressed every time I look into the figures.'

HEAR us! hear us! mighty Jove, and ye dread gods who dwell upon Olympus!

Mark ye, our Foreign Commerce is only 903,363,000*l.* per year.

Chorus.—Ungrateful favourite of the gods! It never was so great either in Imports or Exports. No nation ever approached it in amount. *Per capita* it is 21*l.* 10*s.* France has only 8*l.* 11*s.* 9*d.*; Germany, 8*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*; United States, 6*l.* 3*s.*

Neptune, great god of the Sea, and thou, Triton the Trumpeter!

Mark ye, guardians of Britannia's rule over the waves, our Shipping is only 16,600,000 tons.

Chorus.—Insatiate greed! It never was so great and is constantly increasing. All the other nations combined have not so much. Beware lest thine in-

gratitude offend the gods. Think not that one nation can long continue to possess more than all others. Thy fleet shall increase, though thy world's share may fall as new nations grow. Thou wert first; now others build ships and must share with thee.

Midas, great king of Gold, help us!

Our National Wealth is only 11,806,000,000*l.*

Chorus.—To none of thy sister nations has so much been given *per capita*, and to none, even to the largest, such sum in the aggregate. Only the American Union, forty-five nations combined, exceeds thine hoard, but even it—thy child beloved of the gods—has much less *per capita*.

Mighty Vulcan, god of the subterranean realms!
Turn thy gaze upon us and help us!

Only nine million tons of Iron, and only five million tons of Steel, do we now produce per year. Even our product of Coal (230,000,000 tons) is no longer greatest of all.

Chorus.—This is the highest product of Iron and Steel thou hast ever reached, greater *per capita* than Germany's both of Iron and Steel. Not even the giant Republic equals thine Iron product *per capita*. Hear thou the counsel of the friendly gods. Until a new supply of iron ore be discovered, draw not upon thy

present store one ton more per year. Unless discoveries come, thou wilt regret having so rapidly drained thy supply. Consult thy wise sons of Vulcan and learn what impends. The lands of the Norsemen give some hope of new supply; but for this all were dark indeed. Thy product of coal is almost double that of the Republic and of Germany per man. Thy consumption per man is greatest of all.

Oh! god of Increase, great Deucalion! hear us and help us!

Our people number only forty-two millions and increase slowly. Russia has one hundred and twenty millions and increases apace. Germany has increased until she has one third more than we, and her yearly rate of increase is nearly double. America has double our number, and has increased in the last three years more than two millions yearly. Our yearly increase is not four hundred thousand. We dwindle in comparison. Pray, thou god of Increase, lend us thine aid!

Chorus.—Thou knowest not what thou askest. To England and Wales have already been given more than five hundred people per square mile. No leading European nation has as many. Germany has only 270; France but 190; Russia 15; the United States less than thirty; Canada less than two.

Consider the lessening stamina of thy sons, the numbers rejected as unfit for military service, the millions upon the brink of starvation. The gods in their mercy deny thy prayer for much denser population. This must not be; for Britain's good it must not be. Much increase of population would drag the standard still further down.

Hear us and help us, Minerva, goddess of the loom—only fifty-four millions of spindles turn in our land!

Chorus.—Thou incensest the gods! Not to all the leading countries combined have so many been given. What will satisfy thee, spoiled darling of the gods? Beware thou temptest them not to withdraw their favour. Not even the American Union has half as many spindles, though double in population. Hear this and pause. More and more is cotton being woven where it is grown. New England feels this as Old England must. Even the gods cannot prevent it. Only by the unequalled ability of thy cotton lords has the industry been carried to its gigantic proportions. Should they succeed in sustaining the present production they deserve enduring fame. To expect much increase is to expect the impossible.

O Jupiter, and all the gods together, listen to our prayer!

Explain to us why in nothing do we increase so fast as our rivals. This is the main source of all our woe.

Chorus.—Because to thee the favour of the gods was first given, and continued till thy cups were full and running over. In recent years what thy brimming cups could not hold has necessarily been bestowed upon other lands. What they get lessens not thy store—far otherwise. Thou sharest their prosperity. To thee the gods have placed under tribute the nations of the earth: none escapes. Rejoice, therefore, in the rapid advancement of the world, for upon this thine own undiminished prosperity assuredly depends. Thou must decline if the world prospers not. If it prosper, thou prosperest. Not even the gods can make thy tiny cups hold and supply what the world requires, covering as these do only one hundred and twenty thousand square miles. The cups of others must be used, chiefly those of thine own race across the sea, or the world would suffer. Reproach not the fates because thy cups are small. They cannot now be enlarged. Thy kingdom is almost developed to its limit. None has ever approached it in development. Cease to be as children crying for the moon.

To thee, Ceres, goddess of the Harvest, we turn.

Help us to become a self-sustaining empire. Keep us no longer dependent upon the Republic for our food

and our cotton. Not all the rest of the world combined could in emergency supply in sufficient quantities for us either the one or the other. Terrible though the suffering would be were the cotton supply withheld, this would be but trifling, for there would not only be famine prices, but grim famine itself upon us, were the ports of the Republic closed and our food supply interrupted. The slightest whisper of this danger would create panic even while we yet had food, of which we have never more than a few weeks' supply.

Thinkest thou the friendly gods have not foreseen this and ordered all for Britain's safety? Consider war, with the combination of powers which drove Japan from her spoil—France, Germany, and Russia. Where then would be thy food supply if dependent upon thine own empire? Every ton of it subject to capture upon the seas. How different thy position with the Republic demanding that her flag be respected, and food not contraband of war, every ton of thy needed food protected, or the Republic thine ally? Think of all this, and render thanks to the gods for their prevision.

Thanks, thanks, guardian Ceres! Thou reasonest well; but what if we should ever be at variance with the Republic, our food provider?

Hellish thought! Trust us, the gods would compel peaceful arbitration of differences between you. This for thine own ear. The gods have made it impossible that there can ever be war between thee and thy child across the sea—simply impossible. Strike her and thou starvest. The closer thy blockade of her ports, the sooner thy defeat. Her chief seaport cities are beyond the range of thy guns whenever the distant narrow channel mouths are filled—the work of a day. Equally impotent has the Republic been made to attack thee in thine island home. Neither can strike the other. Impotent as foes, as allies invincible. One word more. If ever there could be war, which the gods have made impossible, food for thee from Canada would never reach Canadian seaports. Dismiss from thy thoughts such phantoms and chimeras dire; never again are English-speaking men to stand face to face in battle; when they fight, it will be side by side for noble causes. Thus have the gods decreed.

Know this, therefore: the best and safest position possible for thee, dependent as thou art and must remain for food from across the sea to feed thy people, is that thou be not dependent for thy chief supply upon thy colonies, thy food subject to capture, but upon the independent Republic of thine own race. This the gods have decreed for thy safety. Madness it were upon thy part to disturb present friendly relations,

conditions, and tendencies which are constantly drawing you closer. Hear this and mark us well. Stir not up strife with your kin beyond sea.

Mightiest of the mighty, dread Jupiter !

Reveal to us our destiny, lest we despair ! If it be impossible that we in our island can increase materially over present figures—pronounced by the gods as filling our cups—either in population, manufactures, shipping, or commerce, and therefore in wealth, as compared with nations of larger area and population, these must soon dwarf us, and our race, chief favourite hitherto with the gods, foremost and commanding in the world, fall to the base and abject rear, and become, as one soothsayer has proclaimed, “a fifth-rate power.” Save us, preserve us, O Jupiter !

Chorus.—Fear not, Heroic Mother of the conquering strain. No such destiny for thy race impends. Prime favourite of the gods in the past, prime favourite still, prime favourite still to be ! To thy race in the future have the gods assigned sovereign sway and masterdom over all the earth. The mother member thou, all others thy children, none so beloved, so revered as thou, none so proud, so happy in her destiny as she of the sceptred isle, whom Albion loves so deeply and guards so well. Be of good cheer and of stout heart. Let this suffice : trust the gods. Farewell !

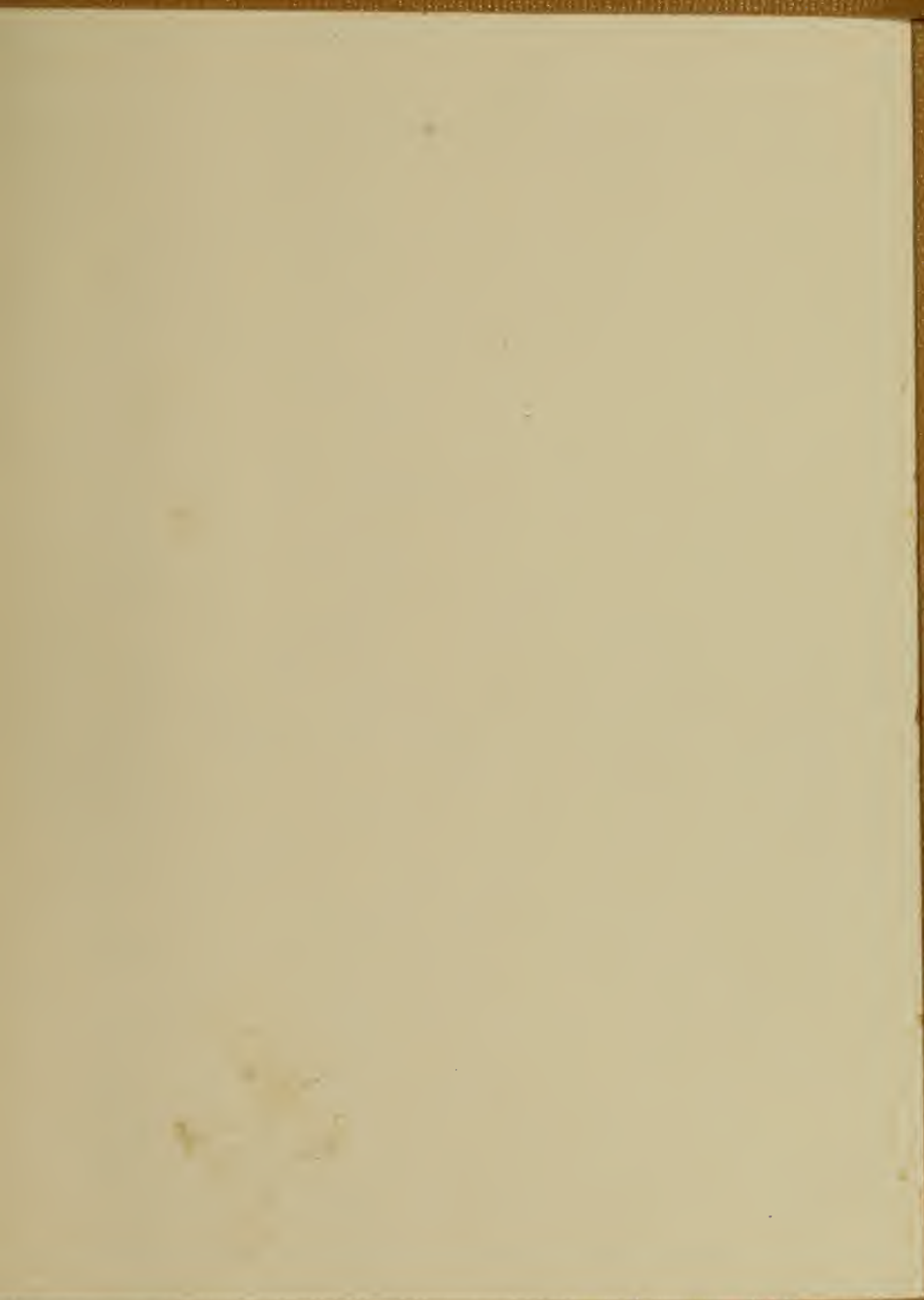
Stay! Stay! Let us know more! How? When?
What shall we do?

Muta, goddess of silence, floated above. No audible response came, but the babbling air seemed to spread abroad in whispering sounds—"Seek to know no more: how all is to be wrought lieth upon the lap of the gods; to the one mortal who has presumed to forecast their plans we waft this message: 'Thy lips are sealed.'"

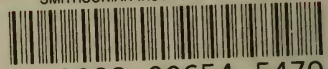
So keeps the mortal his own sweet reveries, happy in the knowledge that for his native land all is well, since all is to be better than yet has been, which is saying much, and for his race—the English-speaking race (language makes race)—its future is far to surpass its past. To it the gods have decreed the leadership of the world for the good of the world. The day of its power is not afar. There be many who read these lines who shall behold its dawn.

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