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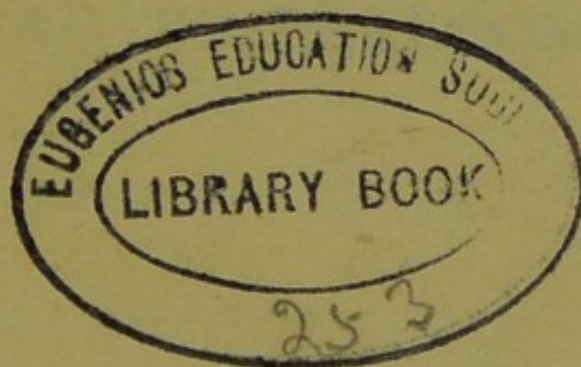
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TO
FREEDOM
AND WHAT LIES BEYOND**

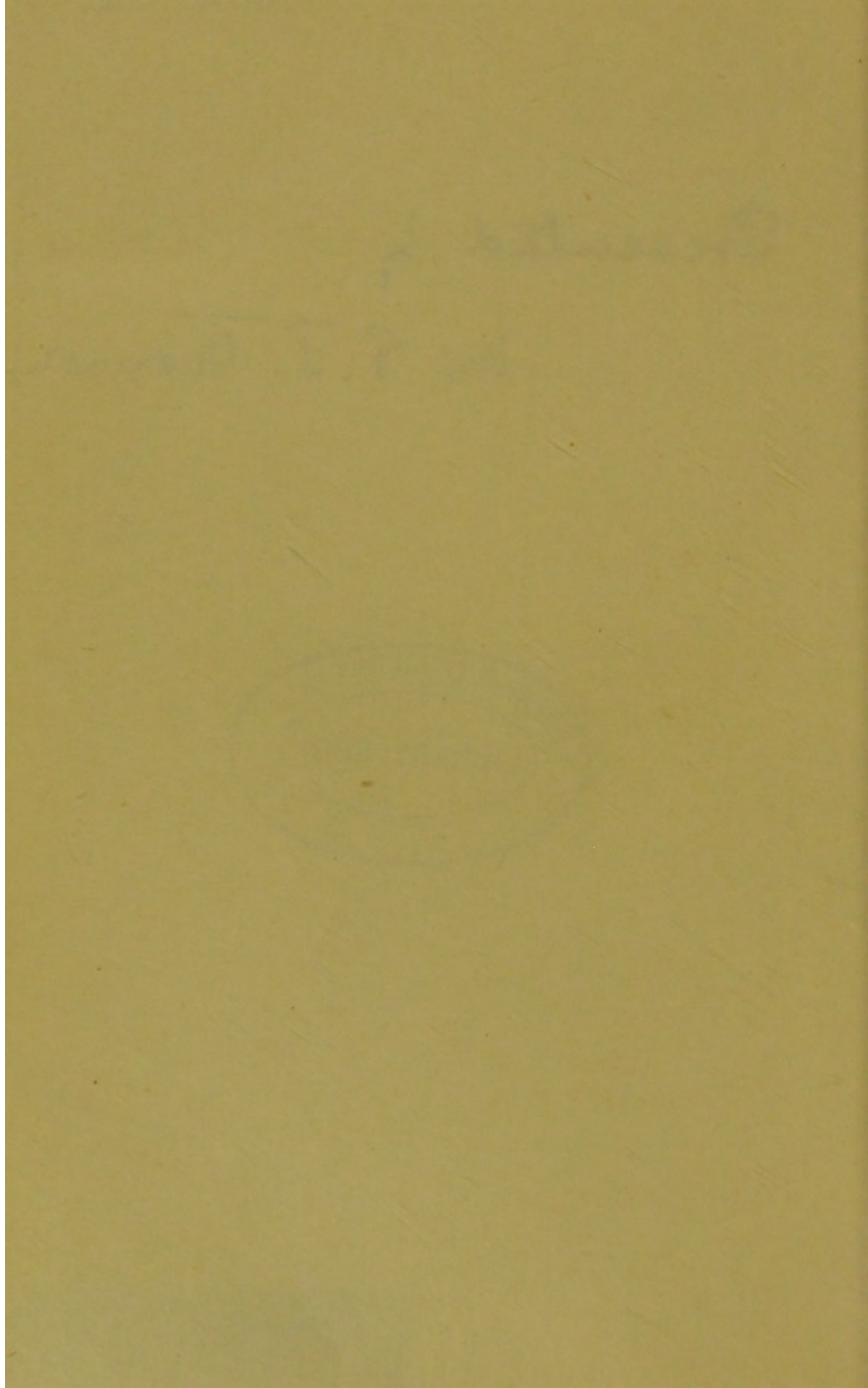


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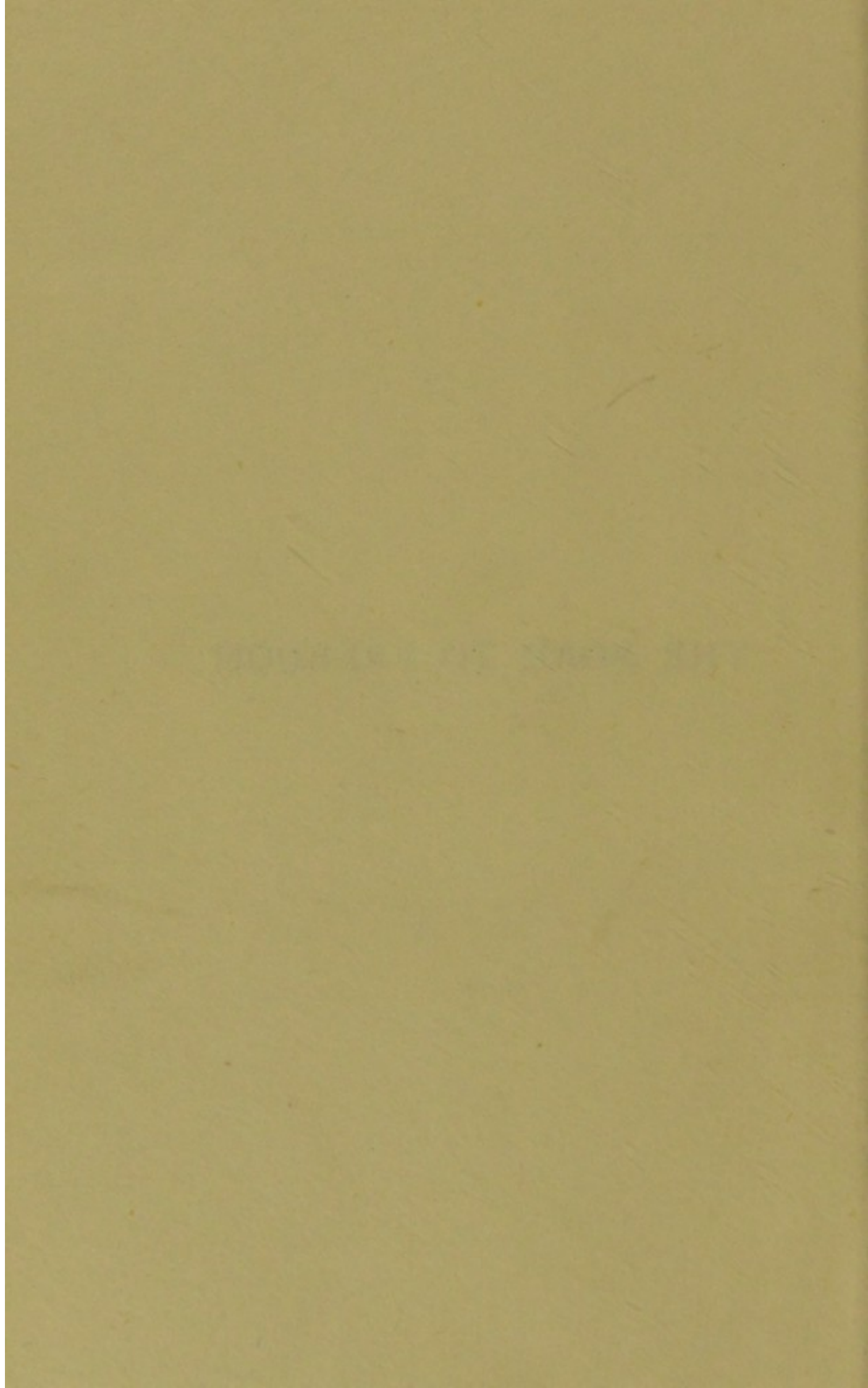
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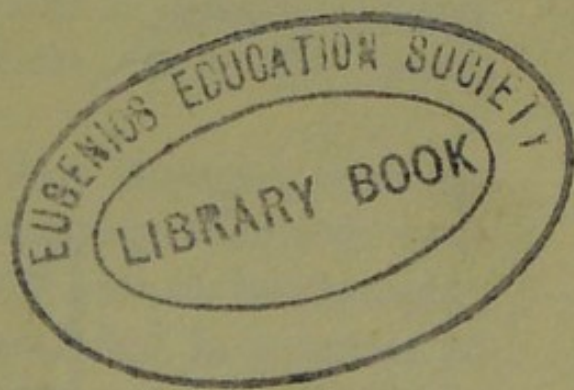


THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

And What Lies Beyond

BY

JOSIAH & ETHEL
W E D G W O O D



LONDON

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It is the purpose of this book to show that modern civilisation is built upon slave labour; that land monopoly is the cause of this slave labour; that when the land is freed, slave labour must cease, and with it so-called civilisation; and that if the unreal civilisation be thus ended, the real will have a chance to begin, and true development take the place of spurious progress.

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PREFACE

THERE come times to men and communities when they are impelled to look into themselves and examine the basis of their whole existence and the truth of their most unquestioned axioms—when they are driven back and back behind the assorted maxims which have served them as a political or religious creed, to hunt out in its lurking-place that first principle to which they cannot but assent and by which all the rest stand or fall.

The men of action are driven to the examination empirically, by the logic of facts, because experience shows them that the approved methods are useless; and others by that mental honesty, which like a gadfly urges philosophers along the lonely path of reasoning.

Such a time came to religious thought towards the end of last century; it is being followed now by a similar crisis in our political and social thought. Reforms once cherished have so failed in practice to remedy even superficial evils; the methods of reform involve so much that is uncertain or contrary to a deeper sense of right; the aims of reformers are often so insufficient and questionable, that society is being forced at last to ask itself what it really believes and really wants. The inquiry is an unpleasant one; and many, when they are brought face to face with it, shrink back (like many religious free-thinkers) and prefer to wander in a limbo of hazy aspiration and vague sympathies. Those

who go forward, bent on getting an answer to their own questioning, embark on a perilous voyage, for there are numberless possibilities of shipwreck, and no pilot save the internal one ; but if they push on, undismayed by the bogeys of this world or any other, they reach at last—not absolute truth—but some firm land where their mind can be in unison with itself.

Independent thought has been made easier for the most timid of us by the great original thinkers of the last fifty years, who have shown the way and borne the brunt of the hostility that departure from tradition often arouses. Giants like Leo Tolstoy, Henry George, Pierre Kropotkin, and others whose names are little known, have made free thought on social matters possible to our generation. The only service that men of smaller stature can hope to render is to clear away still more of the mental and material rubbish that obstructs the road to a true civilisation.

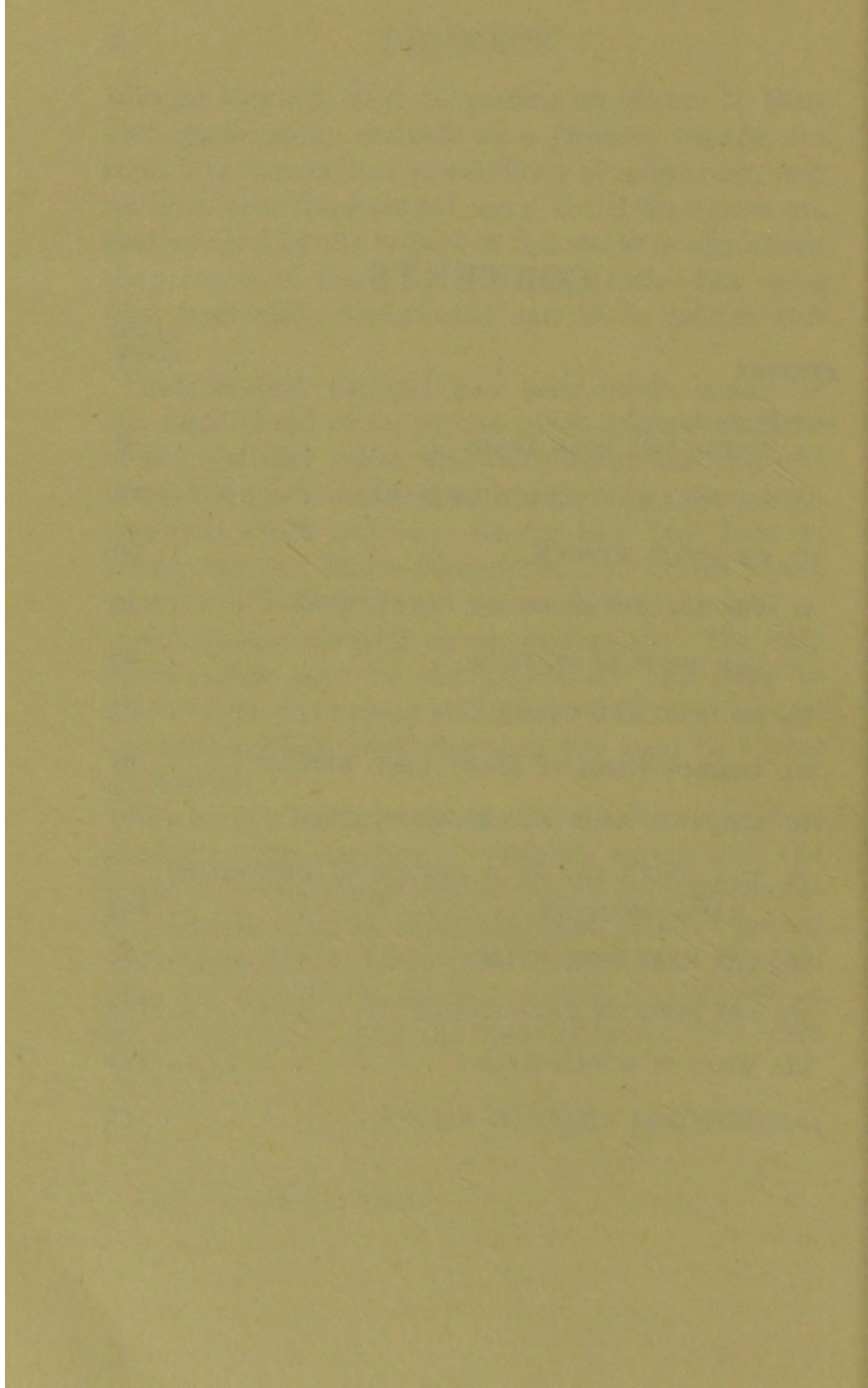
We have tried to express in this book our personal answer to the question : “ What’s wrong with the world ? ” Our thanks are due to all our argumentative friends, who by their disputations have helped us to form and to clarify our own opinions. We also offer our sincere thanks to the Editor of *The Open Road*, in which most of these chapters were first published.

THE AUTHORS.

11th November 1912.

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THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

I

WHERE THE ROAD LEADS

THAT the existing state of society is unsatisfactory ; that the world as fashioned by man is at best a bad one, and that its evils are in great part self-created and unnecessary—all this is a truism, and, like most truisms, is so frequently uttered as to be half forgotten, and requires to be continually discovered afresh.

But this book is not written to show up social evils in any new light, nor to join in denouncing them. It starts with assuming them ; and therefore to those who are contented with the world as it is—who think the failure in human relationships accidental, not structural—the following pages have nothing to say. They can only have any interest for those who also are tossed on dubious seas and steering uncertainly for unknown ports.

Utopias.

Nor is this an attempt to portray a new Utopia. There is more than enough already of these, framed each upon its author's own tastes and ideals, and limited by the moral development and scientific

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knowledge of the particular date. For this very reason, though they contain many dreams that are perennially beautiful, they are in detail antipathetic to people of a different character or period, and valuable chiefly as a record of the highest social ideals of their age.

Nor are they any real guide as to the tendencies of society. Human progress is not a regular curve of which the future can be calculated by the formula of the past, and there is no reason to suppose that humanity is being conducted—or conducting itself—towards the social conception of any individual, however enlightened he may be. It would indeed be truly astonishing if it were so.

Such fancy remodellings of the world are downright mischievous when they become a guide to legislation or action, and when the many possibilities of human development are regulated within the limits of a present-day imagination. Most reformers carry about with them a mental picture of the world-as-it-should-be, and aim at making every creature take the proper size and shape for it, as the parts of a puzzle dovetail. And the puzzle grows ever more complicated, until each fragment of it requires a special study.

The New Priesthood.

No small evil of modern civilisation is that its intricacies breed a class of sociological experts who have the same kind of interest in "social problems" that an attorney has in the criminal code. They become yearly more indispensable to the present system, as each loose thread gets more tightly interwoven with the universal web, and as the public grows more aware that only special knowledge can

prescribe the means to any given end, or foretell the general results of any local disturbance. So it happens that at the moment when so-called democratic government has reached its apotheosis, it has become a mere masque for bureaucrats and wire-pullers. First we have the elected representatives of the people, men of the common sort, with the honest desire to "govern justly" according to a conflicting set of opinions about the "general welfare," "morality," "justice," "patriotism" and so forth; and because these vague maxims afford no certain clue among the intricacies of laws and workings, they fall back for instruction on the permanent officials of departments—men of few general notions but great experience of administrative detail—and these again are inspired as to the aims and objects of their administrative efforts by experts, who, having made a hobby of some special part of the machine, cannot conceive a world without it. Any attempt to combat their demands on general grounds, or to introduce a first principle into the argument, is treated by such specialists with contempt as "doctrinaire." Such people think that when they have shown by statistics that 90 per cent. of the children of drunkards inherit a tendency to drink, they have proved the necessity of legislation for the sterilisation of drunkards; that the proved connection between consumption and slums is an argument for compulsory farm colonies; or that if the chest measurement of soldiers increases on an average two inches for every year of drill, that is an argument for universal conscription.

The ordinary citizen accepts unquestioningly all such decisions based on "the unanimous consensus of expert opinion," which enlarges and diversifies

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its statistics every year; and so we find an ever-increasing tendency to hand over important questions for decision to some "recognised authority"—a favourite politician, a royal commission, an "impartial" board of arbitrators—to be decided, not according to some simple principle of honesty or justice, such as the man-in-the-street recognises, but with the one idea of keeping in existence such a state of society as such commissioners, arbitrators and politicians think desirable—*i.e.* one in which arbitrators, commissioners and politicians are necessary and respected, and in which the other people are docilely willing to be arbitrated and legislated for.

These experts are like the guides to the Catacombs. They have a vested interest in the intricacies of the place; for having once got the traveller well lost in the labyrinth, with no light but their torches, they have him at their mercy, and can dictate exactly what he is to see and where he is to walk, and can thoroughly frighten him with images of death and famine if he attempts to rebel and find his way back to daylight unaided.

Of course these superior persons are not consciously moved by similar considerations; but simply, being part and parcel of a certain state of things, they cannot conceive of any other as possible or desirable; and with the natural tendency to idealise one's motives, they preach some hazy creed about the General Good, or Social Morality, or Equal Distribution of Wealth, or anything that will justify them in arranging other people's lives for them.

And the more such legislation is extended, the more complicated its administration becomes, and the larger the class of official experts who live by and on

it ; so that these professional reformers promise to become as heavy a saddle on the human beast of burden as ever was the mediæval priesthood. But while the old priesthood mapped out their heaven and drove men along the road to it in the name of Mumbo Jumbo, the new priesthood does it all in the name of Science, Humanitarianism and Progress.

The Social Machine.

One thing this new religion, with its creed of toleration, will not tolerate, and that is a disbelief in the social machine. Alterations of detail and structural improvement it welcomes, as necessary stages on the road to complete development.

You may quarrel with its form and tinker with its parts—only, in the machine itself you shall believe. You may overthrow kings, lords, even democracies ; but you must not shake Government. You may attack religions and philosophies (true or false), but you must not attack Social Ethics. You may rearrange society (theoretically) in any way you like, so long as you do not deny that society should be arranged.

Everything done under this creed is not done for the sake of any intrinsic right or wrong, truth or falsehood, but solely to preserve the machine, and to make it work more easily. What chance would there be for our popular social reforms if it were shown that a fair wage, an eight-hours day, higher education, and so forth, instead of “soothing industrial unrest” and making the population more contented, luxurious and manageable, would lessen the total wealth of the country, or make the working classes impossible to control ?

If we assume that the present social system is the

necessary outcome of the world's development, and that civilisation, as we know it, is the culmination of human history, then, obviously, when any part sticks or breaks down, it is for want of proper attention and management, and we must call in the army of social mechanics who deafen and override us to-day. Their business is not to speculate on ultimate principles, but to keep the present thing going at all costs and by any means.

But in the midst of the social reformer's ceaseless activity, of the endless league for the propagation of this and that, and enactments for the regulation of one thing and another, one pauses to wonder whether the common-sense of men will not at last revolt against all this meddlesomeness ?

The plainest thinker can see that opinions as to the ultimate good are conflicting, and that, even if everyone be agreed as to the aim, it is folly to attempt to legislate for the intricacies of modern life, because calculations of the necessary accuracy are impossible. And one is led to reflect whether there is not, after all, some simpler solution to the great problem of social duty, plain enough to guide the man-in-the-street, and not involving a solution of statistics to the *n*th decimal and a dictatorship over the living and the yet unborn.

The question, as it presents itself to us, is not, how by careful adjustment we may improve the condition of those who oil the wheels of the car of civilisation, as well as gratify the amiable feelings of those whose principal function is to ride inside it ; nor yet, how, by increasing the solidarity of labour and fomenting class warfare, we may continue the present benefits of civilisation but secure them to the class that produces them ; but—much simpler

and still more vital question—whether the present civilisation is not altogether a spurious one, based on a primary wrong-doing that vitiates it throughout ; and whether, if one fundamental injustice were removed, civilisation, as we know it, could continue at all.

Suppose the monopoly ownership of land, the source of all industry and life, done away with ; and with it the coercion under which men suffer, and, suffering, labour in artificial combinations : would not many kinds of labour, those especially on which the finer details of the structure depend, cease altogether, and the whole elaborate edifice tumble down ?

This Book's Purpose.

The purpose of this book is, then, to suggest, as it appears true to us (1) that this present form of civilisation is built up by slave labour ; (2) that this slave labour is necessitated by the monopoly of land alone ; (3) that it must cease, and with it so-called civilisation, when land is freed. Further, that, owing to this fundamental injustice, human progress may have taken a wrong turn, and that what we are accustomed to look on as the necessary conditions of a superior life may be, in reality, a bar to true development.

In the first point many sorts of reformers will agree ; in the second all “ single taxers ” will agree ; comparatively few people will agree with the conclusion. The politicians and social reformers cannot be expected to approve of such ideas, for an overthrow of existing conditions would destroy the *raison d'être* of their activities. The intellectual man mistrusts such forms of thought as childishly crude and

simple, and if he believed that the civilisation, of which he is the hothouse flower, would really be overthrown by any such fundamental reform, he would see in this fact an excellent argument against introducing ethics into practical politics. The ordinary private gentleman or business man cannot like it, for it would turn his world topsy-turvy (just as his religion would, if he practised it).

Indeed, to most persons the disintegration of the modern world seems a catastrophe hardly to be discussed seriously, much less advocated, by any sane person. As a rule, only war or death or birth can shake our stolid imaginations sufficiently to give us a glimpse into such possibilities.

It seems to them that such a revolution, involving the waste of so many centuries of human effort, the repudiation of so many fine flowers of intellect, a slur on the aspirations of so many noble lives, would be a cruel and a wicked folly ; moreover, that it would be a deathblow to progress, a negation of all natural forces and tendencies, a sort of scientific blasphemy—in short, an inconceivable thing.

To this many things might be replied, as : that our boasted progress does not seem to involve any great advance in essentials, and that in so far as we are more humane, cleaner and more artistic, there is no convincing proof that such improvement is due to the railways or the daily press, or the cinematograph, or the marconigram—nor even to the aeroplane ; that the age which perfected the spinning-loom and the dynamo, perfected also the slum and the American Trust ; that our fine feelings are more a matter of overstrung nerves than of altruism, and that religion is much where it was in the days before Jesus of Nazareth.

Also we might say that custom alone makes all these wonted surroundings seem necessary to us, and that men of adventure know well how independent the human mind and happiness are of those things which the civilised world regards as essentials ; also that the least accident—a derailed comet, or the spark of a new religion, or merely a great war—might equally at any moment upset the *status quo*, and make our stable civilisation a bygone and a strange thing.

Finally, it must be remembered that this civilisation—of which the upper classes, at present, enjoy most of the sweets, and the lower classes all the bitters—cannot in any case be carried on much longer except by an absolute despotism : a despotism which must finally embrace all classes alike, and which will be death to all advance.

Rotation or Progress ?

People are becoming aware that any eccentricity whatever is a danger to the stability of the whole system, and that to preserve the system every orbit must be regulated. They began long ago with the obvious—courts, dungeons, scaffolds, and justiciars ; a little cleverer, they went on with compulsory school-learning and the poor-law ; becoming economically wise, they took up factory legislation and enforced thrift ; now they are about to continue with laws about eugenics, etc., etc. ; and, because you cannot control men's bodies with ease while their minds are in rebellion, they will—very logically—begin to drill their minds in utilitarian religions and other suitable doctrines ; indeed, they have begun to do so already.

These despotic methods of preserving the machine

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are not yet fully developed, because science as applied to sociology is still in its infancy, and also because the popular imagination lags behind the popular reason. But once it has caught it up, then farewell to such anomalies as that which still allows the children of rich people to be educated off the beaten track, and lets freedom be at least purchasable.

When the system is logically perfected, then we shall all alike have learned to rotate, and civilisation will bloom securely—but we shall have ceased to progress.

In such a system of social stability there will, it is true, be equality, for all will be in equal servitude to the machine, and there may, or may not, as the machine finds advisable, be external similarity as well in surroundings, pay, treatment. But if we drop equality from the triplet, and look to freedom and brotherhood—in which lie the hopes of human development—we shall find them incompatible with such a civilisation, and that the present manner of living, in food, lodging, dress, culture, pleasures—of the poorest as well as of the richest—is only procurable in a system of servitude.

The modern citizen finds himself between two terrifying alternatives:—the glacier age of the old world, where all will be dead and only mechanical revolutions go on with regularity, towards which he is being protestingly but steadily dragged on by his own efforts to improve and regulate the existing order; or, on the other side, the rise of a quite new world, foreign to his conceptions and dreadful to him.

Both are alarming, with that shock of death and of birth from which we all physically shrink, through which we all nevertheless pass as we go on our inevitable journey.

II

ON FREE AND FORCED EXCHANGE

Civilisation is based on Exchange.

ALL that we usually mean by civilisation, every modern facility for comfort, transport, health, education, amusement, all the conveniences of public and private modern life, have been produced by steady co-operative toil, continued and accumulated year after year. Even civilisation in its more refined sense, the spread of humanising knowledge, the softening of popular tastes and manners, this also is largely due to the handiwork of the mass of men, who by their physical labour have made leisure and concentrated thought possible for a small number.

This labour we have been brought up to think of as free, and to regard the civilisation which is built upon and by it as the great work of a free race jointly striving towards the good of mankind. Reflection throws a different light on its nature.

Our civilisation is built up by subdivision of labour —*i.e.* the exchange of different kinds of labour, or of the goods which embody labour (replaced generally in complex societies by money, which represents the surplus or storage of goods embodying labour).

If this exchange is free and fair, then the community is industrially free and equal; but if the exchanges are forced and not fair, then the community is founded in servitude and injustice.

Exchange depends on men's willingness to part with something that they have for something which they have not—with an ivory tusk for a pound of glass beads, or with a week's work digging for the price of rent, food and clothing. The freedom of exchange depends on each having an equal urgency to obtain what the other possesses, or, to express it negatively, an equal inconvenience in doing without it.

Free Exchange.

If a baker starving with cold and a woodcutter starving with hunger were to exchange a loaf and a faggot, the exchange would be free; without the other each would perish. Or equally freely, the baker may supply bread to a sempstress who in exchange sews him two coats, with one of which he gets in exchange firing from the woodman. Or an arable farmer and a sheep farmer might freely exchange help at seed and shearing times; or two women may agree that one shall do both washings whilst the other minds both babies.

These forms of labour exchange are obviously free: neither party is compelled, or both are alike equally compelled to it. And such forms are often taken as the type of the more complicated dealings of modern industry.

Forced Exchange.

But if a man falls down my well and I bargain for 5s. to pull him out, then the exchange may be fair enough, if my time is worth 5s., but it is certainly not free, since his urgency to escape death is greater than mine to earn 5s.

If an out-of-work joiner came to me, an independent householder, and I supplied him with food and

drink on condition that he made me a table, the exchange would not be free, because he is obliged to make my table or else lose his health and working-power, whereas I, if I do not supply him with food, only lose the table. If he is hungry enough and employment precarious enough, he must make my table, or do practically anything else I want, or starve; or he may go to the workhouse, and do exactly what they want there. So this man during the time of his necessity is a slave to me or to the guardians. And if we extend myself to be a whole class or a whole community, and this one workless joiner into a whole class, then his class will be enslaved to my class, or to the community. This will be a worse slavery, because, by waiting longer or walking farther, the one joiner might find a more merciful employer than I, who from ignorance, or compassion, or because he was in more need of a table, would give him better food and perhaps clothes also; whereas the class of workless joiners cannot anyhow get outside the class, or community, who alone have food to give and are willing to take tables in exchange; and if, as is the real state of the case, the class of the table-makers were numerically far greater than the class of the food-givers, then it would be more hopelessly enslaved still, as each man's chance of getting a table to make was diminished.

This sort of exchange can no more be called free, than the man is free who, cast destitute on a lonely island, sells himself bodily to the possessor of the only cocoanut-tree and fresh-water supply in the place.

Of course the workless joiner will not willingly be caught twice. If he realises the situation he will go to the next neighbour and try him. But perhaps

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the next neighbour does not want a table ; or the two neighbours have a mutual understanding that tramping joiners must be kept in their proper places and at a low wage.

Monopoly of the Sources of Life and Labour.

Then the joiner will give up joinering, and will settle down to grow crops and cattle and make bread and meat for himself and be beholden to no man. But supposing the two neighbours singly or in compact get possession of all the available land which the joiner might use for pasture or arable, and besides that, of all the copses also from which he must needs get his wood for joinering ; and supposing this proceeding, of seizing the only means of life and labour, be extended from two vulnerable human beings to a whole neuter and impersonal set of people, or to the trustees of a whole community, then the enslavement of the joiner and all his class is complete.

This illustration is not a purely fanciful one. Something like it must have occurred in bygone times in all nations possessing a wealthy class and a proletariat. The actual process goes on under our eyes in modern days in the colonies of civilised countries, where the native is dispossessed of his land by the white settler on the plea of trade development, and by this landlessness forced to hire himself out for wages ; and if he takes refuge in the native settlements and refuses to compete in the labour market, a hut-tax or a poll-tax is employed to drive him into the net of the recruiter.

Accumulation of Capital.

Now, suppose, further, that the employer, instead of supplying the joiner with the produce of his own

labour, bread and meat of his own raising and cooking, saves up a superfluity of coats, blankets, kettles, saws and other useful articles, which he has got out of other workless artisans in a similar awkward situation, and with these, or the money he has got by selling them, pays the workless joiner's labour?

Then it is clear that the enslaved joiner and his fellows must not only work to supply the employer (individual and class) with the tables, coats, beds, etc., that the employer himself needs, but with such a superfluity of them (or their money's worth) as shall enable him to pay the services of the automobile makers, upholsterers, picture-painters, book-writers, wine-growers, domestic servants and others, whom he may desire to use. The wages will go through the master's hands but are paid with the surplus labour of the other artisans, after the employer (individual or class) has secured that part of their labour which he needs for his immediate personal use. The Master has then become a Capitalist and a great Captain of Industry.

Meanwhile the workman, having to buy with his labour even the materials of that labour, works in dire terror lest he should be forbidden to work at all.

This, or something similar to it, seems to be the industrial system which produces the flowers of modern civilisation.

And just as in the time of the Roman Empire clever or fortunate slaves became wealthy and lived insolently, buying and breeding slaves of their own, so the employers of this forced labour may themselves be performing in similar bondage some other form of enforced service; until no one knows who can be classed as master or who as serf—the whole company being in servitude to those who have possession of

the primary means of existence, and who are thereby able to demand in exchange for the necessities of life any sort of luxury and service, or to put others in a position to demand them. So that even the honest slave-driver, who wishes to escape from his position, is in a dilemma, since he must either continue to slave-drive, or be himself driven.

The Flesh-pots of Egypt.

No doubt even the bottom-most worker has some share of the luxuries he and his fellows create in their compulsory service. There is always gleanings to be done in the wake of the sheaf-gatherers, and probably there were handsome pickings for the slaves who built the pyramids as well as for the slave-contractors who supplied the slave-labourers with food. The meanest little milliner's girl is able to wear a smarter hat for the labour of the thousands like herself who give a lifetime's practice to the curling of ribbons and feathers.

How Civilisation is fostered.

For such a society is not only the product of slavery, it is itself a creator of slavishness; and one of the chief means of riveting the system on to the old-world proletariat or on to savage and "uncivilised" tribes, is by creating in them new wants and fashions—such as top-hats or mechanical toys—so that they may more readily exchange their birthright for a gramophone and a mess of pottage.

The land, then, that in his uncivilised state he cultivated, having been taken from the worker, his return is cut off, and, like the king of the fairy-tale, having once laid hold of the ferryman's oar, he must remain at the task, ferrying passengers to and fro

for the rest of his life. If one of all those hordes whose breaths are keeping up the air-ball of civilisation, despising his task and refusing his service, desires to return to his birthright and labour for himself, he finds it gone, and that he has no longer the wherewithal to live, nor work, nor even die, except under the conditions imposed by the social machine ; so that he must continue to feed it with his life and labour, not according as his own conscience or wants demand, but as the inexorable automatic mouths open or shut.

Competition and Privileged Slaves.

The number of the workers, and the consequent tense competition for employment, of course reduces them to a far more miserable and precarious existence than if there were only one foodless and homeless man with his labour to sell. So long as there are more men of a trade than the work offered, each man is beaten down to the lowest his society will tolerate. But if there were only one joiner, although he were unable to get food unless someone wanted a table, yet, as the only man who could make a table, he would have a special value. He would be nourished, tended in sickness, even cherished by the free and self-supporting employer who foresaw a need of future tables.

So any highly technical worker, or any servant with specially convenient qualities, holds a privileged, sometimes pampered, but still servile, position. So a gifted slave-musician or slave-scribe in Rome or Alexandria would be domestically petted. So it was with typists, chauffeurs, etc., until the supply met the demand. So formerly those workers who could read and write had a great advantage in the market, while

schooling was exceptional ; whereas at the present time in Western Europe the universal elementary teaching that is compulsorily received, and the artificially fostered secondary education, are raising the level of education so much as to bring mechanics, draughtsmen, clerks, etc., out of their privileged position back into the circle of keen competition ; whilst, on the other hand, the price and status of unskilled labour show signs of rising, as training and taste lead young people into genteeler occupations, and lessen competition for the rougher sorts of manual work. In past days the skilled trades, appreciating their advantages, have always, and quite reasonably, sought to form close guilds and to limit the number of their apprentices so as to maintain their vantage ground. The neo-Malthusians, too, of the modern labour movement seem partly inspired by the same idea of improving their bargaining power by limiting their numbers.

*Comfort is not identical with Freedom,
and may be a bar to it.*

But degrees of comfort have nothing to do with degrees of servitude. A skilled artisan, or specially gifted slave, does not become less servile because his wage is higher and his humours studied. Indeed, in a way, the skilled workman is in a more dependent condition than the unskilled, since, his work being more specialised and his education more delicate, he is less fitted to exist outside one particular kind of society.

The free, occasionally insolent, manners which are found in certain classes of labour (and which seem to have characterised also the upper slaves of the Roman Empire) are not, as is often assumed, a sign of " inde-

pendence," merely of a somewhat special position. That their condition is really parasitic is manifest from the preference for propertied persons not only shown, but unfeignedly felt, by persons of the profession of policemen, chauffeurs, shopkeepers, butlers, etc.—that is, by all those whose trade has been invented for the wealthy. Even when such workers call themselves and vote radical, it seems to be more as a protest against mismanagement than from a desire to disturb the order by which they live.

And all the while both workers and masters have some vague idea that the world is kept going by labour of this parasitic sort, and that they and their work all form an integral part of some huge social machine of vital human importance—quite forgetting that the whole population of the world is already fed and clothed by the labour of a small percentage, and could very well go on being so fed and clothed if all the lengthy, twisted line that connects a man with his food were short-circuited.

The Significance of Industrial Slavery.

But many people may think that this is all much ado about nothing; that industrial slavery has a merely academic meaning; that though theoretically it may be true, yet that practically it would make no difference if only "fair" conditions were secured to the workers; that, provided they are comfortable, the workers themselves do not care whether their work is of a free or servile nature.

To this the reply is:—

(1) That there can be no really fair treatment of the workers short of restoring to them the means of production that have been taken from them and monopolised; and that, when these are returned,

the liberty they lost with them will also return, and they will then ensure fair treatment for themselves.

(2) That even the barren theoretic truth of the term Industrial Slavery would be of itself of the utmost importance; for the most pragmatical utilitarian cannot deny the motor force of ideas.

(3) But to see the most direct, tangible effects, one need only glance at the lives and aims of the workers; not only at the poverty, and insecurity, for these might to some extent exist in freedom among men working for themselves and not for a master, but at the humiliation and the squalor, the stupid, monotonous drudgery in performing tasks in which they can perceive no benefit, and which no one would think worth while to do for themselves. But, above all, the manifestation of their servitude is seen in their attitude towards their work, and in the legislative interference which they incessantly demand. Everywhere their cry is for laws against long hours, for a legal wage above bare subsistence level, for sanitary regulations, for a Royal Commission on some trade, for a Labour Minister to set the whole tangle of life right—for some master, in short, above the other masters; or else for transference of all employment to the supreme master, the Government, forgetting that from that one there will be no appeal. No proof could be more conclusive that their work is not free, that they have even no conception nor hope that it might be free. No free man working for himself and getting the full reward of his labour would tolerate the by-laws and legislation that the proletariat clamour for. No crofter or settler would endure, nor obey, enactments about his hours of work; equally with the right of ceasing when he likes, he values the right of going on as long as he

pleases, not only from the politico-economical motive of acquiring wealth, but because he is interested in his work and views it as his creature, not his taskmaster. And because such work is free, it is neither wearisome nor unwholesome. To such free workers grandmotherly legislation is no friend, but an enemy. It is only the weak and dependent who call for leading-strings, and the leading-strings only perpetuate their dependence.

III

ON SOCIAL REFORM

*"Social Reforms" deal with results,
not with causes.*

THE workers themselves are more concerned with the results of their slavery than with the slavery itself ; and their organised efforts have been directed to making the circumstances of their bondage less harsh and uncertain ; and since, under the system, everyone must be wholly slave, or partly slave owner, it is at this latter state that they chiefly aim. Moreover, seeing that the indulgences and pleasures which make their slavish condition tolerable come from the slave labour of others, they are the less eager to cut at the root of these compensations. Indeed, it is common to find Labour men advocating " compulsory industrial labour," as if there were no alternative to idleness but a limited number of hours at the treadmill.

Lecturers and writers also tell the people that modern civilisation is the most glorious achievement of the human race ; and that in turning out by the latest application of science all manner of articles, many useless or harmful, they are serving humanity, and helping to confer benefits which would be inestimable if they were only distributed fairly. Many such people actually believe that a man can quite justly be forced to spend his strength and intelligence on labour in which his own will and wishes have no

part, provided that he receives his equal share of the produce of all such labour, and that his health and efficiency are not damaged in the process. In their eyes the crime of monopoly is not that it has robbed men of their independence, but that it has robbed them of the largest part of their earnings. It is as though a galley-slave were to complain, not of the oars and the chain and the lash, but that his food and bedding fell below the Trades Union standard.

Political Programmes.

Political programmes cannot often be taken seriously as measures of constructive philosophy. In democratic countries they are of necessity opportunist, but they are a useful indicator as to what is popular or supposed to be popular at the period.

Those political parties which make most noise and have most pieces on exhibition, limit their objects, and generally their ideas also, to a series of domestic improvements.

They occupy themselves in trying to make men either richer or more efficient servants—never in making them more free. No party is better than another in this respect; it is merely a question in what name the populace shall be ruled.

In Germany the Social-democratic party, which is the bogey of the middle classes, is in truth formidable, not from anything specially revolutionary in its ideas but from its bristling militancy and solidarity. It opposes both army and civil officialdom as the imperial tools, but is itself impregnated with the spirit of militarism and bureaucracy. It is no new mintage, but just the reverse side of the old coin. Its aims for the supremacy of the proletariat involve as great

interference with the lives of the workers, and as much espionage and as summary treatment of individuals as the imperial régime. Being guided by materialistic ideals, they dread any sudden shock to the social fabric ; and hence, directly they come into a position of responsibility, their programme becomes revisionist, and their schemes are directed by that social science whose nostrums grow antiquated and have to be replaced every few years. Of the six items of the official Social-democratic programme for the new Reichstag of February 1912, two aim at increasing Parliamentary control on English seventeenth-century lines, while the other four are concerned with electoral reform.

In France we find the official Labour party absorbed in Proportional representation, and in a scheme for building, by money levied in taxation, the sort of houses that working men ought to want.

Fabianism.

In England the Fabians, the official Labour Party and the Progressives throw their energies and talents into such proposals as : a limitation of the hours of active slavery to eight ; a provision of crèches with hygienic bottles and educational toys for the children of mothers obliged (under the industrial system) to go out to work ; bureaus for registering who is engaged in wage work and who is not (with a view to compelling the man who is not in service to enter it at once) ; insurance schemes for putting part of that part of a workman's wages which he receives into the bank for him, so that he may go to authorised sanatoria when he is ill, and be attended by licensed doctors ; bills for making men and women decent

by flogging them, and for locking up other people's children on humanitarian principles.

So do we see a conscientious house-mistress of the good old type take charge of her young maids' minds and morals, regulate household affairs so as to train them for good servants ; shepherd them to and from the established church in black frocks and bonnets ; physic them with patent drugs when ill ; provide them with suitable evening recreations, so that they may not be tempted to flirt at the back door ; and treat every breakage of china or decorum as a breach of the decalogue.

Such a programme is of course attractive to the political schoolmasters who have climbed into intellectual pre-eminence on the shoulders of those who "swink with their hands." It is only by inventing things of that sort that they can justify to themselves their privileged position. As for the sheep, fortunately for the professional shepherds, they only ask to be more humanely fleeced and more comfortably folded by shepherds of their own selection. They do not yet believe in a world where sheep are neither shorn nor penned.

Syndicalism.

Alone, the Syndicalist movement, afoot in France, just stirring here, seems to show a blind and groping consciousness that more government is not what is wanted. This movement does not indeed show as yet any distinct conception of what, instead, is wanted. Its immediate programme still halts at the old socialist demands for an obligatory eight-hours day and a minimum wage. It shows signs of the amalgam of opposite elements, anarchic and socialist, of which it is composed. But it is gathering

force and manifesting an increasingly definite hostility to bureaucratic methods. In it there seems to be latent a different ideal, possibly a more spiritual one than is to be found in the old recognised parties. For this reason it is regarded by them with aversion and fear; because to secure the maximum material prosperity you must also have the maximum control over the producers of it, and the rule of the expert over the unlearned. In the only great effort that has been made towards industrial freedom in recent years in England—the miners' strike of March 1912, and the anti-militarist agitation connected with it—we find the official Labour party timid and powerless, and concealing ill their hostility towards any rebel action by that class whom they are supposed to represent.

Why the Workers have sought Refuge in State Socialism.

There are three main reasons why the workers have hitherto looked foremost to their bodily comforts, and put their liberty second. The first cause is urgent poverty. When hunger takes shape and substance, then everything else becomes a shadow; and there are not many—though every generation has a few—who set freedom above food, and fire, and child. It is useless to expect lofty ideals among men made brutish by want.

On the other hand, as the primary necessities recede, and life and tempers get softer, resistance to the established order becomes more difficult, for there is more to lose, and suffering has become unaccustomed and more dreaded. The second cause then is, that the workers themselves feel the conveniences of the slave-system. They have developed a taste for cheap slave-made articles, and so have

become small shareholders in the concern ; and they also enjoy the absence of responsibility, absence of any mentally fatiguing demand for initiative, absence of worry about results.

But, above all, they have lost the imagination of freedom. They have discarded that store of hope and enterprise with which each child enters the world ; and if by any chance they find themselves in the open country, away from tram-lines and the noise of other men's feet, they are frightened as at something unnatural.

In civilised countries the worship of individuality is fashionable only among the wealthy or the degenerate, with whom it is always a nauseous cult, and dependent on the exploitation of other people. The ordinary man cannot find much to choose between the Nietzscheism of the intellectual and the more sensual selfishness of the common pleasure-seeker. Their creeds are not meant for popularity. Both, in order to keep themselves white-skinned, demand too many horny hands in others. Therefore it is no wonder that individualism is supposed to be synonymous with egoism, and has fallen into disrepute ; and that the masses who move and think and are ruled in regiments, fancy that safety can only be found in legislation that shall continually countermine every fresh mine laid by the individual exploiter.

" Social Reforms " perpetuate Slavery.

But not only is all this legislation of " social reform " a witness to the servile state of the people : it is actually involving them more irrecoverably in slavery. Those who urge against free meals for poor children that they will destroy parental responsibility, have this much truth on their side : not that the

conditions under which the poor have to rear children are not flagrantly unjust, not that it is easy for the wealthy to give to the poor anything which is not merely a toll on wrongly-gotten gains, but that every provision made for the poor by private individuals or by the State brings the poor into still greater bondage to the system under which they receive it. Such doles make them more acquiescent in their servitude, less willing to recognise it, less ready to sacrifice immediate comfort in order to attain freedom. And of the two kinds, the State dole is worse than the private dole.

It is at this time fashionable to preach that public institutions should replace private associations for charitable purposes. If it is desired to manage other people's lives for them, it is certainly done with more method and less overlapping by the Government than by a score of separate leagues; and possibly, on the whole, more cheaply also, even allowing for the large salaries paid to permanent officials.

But private charity has at least this to be said in its favour, that the individual dispensing it in person gives with it the only things which are really his to give—and those which have most value—sympathy and personal service¹; and self-denial may also come in, for even though the money which the giver forgoes does not in equity belong to him, yet he thinks it belongs, and so probably does the recipient. It is probable that private alms-giving, however inadequate and however misdirected, is less demoralising

¹ This, of course, is only true when the assistance is of a strictly parochial character, from individual to individual. Large associations (like the C.O.S.), drawing funds from outsiders and worked by business agents, have many of the faults as well as the advantages of a State bureau, and the donations sent them wholesale by wealthy persons are so much "conscience money" paid to the Treasury.

to the community than the carefully graded benefits apportioned by the State. It is true that in Naples there are more beggars visible, but at any rate they are close to the church doors and they sit in the sun.

When Government officials dispense old-age and sick pensions, free breakfasts, free medical aid, and such like, they are merely re-distributing among the workers the money taken in taxation from the workers themselves, after some of the cream has been incidentally skimmed off to pay the minister who devises the scheme, those more powerful adherents whose support keeps him in authority, and the numerous subordinates who do this valuable task of collecting the workers' money and restoring it to them again. And though, according to the more popular method, they take the money directly from the rich, yet it ultimately comes from the workers, by whose labours the rich got it.!

Such arrangements are precisely similar to that of a certain German coal-mine, where the foreman of several gangs (who engaged the men) ran a soup-kitchen for their benefit, received their pay for them, and, after deducting the cost of the kitchen and of his own trouble, passed on the remainder of the wages to the men to share out equally. They are analogous to the system by which the landowner pays the agricultural labourer 14s. a week and a cottage—the cottage representing the balance of the wage, and having the effect of keeping the labourer stationary and docile.

Indeed, society's favourite methods—both those of legislators and of philanthropists—in providing for the proletariat, physically by soup-kitchens, infirmaries, etc., and morally by schools, institutes, etc., all bear a significant resemblance to the system

of Truck-Wages, which, in private practice, was suppressed forty years ago.

The result is, plainly, not to make the workers better off than if they received the *full* reward of their labour and were left to their own devices to co-operate or act singly as they chose, but to keep them dependent on a system which makes and enforces these arrangements for their comfort. Just as we find that, where there is a kind-hearted squire, the poorer the labourer, the more he is attached to the feudal system.

In non-democratic countries, this is all more obvious ; but the Briton still fancies, because he has a four-millionth share in giving the majority to a certain set of governors, that therefore he is master of his own fate.

IV

THE STRENGTHENING OF GOVERNMENT

Governments use Reforms to increase their own Power.

I NDEED it is a flaw, inherent not in any one party but in all governments, as well as in masters, landlords, parents and other authorities, that they glorify their task, and suppose that to govern well and be governed well is the goal of human society. Characteristics and tendencies are approved or condemned as they are judged convenient or inconvenient to the existing order. To be a "danger to society" is reckoned on a level with the basest moral depravity. To breed consumptive children; to try to weaken the discipline of the army; to publicly lecture on the turpitude of the officially recognised deity—those who commit these offences—though they may do so on high moral grounds—are treated in fact if not by name as criminals. Society—not the ideal human society—but society as it exists now, is as gross a fetish as any idol of any older superstition. The amazing thing is that those very people who will support any injustice to individuals in the name of this new god, are loudest in denouncing the religious intolerance of outworn dogmas.

There are many ways of baffling inconvenient truths, and one of the most effectual is to adopt and redirect any movement which threatens dis-

turbance—to turn the enemies' guns upon themselves. It is repeatedly said in praise of the British political genius, that it forestalls revolution by gradual and moderate reforms. This does not mean that the social state itself changes: but that it assimilates the hostile element, and by continual opportunism makes the triumph of a general principle impossible. Reforms adopted by a government are either adopted so late as to have lost their use and meaning, or in such a form that they become a powerful agent in strengthening the governing classes against further encroachment. *Le bien est l'ennemi du mieux*. To take a familiar instance: The Reform Bill of 1832 was adopted by the House of Commons and forced through the House of Lords amidst popular enthusiasm, at a time when a small oligarchy held political power to the exclusion of both the middle and the working classes. It was the union of the intelligent manufacturer with the ignorant "hand" which made the Reform movement a danger to the governing classes. The Reform Bill gave power to the middle class by a limited property franchise, and the middle class immediately became divorced from the worker and a staunch bulwark of government in all its legislation for and against the poor.

The same thing happened with the Protestant Reformation. The movement, which was in essence revolutionary and individualist, was turned to political account by the rulers of the day; and, safe under the protection of the Elector of Saxony, the same Luther, who a few years before had defied Pope and Emperor, denounces the revolt of the oppressed peasants. Kings and rulers adopted the independent religion, and found in their State Pro-

testant Church a firmer pillar of their own supremacy than a Catholic Pope had ever afforded them.

Amongst all the popular movements and proposals of social reform which disturb the slumber of democratic countries, it happens that those selected by their governments are always those that tend to make the population more manageable, amiable and easy to reckon with. On reaching that point the reform ceases to be "dangerous," and is classed as "progressive."

The Trades Unions, for instance, began life as isolated combinations of men really suffering oppression and want, and banded to fight the powers that keep the keys of work and idleness. They had great wrongs to redress, and for a while fought against odds, as purely voluntary groups leading a precarious life; and thus long they were hampered by legislation and abused as anti-economic. Now, however, that they have become part of the industrial mechanism and the recognised middlemen of the labour mart, and have a financial stake in the country, this view has changed. Now that they have educated leaders—leaders, therefore, in touch with the middle and upper classes;—and now that the individual Trades Union member is so thoroughly subjected to the organisation, by means of his sick and out-of-work benefit payments, that he can be relied on implicitly to obey orders;—now, Trades Unions meet with approval from the most enlightened economists and the most commercial elements. Even if one Trades Union is for a time out of favour owing to an inconvenient strike, some local cause is blamed, usually the unmanageableness of the rank and file, but not the institution. In fact, the Trades Unions are now generally recognised

as most valuable bodies and a credit to the working men of the country, not because they voice grievances and keep up wages, but because they make it possible to handle large bodies of men securely, without calling in the military or even the police. In reality, they act as breakers-in for the Lib.-Con.-Lab. Governments. And if their power is menaced (as by the 1911 Insurance Act, which turns them into Government collecting agents), it is only to transfer the workmen into still stronger keeping—that of the State—which, by feeding, lodging, nursing, doctoring, educating, and drilling them, acquires irresistible control of them, soul and body, from the cradle to the grave.

Perhaps it is desirable here again to distinguish between this established kind of Trade Unionism and the form called Syndicalism, which, because it professes to attain the very same objects without using the Government machinery, is anathema, not only to the propertied classes but most of all to the official Labour Party leaders. Here, too, by facilitating the admission of members of the Labour Party to seats in the legislature, well-to-do-society has turned their organisation into an additional bulwark for its own protection.

The People have no Choice.

It may be said that this State control is enacted by “the will of the people.” But “the people”—a political title for the larger half of those consulted—“the people” have about as much choice offered them as the Mahdi’s prisoners between the Koran and decapitation, since they see absolutely no prospect of livelihood except what is offered them by capitalist masters on one hand, or by bureaucrat

masters on the other. For, being absolutely debarred from the land, the only source of independent existence, even if one of them dreamed of freedom he could not achieve it.

The Evolution of Slavery.

Just as the serfdom and chattel slavery of early ages gave place to industrial slavery, so there is every sign now of reversion to the tightest bonds of chattel slavery, not indeed with various individuals as masters, but in their stead, as sole master and owner, a bureaucracy acting in the name of a democratic majority.

In passing from serfdom to industrialism, the serf gained freedom of domicile, of marriage, of style of work, but, above all, freedom to choose between his masters and to bargain with them. In exchange, he lost some amount of protection, of security, and, what was of most importance, his last, slight, customary hold upon the land. When the serf became a wage worker, his master was consummated absolute lord of the soil; and in gaining his personal freedom, the worker lost finally his hopes of real economic freedom. But even such partial increase of independence as he had gained in the choice of masters and the possibility of bargaining was lost when the era of machine-and-factory labour set in. Every opportunity for employment in any particular trade then converged into two or three plexi, and into the hands of a few persons representing all the scattered individual employers of that trade throughout the country. It was the first step in collective bargaining. Instead of dealing with small depots or individual users of boots and teapots, the cobbler or pot-thrower had to deal with a few firms repre-

senting all the possibilities of bootmaking or china-casting. To meet the concentration of employers, the Trades Unions developed, amalgamating the working strength of the proletariat, but at the same time limiting further such individual freedom as remained. The process of collective bargaining was now complete, and the individual worker had become a unit in the proletarian army.

The impossibility of the employer carrying on his trade without hands ; the impossibility of the hands existing if debarred from the raw material of their work ; the ruin to the outside public if either party cut off the supply, not only of food, etc., but of the materials for other work—these things have always made industrial disputes inconvenient and alarming. But it is only recently that the organisations of employers and employed have been so perfected as to make a deadlock actually possible. Legislators and business men, scared at the glimpse of anarchy, are beginning to feel the need of a more complete control of the whole machinery of industry ; while philanthropists realise fully the failure of the present system to give satisfaction, or even a livelihood, to the mass of the population. Both agree that what is wanted is more elaborate organisation and more expert control. And so we have every device for making the worker better equipped and more comfortable, hand in hand with ever more intimate regulations as to his labour and personal life.

*Comparison of Mediæval
and Modern Chattel Slavery.*

This revived form of chattel slavery bears a curiously close analogy, even in details, to the old. It restores security (without, however, restoring any of

the old rights to the soil), and limits such industrial independence as may still exist in theory if not in fact.

1. The right of bargaining, the chief superiority of the industrial over the chattel serf, is being again subjected to restrictions. His wages and hours are being fixed, with penalties, by boards of arbitration empowered and authorised by his overlord, the Government. Similar attempts to enforce contracts and rates of pay were made in the fourteenth century, after the Black Death, when a decimated proletariat, relieved from intense competition, became impudent. It is true that at that date it was the maximum, and is now the minimum that is legally fixed; but there is not so great a difference between the two as at first sight appears, and the principle is the same. The regulation of wages was made then, as it is likely to be made now, with the object of keeping the agricultural labourer on his lord's fields and of keeping the industrial workers at work. It is no injustice to social philanthropists to say that the governing classes, as a whole, would have heard little and thought little about the inadequate remuneration of labour if landlords and farmers had not suffered from the migration of the labourer to towns, and if the organised workers had not threatened to keep trade in perpetual insecurity from fear of strikes. The minimum wage, if it is introduced by any party of the legislature, will be passed with the tacitly understood motive of making the horse quiet in harness. The mediæval attempt to fix a maximum wage failed, because it was not even ostensibly in the labourer's interests; and it was in that age impossible to prevent individual workers bargaining with individual employers. The modern attempt to fix

a minimum wage should succeed better, since it has apparent benevolence to recommend it, is desired by many of the workers themselves who are hopeless of obtaining real justice, and will have, to enforce it, all our good organisations, our admirable police and our more perfect control of every department of life. Economically, or with a view to social liberty, it is likely to be as complete a fiasco as its predecessor.

2. The second point of comparison is the treatment of the unattached or inefficient worker.

In the first period of chattel slavery, the landless and masterless were outlawed or thrown into prison; and all along the workhouse and gaol have stood open for industrial failures and played an important part in social progress. Now, with more enlightenment, we would place the workless worker into labour colonies, where his occupation will be selected for him and efficient training compulsorily given. The Labour Bureaus, though ostensibly only a servants' registry, have become, under the Unemployment Insurance Act, a step in the same direction.

Everywhere capacity to "compete on equal terms" is being made a test of the right to free movement. Of those who do not or cannot compete—the weak to the public hospital—the feeble to the institution—the rebellious to the prison or the Borstal colony. Charity itself is used as a lever of compulsion, and the district visitor and relieving officer enter the homes of the stricken, with a dole in one hand and a "case" card in the other. Their mission is not to relieve distress, but to number the people.

3. It is true that the serf may now marry without his lord's consent—if he can afford to; but the

Eugenic societies are doing their best to remove this privilege ; and if their counsels prevail, the worker will soon not be able to take a wife without medical testimony that neither of them harbours any noxious bacillus, or possesses qualities "undesirable for the race," or is the other's first cousin, or anything that the latest science pronounces contrary to the interests of society.

One can imagine the romances of the future, in which the dreaded Board plays the rôle of the Montague and Capulet relations ; and in which the two lovers are separated by the Notification of Diseases Schedule in place of the Church's mysterious Table of Affinities. No doubt, however, for the rich there will always be "dispensation " forthcoming, as in the case of the Vaccination law.

As regards the poor, indeed, our provision for other people's health is already almost perfect. Madame de Sevigné, hearing of small-pox in a cottage on the family estate, urges her daughter to send the sick child and its family to some place farther from the seigneurial residence. At first reading, one is struck by this as a crude illustration of what made the French nobility so unpopular in 1789. In reality, it compares favourably with a law which takes a sick child away from its mother, because she is too poor to spare a room for isolation and get a substitute for herself in the housework.

4. In habitat the serf is not yet quite so restricted as he was ; but under the excellent new schemes of town-planning and the zeal of some town councils in erecting barracks, he will probably soon be limited to certain sorts of dwellings in certain areas—Jewries not of religion but of class.

Such measures may make the industrial worker a

healthier animal and a more efficient tool, but they do not touch the heart of his trouble ; they only add to the loss of his economic freedom the loss of his personal freedom as well.

On the other hand, without such protective measures, industrial slavery would become utterly unendurable.

V

THE ROOTS OF SLAVERY

"There is a slavery which locks up men's bodies; and there is a freedom which sets, indeed, men's bodies free, but locks up all that they need for subsistence."

Alternatives.

(1) *Individualism.*

THERE stand before us, then, from which to choose, two half-finished social structures. There is the so-called Individualist edifice, which is supposed to be based on personal and economic liberty, but rests, in fact, upon forced competition, and is maintained by unfree labour. In practice it is the model for all business dealings, and is supported in theory by the Manchester School of economists.

It found a fancied reinforcement in the Darwinian science, which seemed to give a kind of moral sanction to the scramble of egoisms. Business men have liked to think that in relentlessly pursuing their own interests, they were obeying Nature's law of the survival of the fittest. But it is worthy of notice that the Manchester School had its vogue at just that time, when not only had pushful men unprecedented openings for success, but when the relations of employers to their employed were becoming wholesale and impersonal. A humane man can with difficulty bring himself to exact the last farthing's worth from the workman who lives at his door and boards at

his table ; but it is easy for him to persuade himself that the competition, which causes his hundred factory hands to work at starvation wages, is all for the good of society. The Merchants of Venice had their deathbed repentances, but the American boss tramples his rivals complacently in the hope of evolution.

In social matters no one consistently adheres to this school of individualism—except when it is necessary to find an excuse for refusing an alms or a subscription. Nearly all, by personal acts of mercy and weakness, seek to mitigate the severity of the business methods they profess to approve. The strongest advocates of “Get on, or get out” will invoke the State to neutralise the effects of their own policy by factory laws, or to keep alive those whom the processes of evolution have thrown on the scrap-heap. Without recognising the fundamental lack of freedom in this so-called free competition, people yet see that, as the world now is, a logical application of individualist doctrines involves intolerable cruelty above and suffering below ; and so, perceiving no other alternative, in desperation they seek refuge in State slavery.

(2) *State Slavery.*

State Slavery, by a system of communal exploitation, would prevent the exploitation of one individual by another ; it would lessen the struggle for existence, and probably increase the physical comfort of the larger number of citizens. But to succeed in this, each individual must be subjected to the thorough and intimate control of the executive. This executive may be elected and democratic ; but, if it is to control the business affairs of an intricate com-

munity, it will require despotic powers and security of office ; and if its officials are honest, zealous and intelligent, they cannot remain content with broad and superficial regulations, but must extend their disciplinary and preventive measures into the minutest details of public and private life.

Until quite recently, the nature of our experiments in social reform has not been clearly recognised. It has been masked by the fact that the leisured and influential are not affected by such legislation, and that those to whom it applies are too ignorant and too occupied to protest with effect. Hitherto, the superior classes have played with the poor as a child plays with its doll's-house. But nothing is doing so much to disturb popular submissiveness as recent practical experience of such officious beneficence. An opposing current has set in, and now the popular choice hovers undecided between these two types of society : Industrial Slavery, with so-called Individualism on the one hand, and, on the other, Chattel Slavery under the State.

Or rather, it would be more accurate to compare society in its present stage to an edifice of two styles blended—a superstructure of new art upon an eighteenth-century basement.

Is there any third practicable alternative : any form of social life which is not merely a selection of evils, or a compromise between them ?

Is it possible to find an individualism which does not lead to industrial slavery, and a communism which does not involve chattel slavery ?

Is there no society possible in which true personal liberty and true economic liberty can be secure for every man alive, and in which there is neither temptation nor opportunity for greed and despotism ?

To find an answer, it is necessary to consider the basis of slavery.

Force is the immediate basis of Chattel Slavery.

Chattel slavery, in its crudest form, depends on individual strength. Thus we find it practised of old by the trading pirates of the Mediterranean, by the Norsemen, and, to-day, by the caravans of Central Africa.

When states superseded temporary chieftains, and armies succeeded to banditti, slave-owning acquired the sanction of civil law and religious custom, and was protected by public opinion as a form of property, and had at its disposal the machinery of government. When superseded by industrial slavery, it partially disappeared, but is now re-emerging under a new form, in which individuals are no longer subject to individuals, but all become the property of the government, acting in the name of the corporate nation and backed by the police forces.

Anyone who doubts this, has only to recall some of the familiar phenomena of government that surround us, and consider, not their desirability, but their nature.

If a mediæval baron, inspired by a passion for hygiene, had ordered the dirty children on his estate to be led to the bath, and, amidst a chorus of protesting parents, taught that cleanliness was next to godliness, we should quote the circumstance as an instance of serfdom in the Middle Ages. It is no less an instance of serfdom because the County Council does it in the name of something called the Community.

If Haroun al Raschid, desiring to purify the breed of the Followers of the Prophet, had seized and

castrated all who showed signs of mental or physical decay, we should regard him as a despot ahead of his age. It will be no less despotism (though possibly behind the age) when it is done at the bidding of the Eugenics Society in the interests of something called the Race.

Chattel slavery still exists, and is now—as it has always been—supported by force, having at its back the practical, philosophic and religious reasoning predominant in the epoch and locality. And, whereas of old there was for the escaped slave a sanctuary, there is for the modern slave no escape and no refuge, for his chain has been lengthened to encircle the whole globe.

Monopoly is the immediate basis of Industrial Slavery.

With industrial slavery the case is different. It does not rest ostensibly upon force, and because the force which ultimately supports it is not in evidence, it is very commonly supposed to be a state of freedom. Those who have prospered under it usually see in their success the triumph of individual liberty and free competition ; and therefore those who have suffered by it attribute their misfortunes to overmuch individual freedom, and clamour for greater control and further checks to free enterprise.

In truth, the present industrial system is based on a forced and slavish competition brought about because a few persons own the means of livelihood of all ; so that the majority are not only forced to sell themselves to a master in exchange for a living, but also, by their excessive numbers, are driven into a deadly undercutting of one another.

Thus we have a society which has the image of

freedom, but it is the freedom of prisoners left at large within the walls of their dungeon. The movements and possibilities of men in the social conditions of to-day no more correspond to the actions of a really free society than the dynamic facts of a world which has air correspond to the results of calculations that neglect atmospheric friction.

Monopoly of the means of life is the immediate cause of industrial slavery, and this monopoly is recognised by custom and protected by the armed force of law. The same monopoly is also the indirect cause of State chattel slavery, since the nations are being driven to this as an alternative preferable to the horrors of the present industrial system.

All established systems have their advocates. All three successions of slavery—individual chattel slavery, industrial slavery, and State chattel slavery—have each in its turn been excused, even advocated, on excellent utilitarian grounds, and arguments of expediency and philanthropy are every day advanced for retaining, or adopting, some instance of one of them.

State chattel slavery and all other kinds will finally cease when public opinion ceases to furnish recruits to force—perhaps a distant day.

But, to end industrial slavery, it is only necessary at any time to abolish the monopoly of the sources of life, and this could be done immediately. To do this, it is not necessary to introduce State slavery, but only that governments should respect the true property that is owned in justice, and cease to protect the false property which is held by privilege.

Monopoly.

It becomes necessary, then, at this point to discuss

the nature of a monopoly and what we understand by the expression, Land Monopoly.

What kind of exclusive possession constitutes a monopoly in the familiar sense.

The exclusive possession of any particular thing constitutes in the strictest sense a monopoly, since no two things can be identical. For purposes of use, however, identity is rarely of importance, and similarity is all that matters. So that, if sufficient other things can be obtained exactly similar to the one exclusively possessed, that particular thing is not commonly spoken or thought of as monopolised ; since it is only when a monopoly causes inconvenience that it is regarded as being one.

For instance : the exclusive possession of King Alfred's sword would possibly be spoken of as a monopoly, and permits to view would certainly be at a monopoly price.

But the exactly analogous possession of a particular penknife would not be regarded as a monopoly, because a supply, equal to the demand, of other similar penknives can be readily obtained. If other penknives were not obtainable, and I refused to lend mine, or charged a high rate of hire for it, then the penknife too would be called a monopoly, and its hire would be a monopoly price. Or if there were other penknives obtainable but not sufficient for all those who wanted them, then my possession would be approximate to a monopoly, and my penknife would fetch an inflated, if not a monopoly price.

But neither King Alfred's sword nor my penknife would be regarded as monopolies unless I withheld them from other people who wished to see or use them.

Monopoly is the power of withholding from use.

It appears, then, that the word "monopoly," as commonly used, implies the power to withhold from use either the whole of a class of things, or some of a class of things which are not numerous enough to satisfy the demand.

King Alfred's sword is a class by itself. It is unique. The exclusive possession of it is similar in character to the exclusive possession of all the present and possible penknives that could be obtained by those wanting them.

Time a factor of importance.

A very temporary monopoly, save under exceptional circumstances, is usually of small importance, because most things that are made by labour can be reproduced, given time ; and then that class of things will cease to be a monopoly.

For instance, the exclusive possession by an enemy of all available bandages might be a monopoly of importance when a man was bleeding to death ; but, except in matters of such urgency, it would be unimportant, because any required number more of bandages could be in short time made by other people.

Price a measure of monopoly.

If an article is sold or hired, the price it fetches is a test as to whether there is a monopoly (whole or partial) in it. The price of an article in which there is no monopoly is determined by the cost of reproduction.¹ The price of a monopolised article is

¹ Economists call this the "natural" price. Such an expression is misleading. For the cost of reproduction depends on the standard pay of the producer and on the rate of interest, which are all, at the present time, most "unnaturally" affected by land monopoly.

what the would-be purchaser, or hirer, will pay, rather than go without it.

For instance : under the usual free competition of makers and sellers, the price of a box of matches is, to all alike, about a farthing. But, in a street where there are no shops, the price paid to a solitary street hawker by a rich man wanting to light his pipe may be a penny or twopence ; because the street vendor has a temporary monopoly.

Monopolised things, when not in the market, raise the price of similar things that are in the market.

Some monopolised things have no price, because the owner does not wish to sell them, or is not tempted by any price that a buyer will offer.

This is specially the case where a monopoliser of the thing or things has been put to no outlay in acquiring them, and has therefore nothing for which to recoup himself.

For instance : a man who has inherited a picture by Michael Angelo may very likely refuse to part with it for any sum. Whereas a picture-dealer, who has acquired another Michael Angelo on speculation, will sell it, but at what approaches a monopoly price, which will be lower or higher as there are more or fewer pictures by Michael Angelo in the market. Incidentally, therefore, the refusal of the hereditary owner to part with his picture will raise the price of all other pictures by the same master.

In like manner, the owner of a vacant plot in the centre of a city, by withholding it from use, enhances the price of the limited number of similarly situated plots all round.

Two conditions under which monopoly prices are created.

There are two sets of circumstances under which a monopoly price may be created for any class of things, both being dependent on the power to withhold from use.

(1) When the supply is equal to the demand, but one man or combination of men controls the whole supply.

If this sort of monopoly is to be permanent it must, of course, be in something which is by nature irreproducible from outside ; or, if the things so monopolised are reproducible, then the monopoly must be patented by law so as to extend to all future things (or sources of the things) of that class. These legal monopolies are sometimes the only kind intended by the name.

(2) When the supply is not equal to the demand, and is in one or in many hands.

In both cases monopoly prices, or extremely inflated prices, are obtainable.

(1) Supply equals demand, but supply all in one set of hands.

An instance of the first would be the total control by one soapmaker, or combine of soapmakers, of all palm-oil forests. The amount of soap produced would continue to be equal to the demand, but each quality of soap would reach approximately the maximum price at which it could be sold, because the soapmakers would always have the power of withholding soap from the market. The combine would be forced to sell, because otherwise their capital expenditure would not be recouped ; but the less their

outlay compared to the monopoly price, and the longer their business would permit them to withhold supplies, the nearer the price would approximate to an absolute monopoly price.

(2) *Supply less than demand, and in many hands.*

The second case might be illustrated by supposing that twenty thousand people were assembled for many hours to witness a Coronation procession ; and that it was known that only nineteen thousand chairs were available. The price that would be paid for the hire of these chairs would certainly not be the "natural" price (*i.e.* the normal return for the wear and tear of the chair, plus the labour of those who brought them to the route). They would let at prices measured only by the urgency of individuals to sit down and the length of their purses. It would be approximately the same whether one man owned them or one thousand men. The one thousand men would not need to combine. They would be sure of their monopoly price, because the supply fell short of the demand ; and the possession of those chairs would be tantamount to a monopoly, although in numerous hands. And if, after all, the demand turned out to be less than the supply, or the prices were found to be more than people would pay, then the prices would come down with a run on the last day ; but they would come down to the same extent if the chairs were all in one man's hands instead of in a thousand.

Now if, on the other hand, there were known to be along the route twenty-five thousand chairs, instead of nineteen thousand, for the twenty thousand spectators, then the dealers in chairs, who wished to hire them out, would be reduced to letting them at a

price which would only repay them for the wear of the chairs and their labour in bringing them. (In any case, of course, the better-placed chairs will command a better price than worse placed ones, under the same conditions.)

But suppose that some of the owners of these twenty-five thousand chairs, having had no trouble themselves in the matter, or being in no need of money, proceeded to occupy chairs themselves, and, for the sake of air and elbow-room, to spread themselves out and keep a large number of chairs all round them vacant, so that the number of the chairs for hire was again reduced to less than the number of the crowd demanding them. Then those people appropriating the chairs would be exerting the monopoly power of withholding, in an exactly similar way to the hereditary possessor of the famous Michael Angelo picture ; and, like him, they would be raising the price of the rest of similar commodities to a monopoly pitch.

Land Monopoly.

The land monopoly is exactly parallel with the monopoly of these seats.

There is enough land to employ, at good remuneration, the whole population (whether in agriculture or industry), and to give independent occupation to such as desire it ; but there is no possibility of increasing its extent from without.

Many of that minority, who exclusively possess the control of portions of the earth's surface, have not only occupied what will satisfy their own needs, but have also exercised their monopoly power of withholding from use, so as to keep other land vacant or half used. They have no necessary inducement or

need to do otherwise ; and that it is actually done, is shown by the fact that many country landlords get no more than 2 per cent. on the capital value of their land ; thus proving that ownership, without even normal return, is all they want.

In withholding these portions from use for privacy or pleasure, like the owners of the seats, they create a shortage in the remaining land, and cause an undue competition for it which results in monopoly rents to the owners.

This effect reacts on the cause ; for monopoly rents, received by a landowner from one place, put him in a position to despise or neglect any advantage to be gained from using or selling his inferior sites, and encourage him to keep them unused.

Thus the monopoly appropriation of land first drives the population off some land ; and then takes tribute of them in monopoly prices and rents, owing to the artificial shortage which this first appropriation creates.

The robbery which drives them away enslaves them. The robbery which taxes them in monopoly rents beggars them, and also confirms their slavery by making them unfit to seize such opportunity of freedom as might yet present itself.

Land Monopoly is the most unjust of monopolies, because monopoly in things created by labour is justifiable, but natural resources cannot be justly appropriated.

Of all monopolies, the Land Monopoly is the most unjust, and the most deadly in its effects on humanity.

There are some monopolies with which society

cannot in justice interfere, however great the inconvenience it may suffer from them.

To anything made by labour, the makers alone have any claim, or those to whom they may transfer it under free conditions. Society cannot with justice take it away from them. If a man has invented, or has had voluntarily transferred to him by the inventor, a sovereign cure for cancer, of which no one but himself knows the secret, then it is hard to find any injustice, although there may be great inhumanity, in his keeping such a thing to himself, or hiring it out at a price unpayable by the mass of mankind. Or if Stephenson, having made the only steam-engine, had then refused to sell or use it, society could not rightly have sent policemen to take it from him, however badly trade might have been suffering from want of it. All society could justly have done, would have been to try and construct others in place of it.

Such things are not natural resources, but the product of labour, and are the rightful property of the producer.

But land, being a natural resource, like air, water, light, is the birthright of every creature. It belongs to everybody, and therefore belongs exclusively to nobody. Each individual has a right to a potential share of it for use ; and none has a right to exclude other individuals from their share, nor to arrogate to himself any benefits arising from the possession of any specially advantageous portion of it.

Land Monopoly the most pernicious of monopolies.

Besides being the most unjust, land monopoly is also the most pernicious of monopolies. Things created by labour, being subsequent to human life,

are not generally essential to it. But land is, like other natural resources, a prior condition of human existence and an absolute necessity for the exercise of all human faculties ; so that whoever controls land, controls through it the life and labour of his fellow-men.

Subsidiary monopolies.

It is possible that, besides this appropriation by individuals of natural resources, there are other monopolies which help to maintain industrial slavery, but, on examination, it appears that these monopolies are subsidiary to the main one, and either are tyrannical because they include ownership of certain natural resources, or would lose their power of exploitation if the monopoly of natural resources ceased. Such is that kind of quasi-monopoly which is created when some individuals, owing to the primary monopoly of land, succeed in amassing the wealth produced by others—a subject which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Industrial slavery, then, would be destroyed by doing away with the unjust monopoly that is its primary cause—exclusive landownership.

With free access to land, there would be no necessity to make masters, and less temptation to make slaves.

It is obvious that if the power to withhold land be withdrawn from individuals, and free access to land restored to the whole population, any necessity for industrial slavery ceases. With sufficient free land available for use, no men need perforce work for masters, but could at will support themselves, singly or co-operatively, either directly by the food

they produce, or by whatever trade the soil and site make most remunerative, whether by horticulture, mining, pot-throwing, brickmaking, or any other occupation.

On the other hand, there would be less temptation for men to enslave each other by laws, for the sake of peace and order : First, because the interaction of individuals on each other would be less incessant, irritating and intolerable ; there would be, in short, more room, physically, mentally and morally ; and so less urgency for *repressive* legislation. For instance, with less wealth and less poverty, less idleness above and below, there would be less crime, less envied property to protect, and less need to protect it, less call for prisons, police, madhouses and armies. Second, with better conditions of housing, work and general circumstances of life, there would be less temptation to, and less excuse for, *charitable* legislation of the social-reform type, with its administrative train of hospitals, medical inspectors, C.O.S. secretaries, and compulsory schools.

Indeed, reflection will show that land monopoly is by itself capable of causing the most significant of our modern social and industrial phenomena ; and that it is sufficient to account for the sullen crowds of trades unionists, police and blacklegs on the London wharves and jetties to-day, as well as for the guns that are shaking the city in proclamation of a royal birthday.

VI

ON LAND AND CAPITAL

Capitalism.

IF the destruction of land monopoly did not carry with it the destruction of capitalism, it would be insufficient, and land reform would be preached in vain.

The evil of capitalism is so self-evident that no argument could override the instinct which tells us that there is something wrong in the society which authorises it. To the plain mind it is inconceivable that the amazing disproportions of wealth, with which we have grown familiar, can rest upon a just foundation.

This possession of great wealth and consequent power by some persons, contrasted with the poverty and dependence of others, is in itself shocking to humanity; and at various times various arguments have been used to try and reconcile the conscience to such disparities.

The Customary Apologies of Riches.

The religions of the East and of the European Middle Ages placed Sanctity in Poverty. God looked more favourably upon the poor; and the rich were more likely to burn in hell-fire. Thus a rough balance was dressed between material and spiritual advantages.

With the growth of Protestantism and similar

creeds, and the contemporaneous rise of a sober and intelligent manufacturing class, riches were explained as the reward of virtue—the correlated idea being, that the rich man was the virtuous citizen and benefactor of society.

Modern social developments have, to some extent, dispelled this idea ; and most of us now are ready to admit, that reward and merit do not always—nor indeed frequently—walk hand in hand. Very great wealth, although it may result from special diligence and skill, yet can only be created by them under those forced conditions, which enable a clever man to retain more of the produce of other people's labour than they would voluntarily give him in exchange for his special skill, if they had the ability to bargain freely.

This is so obvious, that such defence of our present capitalistic system as is nowadays made on the ground of individual freedom of competition, only rouses general suspicion of so-called Individualism ; and social revolutionaries, however widely they differ, nearly all agree in concentrating their attack on the Capitalist.

Definitions.

By “ Capital ” is here meant wealth that is used to bring about the production of more wealth, and by “ Capitalism,” the amassing in certain hands of great wealth—since all wealth has at present latent in it the power of becoming Capital.

The word “ Capitalist ” is used in the loose sense in which social revolutionaries use it, to mean a person who controls large masses of Capital. For the purposes of the argument it is needless to discuss exactly what kinds of wealth under what circumstances make a Capitalist.

Assaults on Capital.

While the ordinary semi-socialist legislature (Liberal or Conservative) is content to lop his crest by death-duties, increment- and income-taxes, the professed Socialist would like to abolish the Capitalist altogether, by in some way transferring all wealth produced by the people to a central trust. (Some, indeed, actually favour the concentration of capital in a very few hands for convenience of this future transference.) This socialistic method, of course, merely transfers the ownership of the serfs from private individuals to the State. In short, it destroys Capitalists but leaves Capitalism; and, while attempting to equalise wealth, perpetuates slavery.

In what the Evil of Capitalism consists.

For the distinctive evil of Capitalism lies not in the unequal distribution of riches, but in the power which it gives over an enslaved and bread-seeking population. The social sin of the Capitalist is not that he has more comforts than his neighbours, but that he is their taskmaster, and that he has become their taskmaster by filching the results of their labour under forced conditions of exchange.

The Real Enemy.

But cruel as it always is, and insolent as it often is in its ostentation, Capitalism needs no direct attack; because it is not the primal cause of industrial slavery, but its result. We will not here discuss the question whether it is even possible to attack it directly with success. The Capitalist has hitherto drawn the fire of both Socialists and Anarchists, because he bulks

large and showy, because his gold and fatness are obvious to the world. In truth, he is only the scarlet-and-brocaded porter who struts under the public eye. The real master is his employer, the little man in black, hidden away, whom the public ignore—the landowner.

The wealthy man, who figures prominently in the Press or on the Stock Exchange, the Capitalist and so-called Employer of Labour, is not the first cause of the competition and attendant degradation of the people ; he only takes advantage of these evils. The causes of the evil may be quite poor men. One of them, for instance, may be an agricultural landlord, who from indolence, or to avoid high rating, or from want of capacity, keeps his paternal acres half used—an unfruitful waste of field, copse and pleasure-ground, fenced round against a dwindling population. Or he may be a small speculator, who with his scrapings has bought a plot of urban land cheap, to hold as a good investment for his son against the time when it shall be sold at a famine price. It is not necessary to be rich to be a robber.

*Diverse views as to the part
played by Land Monopoly.*

Hitherto, revolutionists against the present system have, for the most part, ignored the fundamental character of Land Monopoly ; they have regarded it, if not with indifference, yet as merely one of a long row of monopolies which must all in turn be smashed by strikes or controlled by legislation. They have tended to regard the preaching by Henry Georgeites of the “ Single Tax ” as a political red-herring, and treated the movement with great suspicion and some hostility, as a doctrine subtly formed to reinforce the

capitalist, under the pretence of doing justice to the proletariat.¹

The Communal-Anarchists fear that the Land Reform crusade will draw off attention from the chief feature of their programme—the communalisation of all produce and means of production. They look upon it as a game-by-the-way, which will leave Capitalism, the enemy, untouched.

The Bureaucratic Socialists, again—the I.L.P., Fabians, etc.—see that the result of the Single Tax would be to leave the individual free and render the State impotent.² And since their aim is to rule the community for the community's good, they oppose free land as hostile to land-nationalisation and a barrier to their plans.

Indeed, so long as the ultimate results of the destruction of Land Monopoly are thus partially understood, there can appear to be only two methods of assailing the capitalists : either

(1) The State-Socialists' scheme of giving all rights over the soil and the control of its use into the hands of a central bureau (or sub-bureaux); and this, as was said before, involves complete chattel slavery for the whole population. Or

(2) The Communal-Anarchist plan of abolishing money (as facilitating accumulation) and pooling all produce of labour for common use; and

¹ There is a hint of some such divergence in point of view in the Preamble to the Provisional Rules drawn up in 1864 by the first council of the "International." The English version (paragraph 2) runs : "The economical subjection of the man of labour to the *monopoliser of the means of labour, that is, the sources of life*, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence." The French version is simply : *L'assujettissement du travailleur au capital est la source de toute servitude : politique, morale, et materielle.*" (The italics are mine.)

² Or, perhaps they do not see it after all !

this too would be an infringement of individual rights.

The end of Land Monopoly is the end of Capitalism.

But a deeper consideration of the relation of Capitalism to Land Monopoly shows that neither of these courses is necessary. It is only needful to restore to each and all of the population ready access to land, for them to escape from the dominion both of the Capitalist and of the State, and attain to complete personal and economic freedom, retaining each for himself the work of his own hands. Because—

If Land Monopoly ceased, the employers of labour would no longer be able to exploit their workers by keeping down wages and keeping up prices; and therefore would be also unable to accumulate capital and give it that concentration which is a monopoly power.

Exploitation.

The power of the Capitalists to exploit the community comes in three ways, and all three are due to Land Monopoly.

(1) From the actual possession of special land and the sources of wealth inherent in it, which enables them to forestall competition with themselves, and so to raise prices.

(2) From taking advantage of the overcrowding and undercutting in the labour market, which is due to the general restriction of the use of land, and which enables all employers to get cheap labour.

(3) From the monopoly power which capital acquires from mere mass, when it becomes concentrated—a concentration rendered possible by the two preceding causes.

(1) *Power of Capitalists arising directly from possession of land.*

In the first case, where the capitalist has obtained possession of sites and natural resources valuable to his industry, the monopoly profits which he makes are due to his ownership of such land—although he need not actually work it—and are a landlord's profits. In such cases the scarlet porter and the man in black are fused in one person, and the result is a landlord-capitalist, or pseudo-capitalist, owing his power to exploit directly to the ownership of a monopoly of natural resources.

Anyone who will glance down the Stock Exchange Share List will find that at least three-quarters of the companies there scheduled are this sort of pseudo-capitalist. They have got a "cinch." The modern tendency of business men seems to be to despise the now precarious profits that depend on special skill and personal industry, and to direct their efforts always to securing some partial monopoly. It is in this way that the biggest fortunes are made; and the more striking illustrations are what may be called

The "Vertical Trusts."

It is common to find many firms, where great profits are made, owning, abroad or at home, those lands on which the material of their trade is raised, and having control of the routes and terminal sites whereby alone it can be brought to market. Thus, the two great English soap-producers are acquiring in rivalry the virgin palm-forests of West Africa and of the Islands of the Pacific. Chemical manufacturers own their own brine-fields. Beef-extract manufac-

turers control estancias in the Argentines. And so they are not only safe from the extortion of other landlords, but are able themselves to secure monopoly profits on their goods. Thus, too, the big Trusts in America and Cartels in Germany are apt to be "vertical" trusts—*i.e.* to have a foot on the soil, and to own (or control) the raw material, and often also the means of transport. So the United States Steel Trust controls the easily worked ore deposits at the head of Lake Superior; so the Oil Trust controls, not only the oil-fields of half the world, but the pipe-lines of America. So the great newspapers control, not only their own paper-mills, but forests and water-power in Norway, Canada and Newfoundland to make the pulp. The German Finished Steel Cartel has worked back to the control of the Westphalian iron and coal fields; Armstrongs, Vickers, Palmers, etc., control their own iron-mines in Spain or elsewhere.

"Water."

Owing to such grounding, these landlord-capitalists are more or less able to control the market for their special product; and the profits of their investment do not correspond to any normal rate of interest upon the capital actually invested in plant, etc., but are a monopoly rent extorted from the community. The capital has been "watered."

The "vertical" trust, or industry, is thus the particular landlord-capitalist's special creation for restricting production and raising prices, and thus exploiting the community. But the whole world of landlords is banded together to restrict employment and depress wages. It is true that, but for the original possession of more than average capital, the capitalist

employer would neither have possessed the information nor the cash and credit to secure a monopoly of such natural resources. And this brings us to the second point.

(2) Power of Capitalists arising from cheap labour due to restricted use of land.

Both large and small employers are able to exploit their workpeople by depressed wages. They are able to do this, thanks to the competition in the labour market caused by restrictions on the use of land and the natural sources of work. Whether the individual employer himself amasses capital in this way, or no, the result is to put the whole wage-earning class in a position of dependence on capitalists. They are dependent on the capitalists for the tools of even the simplest industry. Both causes—this and the preceding—act and react, multiplying the slightest advantage gained in any business transaction, and making each low vantage-ground a jumping-off place for a higher.

Why Labour is cheap.

An "employer," under the present system, finds it possible to hire men at a price below the full reward of their labour, because men are legally debarred from working for themselves on the only source of production, the land (whether as miners, potters, farmers, etc.), or from getting, except at a monopoly price, the raw material for any trade, and so are forced to sell themselves to some master, who is able to "give employment"—that is, to sell a permit to work.

If, under existing circumstances, the employment offered were equal to the numbers of the landless

population, if there were one job for every man, there would be no undercutting in the price of labour from competition. Working men would then temporarily receive good wages from their employers. They would thus temporarily escape that middleman, the capitalist exploiter, but would fall directly into the clutches of the landowner, who, owing to the increased general prosperity, would promptly raise rents and royalties, thus reducing the workman ultimately to his first condition.¹

As it is, however, a great deal of land is actually held out of use, or in partial or unsuitable use, so that the opportunities of employment are much fewer than the numbers of those seeking it. In popular terms, there are at least three men after one job. The result is an undercutting in wages, and consequently the workman receives in payment only a very small proportion of the value of his labour.

The balance is divided between the permanent monopoly of the landlord (that is, the rents for sites and natural resources) and the temporary monopoly of the employer, of which the amount depends on the competition then prevailing in that trade. If competition in his trade is keen, the employer makes no monopoly profits, and works himself at a "management" wage, and—under present conditions—for whatever is the normal rate of interest on the capital he actually employs.

Thus, though the Land Monopoly enables an employer to get what is virtually serf-labour at an unduly low price, he himself only gets the benefit of low wages so long as competition does not spring up in the

¹ The same result might be obtained with a great bureaucratic effort by legislation. A legal minimum wage would have precisely the same effect of temporarily fattening the worker and damaging the Capitalist for the sole ultimate benefit of the landowner.

industry ; for competition, besides lowering the price of his goods, immediately increases the demand for both land in that district and for the raw material of that industry ; so rents rise, and the landlord eventually sops up the advantages. It is therefore only under peculiar circumstances that the small employer is able to become a large capitalist and acquire any monopoly power, unless he contrives to make himself at least partially landlord of his own industry. The worker gets the least he can in any case. Capitalist and landlord divide the profits in varying proportion.

(3) Power of Capitalists arising from concentration of capital.

As we have shown, then, capitalists hold a monopoly power : first, from direct ownership of land, the source of wealth and field of labour, when — as pseudo-capitalists — they draw profits identical with the monopoly rents drawn by landlords ; secondly, from the restriction in the use of land which forces all workers to work at low wages. But as the peaks of Capitalism emerge, they begin to overshadow the lesser hills below them ; and concentrated capital, so acquired through land monopoly, gains a peculiar monopoly power through its very size. The scale on which excessive wealth enables a financier to carry on his operations makes it possible for him to freeze out competitors. He has a controlling interest in the railways, the steamships, the newspapers, the parliaments ; he can secure for his own industry special terms ; he can have special sources of information in every corner of the globe. He can afford to bribe or overbid small budding concerns. He can afford to undercut less wealthy rivals at a temporary loss. He can—as in the Tobacco Trust—

get control of the retail trade. He can advance his friends and ruin his enemies ; and the consumers of his products cannot escape him. Moreover, in so far as the industries over which he has a monopoly control is a specially skilled one, he has a monopoly hold also over the skilled and specialised workers engaged in that trade, who are not fitted for employment elsewhere.

Effect on Capitalism of the destruction of Land Monopoly.

But suppose the land monopoly to be broken down, the power of acquiring exclusive control of certain kinds of sites and natural resources would be at an end.

All the artificial scarcity of opportunity due to the disuse or misuse of land must cease. Sites for industry would be obtainable at prices possible for persons in small circumstances, and the capitalist would find competitors in the field. As all land fell into full use, more enterprises would be started and more labour required, so that the undercutting of wages would be lessened and quite cease. Workmen would then demand, and be able to get, full pay—a tendency seen now in countries where labour is scarce. Temporary and monopoly profits must vanish, since competition in industry, difficult now, would be easy then, when the raw materials were thrown open and their price sank.

It is true that the extra demand for capital to start new businesses would, at first, tend to raise or keep up the interest on borrowed capital. But labour, being no longer over-plentiful, would have the game in its own hands ; and the workers, no longer squeezed between the employer and the landlord, would

become independent of the financier, as high wages enabled them to save and create in co-operation their own capital.

*The effect of Free Marginal Land.
Destruction of the "Iron Law," and
fixing of a Full Wage Standard.*

But also there would be another result—in our opinion the most important of all:—the absolute freeing of the worker from the necessity of wage labour. With the disappearance of land monopoly, there would be spare free land on the margin of cultivation, land that could be worked by the independent workman, paying neither rent nor rates, but secure in his occupation, instead of being, as at present, lost to use among the property of country land-owners. Thus, anyone who found it impossible to get work from a master, or who was discontented with the conditions of his service, would be able, as an alternative, to employ himself directly on the land, producing for his own support. This land on the margin of cultivation would in effect form a reservoir for the overflow of the labour market, preventing undercutting, and fixing a standard by which the wages of hired workers would regulate themselves. Every improvement in labour-saving devices would then go—not, as now, to increase the landlords' rents or add to the profits of the capitalists, but to lessen the amount of land having high site-value and raise the margin of cultivation. This would leave better land free, thus making the profits to be got by self-employment greater, and heightening the general level of wages.¹

¹ For a discussion of the whole subject of land on the margin of cultivation and of economic rent, see Chapter VIII.

If this be so, then the end of land monopoly is the end not only of capitalists, but also of capitalism—not only of taskmasters, but of slavery and unjust inequality.

*With the downfall of Land Monopoly,
Riches will lose their purchasing power.*

The above is by far the most important aspect of the question. But, as a corollary, it should be noted that, even if after the destruction of land monopoly a certain amount of capital still lingered on, amassed in private hands owing to inheritance or in some other manner, yet its purchasing power would be gone. Not only would the profits of capital fall (as shown), since monopoly profits could no longer be made out of depressed wages, and since capital would be in a greater number of hands, but also, it would no longer be able to command men nor to force them to exchange the produce of their labour.

One reason why a rich man can get a poor man to work for him is that £10 represents a different order of things to the rich man and to the workman whose work he wishes to get. To the rich man it means a superfluity of goods over and above his ordinary wants: if not used as capital, it would be translated into such things as books, motor tyres, greenhouses, pictures, trips abroad—in short, luxuries. To the working man, under stress of competition, the same sum represents bread, boots, house, bedding, doctors' fees—necessaries.

This is the special quality of the rich man's wealth. He is exchanging articles of indifference for articles of great urgency under cover of the same coin. But if the land monopoly were broken, so that employment offered itself to all men, either independent

labour on the margin, or certain work at a safe and high wage (a wage that would not be levelled continually by proportionately rising rent), then the coin would represent to the workman the same order of things that it represented to the rich man ; and Dives in quest of labour would be bargaining superfluities against superfluities, not superfluities against necessities.

A man who can at will, by his own labour, be secure of liberty, house, food and fire, will not readily sell himself to another, even now, for the sake of a few extra comforts. He will be still less likely to do so, when there is no longer in society the rivalry and snobbishness induced by the perpetual spectacle of a wealthy and exclusive class.

The man whose income is £20,000, is a thousand times richer than he who has £20 a year, and a hundred times richer than he who has £200 ; but the latter, in bargaining power and independence, is past comparison more than ten times better off than he who has the £20 a year. The possessor of the £20,000 income can and will buy the man of £20 a year ; but if he had £200,000 he could not buy the man of £200 a year. For a man can live free and comfortable on £200 a year ; on £20 a year he cannot : he must get more somehow, even by selling himself.

Thus, even if a few wealthy persons for a while lingered on until their inherited possessions were consumed, their power to command and enslave as capitalists would be gone. To destroy capitalism, it is not necessary to introduce the plane and spirit-level, nor to abolish true private property (the work of a man's own hand or brain), nor to hinder exchange and stop accumulation by prohibiting any token of

value, nor to make any fresh bonds and barriers at all, but merely to cease legalising and protecting the fundamental injustice of land monopoly.

Justice and Expediency.

It is because this fact is not clearly recognised, that social reformers are disposed in their despair to throw justice and individual freedom overboard, and try to right social misfortunes by laws of expediency. They seem to assume that the bulk of mankind if left to itself must go wrong, and that only the utmost ingenuity of repression, subvention and guidance can save the world from shipwreck ; and they are urged on by sheer compassion for the sufferings of the submerged thousands.

But they might as well try to " put a bit in the jaws of the sea." Humanity is too big for their strait-waistcoats, and needs nothing but to be rid of its irons in order to stretch its limbs and walk upright, alone.

How to attack land monopoly is the subject next to be considered.

VII

VARIOUS THEORIES ABOUT LAND REFORM

Land reformers differ in aims as well as in methods.

“**L**AND REFORM”—a foolish name, since it is not the land but the dwellers on it who need reforming—covers a menagerie of aims and programmes.

The idea that the misuse of land is in some way connected with social troubles is too obvious not to spread directly it is expressed. Artists and poets, desiring to renew Arcadian scenery; rural proprietors, anxious to revive agriculture; moralists, planning the restoration of virtue by means of wholesome labour; philanthropists, scheming to turn slum-dwellers into model-villagers; Fabian socialists, needing scope for their sociological ingenuity; eugenists, in search of a good laboratory for the concoction of the human race; all these, in their cry for “land reform,” unite with the financier, who sees in the locked-up riches of the soil fresh fields for exploitation, with the statesman, who perceives a new source of revenue, and with the anarchist and single-taxer, for whom the land is a key to social revolution.

Alas! the apparent unity is not likely to endure. Though parties now are ostensibly divided chiefly by differences of method, there is a deep underlying divergence of principle which is already beginning to cleave land reformers into two sections; and if as yet the lion sometimes lies down with the lamb, it is

because neither recognises the other. For some of these land reformers wish utterly to destroy land monopoly ; but the larger number wish to adapt it to their own notions of social fitness, and therefore are naturally excluded in discussing methods of attacking it. These latter desire to control land, as a workman controls his tool to whatever end he has in view ; and amongst them may be reckoned the majority of philanthropists and politicians, in short, all those social reformers whose design is to better the world by various forms of benevolent despotism, and who aim not at freeing the people by freeing the land, but at using the land to govern the people.

Social reforms benefit land monopolists in the favoured areas.

Not only have these reformers not endangered land monopoly, their schemes have been actually such as to intensify its evils and fortify the monopolists. Such measures as the purchase by county councils of agricultural land for small holdings, must obviously increase the monopoly price of all country property in the coveted area, and saddle the small-holder with a disastrous rent. In point of fact, the Small Holdings Act of 1907 promptly raised the price of land in certain districts by 15 per cent., according to the statement of the then Under-Secretary for the Board of Agriculture ; while the tenants are groaning under the high rents needed to recoup the ratepayers.

A similar effect would of course follow in towns on the State purchase of slum property, and the erection at the ratepayers' expense of model dwellings. The disappearance of the slum renders the surrounding neighbourhood more attractive, and neighbouring rents rise in consequence. Anyone who has watched

the transformation of Seven Dials into Shaftesbury Avenue will recognise a practical illustration of this truth.

The erection of dwellings at "charity" rents would have the simple effect of perpetuating that sort of "charity." Some philanthropist in Parliament recently proposed, that the State should provide houses for working men who get less than fifteen shillings a week. Were his scheme realised, he need not fear that his houses would ever lack inhabitants. While industrial slavery continues, the depression of town rents to a country level will not succeed in giving rural charms to the streets of Shoreditch; it will only depress the wages of other places besides Shoreditch to the wages of Bedfordshire. The only certain gainers in this arrangement are, not the workmen, who lose at one end what they gain at the other; not the small capitalist employers, whose profits, under the present system, are limited, like the workmen's, by competition; but those whose spoils are indefinitely capable of expansion—the landlord and the landlord-capitalist.

Such measures as these make the land neither cheaper nor more accessible for free men; the only sure and permanent beneficiaries in each case are all or certain landowners.

Every kind of suggestion has been made to remedy unemployment, besides the only reasonable one of freely opening the gates to the source of all employment. Since misery is greatest amongst the unskilled labourers, it has been imagined that a solution would be found by rendering them skilled, by transferring the competition in the labour market from a lower to a higher grade of worker. With this end in view Trades' Schools and apprenticeship schemes are

fostered, whose clever young scholars drive the elderly and less up-to-date artisan into the street, that the production of wealth may increase and the site value of industrial towns rise.

It must be the same with all other attempts to benefit the working class without going to the root of the social trouble. A minimum wage may, incidentally, kill a few small capitalists and employers; but it must result either in higher rents or higher prices, and so does but entrench landlordism and capitalism still more strongly. Of little use, either, is it to tax profits or incomes. Such taxes are added to the cost of production and transferred to the consumer in higher prices. Such measures will not unlock to labour the closed gates of employment, nor set free one serf whom the capitalist controls.

Anarchists¹ and Single-Taxers.

Of the named sorts of politicians, there remain but the anarchists and single-taxers who desire the genuine destruction of land monopoly—besides those many persons who, while holding very incoherent opinions, are yet, by instinct, individualists.

Of these, the anarchists, like the socialists, consider land as only one of several equally important factors in the industrial problem. They do not recognise its basic character; and therefore they concentrate their fire on capitalists and the money system, and, in treating of land, content themselves with various empirical and arbitrary settlements, which do not seem to have any reasoned connection with the

¹ By "anarchist" we do *not* mean a person who attempts to redress injustice by throwing bombs. It is obvious that no genuine anarchist could approve of explosives and terrorism any more than he approves of police and prisons. Such things are only an attempt to supplant one reign of force by another.

distinctive peculiarities of land as an agent of production and necessity of life. Indeed many writers, of all schools, seem to regard land as a sort of material used in agriculture, rather than as the source of all organic life and mother of all industry ; and they ignore altogether its essential characteristics of space and site.

About the year 1851 the French anarchist Proudhon wrote (*Idée Gén. de la Rév.*, v. 5) : " It was with the land that the exploitation of mankind began ; its solid foundations were laid upon the land. The land is still the stronghold of the modern capitalist, as once it was the citadel of feudalism and of the ancient aristocracy." Yet Proudhon, in the preceding pages, proposes cheap houses and abolition of interest as the panacea for urban troubles, and in the subsequent ones, a sort of peasant proprietorship with a communal levy of half the produce, as a solution of agricultural difficulties !

A similar inconsequence of ideas is found in many honest and zealous revolutionaries of to-day, and seems to be due to a mental confusion of land, the source of life and labour, with the wealth produced from it by labour.

Confusion between Land and the Products of Labour.

(1) Both considered as private property.

This failure to distinguish the difference between land and labour-created commodities, and to discern all that is involved in that difference, is continually vitiating all plans for reform.

If land is placed in the same category with labour-created wealth, then of course the same ideas about ownership and property will be applied indifferently

to both. According to this view, if a book or a knife can be privately owned, so can land. If, on the other hand, land is to be communal, then also commodities created by labour must be communal.

Now, if land is regarded as a private possession—like a book or a knife—individual economic freedom must produce the rule of an oligarchy—as at present ; for whatever persons get control of the land will rule their fellow-creatures, and without free access to land, social liberty is only a name. Hence it comes (as was pointed out in Chapter V.) that the Manchester School of individualists, who regard land as private property, have failed to secure social justice, or even to amend the relations between capital and labour.

Bakunin wrote, about 1867, that liberty alone was but the liberty to die of hunger, and therefore only a farce. Without free access to land this is true, for liberty involves liberty to make a living, which involves use of land. But with free access to land the saying would be meaningless ; for land and labour together are the sole creators of food and shelter, and it is only when they are separated that starvation becomes the alternative of slavery.

A Digression on Free Access to Land.

“Free access to land” : that means, that there shall be for every man free opportunities for individual use of a portion of that land which has no special advantages of nature or site ; and that no land shall be any longer appropriated for use, nor withheld from use under the false claim of private property, except a full equivalent be paid to the rest of the community. Free access to land means a potential share for each individual in all that land for which there is no com-

petitive demand, which is, at the time, "on the margin of cultivation."¹

For it is to the use of a portion of such land only that any individual has an absolute unqualified right. To the use of any portion of land, which has a competitive value because it gives a special privilege, no individual can lay absolute claim; but he must make a return for its special value to those other claimants from whom it is appropriated. In other words, he must pay a rent to the community. And so long as an individual pays this rent to the community for the special value of special land, it cannot rightly be in any person's power to dictate to him any other terms, nor any special method for its use. Nor can it be within the just power of any central or local Government to grant permits for the use of land to those whom it may favour, and under regulations which it may choose to impose. Whilst paying to the community the special value of his land, the occupier is by right freed from any further economic obligations towards society; any other compulsory levy taxes not his privilege but the fruits of his labour—not what he has taken from the world but what he has added to it.

But without such free access to land, social liberty must be abandoned, and all that can be aimed at will be a rough material equality, maintained, either by continual prunings of the very wealthy to subsidise the very poor, or by a compulsory pooling of all the wealth produced by labour. The injustice of such methods is disguised by talking of "labour" where "labourers" is meant; as if labour were an organism, possessing but two arms and two legs. To "secure to labour what labour creates" has a high and

¹ See Chapter VIII.

plausible ring, but it merely means sharing the fruits of A, B and C's toil among all the letters of the alphabet. However cunningly concealed, this is what all schemes for the distribution of wealth amount to, whether they be in the crude form of collective ownership, or in the familiar and accepted shape of rates and taxes on houses and machinery and incomes ; or of the familiar juggle of 9d. for 4d. ; or of tariffs (whether buyer or seller pays the duty) ; or any other way of compulsorily levying wealth from one person, to spend either on the benefit of other individuals or on so-called common services. Yet between such schemes we must needs choose while land continues to be erroneously treated as private property ; and we have the anomaly that while it is so treated, genuine private property is continually tampered with.

Confusion between Land and the Products of Labour.

(2) *Both considered as communal property.*

To return to our theme : When land and commodities made by labour are placed in the same category, then, if both are treated as private property, the present condition of industrial slavery must ensue. If, on the other hand, both created wealth and land are alike regarded as common property, then either the kingdom of heaven must come to effect the arrangement amicably, or open despotism must prevail. For just as no man can rightly monopolise the common soil, because no man made it, so no man can rightly be forced to share with the community anything that his own brain and limbs have made. Community of goods could only be enforced by a tyranny as great as that which now drives the tramp and the gipsy from their camp-

fire on the common into the stone-breaking yard of the workhouse.

As land is true public property, so the produce of labour is true private property.

Such interference is only supposed necessary by reformers because they fail to see that the unjust accumulation of wealth, and its dangers, spring from land monopoly alone ; that, far from being an inevitable result of unbridled liberty, they are due to the legalised confusion of land with private property. For social liberty is possible ; and it rests on the recognition of a double right : the right of everyone alike to a use of the soil, and the right of everyone to own what his own labour has made.

Communal anarchists, not recognising this difference, find themselves in a dilemma ; for in asserting common rights, not only to the soil but also to the produce of labour, they are obliged (in order to avoid Government coercion) to presuppose an Utopia in which no man will contribute less, nor take more, than his fair share from the common pool. This is assuming much. The voluntary renunciation of individual property is perhaps a flower of the perfect life, but social justice can make no claim for it. Such self-abnegation belongs to a world where the common human terms of justice and injustice have lost their meaning and yielded to a more divine conception.

The Single Tax.

The clearest recognition of the fundamental difference between land and commodities made by labour is to be found in the teaching of Henry George ; and the economic and social principles that result from

that difference are embodied in the doctrine of the Single Tax.

As a philosophic idea, this doctrine has profoundly influenced many thinkers. In particular, it notably affected the later writings of Leo Tolstoy, providing an immediately practicable scheme of society in accordance with his religious principles.

As a political programme, and under the name of "the Taxation of Land Values," it has in a limited form introduced itself recently into the politics of many countries, and, as a measure of industrial utility, found supporters to whom the philosophic ideas at its root would seem fantastic and high-flown.

The Single Tax as an Ethical Statement.

The single-tax proposition must be analysed into two parts. The first is a statement as to the relationship which ought to exist between men in the use of land. It is as follows : That every individual has an equal right to the use of land ; and that since some land, by reason of its superior nature or situation, gives to its owner a special advantage, the owner of such land should pay to the community an equivalent to its special value. This compensation, paid to the community by the owner of superior land, would be in the form of a tax which should take from him all the superior profit which that land yielded above the least profitable land in use. This superior profit is called "the site value," and in paying the site value, the owner is losing the special advantage conferred by the superior land, and restoring it for redistribution among the whole community.

This tax, or rent, paid to the community for the site value of the land he monopolises, is—according to

the single-tax doctrine—the only contribution which can justly be levied from the individual by any government.

This proposition is sometimes stated somewhat as follows : That a tax on land values should replace all other forms of taxation for the purposes of communal revenue ; or, That all rent should be communalised by means of a full tax on land values.

The proposition cannot, of course, be accepted by persons who are able to retain a belief in the absolute private ownership of land, and who would prefer that the public should purchase from present land-owners—at a price—whatever land is needed for communal purposes. Neither does it find favour with State socialists, who believe in State ownership and control, not only of land but also of labour and of the produce of labour ; and who therefore desire to “nationalise” land, even at the cost of pensioning every existing landowner. It is a stumbling-block to those rule-of-thumb reformers, who fancy that taxation should be “according to ability to pay.” But to individualists of all kinds it must appeal as a solution of problems heretofore unsolved. Even among absolutely anarchical and decentralised communities it would appear that some such solution of the difficulties arising from special advantages in site or minerals must be agreed upon, if there is to be real equality of conditions.

The Single Tax as a Method.

The second part of the single-tax proposition is a practical programme. By putting this system in force, or even by only beginning to apply it, as a legislative measure and under existing conditions, land monopoly would be broken down and access to

land restored to the whole community. Its advocates propose to do away with all other taxes on property, and to levy taxation on each landowner according to the land value he owns, so that rent may replace all other revenue for communal purposes. They contend that such a land value tax, even in its beginnings and gradually introduced, (1) will bring all land into its most productive use, lower the price of goods and improve material conditions ; (2) will make such a change in the worker's bargaining power as shall turn him into a free man, and secure to him the full fruits of his work ; and (3) will prevent the possibility of wealth being unjustly accumulated by industrial methods.

Of these three results, the second, the freeing of individuals from industrial slavery, is by far the most important. That, and the third, the prevention of capitalist exploitation, are the only two which come strictly within the scope of these chapters ; although the first, the increase and cheapening of production and amelioration of physical conditions, figures prominently whenever the taxation of land values is discussed on political platforms.

That the increase of production is perpetually put forward by politicians as the main result of the taxation of land values is, we think, the cause why the measure is regarded with such suspicion by many sincere reformers, who are led to suspect in it some further trick for further enriching the capitalist employer by new opportunities for exploitation. It cannot be too clearly emphasised, that the argument for the single tax, as a practical method, is not the greater creation of wealth (although that wealth should be then fairly distributed), nor the increase of revenue for public services, nor the better housing

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and improved material conditions of the people. These are all but incidents in its course. Its great final result, that which inspires men, who are more than professional politicians, to hope in and work for it, must be the emancipation of the whole population.

In Chapter IX. are discussed in detail the immediate effects to be expected from a practical application of the single-tax principle.

On the side of theory there seem but two objections that can be raised to it by the most fervent lovers of liberty. First, that as a tax, it involves the existing Government machinery. To this may be replied, that the single tax involves less State interference than any other political programme; and that, as a social truth, it will survive the practice and theory of autocratic, democratic, or any other sort of government. Also that it is the only method of genuine revolution which does not of necessity involve earthquake and catastrophe. The second possible individualist objection, is the question of how far the community, who rightly own the site value, can be represented by any government, when it comes to applying the revenue drawn from it. A careful consideration of the ideas that are discussed in the following pages may lead to the conclusion that the difficulty would in practice solve itself, and that site values will tend to disappear as the population emancipates itself from present conditions. Until then, local devolution might offer a convenient temporary solution.

But however imperfect the single tax might be, as worked by political machinery during the time of transition from this state of society to a new and better one, however partial its application in the hands of any conceivable legislature, yet it must at

least be far more just than the methods of taxation now in vogue. At the present time, our governments not only leave scarcely touched that source of revenue to which the public can fairly lay claim—the rents drawn by individuals through the monopoly in land—but they substitute a tax on individual earnings, and apply the proceeds, in the name of public services, to all manner of objects from which that individual gains possibly little or no benefit, or of which he may absolutely disapprove. Every year a larger number of citizens grow discontented and suspicious, not only of the methods and education of the schools, but of compulsory schooling in itself. Increasing numbers condemn war and military service. Distrust of police and judicial methods, and scepticism as to the treatment of criminals, are rapidly growing. And the condemnation and the scepticism come, not from the ignorant, who might be converted, but from the thoughtful and educated. Yet private property—the creation of personal labour—is compulsorily taken in ever-increasing taxation to carry on these systems, and to introduce fresh schemes, such as experts delight in, in defiance of individual opinion and individual rights.

VIII

MARGINAL LAND AND ECONOMIC RENT

Free Land necessary to economic freedom.

THE existence of free land somewhere is the fundamental postulate of any economic freedom for individuals; and such free land would naturally be land which is the least valuable in use, for which there is no competitive demand—that is to say, which is on the margin of cultivation. If no land is available, except by favour or by payment of rent, then, however well paid the worker, he must always be at the mercy of combinations and exactions by the givers of work.

Under free conditions, rent would not be—as is commonly supposed—a payment for the use of all land, but only for the use of superior lands, and strictly according to their superiority, whether in natural fertility or in position. The least productive land at any time in use (*i.e.* land on the margin of cultivation), would be rent-free; for, in a country not over-populated, there would be no competition for the use of such land. Rent under free conditions can only appear when more than one man desires to use the same piece of land.

The existence of marginal land.¹

This marginal land *must* exist, because if it did not, there would be too many people in the world. If,

¹ Marginal land—*i.e.* land on or below the margin of cultivation.

when all land was fully used, there existed anywhere a site which would support only one human life, and two people were competing for its occupancy—then one of those two must starve.

It obviously *does* exist even under present conditions, because the small amount of land actually in use in the United Kingdom supports all the inhabitants—and even keeps some of them in great luxury. It does not, it is true, support them directly with food, but it supports them by the products of industries on land of high site value, exchanged for food imported from foreign soil.

It will *continue* to exist (and even to increase in quantity), because the wealth to be got out of the soil is practically inexhaustible.

Unlimited productivity of land.

Not only are there to be reclaimed great quantities of land never yet cultivated, or fallen out of cultivation, but every day teaches the application of new methods which increase the amount producible from both agricultural and industrial land already in use. Materials previously wasted are turned to account to enrich the soil and improve mechanical efficiency, or to be fabricated into some fresh article of utility: and each new human being is not merely a consumer, but to a certain extent adds to the proportional productivity of the soil. Moreover, so far, we have only touched the surface of the globe, except for a few materials such as stone, coal and iron. Great depths lie beneath our feet, only waiting proper treatment to turn them to account. Ultimately, indeed, it is conceivable that even the most unpromising inorganic matter could by chemical methods be converted into organic

matter capable of feeding an almost limitless population.

Definition of Marginal Land.

Marshall describes Land on the Margin of Cultivation as land "that is cultivated but only just pays its expenses, and so gives no surplus for rent."

This definition is not a scientific one, because it would not satisfy all possible cases.

Suppose a country having 100 square miles of fertile land in good climate, and having, say, twenty inhabitants. There would obviously be in such a country plenty of unused land for which there was no competition, which would yield such a profit to labour as could amply provide both subsistence to its user and also tribute (in the shape of a rent) to the legal owner of the territory. Such land, being presumably less advantageous than the sites cultivated, or otherwise used, by the twenty citizens, would certainly be land "on the margin of cultivation." Actual examples are still to be found in a few places, such, for instance, as British East Africa.

Similarly, if the whole surface of the earth were available, and the world's population free and able to spread out over it, there would certainly be fertile land on the margin of cultivation yielding more than a bare subsistence in return to labour.

Whether land on the margin of cultivation is such that it can pay rent, or no, evidently depends on the ratio of population to available territory.

Private ownership of land drives down the margin of cultivation by monopoly rents, and also by artificial shortage.

In ordinary civilised countries, where land is

privately owned, land that could be obtained freely would be cultivated, although it only afforded a bare subsistence in return. Such land therefore, if and where it exists, might be said to be "on the margin of cultivation."

In so far, Marshall's definition holds good ; but only because the land is held in private ownership. It would be falsified, were land monopoly overthrown. The terrible thing is, that private property in land is so assumed as a natural phenomenon by almost all writers on economics that they do not even realise, when they frame their definitions and theories, that it is an accidental condition. If, owing to private or bureaucratic ownership of the whole land of the country, land, for which under free conditions there would be no competition, can only be had by paying rent (a monopoly rent, since it has no economic rent) then the return which the worker secures to himself on such land is bound to be driven down towards the level of the lowest standard of subsistence—all above that going of necessity to the land-proprietor. The rent also of all superior land will be enhanced in proportion to the monopoly rent of this marginal land. The worker, therefore, being in no case able to get for his labour (directly, or in wages) more than a poor subsistence (the standard of comfort being kept down by the payment, not of economic, but of monopoly rent), will take under cultivation, if he can get it, land which would be below competition if his standard of life were not so low. In this way, a low standard of wage and life may bring under cultivation land which would otherwise be neglected.

But the margin of cultivation is actually forced

down in another way. For the artificial shortage in land, which is the outcome of exclusive private ownership, makes the world actually smaller in size for the purposes of use. Thus, owing to the direct withholding of some land, the partial and inefficient use of other land, and the degeneration of much agricultural land¹ through disuse, there is competition now for all available land, except for such as under existing conditions of tenancy, rent, insecurity, lack of capital, etc., cannot yield profit enough for decent maintenance, while the only land obtainable at no rent (or at a nominal rent) will be—if any be obtainable at all—land which will afford in return to labour the barest subsistence; and which is really *below* the true margin of cultivation.

It is, therefore, true, that in England and other “old” countries land on the margin of cultivation is only such land as will afford a bare subsistence. It is unfortunately true to-day of the “new” countries also. They started with a large free margin, but owing to their unquestioning adoption of the theory of exclusive ownership, land monopoly there too has forced the margin down to land which can only yield a poor subsistence either because of its inferior fertility, or of its remote situation. In Canada, for instance, the immigrant in seeking farm land might have to traverse miles of virgin prairie land held up by the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Hudson Bay Company, or other monopolising syndicates and individuals, in order to get to land where he may farm rent free, but which, owing to its distance from supplies, will afford him only a bare living. This land, Professor Marshall

¹ This degeneration is not due only to the improvements being exhausted, but to a real diminution of natural value—the growth of brambles, weeds, heath, etc.

would designate as land on the margin ; so it is—but it is an artificial margin. If these more accessible lands, that are now withheld, were available to labour, there would be no competition for the greater part of them, and the marginal line would lie along land which would afford much more than a bare subsistence. It is this legalised restriction of use which has driven down the standard of life in Canada almost as low as in this country.

Marshall's definition of marginal land is therefore correct for civilised countries in this present state of society ; and the object of those who would increase the profits of labour must be, to make his definition incorrect, by overthrowing the system which depresses the free margin and with it the wages of labour in all employments.

It is a truism, that with more capable workers, more accessible capital and more reasonable terms of tenure, and, above all, with wider and more intelligent application of science, even such poor land as is now on the margin could produce per head of workers manifold what it produces to-day. But under existing conditions, such increased possibilities do not go to the permanent benefit of the workers, but to increase the tribute exacted in the form of monopoly rent by the landowners.

It must be remembered that monopoly rent is the tribute paid for permission to live and to work, and is not identical with economic rent, which represents the superior advantages of any given site. The rent at present paid to landowners is a compound of both monopoly and economic rent. Under a free system it would, of course, be the economic rent which would be payable to the community.

Monopoly rent due to artificial restrictions cannot

in justice be exacted either by the State or individuals and would, as a matter of fact, disappear of itself so soon as the artificial barriers were removed. It is only when there is a margin of free land, able to support life in comfort, that the rent-paying tenants will be able permanently to secure any addition of produce to themselves, and will be able to keep down the rent of superior land to what will leave the worker on it a profit equal to the profits got on the free marginal land.

The quality of the marginal land depends on the whole of the superior lands being in use, and used to their full capacity. This is one of the most important factors in determining the position of the marginal line.

Improvements in the crafts raise the margin.

Moreover, under this condition of free marginal land, improvements in industrial crafts and in agricultural methods, which enable men to get more wealth from the same area of land, must raise the margin of cultivation, and set free land of a higher grade, and consequently increase the direct return to labour and cause a corresponding rise in wages, wherever there is also wage labour.

Suppose the unit area to be as much land on the margin of cultivation as will support one man, then the site-value of the unit area of such land is unit site-value. Then equal areas on better sites will be represented in site-value by 2, or 10, or 100, or 1000 units respectively. Suppose then that under free conditions some land of a quality of 60 units of site-value—that is to say, which on unit area can support, either by industry or agriculture, 60 people—became capable, through a new invention, of producing food

or manufactured articles equivalent to the support of 90 persons. This improvement in a special industry would not, of course, affect the whole land of one grade in the world, or country ; but it would probably affect land of different grades, so that some land of 40 units would rise to 60 units, and that of, perhaps, 100 to 150. This would mean that the actual number of site-value units would be increased, not, of course, 50 per cent., since the improvement presumably would only be applicable to certain trades, but so that perhaps the whole population could be provided for on, say, 95 per cent. of the total area formerly needed by them. It is exactly as though the actual territory had been extended in space while the population had remained constant (which, as we have shown before, means a higher marginal line). The whole population, then, would, as it were, shift upwards 5 per cent. to occupy grades of land better than those they previously occupied ; and what was before land on the margin would be discarded for the better now available. So the marginal line rises and the marginal unit—or, to put it otherwise, the standard of comfort—rises 5 per cent.

As example of such scientific improvements as would raise, under free conditions, the margin of cultivation, but which to-day have merely increased monopoly rent, one might cite the use of basic slag for artificial manures, the application of steam and electricity to transport, the manufacturing of soil for French gardening, etc.

Assuming continued improvements in the crafts and applied sciences, then, either the standard of comfort would continue to rise ; or, as seems more probable, when it reached a certain point, free men would lessen their activities in the production of

tangible wealth, and a rise in the margin of cultivation would mean, not increased output, but a shortening in the hours of productive labour.

Of course it is not necessary that the marginal line of cultivation should actually shift geographically from land of one quality to land of a superior quality. "The raising of the margin" might only mean that the unit site-value became a higher one.

The whole subject bristles with difficulties, especially as the possibility of free marginal land is seldom considered together with its effects on wages, economic rent, and so forth. The above remarks are only an attempt to disentangle some of the problems which offer themselves, in considering the part which marginal land must play in an endeavour to regain economic freedom.

IX

THE SINGLE TAX AS A METHOD OF DESTROYING LAND MONOPOLY

“ I DESIRE that you should employ for the fulfilment of my aims those very institutions which it is your mission to abolish, and those very rudiments of equity which it will be your task to complete, so that the new society may be, as it were, the spontaneous, natural, and necessary development of the old one, and that the Revolution may be the continuation of that ancient order of things which it destroys and supplants ” (PROUDHON, *Idée Générale de la Révolution*, v. 1).

Without entering into the philosophy of the above sentence, and the question how far a faulty system can serve in its own regeneration, we quote it as aptly describing the endeavour of those who advocate the Single Tax as a method. And it is purely as a method of destroying land monopoly, and therewith capitalist exploitation, that the present essay deals with it.

As a method, the Single Tax consists in a positive and a negative part. To the positive part belongs the scheme for the taxation of land values, on which the destruction of land monopoly depends. The negative part is the removal of levies on true private property, usually spoken of as “ the abolition of taxes on industry,” to which it may be necessary to refer in discussing details.

For brevity's sake, the word "taxes" will be used to cover both taxing and rating, imperial and local.

Landlords' profits come direct from land monopoly: Capitalists' profits from the artificial shortage caused by that monopoly.

The power of landlords lies in their legal right to keep people off land. Their wealth comes from the direct toll which they are thus enabled to levy on all those who exist on the land—whether worker or idler. The rent so paid for the means to live and to work falls in the first instance upon the immediate hirer of the land, but ultimately it comes from those who actually use the land and its contents—the workmen—since it is out of the produce of their labour alone that the rent can be paid. It is they too who create the site-value for which they pay, since it is the opportunity of exploiting their labour, which causes a competitive demand among capitalists for special pieces of land and gives to these their site-value.

The wealth and power of capitalists, on the other hand, in so far as they are not derived directly from landownership, are due to that artificial shortage of natural resources which land-monopolists create.

This artificial shortage consists in (1) land which has a true rentable value, but which is held out of use, or not used to the extent of its value. Such are empty sites in the heart of towns; or fields near towns or railway stations, which are wanted for houses or other urban purposes; minerals lying beneath the surface, wanted, but unworked; good agricultural land kept unproductive for purposes of sport, or privacy, or pride of possession. (2) Land which has no true rentable value—such land as that spoken

of in the last chapter, which owes no tax to the community because it is on, or below, the margin of cultivation—for which, in the absence of land monopoly, there would be no competition, and part of which, therefore, any individual might rightly claim to use free. Much of such land would give its occupier a livelihood, provided he paid no tribute to landlord or State, and enjoyed security of tenure. At present, however, since it cannot be got, or only under unworkable conditions, it is not in active request, and there is often supposed to be no demand for it.

This artificial shortage in land, both rentable and non-rentable, which is withheld from use or arbitrarily used, has three direct effects; it increases the competition for all land that can, now, be got, thus raising rents above their economic to monopoly heights; it lessens the total amount of wealth produced, thus maintaining high prices in scarce commodities; it enhances the competition in the labour market, thus depressing wages.

It is by this forced competition in the labour market, as explained in Chapter VI., that capitalist employers are able to make their profits and amass wealth in formidable bulk; whilst the landlord draws his revenue from the mere fact of ownership.

The landowner can levy toll on the produce of all labour applied to land yielding more than a bare subsistence. The capitalist, as such, can only levy toll so long as land is not available in sufficient quantities for the number of would-be workers. A country is quite conceivable and possible in which, though the land was all privately owned by a king or a few landowners living on the rents they drew, there would yet be no exploitation by capitalists.

If in such a country the whole population were secure of access to the natural resources of the land, then, although they paid away almost all their produce to the landlords, in rent, yet, because there was no competition for a living amongst them, the capitalist could not buy them, except at the price they themselves set on their own independence.

Such conditions, however, would not be likely to last long in any real country, for it is to the advantage of landlords to make the supply of land less than the demand for it, and to withhold some from use, so that the site-value of the available remainder may be enhanced and monopoly rents rise. Just so, in the eighteenth century, when difficulties of transport prevented competition between coal-fields, it was to the advantage of Northumbrian coal-owners to limit their output of coal and so raise its price. Similarly, we have recently seen the coal-owners benefit by the coal shortage caused by the strike of last March.

It is not necessary that the landowners should act in this manner, like the eighteenth-century coal-owners, with deliberate intent. A little idleness and irresponsibility on their part is enough to cause the mischief.

“In addition to the tax levied for the profit, real or imaginary, of the monopolists, the consumer” [in this case the user of land] “. . . pays an additional tax for their laziness and incapacity” (JOHN STUART MILL, *Prin. Pol. Ec.*, Bk. V., ch. x., par. 4).

Evil effect of present rates.

And, besides the natural inertia of those who are secure in the necessities of life, landlords are actively discouraged by the present system of rating in efforts

to develop their land and employ labour on it. The heavy rates upon houses, machinery, stabling, sheds, glass-houses, etc., the 50 per cent. exemption given to agricultural land, and the rebates on game-covers, are all a very definite discouragement of production, and a distinct encouragement to keep land vacant or half used and cause a shortage in it.

And while this artificial shortage in land continues, the labour market will continue to be overcrowded, and employers still carry on their exploitations. Further, the capitalist employers, having thus made their profits, are the only persons able to meet the artificially high rents, to bring out the large sums needed, and to face the risks attendant on such speculative transactions. Indeed, land monopoly and capitalism continue to play into each other's hands, and to augment like a snowball with each completed cycle of production. Owing to land monopoly, the capitalist is alone able to buy the means of giving work, and hence to exploit the workers. Having exploited a few workers, he is—thanks still to land monopoly—in a yet more favourable position for buying the means of exploiting more. And as his operations thus steadily increase, so does land value rise in their neighbourhood.

Therefore, effectively to destroy land monopoly, it is necessary to stop the robbery by the private landlord of economic rent, by transferring it from him to the rightful owners of it—the whole community. At the same time, the artificial shortage of land must be broken down, so as to bring unused or misused land into full use, so that the landlords' monopoly rents may disappear and the robbery of industry by the capitalist employer be ended. But to stop the exploitation of the workers would not be enough ;

for the land monopoly has not only robbed them of their wealth, but of their freedom also ; for every individual has a claim, not only to the wealth of the earth, but to an actual share of its surface. Therefore no destruction of land monopoly can be complete, which does not also provide for every individual a possibility of free personal access to the soil on the margin of cultivation.

Taxation of land values as a means of communalising rent and of breaking down artificial land-shortage.

The taxation of land values has all these aims in view. Fully applied, it would be the establishment by law of just economic relations between each occupier of land and the rest of the community, and when this first fundamental relation—the prelude to all social and industrial life—is equitably established, those evils, which now flourish on the primary injustice, will wither at the root.

The whole economic rent of land could be secured to the community, and the landlords' direct profits completely eliminated by a full tax upon all land values, so as to completely transfer their amount from the private landlords' to the public exchequer. But even a partial tax of so much per cent. on the value would be sufficient to make a breach in the monopoly wall and very largely destroy the land-shortage. And in proportion as it did this, the capitalists' power of exploitation would diminish, and landlords' rents sink from their monopoly towards their economic level.

The efficacy of such a tax depends, of course, on its being borne by the landlord and by no one else. If a tax on land value could be transferred from the

landowner to the tenant (or land-user) in higher rents, or to the community in higher prices, in the same way that a tax on cards is transferred to the bridge-player, it would obviously be futile as a way of communalising rent. That such a tax cannot be shifted, but does always lie where it falls, on the owner of the land and on him alone, is the opinion of the most respected economists.

It may be well, however, to briefly outline here the arguments which prove such a tax not transferable.

Why landlords cannot shift a tax on land values.

The price of commodities produced by labour, in which there is no monopoly, is fixed by the cost of production. This is obvious: for if boots grew naturally, like daisies in summer, they would have no price at all. What gives them their price is the cost of producing them. This is their minimum price, below which they would not, under the same general conditions, be produced at all. It is also their maximum price, since the competition of producers, anxious to sell, drives it as low as possible. By "price" here is meant "wholesale price"; for into retail price other considerations enter, and locality, fashions, goodwill and partial monopolies come in to make a pair of boots in Bond Street dearer than a perfectly similar pair in South Kensington, or in one shop in Bond Street than in another.

The cost of production of any commodity is, at the present time, made up of:

Wages of labour.

Interest on capital outlay for all the plant.

Monopoly rent of factory sites, etc.

Rates and taxes.

Each pair of boots has to pay its share of the total cost, and this fixes its price.

If any of the factors in production rise in price throughout the boot trade, the price of boots will rise.

If the interest on capital rises, the price of boots will rise ; an additional tax on boots or boot factories will raise the price ; a rise in monopoly rent would raise it ; so would a general increase in wages (unless accompanied by greater efficiency). Otherwise the price will remain constant.

The price of land, however, does not depend on the cost of production, for there is no cost of production. It is determined by the price of the least valuable land in use, and this is, at the present time, as we have before shown, a monopoly price, due entirely to the owner's right to withhold the land from use. The monopoly price of the least valuable land is, generally speaking, such, that its full rental value (calculated at a percentage of the capital value) will leave the average tenant just enough produce for a living.

The rent of all other sites of land is measured by the excess of the value of their produce over the produce of the least valuable land in use. So that, if the produce of an acre of the least valuable land in use = the tenant's living + x , the rent of it will be x , and the rent of other more valuable sites will be $x + a$, $x + b$, $x + c$, and so on. A tax on all land values cannot alter the differences in value of the sites, and a , b , c , will be constant. Therefore, unless the land values tax increases x , it cannot increase $x + a$, $x + b$, etc.—*i.e.* if it does not raise the rent of the least valuable land in use, it will not raise it elsewhere.

It will be sufficient, therefore, to show that a tax on land values could not raise the rent, or price (*i.e.* the capitalised rent) of the least valuable land in use.

It is simpler to treat the question as one of capital selling price rather than of rent, because capital selling price is less subject to particular and accidental variation than rent.

The actual price of the least valuable land in use is always approximately its monopoly price, whereas the actual rent paid by the tenant is by no means always the monopoly rent. Personal friendships intervene, or the landlord does not care to exert himself to get the utmost return out of his land, and prefers to have a steady, well-known tenant rather than a stranger who bids higher. In such cases, the landlord is taking out part of his rent in personal convenience; and it is part of his monopoly privilege that he can thus indulge himself by keeping favourites on his estate at a favourable rent, instead of getting the full value from it.

The price, then, of the least valuable land in use is, generally speaking, a true monopoly price—the highest than can be got, not the lowest that could be taken.

If this is so, then no additional financial liability will make it sell for more. A tax on it will not raise the price nor the rent based on the price. On the contrary, since the tax has to be calculated into the cost by the buyer, the price will fall by the capitalised amount of the tax—and this is, in fact, the very point to which opponents of the tax, such as Mr Harold Cox, object.

But if this is not so, if the tax on land value can in reality be shifted on to the tenant, then the

price of land is not a monopoly price, but, like the price of a manufactured commodity, competing for customers in the market; in which case the least valuable land in use is not to-day either withheld or sold at a monopoly price, but is already always put upon the market, and sold, or rented out, in brisk competition with other landlords also eager to sell, and at prices to which there is no minimum, since there is no cost of production to set one. And, obviously, in this case, every portion of land is now being put to its most remunerative use, and every possibility of employment for labour is already utilised to the full.

All of which is patently absurd, and contrary to facts. Therefore the prices of the least valuable land in use are actually to-day monopoly prices; and the rents based on those prices are monopoly rents, and cannot be raised by a tax on land values; and the rents of superior lands cannot be raised either, because they depend on the rent of the least valuable land in use.

A tax on land values cannot, therefore, be shifted from the landlord's shoulders on to the tenant's.

Neither can it raise prices. For it could do so only by increasing the rate of interest on the capital outlay, or the wages of labour, or the rent of land. It is obvious that it cannot in itself raise the rate of interest on capital, nor in itself raise the wages of labour; and it has been shown not to raise rent.

Therefore it cannot in itself raise prices.¹ Therefore a tax on land values falls solely on the landlord,

¹ On the other hand, indirectly, inasmuch as by breaking down land shortage it will increase opportunities for employment and the production of wealth, it will, indirectly, have a double tendency both to increase wages and to reduce the prices of scarce commodities.

and cannot be transferred by him either to the tenant or to the community.

Exact Proposal of "Taxation of Land Values."

Since there is much misconception about the whole subject, the proposal contained in the taxation of land values cannot be too precisely detailed, so that it may be quite clearly understood what it does and what it does *not* involve. Under the complete taxation of land values, then, those rates and taxes would be abolished which take toll of every citizen according to the kinds of commodities he is using (machinery, glass-houses, motor cars, etc.), or according to the total amount of wealth that he has amassed by fair means or foul. Such penalising of industry and wealth in itself is both unjust and suicidal, and it would have no excuse in a society so founded that exploitation was impossible. These means of communal revenue would be replaced by a tax (or rate), which holders of land having a competitive value would pay to the central (or local) treasury in proportion to this special value. This value, at any particular time, would be measured by the price it would fetch in the open market if stripped of all improvements (houses, fencing, manuring, draining), this price being a gauge of the community's need for the bare site or its contents¹; and the annual tax, or rate, would of course be equivalent to the economic rent. It should be clearly remembered that this economic rent is not the same as the value of the produce of the land. It is not

¹ Under present conditions, when all actual rent has a monopoly element in it, the strict economic rent would not be gauged by the actual market price but, roughly, by the difference between that and the price of average "marginal" land.

measured by what the user can afford to pay after deducting a bare living, although under the present system of monopoly ownership rent does often leave but a subsistence profit. The economic rent (and with no land shortage there would be no other sort of rent) is the value one piece of land has in competition with others of different situation or contents ; it is what the user is willing to pay rather than go to land of inferior convenience. It is not a fixed quantity, but the result of a subtraction sum : the return to be got from the use of that site *minus* the return yielded by the same-sized piece of land on the margin of cultivation.

If the full land value of any site be taken in taxation, then, if the land be in most productive use, the landlord will be passing on in taxes the whole rent (or rental value) of his land. He ceases to draw any pecuniary advantage from his position as landlord, and becomes a mere rent-collector for the community.

If, however, the site be not used, or not used to full advantage, then his yearly tax will overtop the return he is getting from its present use, and he will be a loser, for he will be paying in taxation the excess in annual value of the return the site might yield over the return it actually does yield.

The only economic profit which the owner of any site could get from it under a full taxation of land values would be the *user's* profit ; that is, the profit which, as a tenant, he could make after paying rent ; and this under such a scheme must approximate, closely and inevitably, to such profits as he could get working, without paying rent, on such land as is at that time on the margin of cultivation.

Immediate effects on land of rentable value.

It is obvious that the immediate effect of such a tax must be to bring unused and misused land of rentable value into full use. For instance, land-owners would not be willing—most would not be able—to pay even a heavy annual tax on urban sites which, under the present system, are “ripening” at agricultural rates; and under a complete application, such speculations would lose all their charms. Owners of hitherto half-used land in town or country would sell it, or lease it, or themselves employ labour in putting it to a use which will pay the tax. Such a land-values tax imposed on landlords is analogous to a poll-tax imposed on native tribes; the native is compelled to bring himself into the labour market, the landlord to bring his land into use, so that the taxed article may pay for itself.

Idle urban and suburban land and unworked mines would be the first to respond to the pressure; because it is here that the difference is greatest between the full economic rent and the present rate that it pays.

On country land, the effects might be slower; it might be longer possible for a wealthy business man to keep his “grounds” in Surrey solely for the enjoyment of week-end visitors, and to pay the price of this luxury, as of others, out of the profits made in business; or for the country squire to consult the demands of sport in the use to which he puts his fields. But as the indirect effects of the tax on the labour market and on employers’ profits began to be felt, the owners also of country estates would find an urgent need to turn them to profitable account, or to

rid themselves of the liabilities involved in possession. So that in town and country alike all locked-up land of any special value must finally be thrown open for use at decreased prices, and land which hitherto employed only the labour of a few men would find productive occupation for many times their number.

The immediate result of this would, of course, be a temporary boom in trade, as there has been in those few districts where partial application of the single tax has been made—*e.g.* Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, etc. This would be followed by a settled and permanent activity, no longer subject to the sudden fluctuations which disturb trade and are due to speculations in monopolies. Both capital and labour would be called for to develop the territory now added to the field of industry; and the remuneration of both would instantly rise. The interest on capital would be only temporarily enhanced; for, with the increase of production, fresh capital would be eventually formed to meet the demand, and interest again drop to normal. But the wages of labour would remain at the higher level, so long as opportunities of employment remained equal to or in excess of the number of the population.

*Population does not in this age
vary directly with prosperity.*

And here it should be remarked, that the numbers of the population, instead of varying—as used to be supposed by Malthus, Ricardo, and other economists—directly with wages (and so bringing down every temporary rise again to subsistence level with the next generation of workers) show, on the contrary, a tendency to vary inversely. The age of

marriage seems to rise, and the rate of fertility to decrease, as a higher standard of comfort and education makes men and women less happy-go-lucky, more fearful of changes, and more sensitive to inconvenience. There are certain savage tribes which have increased rapidly since European rule has put a stop to warfare and to cannibalism ; but there is every reason for not believing that the populations of civilised countries are only limited in numbers by the amount of food. It is not, therefore, to be expected that the decreased pressure in the labour market would automatically increase itself again owing to the rise in working-class prosperity, and again restore the old unequal conditions of bargaining between master and man.

Meanwhile, the purchasing power of the actual wage would be higher, for the new land brought into use would enormously add to the total wealth produced in the country, and prices would fall. It is not only that, owing to the rise in wages, the worker would get a far higher percentage of the wealth he produces, but that this percentage, being on a larger quantity, would itself be larger.

But the effects do not stop at what would result from merely bringing this additional land into use under present conditions—increased wages, lower prices. The whole relation of social man to the land would be completely changed. Instead of it being often to an owner's interest or to his convenience to keep land idle (a tendency encouraged in England by our absurd system of rating unused land as if it were useless land), valuable land would be to its possessor a burden unless it were in full use. If unwilling or unable to develop it himself, he would be as eager to find a user for it as the hawker of perishable goods

is to find a customer ; and land would be available in the market, no longer at a monopoly rent, but at a true economic rent, to anyone able to use it. It would be available, also, in a steady supply ; for, obviously, it can be to no one's interest to speculate in land, and attempt to make a profit, either by holding for a rise, or by sub-letting, when all such profits pass automatically away in taxation. This permanent accessibility of land must put the whole working-class public in a new and securer position, and totally alter both their status as wage-earners and the possibilities of their whole existence.

How to deal with "marginal" land.

But, so far, the tax on land values has only been shown to bring into use such land as has a site-value measured by economic rent. It has put the landlord into the position of a tenant of the community—a tenant paying full economic rent, and therefore induced to extract the utmost from his holding. So far, all economic rent has been secured for the community, the "water" knocked out of monopoly rents, and fresh fields of employment permanently opened to an indefinite number of workers on far more favourable terms. But this is not enough to satisfy those who desire, not merely a prosperous, but also a free society. Thus far, the tax on land values would ensure to the worker most of the fruits of his labour, as well as his share in the benefits of communalised rents. It must also give him back, in addition to his rights as a citizen of society, his individual rights as well. As we have said before, there is, amongst other more valuable landed property kept out of use, a great area, scattered all over the country, of land on the

margin of cultivation, land to which there should by rights be free access, and which should afford a sanctuary for the victims of industrialism. The "marginal" line should be the Mason and Dixie line of the hired workers. This land has no economic rent at all, and much of it, under present conditions of cultivation, yields scarcely a subsistence, and nothing over for the landlord, although it is often potentially very fertile. It often does obtain high rents as sporting land or pleasure land, but these rents are not paid out of the produce, but by wealth which has been amassed elsewhere under the present system of exploitation. They are fancy, and not economic rents, and therefore do not correspond to that value which is measured by the economic needs of the community. In former days much of such land was fully cultivated by the country squires, who were obliged to get their own living from it. But with the increase of capitalists, and of business and professional men, who make their money by direct or indirect exploitation elsewhere, this land has degraded, and gone out of productive use: for such people can afford to hold it for mere privacy or pleasure, or to let it out in large grazing areas while preserving the sporting rights. This land not having any true site-value, there is some difficulty in ousting the present owners by a land-values tax; though it must be remembered all along, that when the possibility of making big profits by exploiting other land values has disappeared, this class of owner will not be so numerous. But, clearly, a tax imposed on this marginal land with the object of breaking down the monopoly and bringing it into the market, could not correspond to the non-existent site-value. It might be imposed on the fancy or sporting value, but this

would be a penalising tax ; it would bear no immediate relation to what the user really owed the community, and when once the land came into profitable use, it could not continue to be imposed upon small proprietors living on the produce. Such a tax on fancy rents might temporarily serve its purpose by causing the wealthy proprietors to loose their hold ; but though useful, it would hardly be defensible on the grounds of abstract justice.

Probably the simplest, as well as the most honest way, would be to cease to protect by law the private possession of such land, except in so far as it was actually occupied and improved, and then to give security of tenure for all improvements. All marginal land, not actually occupied and improved, should be as free as air for use and occupation by the first settler. This would be absolutely just as well as expedient, since every individual has in fact a natural claim to his share of such marginal land.

Free marginal land the essential of free bargaining.

It is essential that such land should be restored to the public. It is the one possibility of escape that the poorest of the population have from taskmasters. Such land should afford a refuge from the gang and the shift, from the factory and the shop, from the tyranny alike of the foreman and the trades union. On such land a man could live hardly, but live free—an art which generations of civilisation have well-nigh extinguished. This land on the margin of cultivation, if once unlocked to the public, would be a great reservoir into which the overflow of the labour market would regularly find its way, there to make a new home, or to support existence until conditions in other trades became tolerable

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and desirable. Secure in occupancy, the wage slaves of modern industrialism could look their would-be employers in the face, and demand at ease and leisure far better terms than any labour committee can make for their trade now, with the hungry mass of men, women, and children, fretting at the council door, and with necessitous blacklegs creeping in at every breach. An army of organised labour can accomplish something, so long as it is universal and absolutely solid, so long as its leaders are absolutely honest and intelligent and unremittingly watchful, and provided the time of battle is short ; but every day of the campaign brings fresh elements of decomposition within, if not disruption from without. But the weakest worker, who is assured at any moment of a foothold on the soil, is strong enough singly to hold his own ; and the wealthiest would-be master has no power over such an one, while and whenever he chooses to be independent. If there were a margin of free land in the country, wages of workmen everywhere would be determined, not by the difficulty of getting a job, but by the price at which they valued liberty. And as the enclosure of common lands, in the early part of the nineteenth century, was the deathblow to village industries, so, reversely, a foothold on the poorest soil would bring about again the devolution of now centralised industries, and pave the way to that integral education which should turn the specialised human tool back into a man.

■ One of the most important features, then, in the destruction of land monopoly is the restoring to each individual of the whole population a potential share of marginal land, secure from interference with the fruits of his labour. Moreover, as all land having a rental

value came into full cultivation as the result of the land-values tax, the line of marginal land would rise to include a better quality ; and therewith the comforts and conditions obtainable by the same amount of labour would rise for the masterless man, and raise the average standard all over. Under such conditions it is impossible that the exploitation of workers should continue, or that great riches should even exist, much less be able any longer to buy a position of command. Whether business and factory were conducted by syndicalist groups, or by private employers, receiving a manager's wage, the individual worker would be a free co-operator, receiving the full fruits of his labour, and able, without strife and without risk of ruin, to alter the conditions that he found onerous, or else to withdraw himself from them.

X

THE NEXT REVOLUTION

Old revolutions only changed masters and laws.

IT is the beginnings of a revolution that have been outlined in the preceding pages—a revolution compared to which the great upheavals in history that have overthrown dynasties and churches would seem superficial. Hitherto the nations have attempted nothing beyond the substitution of one authority for another. Political revolutions have done little but exchange oligarchy for autocracy, democracy for oligarchy, bureaucracy for democracy. Authority, in a different dress, has condemned, now Wat Tyler, and now Charles I., and burned alternately Latimer and Servetus. Dogmatic revolutions have replaced the word of the Church by the word of the Bible, and this in its turn by the decrees of statisticians, doctors, scientists and other experts. Industrial organisation has succeeded political organisation in the day-dreams of reformers; but its aims are no surer nor truer, and its methods even more harassing and tyrannical.

But a free society is possible.

We have suggested that it is possible for society to re-establish itself in justice and freedom; not by the introduction of all manner of new regulations, but by the removal of the unrighteous laws which are the expression of human error and the cause of

social evils, and by the substitution of a simple and just relationship between men in their use of the common sources of life. We believe that, even now, instead of common social morality being in rear of the opinion that is expressed and administered in laws, and needing to be controlled and educated by State rules and State police, it is actually, in both autocratic and democratic countries, far in advance of the law, which is only a clumsy register of opinions that time is continually discarding or rectifying. For this reason—if for no other—individual liberty is the only sure guarantee of general social progress; and to ensure industrial liberty for every individual, it is only necessary to ensure to each person free and equitable access to the sources of all life and of all enterprise.

It is not necessary to make elaborate provision for the continuance of this present civilisation in a way more tolerable to the masses; for this civilisation is based on monopoly of the sources of life, and on industrial and governmental slavery. The one thing needful, is to remove the monopoly and the slavery which are corrupting the souls and bodies of both rich and poor right through the social scale. Those being gone, we can leave it to a regenerated society to express itself in its own way in a suitable form.

That some sort of revolution must take place is certain. The mass of the people—especially those who suffer from the present form of society—recognise already with their brains its injustice and absurdity. So soon as they recognise it also with their souls, the change will effect itself, for there will then be no inertia of conventional opinion to maintain the *status quo*.

*Will the next revolution be towards
freedom or worse tyranny?*

The only doubt is: whether this revolution will lead to greater tyranny and to a stereotyping in government of our twentieth-century ideals—or to a greater liberty and indefinite possibilities of progress and development. It will depend on the masses; and the masses are hard to read. At times, when the crush of their own weight is heavy, and suffering severe, they cry to their popular Baals for a new law or a new grant-in-aid—a fresh inspector or an extra shilling a day. But now and again—especially after some benevolent dispensation has proved unusually irritating and futile—they begin to show signs of restlessness, as though conscious that they are but changing masters, and that each is more despotic than the last. The stirrings of independence are still too vague and instinctive to be reckoned with, but each fresh act of well-meant interference (and we have had many recently) makes the movement more conscious and explicit. Dimly the popular spirit begins to grope after liberty, though often mistaken in method and doubtful in aim. Under such conditions, many revolutions of the past have ended in fiasco. Samson, being blind, has done nothing but pull down the house, and the old architects have built it up again as it was before.

But suppose that it were possible to forestall or succeed another such abortive revolution by a true one; suppose that society could be released from the present intolerable conditions, and that to each person could be restored the possibilities of industrial and personal freedom, by the abolition, on terms that

left him no privilege over his fellows, of land monopoly. Suppose that this work were begun under present circumstances and through existing machinery by a method of taxation ; or that, after a period of industrial war, private property in land were abolished, and that a free population, in groups or singly, took occupation of the soil, with payment of rent to the whole community for any special advantages of site or minerals. It then remains to be discussed how such a revolution would change the form of modern society—in short, how it would be a real revolution and not a superficial one ; by what steps the change would effect itself ; and what it would mean for all of us—to whatever class we belong.

Revolution in the form of society.

It is impossible to conceive that the civilised world could continue as at present, when once economic compulsion disappeared. The whole modern industrial machinery is kept going by two forces : the worker's fear of losing his livelihood, and the employer's hope of making profits. Whenever either of these impelling motives is weakened, the machinery goes erratically or comes to a standstill. This is bound to be the case in large businesses and factories, where the individual worker cannot see the end of his labour and is only a cog in the wheel of production, and where the directors are more concerned with the market than with the workshop.

In work involving variety and personal initiative, in which the processes are begun and completed by one set of hands, a personal interest can be taken—not necessarily of a mercenary kind ; and people, even now, do such work with love of it, and with a desire to accomplish the end in view. But it is not

on this kind of work that modern industrialism is built up, and by which the wants of modern civilisation are supplied. Business thrives on the men and commodities that are turned out by the gross. Any sort of divergence from the normal, any personal distinction or artistic individuality, are as unsuitable to the automatic proficiency of business routine as originality in a box of "refills." Such a market is best suited by servile men and machine-made commodities. Moreover, articles of daily use become more and more of that complex make which requires trades involving mechanical and minutely subdivided labour. (Most so-called "labour-saving" appliances involve just this sort of labour in their making.) This is precisely the most distasteful sort of work, because it involves great regularity, monotony and effacement of individual brain and imagination.

Not only is much of the work stupid, that is needed to keep the present machine going; but the conditions of its performance would be rebelled against by free men. It is quite possible, that when the workman no longer felt himself exploited and overdriven, and was no longer at war with an employer or a foreman, he would begin to feel personal interest in his work and to enjoy labour instead of finding it a penance; but it would be on condition of doing the work that interested him, and doing it more at his own leisure and in his own way. The present pace could not possibly be kept up under such a system; and the modern world hinges on pace and numbers. Successful business to-day depends on an elaborate method of "speeding up" in every department. Competition takes account neither of men nor machines. They are

used till they go to pieces, and then scrapped. The foreman's wages and promotion depend on his getting out of each subordinate to a fraction of the amount he is capable of. A system of fines checks every irregularity in hours or conduct; and an army of cheap boy labour supplies the messengers, carriers, lift-men, without which no business could be an up-to-date concern.

Now it is impossible to believe that free men would perform labour of this sort and at this pace and under this sort of direction with the required punctiliousness for eight, or six, or four, or even two hours a day, however large their share in the fruits of such industry. Live workers are not actuated, like the Economic Man of fiction, by the desire of making an ever-increasing amount of wealth, nor by the communist virtue of producing for the sake of production; and those who have an opportunity of earning a competence in cheerful surroundings by work of an intelligent kind are not likely to turn out regularly *en masse* at the call of a buzzer to feed $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch steel plates through rollers, even though they know that society would be wealthier for the consequent motor cars and railway trains.

Nor would enterprisers be so zealous in new undertakings if they were not spurred on to exertion by the hopes of monopoly profits, and also by the dread of slipping back from the ranks of the masters into those of the men. Take away the two incentives of greed and fear, make it impossible for a man by exploitation to raise himself over the rest of his fellows, and much of the present-day business enterprise must dwindle and factory labour decline.

Such civilised products might not, it is true, altogether cease because free labour was loath to work

at them, but production would certainly slacken and grow irregular; and the tension through the whole world is so great that a slackening anywhere would be sufficient to throw that part out of connection with the rest of civilisation. If the staple exports fail any longer to compete, imports in turn decrease; and every household suddenly misses some familiar necessary.

A very slight disorganisation of any of the principal manufactures or trades would be enough eventually to dissolve the cement that binds the whole of industrial society together.

The railway strike of August 1911 gave a brief but vivid illustration of the dependence of all modern homes—from the simplest to the wealthiest—on the continuance of cheap, frequent and rapid transport. But can one imagine, that under free conditions the railway service will be carried on as docilely and securely as at present? It may be that improvement in hours, wages, general conditions of work might, in the present state of the labour market, really satisfy the railway, mining, cotton and other operatives for a time, because they realise that somewhere in the background lurks lack of employment. But once they and their descendants have savoured freedom and independent labour, nothing else will satisfy them. The clockwork must cease to run smoothly when the wheels come alive, and the whole social machinery will get out of gear.

Of course the permanent slackening of certain kinds of trades and manufactures would not cause suffering and shock similar to what ensued on the three days' railway strike of last year. Society, if the change came gradually, would have time to adjust itself. Access to land would have put simple pro-

ducts and ample space within the reach of every person, and co-operative and home industry would replace a good many of the cheap articles now turned out by factories. Life under such conditions would probably be happier—it would certainly be more varied and healthy for the mass of the population—only it would be quite different to the life of modern civilisation.

Disappearance of trades devoted to supplying parasitic articles.

Thanks to the disappearance of the wealthy class and those who live on it, the manufactures which cater exclusively for that class and its parasites would be the first to vanish. Not only would there be nobody to buy such things, but there would be few willing to make them. An inspection of the shop windows of Regent Street and Bond Street will sufficiently indicate the kind of articles of which the production is likely to cease.

Then, besides the trades which cater strictly for the very rich, there are many others which depend on fashion or convention—the aping of the rich and the scramble of the middle class for the upper places; and half of Oxford Street may follow Bond Street into limbo.

Besides these, are the trades which cater for those pleasures which are sought by the large mass of the population as a relief from distasteful occupation and ugly domestic lives. When work becomes, under free conditions, itself agreeable and interesting in its nature, then such distractions will be less sought after; and many professions—such as the cinematograph operator, billiard-marker, music-hall

dancer, bar-keeper—will become, not extinct, but less common.

It is commonly said that easier access to land would greatly increase the output of wealth, improve the purchasing power of the worker, and raise the standard of wealth and comfort to a very high level all over.

So it might at first. And so it might permanently, if the opportunities for industry increased, while the workers still remained bound to labour in those industries. But wages might rise and land cheapen to any extent, and yet not counterbalance the falling-off in factory produce due to the freeing of forced labour and to the consequent disorganisation of the whole artificial commercial system.

Money would cease to buy things, because it would cease to hire such large bodies of labour as is needed for extensive undertakings. Again in the world's history people would be thrown back on their individual versatility, and those, who had not yet done so from choice, would turn to the land for the support of themselves and their families, while small groups of co-operative labour would replace the centralised manufactures of to-day.

I have no desire to extol the Simple Life, nor picture Arcadian morals. In so far as these things are alluring to the middle-class reader, there is generally something wrong with them. The Simple Life, as some of us know and like it, is just an excuse for more artistic surroundings and less domestic worry ; it is generally an expensive luxury after all. Compared to the Petit Trianon of the modern idealist, the real thing would be for most of us as unattractive as a cold bath on a winter morning. The real Simple Life may, or may not, involve a fuller development of

individuality in those that lead it. These aspects do not concern us. If we desire justice in human relationships, and freedom for the whole population, we must be prepared to sacrifice, if need be, even the efficiency of the railway, the telephone, and other services, and to accept the results, pleasant or unpleasant. And yet, if we could divest ourselves of the idea that such things were the signs of human progress, we might find a state of home labour and friendly co-operation not too dearly bought by the loss of present luxuries with those conditions that produce them.¹

¹ An interesting economic result of such a change in the state of society would be that site-values would decrease. For site-value is the difference between the value of any given site and that of the least profitable land in use, so that as the greater centres broke up and were replaced by smaller groupings—as the country became more productive and the town less so—the difference would become less and land values be levelled. This decentralisation of population and industry must clearly, for several reasons, follow on any general opening up of land.

In the first place, there is the immediate diversion of the floating population to the cheap, accessible country land. This possession of agricultural land would make practicable such a re-formation of small industries and manufactures on a co-operative basis as is advocated in Kropotkin's "Fields, Factories and Workshops"; in which book is also clearly shown, how negligible, under modern conditions, are supposed "natural" advantages of soil and situation. Another levelling factor is the continual improvements in the applied sciences, which all, broadly speaking, tend to diminish the difference in value between different sites, except in so far as their application is restricted by monopoly to limited areas.

Moreover, it is largely the possibility of exploitation which gives site-value to land. The competition for land in certain areas, which creates their economic rent, exists largely because those areas offer better openings to the employer who wants to make high profits. For instance, the high value of land in towns is not only due to the competition of the population to use it as inhabitants, but also to the fact that, owing to this large population, capitalists find a crowded labour market, and compete with each other for sites for industrial undertakings. In this sense the "enterprise of the community" undoubtedly creates the *monopoly* rent of land. These industries so started, again, attract a larger population for trade or labour, and further increase the value of the town-sites.

But suppose all site-value taken in taxation: then there would

be no surplus profits to be got out of one site above another, and the founders of new industrial undertakings would have no reason for selecting one site rather than another, since taxation had levelled all special advantages, including that advantage of easy exploitation, which is also registered by site-value. Special considerations in each case would be the deciding factor, and both industries and population would spread themselves out again over the countryside. Thus we arrive again, by another route, at a probable combination of agriculture and industry. If this be true, then under the Single Tax, the revenue taken by the State in economic rent must be an ever-decreasing quantity, until, finally, a State maintained by taxation would cease to exist, and the public services needed would be supplied by voluntary combination among the various communities.

According to this view, therefore, some form of communal anarchy is an outcome of the Single Tax.

Those people, on the other hand, who think that the destruction of Land Monopoly will encourage the centralisation of labour and industries, and so increase economic rents, must deduce from this an ever-increasing State revenue, leading to a kind of State socialism in which the workers become more and more dependent on the partition of the central funds, and the central authority more and more powerful.

XI

THE STEPS OF THE CHANGE

BY what steps would this change in civilisation probably take place, if the land monopoly were done away with in the manner suggested—that is, if superior land became available at its true economic rent (far below the present monopoly rents), and if land which had no economic rent were free to everyone to use with security in improvements and without taxation?

Independent agriculturists.

At first probably but few workers—and fewer still of the chronic unemployed—would avail themselves of the opportunity to use this rentless land as agriculturists. Long habit and all the circumstances of their education have rendered them shy of a lonely life and isolated effort. The unsuccessful and the wastrels are, as a rule, demoralised by their own failure, and are the least fitted of all to be thrown on their own resources, and the least likely to make a bold and successful bid for independence. In addition, the town-dweller is usually very gregarious, fond of conversation and amusement, nervous and—when not acting under excitement—downright timorous. The conditions of his work have made work itself distasteful to him. The want of natural, varied occupations has given him a taste for artificial pleasures—just as a badly nourished child rejects

bread and craves for sweets. Such a type has lost much of its original manhood and usually makes a poor colonist—either at home or abroad. It must be added, that the Municipal Councils and the various departments of State (including the compulsory elementary school) have done what they could to render him incapable of walking alone.

These characteristics, however, have been acquired, and would probably disappear again rapidly under different conditions. Even now among such men there are many who have preserved a latent independence and resourcefulness, which asserts itself directly there is an opening. And every piece of colonisation that is effectively carried out would make it easier and more attractive to new-comers.

Among the best of the workers there are already plenty who would directly choose an independent life—even though a hard one—rather than continue in comparatively comfortable servitude. It is such men—capable, courageous and already fairly successful—who would be perhaps the earliest to avail themselves of free land, leaving their old position as wage-earners to be filled up from the ranks of the less competent unemployed.

In addition to such people, whose colonisation of their mother country would usually be a permanent success, there would be all manner of temporary squatters on still poorer unoccupied land, ex-“casuals” of the workhouse, hoping for odd jobs on the new road-making, hedging and draining and building which the fresh country population were undertaking; men in temporary difficulties “hanging on” till things came right. Consider what it would have meant to the miners, the railwaymen, and, above all, the dockers of the last two years’ strikes had they

been able to secure land where they and their families could have had temporary shelter and carried on a little rough gardening until terms were arrived at ; and consider the difference it would have made in the nature of those terms.

Co-operative and Syndical Use of Land.

But though free conditions can only be ensured when each and every individual has the possibility of himself living in independence, yet it is not necessary for the attainment of social freedom that a large number—nor even any particular person—should actually lead this life of ultra-individualism. Its very possibility is enough to secure social liberty.

In fact, where the new conditions would first manifest themselves, would probably be in the new possibilities afforded to syndical unions and co-operative associations—meaning by the former, associations for production in a particular industry, and by the latter, associations in which the members combine to produce not for the outside world, but for their own consumption, and aim at being generally self-supplying.

The destruction of monopoly rents, and the facilities for getting cheap land, combined with the general rise in wages, would make it at once possible for groups of men, clubbing their capital, to acquire direct use of the material for any primary trade ; or to form communities for mutual support. Free from interference and able to keep the full proceeds of their work, the only payment demanded from them by the rest of the population would be the site-values—or economic rent—of the land they used.

This would secure the object of syndicalism, whilst obviating the risk of the principal syndicates becom-

ing in their turn "holders-up" and blackmailers of the rest of the community. The syndicalists propose to meet this very obvious danger by some kind of conference between delegates of world-wide unions in order to settle questions of output and exchange according to the common interests—a scheme which, it is easy to see, is nothing but the re-introduction of parliamentary control on a trades basis. But the simple provision for the payment of the site-value of the land worked would prevent the syndicate, as it would prevent private employers, from withholding their raw material from use, or acquiring any monopoly power from their possession of valuable sites and minerals.

Free land combined with a single tax on site-value would be the opportunity of both syndicalist and co-operator. Such associations would, however, lose their closely organised and militant character (which, moreover, would be no longer needed), since it would be possible for their individual members to escape from them on the first signs of tyranny—just as they escaped from the capitalists—by becoming individual workers.

It is possible that such associations as trades unions and co-operative societies might very rapidly split up, after they had taken the first step in assisting the workers to independence. For these organisations owe their existence more to the need for mutual defence against outside oppression, than to any natural desire for association, or recognition of the advantages to be got from subdivision of labour.

The history of co-operative societies and trades unions, and all similar semi-compulsory groupings, shows that they start well and with elevated motives, but that internal dissensions arise immediately to

weaken and disintegrate them, despite the uniting pressure from without. Such strength and unity as they do possess, is drawn from those evil conditions, which crowd men together in towns and factories in such a way, that only organisations of a militant nature can survive.

The direction of "Progress."

It is commonly objected that "progress" is all in the direction of still greater social complexity, closer co-operation, more subdivision of labour, more massing of men to perform works of communal utility; and every suggestion of the possibility of a return to more individual methods is derided as an attempt to set back the clock.

Probably under the present system of monopoly and enforced labour-competition, the tendency may be towards even greater centralisation. But accidents occur in history to falsify the most acute predictions; and such an accident would be the freeing of the population by the freeing of land—a change in the factors of the problem which would give quite a new direction to the line of "progress."

In any case, historically viewed, progress has not been steadily from individualism towards combination. The primitive races have not been the most individualistic. Amongst savage tribes of hunters, or semi-civilised nomads, the need of mutual defence and lack of the tools of independence keeps the members of a community strictly united, and subordinates all individual rights to tribal necessities. It is the early communities who are State socialists.

We have no experience of social liberty, and therefore cannot exactly predict how it may affect "tendencies." What is certain is, that under such a society

true mutual assistance and true charity will for the first time become possible.

At the present time such virtues are almost impossible to practise. The rich cannot be charitable towards the poor, for their gifts and sympathy are only part payments of a debt ; and when they are charitable towards each other, their assistance is tainted with the injustice on which all their leisure and culture and wealth are founded. The poor cannot be charitable towards the rich, towards whom their natural feelings are suspicion and covetousness. At present only the poor can be charitable towards the poor, for they lend to each other out of their necessities.

The fundamental injustice makes Christian society an impossibility. It is only under a state of freedom, economic and political, that the best possibilities of human society can ever reveal themselves.

But, whatever type of society may result from the abolition of industrial slavery, and whatever form of civilisation a free people may build up on a free basis, the rightfulness of that free basis is what concerns us—not the result. Perhaps it is not in the capacity of people, reared in the present system, to value aright any scheme of life that would evolve itself under free conditions. Our mental nature, as well as our physical, has been vitiated by our unjust and false relation to our surroundings.

Any social scheme which the people of our day can imagine must be largely wrong in ideal as well as methods, and to confirm it by law and force is not only to prolong the error but to stifle the elements of progress in society itself. All we can do, is to remove the oppression which cramps and crushes individuals, and leave the human spirit at liberty to

find and follow its lights—whether the light be, in our opinion, a will-o'-the-wisp or a pole star. Industrial freedom is not a final end in itself, but a necessary condition for humanity to realise its fullest possibilities.

For industrial freedom, free access to land is a necessity; and even after the destruction of land monopoly there may be other minor monopolies—though of comparatively small importance—to be abolished, before industrial freedom can be fully realised.

But whatever is done towards that end will not be in the erection of new dykes and barriers for the regulation of human energies, but in the removal of the old ones.

The new order may be, as we believe, a return to a less artificial and greedy social life, decentralised, peaceful, laborious and reflective; or the result may be, temporarily, a rush of industrial energy, strenuous concentrated effort after material production, for the old ideals and habits engendered by the present system may die hard.

Merging of Classes.

One thing, however, is certain: that the downfall of monopoly will be the downfall of classes, and that the privileged position of the wealthy, the educated and the middle class will come to an end.

XII

WHAT IT WOULD MEAN

WHAT do each of us stand to lose, when the Leveller comes upon us, like Death, with his scythe ?

Many of us will lose a great deal : perhaps some of the things that seem to us—and not in a base way—very important ; because the upper classes have not only got wealth and comfort through this general system of exploitation, but also excellences of mind and body that they are not wrong in prizing highly. We must be prepared to forfeit everything—good as well as bad—that has been got in an unjust way, and therefore this movement, once understood, would be very much hated by most of the upper and middle classes, and only come because it was inevitable. For the person who goes into the true revolution is like the passenger over Acheron—he can take nothing but his naked soul with him, and must trust to finding something better than his lost possessions on the other side.

The “ Lower Orders.”

The obvious gainers by the change to a system of freedom and equal opportunity will, of course, be the “ Lower Orders,” who will benefit immediately, for the most part, in every conceivable way. The great mass of genuine workers are fitted at once to make use of the new opportunities. The wastrels,

the foolish, the parasites and the blackguards of that class will suffer some inconvenience until they disappear, for they will be deprived of the conditions necessary for their existence and propagation. There will be no rich for them to attack or to toady ; no prospects of wealth to tempt them on to crime or parasitism, and no destitution to goad them to it ; no general sense of injustice and ill-treatment to make public opinion condone their unsocial actions.

The "Middle Classes."

The bourgeois or middle class will suffer a good deal. They will suffer not only in their pockets, but in their amour-propre and in their religion. The necessities of their existence have at all times taught them a special creed, which is inseparable from their best peculiarities. They worship, as barely second to the Deity, punctuality, sobriety, thrift, industry, early rising and cleanliness—in short, all those good qualities which take prizes in the business world. Any erraticness or irregularity, as it means business ruin, is a menace to their caste, and is ranked by them with essential immorality ; and they invariably oppose with righteous indignation anything that may upset the social ladder up which they are climbing with such diligence, courage and self-restraint.

It is in spite of the opposition of this class that the revolution will be carried.

The "Upper Classes."

The wealthy will, of course, be the greatest losers in the way of material possessions, and they will no doubt fight the change so soon as they begin to see it coming. At present, they are on a pinnacle, and

trust to the extent of their money and power to keep themselves above the high-water mark of the deluge.

Those of them who are self-made men, of no tradition and small education, are the least to be pitied, for their loss at most will be purely material, whilst many of them could rely on their brains and business capacity to keep them afloat under any fair conditions.

Then there is the large class of hereditary gentlefolk, who have their traditional prestige to lose, and, in addition, perhaps, direct privileges as landowners.

Except for the damage to their prejudices, this class would not suffer as acutely as many others from the change to free industrial conditions and social equality. Most of them have been brought up to an active—if non-productive—way of life; they are by training and custom plucky, practical, fairly healthy and hardy, and socially genial. Such men, even if they lost at one stroke all they possessed, would be far better suited to keep themselves by their labour than the usual “unemployed” of the lower orders. They are just the type to take the lead in home or foreign colonisation, and to keep from their personal qualities much of their present ascendancy. For these country gentlemen, the change from existing circumstances to those of a free society would be actually less than for any other class—except perhaps the artisan or the intelligent country labourer.

The Aristocratic and the Intellectual Classes.

Those who are most to be sympathised with in such a prospect are the intellectual class—those who have some claim to consider themselves as the real aristocracy of the nation—the better professional

classes, the writers, historians, rich amateurs, painters, professors, etc.

A very earnest writer, in two books lately published,¹ has urged the rich and the aristocratic to reform themselves: the rich to make a less bad use of their money, to be less self-indulgent, sensuous and selfish; the aristocracy to educate themselves better, and become leaders by virtue, not by tradition.

But the problem goes deeper than that. It is not a question of making better use of riches and leisure and culture, but of whether their acquisition is compatible with justice and common morality. The culture and education of the intellectual world is derived as much from the spoliation of the lower world as are material riches. No consecrating of the things so gotten to the service of humanity will satisfy reason and conscience, any more than the takings of robbery offered at a shrine.

The cultured man thinks: "These poor, ignorant people do for me the rough work to which I am superior. In return I devote my knowledge and talents to their guidance and enlightenment." But the poor and ignorant reply in their hearts: "If it were not that you live by our rough work, we should have no need of your guidance. Change places awhile; take to yourself the toil, and give us the enlightenment."

The educated class are under the impression that the value of their existence pays the community for the privileged position they occupy. But what is really the case? Many of these people have independent incomes—that is to say, they can live on other people's work without working themselves.

¹ A. Ponsonby, "The Camel and the Needle's Eye" and "The Decline of the Aristocracy."

Some of them take to literature and art : they create a little world which exists by writing books or painting pictures or composing music, and by reading, looking at, listening to, and writing criticisms of what the others write, paint and compose. This they call "higher culture," and imagine that it is all of benefit to the world at large—because rich connoisseurs will pay to dabble in such things ; or because they exhibit sometimes in the East End for charity. And because they enjoy having beautiful thoughts and fine ideas, they imagine that their possessing them is an equivalent for the lives of the crass, inferior people, who work at tedious work many hours a day, feeding, clothing and housing the educated people with the fine thoughts.

Then there is the class of professional artists, who really live by catering for the public demands in art, literature, drama, etc. In so far as these people live by providing entertainments for a society that is spoilt by wealth at the top and poverty at the bottom, it is impossible to say how far they are parasitic. Only a free society can test the value of their services and determine whether they will continue their trade, or return amongst the manual workers. Then there are the professional men and women—making incomes by services to the community that are of dubious value, or of value only in existing conditions : —lawyers, who prosper on money disputes ; doctors, who live by the diseases of civilisation ; the civil servant, who is the protégé of the State ; of these too, the functions and numbers may be expected to diminish.

There is also the class of philanthropists, which has recently become in itself a profession. These people are genuinely grieved at the ills of society, and

lead laborious lives trying to remedy them, working as hard as any wage-earner at hospital committees, boards of guardians, district visiting, school managing, etc., etc., in a perpetual effort to undo some of the evils of which they and those like them are in part the cause. If there is any truth in the preceding pages, then these people too will find their occupation gone in the new world of freedom, and drop from the guardian angels to the fellows of their neighbours.

Good brains and education will keep their natural predominance in every society and through any revolution, but much of the extant intellectualism is a spurious culture, grown for and existing only in a hot-house atmosphere.

The intellectuals emphasise the necessity of brain workers who are exempted from all manual exertions, as necessary for the good guidance and ordering of the manual workers. They will not see that their sharpened and trained brains have been fed by the overwork and the brutalising of those classes of whom they imagine themselves the saviours; that because they refuse their share in the common lot of Adam, others must toil and sweat double; and that in order that they may be finer instruments, others must be greater brutes. They are, in fact, themselves helping to create the problem to whose solution they devote the midnight oil, the pens, ink and paper that others have made.

But if, under free conditions, there were fewer specially trained intellects, there would be probably a higher average of culture, and certainly the opportunities for special natural intelligence would be more equal. At present the field from which the clever people are drawn is very narrow. The highest

mental qualities have little chance, unless they go with an independent income ; for it is minds of second-rate order which survive and succeed in the competitive business world.

And this brings us to the other kind of "intellectuals"—to the real thing—the race, not of trained clever people, but of those who have that special quality which makes us recognise them as great men. Such men are beacons to their own generation, and landmarks to those who come after, and the world owes its best things to them. Are they, too, to be swept away with the rest of the intellectual class, in this holocaust to liberty and equality ? Now, such men have come to us from all grades of society : they are not confined to the leisured and sheltered class. They have come, like Plato, from a small oligarchy, like Christ from the working class of a despised race, or like Tolstoy from the rich and highly educated. But if they could be brought to birth and reared only under a system of privilege, and nourished only by the compulsory labour of their inferiors, then the best men—one may believe—would say of themselves, that they too must go, and that the light which shone in them will find some other medium more compatible with common human rights.

But if it is the intellectuals as a class who will suffer most in a true revolution, they are the principal danger to it, unless they surrender their privileges voluntarily ; for their very education gives them power to turn the masses aside into wrong roads after false aims. There is no danger to the revolution in the rich or the well-born, once it is afoot. They will fight for their position, but it will be a mere contest of force, in which—being the

smallest party, and also least sure of a good cause—they will be worsted.

The danger lies in the intellectuals, who are already trying to turn the revolution in a direction which shall make them pilots of the popular movement, and leave the common people in helpless dependence on their guidance. In renouncing this privileged position they would have to sacrifice what is far more to them than material comfort or success. They would have to forgo the very ideals for which they have neglected such common things, to forgo their fine visions—schemes of human existence, their image of an evolution, in which history unrolls itself like a magnificent and harmonious pageant, and in the perfecting of which their own lives were to play a part. They would have to acquiesce in the decay of what they appreciate as noble social architecture—the edifices of time and great intellects—in the neglect of the refined and beautiful, and in the triumph of vulgarity. They must accept a future human landscape in which there are no picturesque incidents, and few exalted passions—only the simple inglorious passion for unadorned truth and humdrum justice. To some minds it would be no small abrogation to lay their beautiful dreams aside, and accept the commonplace. And a world in which men are both just and free, without strife or wealth or poverty, would be likely to be very prosaic and insipid to our palate. We may regret the crimson in the picture, the sharp contrasts, the splendour and the din of battle; and perhaps the beauty of the new social life may be impossible to appreciate except by other men in another age. Yet what can we do but let these things, too, go, if need be?

LAST CHAPTER

WHAT LIES BEYOND

Repetition.

IT seems, then, that the exclusive ownership of land lies at the base of our existing social state, of much that is pleasing, as well as of what is displeasing in it; and that if this injustice were removed, society, as we know it, must fall to pieces and be replaced by a new form. For however much the application of the terms, "slavery," "monopoly," "capitalism," "robbery," may be disputed, yet the fact remains, that the labour, by which all the subtle conditions of our thoughts and habits have been created, is unfree labour; and that it is unfree primarily because men have been fenced off from the sources of life and production that lie in the land. This crime runs like a flaw through the whole structure, making true social life impossible. For a civilisation founded in monopoly and maintained by force is an anti-social one; it excludes what alone can create a stable social state, free and mutual service.

But people will not face the downfall of the house they live in, however bad it be; and therefore preachers, teachers and legislators spend their knowledge and strength in shoring-up this society and clamping it together against disruption. Their remedial measures are largely futile, for they only transform the evil instead of destroying it.

A century ago reformers thought they could make the nations free and happy by transferring political power from a king to a republican senate. Now they think they can make society prosperous by transferring industrial power from men called capitalists to other men called a state or a workers' union. They are afraid to bring about the real revolution by restoring to everybody the only means of individual liberty, and letting them alone to shape their own destiny.

The New Civilisation: Social Relations.

What form of society might grow up after such a revolution it is impossible to foretell. Certainly it would be a better form than this, because a free one. Whatever the true civilisation may be, the present civilisation is overlaying and crushing it—stifling the best things in human nature by its atmosphere of suspicion, envy and rivalry. Yet, in spite of this fraudulent civilisation, honesty and human kindness still struggle up and keep alive; and in the new society, virtues so tough of life may spread and prosper. If to sketch a Utopia were at all permissible, it might at least be predicted that under just conditions men will venture to practise on terms of equality the brotherhood which all the churches preach, and that it will be common to show charity without patronage and to receive it without sycophancy.

The New Civilisation: Wealth.

Some writers think that in a just society the production of wealth would go on at the same pace as now, only with much less expenditure of time and effort by individuals; and that applied science

would continue increasingly to lighten and simplify all sorts of work. This may be so, but it is doubtful. It is difficult to believe, for instance, that the numberless ingenious applications of electricity, the specialised tools of all trades, the diversified appliances of luxury, would have been so readily invented, had not the twofold spur of wealth and poverty sharpened the inventors' brains and quickened their activities. Thanks to the relentless industrial slavery in which we now live, the whole of human effort is being perpetually whetted by necessity, and is devoted mainly to the achievement of any material result which may give a foothold for climbing above the struggling masses. If a society ever comes in which each man is free and safe, this will be so no longer, and it may be expected that men will then be satisfied with such moderate comforts and appliances as will ensure their health and leisure. Tastes become revolutionised with circumstances, and much that is involved in our present ideas of comfort may seem to a saner generation as fantastic as the elaborate items of a chef's menu seem to the vegetarian who lives on fruit. The passion for rapid locomotion and communication, for living in a rush, for amusements, for sensations, for delicacies, may be looked back on and despised by the coming age as the tossings of a sick society on an ill-made bed.

Nor would such reversion to calm and simplicity be a retrograde step towards barbarism. The savage is placid and simple, because he is limited, and has not tasted the fruit of the civilised tree. If free men in a free society adopt the less strenuous life, it will be from deliberate choice.

The New Civilisation. Science.

It may be, that in the new civilisation science itself may be directed into quite other channels. The progress of applied science and the progress of the human race are so often assumed to be one and the same, that we forget that research into the unknown is not identical with improvements in machine construction. Scientific knowledge has hitherto been acquired in a state where restless wealth and aimless energy are side by side with incessant unreasoning production, and where things are made, not to satisfy wants, but according to the changing fancies of the rich. The great discoveries have been applied first and foremost to increase rapidity of motion and novelties in food, dress and amusements, such things as may give a temporary advantage in the market that supplies the rich. People have utilised the few facts they have discovered about matter to make themselves playthings, and have dignified them by the name of "the benefits of civilisation." But in our haste to utilise the laws of nature we may well have missed their true significance. There may be possibilities of science equally or more valuable to the human race than its use in industrial invention ; and our commercial preoccupations may have warped, not only the application, but the nature of our knowledge itself. Who can say, whether in utilising natural laws we have not been blind to what lay behind them of more vital importance. Speculations, which in our civilisation have not emerged from the cloudland of mysticism, may be fruitfully pursued by a race less condemned to greedy pursuits, more honest and more leisured ; and the new civilisation may acquire scientific knowledge con-

cerning time and space, matter and spirit, compared with which our present conjuring tricks with physics will seem childish.

But the decisions of a free posterity do not concern our age, whose first business it is to remove the obstacles from their path and our own. We cannot yet see the goal, nor know what our race is capable of doing or being ; for at present we are forced along one path and into one set of ideas by the system that enslaves body and soul.

Socialism.

And therefore any reformation which tries to regularise present conditions by equalising the production and distribution of wealth, without first restoring individual freedom, must be a failure from the point of view of progress. The alternative to a free state is the perfectly organised state ; and if the perfectly organised state is the ideal of humanity, then socialists are quite justified in the most extreme proposals, with which their opponents ever credit them ; such proposals are, in that case, perfectly logical and perfectly right. To make society safe, it will be their duty—not to have prisons where offenders are punished, but to forestall all possibility of offence ; to have, not only State factories where the necessary wealth is produced in the approved manner under proper inspection, but to have also suitable factories for the human instruments of production, marriage provisions for improving the breed, nurseries for their physical culture, schools above all that the minds of the growing race may be trained in such beliefs as are necessary to preserve the State, in order that this superstition may receive the full

strength of the soil, and that the seed of every other idea may be destroyed before it can germinate.

This is all necessary for the preservation of the perfectly organised State, but let no one imagine that it is compatible with Progress.

Progress.

There are blind alleys in nature which are entered when any system is brought to work so perfectly that divergence from it, and advance beyond it, become impossible. The community of the bees is such a one. They are creatures of remarkable intelligence and subtlety, in whom the civic virtue of honey-making has become an ingrained habit, and, by subdivision of labour, been brought to extraordinary perfection; and their communal organisation is so complete that it gives no opportunity for error.

It is common to compare to the community of the bees the ideal community of socialised mankind. If this ideal be ever attained, the achievement will no doubt be hailed with pride by the smooth automations of the day; but it will mean that men, like the bees, are rotating instead of progressing, and that their powers have become limited to performing with admirable regularity the rôle of citizen in a perfectly administered state.

The Logic of Facts.

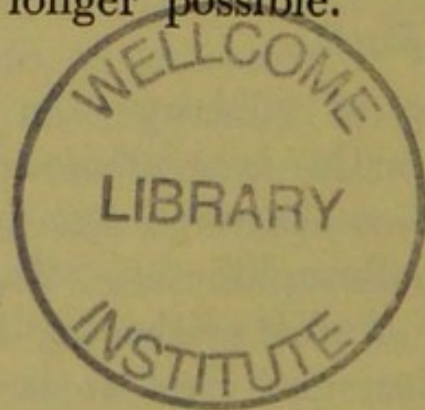
The ending of robbery—the robbery of men's rights to the earth—is an ethical duty. The restoration of freedom—through the restoration of these rights—is a philosophic aim. They go hand in hand of necessity. And if critics say that such principles are doctrinaire, and that it is foolish to seek to destroy the present order, without first deciding

what should replace it, the reply is : that the opportunism which places expediency above justice and above freedom is equally based upon a doctrine, and one that in its effects is disastrous.

Those who discard first principles in political and social action are apt to find themselves forced by the hard logic of facts along to the path to which reasoning pointed in vain.

The principle of human rights to the earth is being already forced on a reluctant society by the growing restlessness and hostility of the dispossessed workers,—by the invidious disparities of wealth due to the growing differences in site values, and the power they give of increased exploitation,—by the crimes and vices of the idlers of all classes divorced from labour,—by the dangerous diseases engendered by overcrowding and physical degeneration,—by the alarm and danger caused to the propertied classes by all these things.

It may require a hopeful temerity to face a peaceful revolution now, by resolutely restoring the land to the people ; it will require more courage to face that blind revolution that may come if the discordant elements break loose ; but it will need a courage without hope to face the world as it may be preserved, so doctored and so disciplined that no revolution is any longer possible.



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