



The Fatherland



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DELEND A EST BRITANNIA

(Being a prologue and epilogue to "The Vampire of the Continent")

By Aleister Crowley

(In previous issues of THE FATHERLAND we have commented upon Count Ernst zu Reventlow's masterpiece, "The Vampire of the Continent." Our comments represented the opinion of Americans on this remarkable work. We herewith publish Aleister Crowley's analysis of the book. Mr. Crowley is an Irishman, a member of Cambridge University and a poet of fine distinction. Frederic Harrison, Editor of the "English Review," stated some time ago that Mr. Crowley was the first metrical artist in the English language since Swinburne.)

COUNT ERNST ZU REVENTLOW'S extraordinarily lucid and cogent work on historic English policy has one fault from the point of view of the philosopher—he does not begin his history early enough, or derive the piracy of England from necessity. Will the distinguished publicist pardon us if we attempt to fill the gap?

It is notorious that mountaineers are necessarily brigands. In their rocky fastnesses wheat will not grow, sheep will not grow fat. They are condemned to rough cereals like oats, to small and stringy sheep and goats. The dwellers of the plain care nothing for the products of the mountain, and will not surrender their goods except by force. The highlander consequently becomes a cateran or brigand. The mountain districts of every country in the world—Scotland, Spain, India, China, or America—prove the correctness of the theory.

A similar proposition may be made with regard to islanders, as opposed to continental powers. The natural first industry of islands is fishing, in itself a piratical occupation. Just as mountaineers become hardy and desperate through the necessity of battling with the elemental forces of nature, so do fishermen. And when continental settlements begin to ship their merchandise by sea, they soon excite the envy of the fishermen, whose hardihood and desperate poverty emboldens them to become pirates.

IN course of time the continental powers find it necessary to build a navy, to wreck these nests of pirates in self-protection, and the usual result is, that the island is annexed to the continent, and its people properly policed, become tranquil, they may even be turned into excellent citizens, since they possess the material of courage and energy in that degree which originally started them on their piratical career.

But where the island, while retaining in the full its insular characteristics, is large enough and strong enough to develop into a sovereign state, the sporadic piracies of its aborigines become incorporated in the policy of the nation. A nucleus is formed, usually upon the banks of some great river, and the central authority is not slow to perceive that the welfare of its increasing population depends upon sea-power. The history of all island nations illustrates this view. Islands form the natural stronghold of every lawless race. However extended a sea coast may be, it may yet be turned; if a hinterland exists, the pirates can be suppressed by overland attack. Thus we see that the Vikings soon lost their power, the Danish ships of war were ultimately conquered, not upon the sea, but by attacks upon their base. Venice was destroyed from the rear. The sea power of Holland fell, not so much because of British victories on the North Sea, but because the country itself was unable to resist internal pressure. We know how easily England herself was turned out of France; and to this day she has never been able to make good her footing in any country requiring an army to defend it. India is practically an island, owing to the impossibility of invasion from the north. Yet India has always been un-

derstood by England as her weak point. Egypt, by reason of deserts, is almost an island, yet there again is a weak point. Canada is politically an island, owing to the inveterate pacificism of the inhabitants of the United States. Gibraltar is only joined to the main land by a bare and narrow neck, which can easily be swept by the gunfire from the rocks. But since the range of modern artillery has increased so greatly that Gibraltar can be shelled from the hills beyond Algeiras, it has been recognized by military authorities that the fortress is indefensible, and proposals have actually been made to abandon it. We can see England's new fear of Spain in her policy towards that country, in her haste to place an English princess in the arms of the successor of Charles V. Further east we find Malta, an island—Aden, insulated by many miles of the most inhospitable desert in the world—Ceylon, the naval base of India, an island—Penang, an island—Singapore, an island—Hongkong, an island. When England obtained possession of Wei-hai-wei she was compelled to abandon it without a struggle after a few years. Similarly the English outposts in the Pacific and in the West Indies are all islands. British Honduras can hardly be called a British colony at all, the conditions there are very exceptional.

TO turn to other island powers, history shows us the same picture. All successful Corsairs have been invulnerable by land. The islands of the Mediterranean have always been strongholds of pirates. The situation of Japan in the east is singularly like that of England in the west. Rome only beat Carthage after the destruction of her sea-power, by dint of using her command of the Mediterranean to land an army in Africa and attack Carthage by land. The power of Spain was not destroyed by the dispersion of the Armada, but by her disasters in the Netherlands.

From all this we perceive easily that England is not at all to be blamed for her piracies. Her situation compelled it. We must further remember that not only were the original inhabitants of Great Britain of a predatory disposition, but the invaders who conquered England in part and mingled with the inhabitants were all sea-rovers: the Norsemen, the Danes, the so-called Saxons, and the Normans, were all brigands who were being pushed off the continent because their ravages had become intolerable to civilized people. It is therefore criminally unthinking in us to blame England for her policy of piracy. She is of necessity a pirate, by situation and by heredity. It would be equally absurd to blame the crocodile or the tiger. Even England's hypocrisy must not shock us. It must be regarded in the light of a tribute paid to continental virtue. . . . Perhaps we might even be optimistic enough to suggest that it represents the beginning of a conscience. This much being conceded, we must no longer regard England with detestation and contempt. To do so is unreasonable, and therefore immoral. We must not shed crocodile tears over the crocodile. But on the other hand, we cannot tolerate the crocodile. We need to cross the river, in the pursuit of our peaceful avocations, and we must find the