MONOPOLY.

(Concluded from page 91.)

Now I ask you to conceive of a society in which all sound and sane persons can produce by their labour on raw materials, aided by due tools, a life and comfortable livelihood, and which possesses a sufficiency of raw material and tools. Would you think it unreasonable or unjust that such a community should insist on every sane and sound person working to produce wealth in order that he might not burden the community; or, on the other hand, that it should insure a comfortable livelihood to every person who worked honestly for that livelihood, a livelihood in which nothing was lacking that was necessary to his development as a healthy human animal, with all its strange complexity of intellectual and moral hungers and aspirations? Now, further, as to the raw material and tools of the community, which, mind you, are necessary to its existence: would you think it unreasonable if the community should insist that these precious necessary things, without which it could not live, should be used and not abused? Now, raw material and tools can only be used for the production of useful things; a piece of tillage, for instance, is not used by sowing it with thistles and deck and dodder, nor a bale of wool by burning it under your neighbours' window to annoy him; this is abuse, not use, of all these things, and I say that our community will be right in forbidding such abuse.

Again, would it be unreasonable for the community to say that these means of production, if they are to be used and not abused, must be used by those who can use them, that is, by all the same and sound persons engaged in earning their livelihood in concert; that they are to be so used according to fair and natural regulations agreed upon by the whole community in its same mind; and that, furthermore, since they are to be used by all, they must not be exclusively possessed, i.e., owned by any; because, if any private persons, or groups of such, held the exclusive possession or ownership of them, they could withhold the use of them from those who used them except on terms which would place the useful persons in a worse condition; or, in other words, they would be their masters, and would impose such a life on them as they chose. Therefore, I say these raw materials and tools would be the property of the whole community, and would be used by everyone in them, on the terms that they should repair the waste in them and not engross undue share of them.

Here, then, is our reasonable community, in which all can produce, all do produce, no one has to pay poll-tax to be allowed to work, that is to live; in which no man need be badly off unless by his own will; in which the society whose aim it is to make the most of its nature's conditions and surroundings for the benefit of each and all of the members. These people I call reasonable men; but they have been called by other names, as breakers of the eight commandment (or of all the commandments in the lump), brigands, assassins, greedy pillagers, enemies of society,—in a word, Socialists.

Look at another society, and see if we like it better. In it, as in our first one, all sane and sound persons can produce wealth by their labour on raw material aided by tools; nor is there any lack of raw materials and tools in this society; yet there the resemblance ceases, for one part of those who could do useful work will not, and consequently another part cannot; some of this second part can get no work to do, and are starved outright; others can get nothing but useless work to do, and thereby help to starve their brethren; and all those who produce anything, as we have seen before, are in an inferior position to those who do not.

The law of nature, that livelihood follows labour, is thus reversed, since those who work hardest get least, and those who work least fare best. Is this reasonable? Yet it is the direct and necessary result of those rights of property which the whole of our army, navy, police, judges, lawyers, persons, etc., are banded together to sustain by whatever amount of fraud and violence may be necessary for its safeguard. In it, the use of all of monopoly; a man in the misery of life is no longer used only for its primary use, the growing of corn, the feeding of beasts, the building of a house upon it; it is also abused by being employed as a rent-squeezing machine for the supposed benefit of an individual, and the like is the case with the tools of labour; the stored up labour of past generations, the machinery, the means of transit, all these things are no longer used merely as means of production, that has now become their secondary use, which the law does not trouble itself with at all, since it has all its attention turned to its enforcing their abuse (now become their primary use) for the benefit of one or another, as instruments for squeezing rent, interest, and profit out of the producers.

Those that thus according to the (middle-class) ten commandments are so anxious to prevent what they call theft, are thus the masters—nay, the owners—of all society under our present system; outside them, there is nothing whatever but machinery, mental, brutal, and human, for enabling them to produce, not the greatest amount of wealth, but the greatest amount of profit; and when the masters get in getting what they consider the due amount of profit produced by this said machinery, they say times are bad, even though the warehouses and granaries are full, and the power of producing wealth with decreasing labour is every day growing. High prices to them and also, unluckily, to their human machines, mean prosperity, because these latter are not in the least in the world rewarded for producing wealth for themselves, but for producing profits for their masters; the destruction of wealth by war and other calamities is good for their profit-grinding, therefore we have war; the waste of labour in all kinds of stupidities and futilities is good for trade, therefore we have sham literature, sham art, sham enjoyment, newspapers, advertisements, julexes, and, in a thousand and kinds of disgrace, to help our faltering system to totter on a little longer, so that our sons instead of ourselves may have to face the inevitable ruin which, on these terms, must bring about the peace to come.

What help is there out of it all? I have spoken of the workers as the helpless machinery of commerce; and helpless they are as long as they are apathetically accepting their driven or driven machines in the hands of the masters of society; and yet it is they who have to bring about the change, and sweep away monopoly. The capitalists for any radical change are far more helpless than they are, because as masters of machinery, they are not masters of the raw materials of living except as pensioners on others, and it is their accepted duty, nay, their religion, to resist all change in this direction; nor as individuals have they the means of earning their bread, if they take away their pensions before you have begun to reconstruct a new world in which they would find a place like other people; it is therefore, impossible that the change can be made from above to below. No, it is the classes which are necessary to what of real society still hangs together behind the monstrous machinery of monopoly, it is the workers themselves that must bring about the change. And it is at least an incidental purpose of Socialist propaganda that the change should be, if possible, brought about or at least guided by the conscious intelligence of the workers, that it may not be left altogether to the blind forces of hunger, misery, and despair, which the capitalist system is so steadily piling up for its own overthrown. Apart from all the conscious politics, all the pushing this way and that, of semi-extinct Toryism and vague crude democracy, which is undoubtedly plying the way for revolution, the time is coming when the monopoly of the means of production will lose its value, when the employers will begin to cease to employ. Cut-throat competition ever cheapening means of production and exhausting markets on one hand; on the other, the unceasing struggle of the workers to improve their conditions at the expense of the capitalists, will make employment for profit more difficult both to get and to give; will, in fact, bring about deadlock and ruin in spite of occasional improvements in trade. But if the workers have learned to understand their position, which means if they have become determined to make the best of the nature which they have so far conquered, in spite of artificial restrictions on labour for the benefit of a class, they need not fear the coming crisis. That very increase in the productivity of labour, which will ruin capitalism, will make Socialism possible, and it cannot be doubted that the act of production will itself become ever more prodigiously in the very first days of the new social order, and we shall find it easy enough to live a very few years after the time when we found it so difficult to make profits.
THE RUSSIN READING GUILD.

It is no criticism on Socialism to say that Socialists show some resemblance to schoolboys, in their tendency to despise what is not of their own growth, and to adopt, without a sufficient examination of independent opinion, and without, as it were, a consciousness that this the more if amongst ourselves, where it is so much easier to form prejudices, than in a stranger who follows not with us. Like the new boy in a school, the latter is kicked and passed by; but a pitched battle ensues upon any division in our own ranks. Some apprehension may be felt for the Cause when at these times difference of opinion, like a sharp knife, slices important sections from the main body of Socialists. Yet this is as usual a division not fatal. The cuttings take root and grow. As in the vivification of the hydra of our duplicity, the divided powers assume the parent form and become的新 organisations. Perhaps in the end, the struggle may prove groundless, since it is with ideals as in organic life; the division of struggle is the growth of struggle, and the development more adapted to survive. Only, if Socialism is to result from, the struggle, superiority should be shown in those characterizations which are peculiar for Socialism. In generosity we must excel, and by wisdom vanquish. We should adopt, or rather, we should deal in personalisms or scandal, to hear it eagerly, and harshly to howl it, what can result but long ears and a Bray? Bitterness and ridicule are clogs to the growth of a people, to prolong the steps of an individualism. Out of these, no Socialism can arise to shed its summer glory on the world. We must be tolerantly calm; then with the struggle the brotherhood will increase. Isolated facts will seem contradictory for a time; but when the general law is deduced, it will explain them all, and peace will be more secure than before. So long as our contest be friendly, what matters the numerical division of struggle? The struggle itself is the evolution and development of individualism.

Socialists have no monopoly of wisdom, and their sympathy should go out to all honest enquirers; not omitting such as are going over the old ground once more. Something overlooked may turn up; gold may yet be found in the mine we wended and left; our pyramid may be strengthened by another brick, added somewhere at its base. At any rate it will be better for the searchers, as well as for us, to prove the admitted truth again. "Every mind must know the whole lesson for itself," says Emerson; and we who believe in brotherhood must acknowledge, our ranks. To that extent, the effect of the former speaker is not less obvious than that of the latter, though they are not so far removed, they are not so far apart, as to render the former a serviceable reminder; to the latter it may be a revelation. Let not our theories be too narrow to include what treasure they may contain. It is not our knowledge, but our eagerness that strengthens the touchstone of free-thought, and cast out the dross from their gold. In their monthly publication, the Ruskin Reading Guild Journal, the names of their labour are displayed; and having read a recent number, I am of opinion that they deserve the title of "Socialists," in that they deal with the practical and ethical aspects of Socialism.

In so far as they accept Ruskin's authority for their conclusions, there may be considered worthless—at least to them. Their opinions are based on the supreme correctness of the dogmatic exposition of his own. "Re-examining," says Walt Whitman, "everything that you have been told"; and this good advice is good applied to Ruskin as to any other. So only shall the truth be sifted out. But an imitation of Ruskin's literary style—the double-barrelled adjective, the allusive argument from epithets, the headlong sentiment unseasoned with any salt of humour—are not re-examination. Without the fire of Ruskin's native strength, the writers' enthusiasm sometimes borders on the comic. Yet their earnestness will save them; as a swift horse, it will carry them on to overtake the important truths they are following, which Socialists too will do well to keep in view. For face to face, as it were, with the subject, so Ruskin places, by means of the examples of the practical application of that which he says, the elementary needs of the body push into the background all further aspirations; whereby it happens that some, listening to these and not grasping the real Socialism, which I suppose the book aimed at, are sometimes left with a dismal barrow-like existence. Nay, are there not some Socialists who have no higher idea? But the Ruskin Reading Guild looks beyond. Its claims for a cultured life are intense, if narrow. Perhaps we must write a better book for them to read, as we should write the aesthetic side of art—the mere delight in lovely form and colour — so enthusiastic is he for the meaning conveyed by the artist. Indeed, above all, Ruskin wants the reader to understand the true social, the true art, the true spirit of organisation; the real social, the art symbolic, rather than sensuous and itself sufficient. One feels disposed to kick at this asceticism, and to claim the widest possible enjoyment for this present life. "Let it be a life of happiness not all. The quality of it is to be reckoned as well as the quantity; perhaps even before it. I heard one child ask another, "Would you sooner have little and good, or much and not so good?" and the same question is ever before us to be answered. The Ruskin Britannia (Good, Truth, and Liberty), and for this the Ruskin Reading Guild is making systematic preparations. Mazzini, too, and Tolstoi and Carlyle are in their programme, as throwing light on the "Master." Pity that the light should be so much of one colour. Why should the faithful doubt? Only the play-actor needs footlights: the hero shows best in the blazing sunshine. Is he truly greater than his worshippers? Then should they call in others to discourse with him— his equals, to whom alone he can fully disclose himself. Whitman, Darwin, Ibsen—what will he say to these, and these to him? The seeds of wisdom are sown in the mind where men like these compare notes. The seeds of profit are播 the same fields. It is the struggle of some, clothing the cause in fact, until the ideal becomes actual. To-day's dream is of to-morrow's doing; but the dream is first and the other follows, as the day follows the sun. The future society will be our fruit, the present task rather a selection. Besides, is it not possible that they mightier than all our conscious efforts to attain it, and it will grow in its own way. The Ruskinians have their ideal, the Collectivists also. They would harmonize and side with Ruskin; but it would flourish without some factors in fact; and of these, one that is to survive must never be partial, it must cover the whole ground, and possess that fact.

We are not pacific, or have little belief in parties. They savour too much of trade, with its advertisements. Let us rather have societies. Your party man has his pill to puff, and public analysis may ruin his profits. Not so the farmer, feeder of men. He knows no advertisement, and loves his work, for he is really him, and his food puts him let us gather in truth, rejoicing in the plenty of our neighbours' fields. It is the true economy, whether applied to corn or to wisdom, true and practical. For together these admirable advertise-merities feed us, nor wrangling make us wise. Not amongst the advertisers do we class the Ruskin Reading Guild. Though not in the Socialist ranks, they are walking the same road together, and it is good to give them greeting as we draw near together.