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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

MONOPOLY.

(Concluded from page 394.)

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 due and comfortable livelihood, and which possesses a sufficiency of raw material and tools. Would you think it unreasonable or unjust that such 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 habits 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 necessities, 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 dock 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 sane 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 sane 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 could use them except on terms which would place the useful persons in a position of inferiority to the useless; in other words they would be their masters, and would impose such a life on them as they chose. Therefore, I say those raw materials and tools would be the property of the whole community, and would be used by every one in it, on the terms that they should repair the waste in them and not engross undue shares 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; a society whose aim it is to make the most of their natural conditions and surroundings for the benefit of each and all of its members. These people I call reasonable men; but they have been called by other names, as breakers of the eighth 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, parsons, etc., are banded together to sustain by whatever amount of fraud and violence may be necessary for its safeguarding. It is the result of monopoly; for now the field 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 the owners; their abuse 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, metal, brutal, and human, for enabling them to produce, not the greatest amount of wealth, but the greatest amount of profit; and when the masters fall short 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 fatuities is good for trade, therefore we have sham literature, sham art, sham enjoyment, newspapers, advertisements, jubilees, and all kinds of disgraces, to help our failing 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 position as mere machinery 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 capitalists, as a class, they cannot even conceive of any other means 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 any means of earning their livelihood, if you 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 overthrow. Apart from all the conscious politics, all the pushing this way and that, of semi-extinct Toryism and vague crude democracy, which is undoubtedly paving 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 condition 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 despite 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 progress of the cheapening of production will be quickened prodigiously in the very first days of the new social order, and we shall all find it easy enough to live a very few years after the time when we found it so difficult to make profits.

Nevertheless, it would be disingenuous if I seemed to try to create the impression that the abolition of monopoly—of the artificial restrictions on production—would be plain sailing, that it would come quite peacefully and without strenuous effort of various kinds. Things now going on do not encourage one to think that; hypocrisy where the movement seems weak in power or limited in aim, unscrupulous and relentless repression where it seems threatening and well instructed; no real signs of privilege yielding a jot without compulsion. And you must remember that all our law and government, from Parliament to a County Court, has now got to be just an elaborate defence of that very monopoly which it is our business to clear away, though they by no means began with that. True it is that if the whole class of workers could be convinced on one day or in one year of the necessity of abolishing monopoly, it would pass away like the clouds of night. But the necessities of the miserable, and the aspirations of the intelligent will outrun the slower process of gradual conversion, and the anti-monopolists will find themselves in a position in which they will be forced to try to get hold of the executive in order to destroy it, and thus metamorphose society not in order to govern by it and as they are now governed; in other words, they will have to sweep away all the artificial restrictions that stand in the way of free labour, and they will have to *compel* this step by some means or other. Those who set before them this necessity will doubtless differ at present as to the means whereby this will be done; but they should at least agree, and will agree when the time comes for action, that any means that are means, and are not unhuman, are good to use.

I have then tried to point out to you that the producing or useful class are in an inferior position to the non-producing or useless class; that this is a reversal of the law of nature that bids all to labour in order to live. That this monstrosity is the necessary result of private persons being allowed to treat the matters that are necessary to the fructification of labour as their *property*, and to abuse them by employing them as mere means of compulsion on the worker to pay tribute for leave to live. I have asked you to learn to agree with us Socialists in thinking it necessary to abolish this monopoly, and to combine together for its abolition and the reconstruction of society on the basis of the freedom of labour and the abolition of all privilege. I must add further that no programme is worthy the acceptance of the working-classes that stops short of the abolition of private property in the means of production. Any other programme is misleading and dishonest; it has two faces to it, one of which says to the working-man, "This is Socialism or the beginning of it" (which it is not), and the other says to the capitalist, "This is sham Socialism; if you can get the workers, or part of them, to accept this, it will create a new lower middle class, a buffer, to push in between Privilege and Socialism, and save you, if only for a while.

But this true programme, which means the abolition of privilege, is enough, for it must and will lead directly to full Socialism. It will draw the teeth of the dragon of capitalism, and make a society of equality possible; a society in which, instead of living among enemies in a state of things where there is nothing but a kind of armed truce between all men, we shall live among friends and neighbours, with whom indeed our passions or folly may sometimes make us quarrel, but whose interests cannot really be dissociated from our own. W. M.

THE RUSKIN 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 set. We are apt to be intolerant of independent opinion; and this the more if amongst ourselves, where we most look for uniformity, than in a stranger who followeth 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 is such division not fatal. The cuttings take root and grow. As in vivisection of the hydra of our duck-ponds, the dissevered parts assume the parent form and become new organisations. Perhaps in the end apprehension may prove groundless, since it is with ideas as in organic life—the more crowded the struggle the more rapid is the evolution, and the development more adapted to survive. Only, if *Socialism* is to result from the struggle, superiority should be shown in those characteristics that make for Socialism. In generosity we must excel, and by wisdom vanquish. From sarcasm comes no help; and to those who deal in personalities or scandal, to hear it eagerly, and harshly to howl it, what can result but long ears and a bray? Bitterness and rancour can develop only meanness and distrust, to prolong the era of individualism. Out of these, no Socialism can arise to shed its summer glory on the world. We must be tolerantly calm; then with the spread of wisdom brotherhood will increase. Isolated facts will seem contradictory for a time; but let all be admitted. 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 number of competitors? The more hands digging in the field of truth the better. Presently the trenches shall run together; the traversed space will increase, and the buried treasure unearthed will be the common property of all.

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 ore we washed 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 the kinship of every learner.

Amongst the claimants for our sympathy is the Ruskin Reading Guild. Many have tasted the rich fruit that Ruskin offers; others, in their haste, have passed him by. Here, accordingly, is this society making a fresh search of the tree. What they find will be to 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 bring. And they, for their part, must assay their metal with the touchstone of free-thought, and cast out the dross from their gold. In their monthly publication, the *Ruskin Reading Guild Journal*, the results of their labour are displayed; and having read a recent number, I am of opinion that they deserve some recognition from us.

In so far as they accept Ruskin's authority for their conclusions, these may be considered worthless—at least to them. Their opinions may be correct; but the coin is borrowed, and they must make it their own. "Re-examine," 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 adjectives, the slippery 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 so many of our comrades are, with the facts of actual starvation, the elementary needs of the body push into the background all further aspirations; whereby it happens that some, listening to these and not understanding our aims, fear lest Socialism should bury culture in a dismal barrack-like existence. Nay, are there not some Socialists who have no higher ideal? But the Ruskin Reading Guild looks beyond. Its claims for a cultured life are intense, if narrow. Perhaps we must admit them to be narrow. One writer, describing a picture, ignores the æsthetic side of art—the mere delight in lovely form and colour—so enthusiastic is he for the *meaning* conveyed by the artist. Indeed, throughout the book pleasure is rather frowned upon, except as a means of educating "the soul." Education is divided into two sorts, and this on the "Master's" own authority: the false, namely, which delights us, and the true, which makes us unhappy. A rash statement, or over-statement rather; but typical of the energy of its authors, which sometimes carries them beyond the goal of their own meaning. Nevertheless, it is fair criticism to say that in their desire to exalt the "spiritual" they deny the "material." Their culture is to be didactic, and their art symbolical, rather than sensuous and in itself sufficient. One feels disposed to kick at this asceticism, and to claim the widest possible enjoyment for this present life.

Yet is *width* 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 Ruskinians say, *Good*, if only little; and can we find fault with their decision? Narrowness may be compensated for by depth. If our cup be deep *enough*, who knows but, like Thor's drinking-horn, its bottom may communicate with the infinite ocean? Very intense is the joy aimed at by Ruskin and his followers. In Carlyle's words, they seek "a higher than happiness in *blessedness*." So did the Chicago Anarchists, and none dare call them mistaken.

Much is to be learnt from a study of Ruskin; and for this the 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 Idea is the first cause of progress. Duly the effects follow, 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 it, as the day follows the sun. The future society will be our creation rather than our manufacture. The thing we really want is mightier than all our conscious efforts to attain it, and it will grow in its own way. The Ruskinians have their ideal, the Collectivists another, and the Anarchists a third. Be very sure that none of these would flourish without some root in fact; and of these, that one which is to survive must never be partial, it must *cover the whole ground*, and possess that fact.

I say *not partial*, for I 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 advertisements, and loves the light of the sun to enrich his harvest; and like 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, to labour together as comrades in useful work; for neither can advertisements 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 with us, and it is good to give them greeting as we draw near together. G. S.