

MONOPOLY.

(Continued from p. 389.)

Society to-day is divided into classes, those who render services to the public and those who do not. Those who render services to the community are in an inferior position to those who do not, though there are various degrees of inferiority amongst them, from a position worse than that of a savage in a good climate to one not much below that of the lower degree of the unserviceable class; but the general rule is, that the more undeniably useful a man's services are, the worse his position is; as, for example, the agricultural labourers who raise our most absolute necessities are the most poverty-stricken of all our slaves.

The individuals of this inferior or serviceable class, however, are not deprived of a hope. That hope is, that if they are successful they may become unserviceable; in which case they will be rewarded by a position of ease, comfort, and respect, and may leave this position as an inheritance to their children. The preachers of the unserviceable class (which rules all society) are very eloquent in urging the realisation of this hope, as a pious duty, on the members of the serviceable class. They say, amidst various degrees of rigmarole: "My friends, thrift and industry are the greatest of the virtues; exercise them to the uttermost, and you will be rewarded by a position which will enable you to throw thrift and industry to the winds."

However, it is clear that this doctrine would not be preached by the unserviceable if it could be widely practised, because the result would then be that the serviceable class would tend to grow less and less and the world be undone; there would be nobody to make things. In short, I must say of this hope, "What is that among so many?" Still it is a phantom which has its uses—to the unserviceable.

Now this arrangement of society appears to me to be a mistake (since I don't want to use strong language)—so much a mistake, that even if it could be shown to be irremediable, I should still say that every honest man must needs be a rebel against it; that those only could be contented with it who were, on the one hand, dishonest tyrants interested in its continuance; or, on the other hand, the cowardly and helpless slaves of tyrants—and both contemptible. Such a world, if it cannot be mended, needs no hell to supplement it.

But, you see, all people really admit that it can be remedied, only some don't want it to be, because they live easily and thoughtlessly in it and by means of it; and others are so hard-worked and miserable that they have no time to think and no heart to hope, and yet I tell you that if there were nothing between these two sets of people it would be remedied, even then should we have a new world. But judge you with what wreck and ruin, what fire and blood, its birth would be accompanied!

Argument, and appeals to think about these matters, and consciously help to bring a better world to birth, must be addressed to those who lie between these two dreadful products of our system, the blind tyrant and his blind slave. I appeal, therefore, to those of the unserviceable class who are ashamed of their position, who are learning to understand the crime of living without producing, and would be serviceable if they could; and on the other hand to those of the serviceable class who by luck maybe, or rather maybe by determination, by sacrifice of what small leisure or pleasure our system has left them, are able to think about their position and are intelligently discontented with it.

To all these I say, you well know that there must be a remedy to the present state of things. For nature bids all men to work in order to live, and that command can only be evaded by a man or a class forcing others to work for its stead; and, as a matter of fact, it is the few that compel and the many that are compelled, as indeed the most must work or the work of the world couldn't go on. Here, then, is your remedy within sight surely; for why should the many allow the few to compel them to do what nature does compel them to do? It is only by means of superstition and ignorance that they can do so; for observe that the existence of a superior class living on an inferior implies that there is a constant struggle going on between them; whatever the inferior class can do to better itself at the expense of the superior it both can and must do, just as a plant must needs grow towards the light; but its aim must be proportionate to its freedom from prejudice and its knowledge. If it is ignorant and prejudiced it will aim at some mere amelioration of its slavery; when it ceases to be ignorant it will strive to throw off its slavery once for all.

Now, I may assume that the divine appointment of misery and degradation as accompaniments of labour is an exploded superstition among the workers, and, furthermore, that the recognition of the duty of the working-man to raise his class, apart from his own individual advancement, is spreading wider and wider amongst the workers. I assume that most workmen are conscious of the inferior position of their class, although they are not and cannot be fully conscious of the extent of the loss which they and the whole world suffer as a consequence, since they cannot see and feel the better life they have not lived; but before they set out to seek a remedy they must add to this knowledge of their position and discontent with it, a knowledge of the means whereby they are kept in that position in their own despite; and that knowledge it is for us Socialists to give them, and when they have learned it then the change will come.

One can surely imagine the workman saying to himself, "Here am I, a useful person in the community, a carpenter, a smith, a compositor, a weaver, a miner, a ploughman, or what not, and yet, as long as I work thus and am useful, I belong to the lower class, and am not re-

spected like yonder squire or lord's son who does nothing, yonder gentleman who receives his quarterly dividends, yonder lawyer or soldier who does worse than nothing, or yonder manufacturer, as he calls himself, who pays his managers and foremen to do the work he pretends to do; and in all ways I live worse than he does, and yet I do and he lives on my doings. And furthermore, I know that not only do I know my share of my work, but I know that if I were to combine with my fellow-workmen, we between us could carry on our business and earn a good livelihood by it without the help of the squire's partridge-shooting, the gentleman's dividend-drawing, the lawyer's chicanery, the soldier's stupidity, or the manufacturer's quarrel with his brother manufacturer. Why, then, am I in an inferior position to the man who does nothing useful, and whom, therefore, it is clear that I keep? He says he is useful to me, but I know I am useful to him or he would not 'employ' me, and I don't perceive his utility. How would it be if I were to leave him severely alone to try the experiment of living on his usefulness while I lived on mine, and worked with those that are useful for those that are useful? Why can't I do this?"

My friend, because since you live by your labour, you are not free. And if you ask me, Who is my master? who owns me? I answer *Monopoly*. Get rid of *Monopoly*, and you will have overthrown your present tyrant, and will be able to live as you please within the limits which nature prescribed to you while she was your master, but which limits you as man have enlarged so enormously by almost making her your servant.

And now what are we to understand by the word *Monopoly*? I have seen it defined as the selling of wares at an enhanced price without the seller having added any additional value to them, which may be put again in this way, the habit of receiving reward for services never performed or intended to be performed; for imaginary services, in short.

This definition would come to this, that Monopolist is *cheat writ large*; but there is an element lacking in this definition which we must presently supply. We can defend ourselves against this cheat by using our wits to find out that his services are imaginary, and then refusing to deal with him; his instrument is fraud only. I should extend the definition of the Monopolist by saying that he was one who was *privileged to compel* us to pay for imaginary services. He is, therefore, a more injurious person than a mere cheat, against whom we can take precautions, because his instrument for depriving us of what we have earned is no longer mere fraud, but fraud with *violence* to fall back on. As long as his privilege lasts we have no defence against him; if we want to do business in his line of things we must pay him the toll which his privilege allows him to claim of us, or else abstain from the article we want to buy. If, for example, there were a *Monopoly* of champagne, silk velvet, kid gloves, or doll's eyes, when you wanted any of those articles you would have to pay the toll of the Monopolist, which would certainly be as much as he could get, besides their cost of production and distribution; and I imagine that if any such *Monopoly* were to come to light in these days, there would be a tremendous to-do about it both in and out of Parliament. Nevertheless, there is little to-do about the fact that all society to-day is in the grasp of *Monopoly*. *Monopoly* is our master, and we do not know it.

For the privilege of our Monopolists does not enable them merely to lay a toll on a few matters of luxury or curiosity which people can do without. I have stated, and you must admit, that everyone must labour who would live, unless he is able to get somebody to do his share of labour for him—to be somebody's pensioner in fact. But most people cannot be the pensioners of others; therefore, they have to labour to supply their wants, but in order to labour usefully two matters are required: 1st, The bodily and mental powers of a human being developed by training, habit, and tradition; and 2nd, Raw material on which to exercise those powers, and tools wherewith to aid them. The second matters are absolutely necessary to the first; unless the two come together no commodity can be produced. Those, therefore, that must labour in order to live, and who have to ask leave of others for the use of the instruments of labour, are not free men but their dependents, *i.e.*, their slaves, for the commodity which they have to buy of the monopolists is no less than life itself.

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(To be concluded.)

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

To those who have obtained copies of the *Commonweal* through the propagandist work of our comrades, by free distribution in the streets and public conveyances, or by purchase at our outdoor stations, we ask if in agreement with our principles to help the sale of the *Commonweal* by ordering it of their newsagents, and sending on to us the names of newsagents willing to sell it; and still better, as our outdoor work must shortly be reduced, by joining the local branches and helping on the work.

In the newly-drafted constitution for the State of Wyoming it is provided that "eight hours shall constitute a lawful day's work in all mines and on all State and municipal works."

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, Knights of Labour, Switchmen's Mutual Aid Association, and Brotherhood of Railway Brakemen, all in the employ of the Union Pacific system, have signed articles of federation. The agreement was submitted for approval to the general session of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.