JULY, 1902.

"No consecrated Absurdity in this world if the would have stood its ground MAN had not silenced the objection of the CHILD."

Why?

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE Devoted to SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM

CONTENTS

FRANK VIERTH, Publisher
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA, U.S.A.

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Continued on the other side.

Why?

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of the "Single Tax and Direct Legislation" number. While they last, 10c a copy. Address "Why?"

After reading this, hand it, or mail it, to some other person who will give it a thoughtful reading, and in that way assist in increasing our subscription list.

The Story of My Dictatorship.

INTRODUCTION.

Many people will read an allegory who would shrink from a treatise. If John Bunyan had neglected to clothe his ideas with the alluring garments of a story, it is doubtful whether *Pilgrim* would have made much progress in his own generation, to say nothing of the unimpeded march through the centuries. For humanity loves to see truths incarnated in individual forms. The concrete is easier to grasp than the abstract, and one who finds a sermon on courage tiresome glows with enthusiasm over the mythical hero who embodies and reveals in it brave deeds. Under the guise of dreams one can draw with a freer hand, without the prosaic limitations of wakefulness. And always a dilemma can be escaped by the dreamer opening his eyes at the right moment.

In this unpretending "Story of My Dictatorship" the author prefers to conceal his identity, and even

The Story of My Dictatorship.

CHAPTER I.

A POLITICAL OUTING, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

The legend about Mohamet visiting the celestial regions, wandering all over the seven heavens, encountering countless vicissitudes on his way, and returning to earth in time to pick up a pitcher he had accidentally upset on leaving, and that before a single drop of its contents had time to escape, does not now seem so incredible a feat as when I first read the story. My own adventure may not be quite so marvelous as that of the great prophet, but at any rate it would come in as a good second. To be "wafted by a fav'ring gale" from the humble station of a retiring tax-payer to the exalted office of Lord Protector; to hold that office for a full twelve months; to crowd into this short span of time the work of a whole and possibly of several generations; and to accomplish all this between sunset and sunrise is a performance unparalled by anything in history, and is comparable only to the miraculous journey of Islam's renowned prophet.

But I had better tell my tale from the beginning.

but saw part of it only, and that from this partial recognition arose all the confusion. As is usual in such discussions, they all paid more attention to their points of disagreement than to those on which they agreed, and so the latter were overlooked, while the former were accentuated. And I could not but feel how detrimental this was to their common aim, and how far better it would be for the cause of humanity if, instead of uncompromisingly opposing one another, the members of all the different schools would seek to ascertain how far they could honestly support each other's plans.

As I sat in my easy chair that evening, reflecting over the day's proceedings, my thoughts became more and more confused. Time and space seemed annihilated. Scene after scene passed before my vision in rapid succession, until at last I found myself in Trafalgar Square, in the midst of a surging, noisy crowd, then all became again clear and natural.

I knew what had happened. There had been a general election, the fight of democratic principles had been triumphant, and the people had assembled here to determine the kind of reform that was needed to secure equal rights and duties to all. All kinds of proposals were being made, but none met with universal approval; and the people began in despair to exclaim that democracy was a failure, since its leaders could not agree on a workable plan. I trembled, for I saw that unless some agreement between the different factions could be brought

about, the cause of democracy might be discredited for all future time. With the hope of bringing about such a reconciliation, I forced myself to the platform, and spoke as follows:

"Friends, do not despair; your differences are not so great as you seem to think, for are not your aims identical? Your only differences are as to the means to be adopted for carrying them into effect."

Here I was interrupted by shouts—"That's just the trouble. And if we don't know what means to adopt, how can we govern the country?"

"That's very simple," I said.

"Do it then!" they all shouted at once.

"But I have not the power. I only intended to make suggestions." The latter part of my remark was drowned in the noise.

"Let's give him the power!"

"If he says he can do it, let him do it!"

"Let us elect him Lord Protector!" and other such cries reached my ears.

I waved my hands, trying to restore silence, and to explain that I did not intend to be Lord Protector; that such a course would be contrary to the spirit of democracy; that, instead of democracy, it would be establishing a Dictatorship, which would be undesirable. But I could not make myself heard by the crowd, while the leaders on the platform, as if glad to be relieved of a responsibility, said, in a menacing manner, "You are not going to

back out of this." And the chairman, telling me to sit down, rose and read from a paper in his hand as follows:

"Be it enacted by the Democracy of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, that Citizen"—here there were shouts of joy, and I only caught the concluding sentence, "be Lord Protector——"

I interrupted indignantly, "Say, rather, Dictator."

But the chairman took no notice of my remark, and repeated, "Be Lord Protector of the Realm."

Thus I was unexpectedly, and against my wish, made absolute Dictator of the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION.

My sudden elevation to the exalted office of Lord Protector displeased me as much as it seemed to give general satisfaction.

"What mockery," I thought to myself, "that the triumphs of democracy should end in a Dictatorship; and I, above all men, to be Dictator!"

How often had I not inveighed against monarchial institutions and "one man worship" of any kind, as being of the essence of despotism. And how often had I not wished to be absolute monarch for a few hours only, so that I might have power to resign for myself, heirs, and successors, and make monarchial rule impossible for all future times.

My wishes were now fulfilled, and now was my opportunity to redeem my promise.

My first thought was to jump up, and, in virtue of my new office, declare the republic for all future time. In the next moment I hesitated. How is a republic possible with such discordant elements, trained for centuries in a school inimical to republican institutions? No! that would mean a return to confusion. My first duty was to make of the people republicans. If I should succeed in this, then the republic would follow as a matter of course.

"A speech! A speech!" shouted the impatient masses. There was no escape, and but little time for reflection. I had boasted that I could establish happiness, prosperity, and, above all things, unanimity; and this promise must be made good. I rose and said:

"I am willing to be your servant and manage the affairs of state for you, but not as the Czar of Russia. To this end it is not enough that you invest me with power to act; you must also define my duties. In other words, you must frame a constitution of which I am to be the executor."

Shouts of approbation came from all sides. They actually were all agreed.

"A constitution"—"Frame one"—"Suggest one," and so forth, came from the crowd.

"There is no need to frame one, as the only constitution worthy of the name and worthy of a democracy is indelibly written in every heart. See

whether I am speaking the truth—whether your hearts will respond. *You all desire to be free. Is that so?*"

There never was a more hearty response made by a crowd than the one with which these words were greeted.

"Well then," I continued, "our constitution will be very brief, and one with the wording of which you are already familiar, though not with its spirit. It runs as follows:

"Every individual to have equal and inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!"

Again all agreed and cheered lustily.

"This, then, shall be our constitution, and all the law there is or shall be. It clearly defines the rights and duties of every citizen, and at the same time marks out the duties you have delegated to me."

This last sentence was received in profound silence. I saw that it was not quite clear to them how these few words could have all the meaning I attributed to them. Therefore, without appearing to notice their embarrassment, I continued:

"If *all* have an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, then it is clear that no one must be interfered with in the exercise of this right. Therefore, while free to do as you please, you must allow equal liberty to every one of your neighbors."

"Hear, hear," from all sides.

"So that your *duties* consist in respecting these

rights of your neighbors. And my duty consists in guarding these rights, and to secure them, without exception, to every individual member of the state."

Once more I had the assembly with me.

"This constitution shall not only be our only and valid law, but the touchstone of right and wrong. Any enactment of the Executive, or any private act, by whomsoever committed, that runs counter to this constitution, shall be deemed an offense not to be tolerated. This shall be my first official proclamation. My second is, that all men shall have free access to all the opportunities of Nature, for the reason that without such access to the sources of nature the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness is impossible. My third proclamation prohibits as a matter of course, any person or persons to take from any other persons the fruits of their exertions under any pretense whatever, except it be the voluntary gift of him to whom such things rightfully belong. Therefore, from this hour I abolish all taxes whatever, direct or indirect."

This announcement created surprise and a good deal of dissatisfaction.

"You can't govern a State without revenue," came from all sides.

"No," I replied. "But the state is not without revenue. For inasmuch as the opportunities of Nature belong to all alike; and inasmuch as, in the nature of things, these opportunities cannot be enjoyed by several at the same time——"

"Speak plain!" "We do not understand your riddles," and like protests reached me from several sides at the same time.

"Well, then," I said, "what are called the 'opportunities of Nature' consist of soil, climate, locality, water, etc.,—in short, the forces of Nature, all of which appertain to land. But the same locality cannot, obviously, be occupied by more than one person or family. Such person or family, therefore, in order to secure to them the harvest of their labors, would require a monopoly of such locality. But inasmuch as thereby they enjoy a monopoly of such lands, each occupier would have to pay to the community whatever natural advantages accrue to him from such exclusive possession."

"This is very confusing," remonstrated several.

"Plainly then it means this, that all former taxes are abolished, and in their stead is substituted a tax on *land values*, irrespective of improvements, to equal the full annual rental value of the land. This tax, belonging to the community, will be used for communal purposes. All former contracts, unless conflicting with our constitution, shall be respected as heretofore; and no one shall be disturbed in his present possessions. This is all for the present."

This announcement produced general dissatisfaction, and the crowd became very noisy.

"What! Tax the poor farmer, and allow the capitalist to escape?"

"And allow the workers to be ground down by the rich?"

"Not even a property or income tax?"

These and many other objections were raised, to reply to which, amid such a tumult, was clearly out of the question. I had to make use, therefore, of the authority with which I had been invested. After the noise had somewhat subsided I said:

"You have imposed upon me the duty to secure to all equal rights and equal duties. This is, to my mind, the only way in which this can be done. If I am wrong, the remedy lies in your own hands. Anyone who can show that he does not possess the liberties guaranteed him by the constitution shall have his grievance removed. For this purpose I shall now retire into my office and listen, one by one, to all those who have cause to complain."

Whereupon I left the platform, followed by the surging crowd.

CHAPTER III.

A LOAFER.

The next instant I found myself seated in my audience chamber, with the whole crowd pressing in upon me, each eager to be first. Foremost among them was a man whom, for brevity's sake, I will describe as a Loafer. The guards tried to push him back to make room for others more respectably

dressed. But I interposed, saying, "Under the new constitution all have equal rights by virtue of their citizenship, and not by virtue of the kind of coat they wear. First come, first served."

With this it seemed as if I had recovered a little of my lost ground. The man himself seemed delighted, and thanked me warmly.

"You are the true working man's friend after all," he said. "I have come, governor, for my bit of land."

"Explain yourself," I replied. "To what bit of land do you refer."

"Well, I mean my share of the division."

"But there is to be no division, neither of land nor anything else. The constitution says nothing of division."

"No, but it does speak of equal opportunities; and how can I have equal opportunities with the Duke owning his thousands of acres and I having none?"

"You have equal opportunities with any Duke. For every penny that accrues to them by virtue of the mere ownership of land, they have to hand over to the state. If you owned it, you would have to hand it over. The real owner, therefore, is the community, of which dukes and yourself are equal citizens."

"Then you still allow dukes to own land?"

"Certainly, if they like to. What does it matter

to you who owns land provided that your share of the land values, or rent, is secured to you?"

"All right; hand me over my share of the rent."

"Not quite so quickly, if you please. You have equal rights with every other citizen, but also equal *duties*, and therefore have to pay taxes the same as everyone else. Your share of the rent is appropriated by the state as your share of the taxes."

"What good do I get out of that?"

"Every good that a well organized government can secure you. You will receive every facility to produce wealth, and the fullest protection for what you produce; together with all such conveniences, in the shape of roads, railways, facilities for education, etc., as are best provided by the state."

"But did you not say that we should all have equal access to land?"

"Oh! if it is merely access to land you want, you can be easily supplied. See here, the columns of the *Times* are already full of 'Lands to let.' So you can make your choice."

"And pay rent for them, I suppose, as before."

"The rent you pay, so far as it represents the value of the land, will go into the public treasury."

"Oh, that's fine talk. If there is no advantage in owning land, then why do not these people who don't want the land for their own use give it up?"

"Because they have improvements upon it, which are theirs. Whatever is paid for the use of these will go to the owner. If you want land without

any improvements upon it; we have now plenty belonging to the state, which the former owners have relinquished rather than pay the tax for land which to them was useless. Among these lands are some very fine deer parks; that is, which formerly were deer parks. You can pick and choose where you like, and take as much of it as you please."

The applicant's face brightened. "And would it be mine then?"

"Yours as long as you care to keep it. Your children's after you, or to whomsoever you may choose to transfer your rights of possession."

"And what have I to pay for it?"

"If there are no improvements on it belonging to former owners, nothing at all."

"And as much as I like?"

"As much as you care to take, subject to the annual taxes."

"Oh, that's all right! I don't mind that; because, you see, I shall let it to tenants at a higher rate, and so make at least a comfortable living. It is right that the working man should at last have his turn."

"Stop, you are under a misapprehension," I said. "If you take land with such an intention it will be of little use to you, since all of the rent would accrue to the state, leaving you only the trouble of collecting it, and the responsibilities connected therewith. It is for this very reason that its former possessors have relinquished it, because they did not care to

incur risk and trouble for land for which they had no use."

"Yes, but I intend to put the tax on my tenants in addition to the rent."

"That would be impossible. The amount that the land will rent for determines the amount of the tax you will have to pay. If it can be rented for more than formerly, its value has increased and the tax will be correspondingly raised.

The applicant pulled a long face. "What good is the land to me, then?"

"It gives you free access to the opportunities of Nature; and whatsoever you can make it yield is yours. Whatsoever others, your tenants, as you say, can make it yield is theirs. This is the spirit of the constitution."

"So this is the kind of working men's friend you are, is it?"

"Yes, I am a *working man's* friend, but not the friend of those who wish to live by the labor of others," I replied. "You can have land in plenty, together with every opportunity and facility to labor, and full security of the fruits of your toil, sacred not only as against every fellow-citizen, but sacred even against the power of the state. It is yours exclusively and absolutely. You are free from all manner of taxation and vexatious laws and restrictions that formerly used to hamper trade and industry. In short, you have now every inducement

offered to become a *working* man, if you really wish to work."

My visitor, being disappointed in his expectations, assumed a defiant attitude.

"But I don't wish to work. I have not been used to work, and I don't care to begin now."

"Then I fear you will have to starve."

"I can beg, can't I?"

"Yes, you are at perfect liberty to do so; but you will be disappointed, I fear. So long as people were starving from necessity, and from no fault of their own, there were always kindly-disposed people —to the honor of mankind be it said—who were willing to assist their unfortunate brethren. But even then these kindly people endeavored to discriminate between the loafer and the necessitious. But it was difficult to discriminate, the former often participated in what was intended for the honest poor. In the present state this difficulty no longer exists. Everybody knows that whosoever is willing to work can do so equally with everybody else. Under these circumstances no one will be disposed to support idleness and foster vice."

I delivered these words with deliberation and emphasis, and I could see that their meaning was not lost upon my applicant. He saw at once how difficult it would be for him to practice in future his former habits, and half plaintively asked me to give him an order for the workhouse.

"There are none," I replied. "Those disgraceful institutions have been closed, and this blot on humanity and civilization is at last wiped out."

"What! actually turned all the poor helpless folks out into the street?"

"Not so. Most of its occupants were there because they had no home to go to—old helpless folks or cripples. But now that their children and other relatives can earn good livings and have comfortable homes, they would no longer tolerate those dear to them branded as state paupers, but took them home—now no longer a burden to them, but a source of pleasure. Some few there were helpless and friendless, victims of former social conditions. To these we have granted pensions to enable them to live where they like and as they like—as citizens of the state, not as its paupers."

"Can't you grant me a pension?"

"Certainly not; you are not helpless."

"No, I am not helpless. You are right," he said defiantly. "If you have closed your workhouses, you have not yet closed your prisons. I shall find ways and means to get there, and then you will have to keep me."

"If you attempt to do violence to the liberty or property of your fellow-citizens, of course it will be my duty to protect them; and if you cannot otherwise be prevailed upon to keep the peace and respect the equal rights of others, we shall have to restrain you. But you will not be cast into prison and fed at the expense of your fellow-men. You will find a

nice clean cottage ready for you, comfortably furnished, with a garden plot and spade, or a workshop and such other tools by which you may prefer to earn your living, but isolated from the rest of the community, so that you cannot interfere with their liberties. You will be charged a certain rent for the house and tools supplied you, and you will have to pay, of course, the ground tax just the same as the others; in addition to which you will have to pay your share of the salaries of the officers and doctors, whom the state would have to employ to watch you and others like yourself."

"Doctors?" he asked.

"Yes, doctors. We have replaced lawyers by doctors, because such cases as your own do not call for quibbles about precedents and abstractions, but demand medical skill and judgment. Our judges only decide whether there is any necessity to put people under restraint or not. In this they are guided by the fact whether the accused's being at large would interfere with the liberties of other citizens. For how long this restraint is to last is for medical men to decide, and not for lawyers."

"Then would you treat me as if I were insane?"

"What else is a man who has every opportunity offered to be free, independent, and happy, and yet prefers to work harder and be deprived of his liberty? For while under restraint you would have to work just the same for your living as if you were

free, and, in addition to that, would have to pay the expenses of officials."

"But I tell you I am not going to work."

"In that case, of course you will starve while under restraint; and if you do not pay the rent of the cottage provided for you, you will be turned out of it and allowed to starve in the fields."

"What! and would you actually let me starve?"

"If you choose to, why not? I do not see in what manner I have a right to interfere with your liberties; and, to tell the truth, if you would rather starve than be an honest man, I think it would be a blessing for mankind to be rid of such as you."

My visitor stared at me with profound astonishment, and for some time seemed as if he could not find speech. I watched him carefully, as if studying the effect of a drastic remedy on a patient. At last he said:

"I have, it seems, to work or starve. The only choice you give me is to do either of these two things as a prisoner or as a free man. If prisoner, I have not only to work for myself, but also for your policemen and doctors, and besides am stigmatized as a lunatic. Under these circumstances it will pay me much better to become an honest man."

Here a deep sigh followed. "I can see through your plan," he continued. "Circumstances made a loafer of me, and now you wish to employ the same means to make me honest again. Sir, I may

be bad and wicked, but I am not a fool. Your methods are very drastic, but I think your plan is good. You shall hear of me again, but no more as a loafer. I shall try and retrieve my lost dignity and manhood, and see whether I cannot be as good a citizen as I might have been had society but allowed me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHOPKEEPER.

The next petitioner, from whom I learnt that he was a small shopkeeper in Cheapside, was much agitated, and bore a worried look.

"Sir," he said, in a trembling voice, "I hope you will relax your sternness a little in my case. I am hard hit. I am a hardworking, honest man, and have been all my life. After fighting the battle for life for so many weary years, I have at last succeeded in scraping enough together to buy a small piece of land and build a house on it. What am I to do now?"

"Why, keep it, good sir, and make the best of it." My answer seemed to electrify the man into life again.

"Then you are not going to take it from me?" he inquired eagerly.

"Certainly not. I could not if I would. The constitution would not allow me."

"But has not everybody a right to it?"

"Yes; everybody has an equal right with yourself to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and therefore to the *natural means of life*, that is the land and the elements of Nature."

"Then anybody might come and turn me off the land—out of my home?"

"Oh, no. No one can do that so long as you care to stay. You are only expected to share with the others the advantages that accrue to you from the exclusive possession of that particular spot; and in return, all the other people have to share with you whatever similar advantages they may enjoy by monopolizing portions of the country."

"And how are you going to adjust what I am to give and what I am to receive in return?"

"Very easily. Whatever the value of your plot of land may be, is the measure of the advantages you enjoy to the exclusion of others. Therefore you will be required to hand over to the state a sum equal thereto. You will pay a tax based on the *unimproved value* of the land, and that tax will amount annually to approximately what the land will yield in rent. Others will do the same, and thus provide the funds necessary for public purposes. Your returns will consist in the enjoyment of those conveniences which the money will provide."

"If you tax my land to its full value, is it not the same as if you took it away?"

"Certainly not. You can still use it the same as before. But if I took it away you could not."

"But is not its value gone?"

"Its selling value is gone but not its utility value. You can live on it, trade on it, and grow on it whatever it could yield, as before. These values it will still possess undiminished, and yours will be the exclusive right to enjoy them so long as you pay the tax."

He shook his head. "You leave me in possession of the land, but you tax me, and that heavily."

"No more than what you receive in return. And not so much, I think, as you paid formerly for less. You are a business man. Let me put a few common-sense questions to you. Suppose you sold goods to a customer of yours and sent them home by another man's cart, would you claim the money for the cartage as well as for the goods?"

"The cartage money would go, of course, to the man to whom the cart belongs."

"Every cent of it?"

"Of course."

"That is precisely your case. If you withhold portions of the country, with all its natural advantages, from your fellow-citizens, you have to pay to them for the privilege; while whatever you create on the land by your toil is yours. Others have to do the same. Those who would contribute less must be content with monopolizing less. Everybody is treated alike, and each has to pay, not

according to what he possesses, but *according to the value received.*"

"I do not dispute the correctness or even the justice of your principles," he said with a sigh, "but it falls heavily on me. You see, sir, I have bought my land with honest, hard-earned money, and now am as good as losing it—every penny."

"What is the value of your land?"

"I paid $1,200 for it. It is assessed now at an annual value of $50."

"Then your taxes will amount to $50. Have you not paid as much before?"

"No, certainly not. My tax did not amount to more than $2.50.

"Yes, the land value tax. But I mean altogether, taxes and rates. Surely you have paid as much before."

"Oh, altogether, I have paid, let me see—inhabited house duty, $2 50; property tax I believe as much; and rates and poor law, $75; that is about $80."

"And on your shop—is that your own too?"

"I have built it, but it is mine for only another eighty years."

"What rates and taxes did you pay for that?"

"About $300."

"Income-tax?"

"That's not much, something like $30."

"Stamp duties on checks and receipts?"

"Say fifty cents a week."

"Custom duties on coffee, tea, etc."

"Yes, I dare say it comes to something like $20 a year, although I neither smoke nor drink. But I have a large family and they make up for it in tea, coffee and other imported products."

"Let us see now. You have paid altogether in rates and taxes something like $430, of which burden you are entirely relieved. You are asked to pay instead $50 on your land only. Are you really so hardly done by?"

"If you put it that way, perhaps not."

"And for these $50," I continued, "the community puts at your disposal postal and telegraph service, roads, railways, protection of life, liberty, and property; education for your children, and many other conveniences. Is that so great a hardship?"

"These are fine promises, truly; but if you are going to reduce my taxes as you say, where is the money to come from to carry them out."

"You say your shop in Cheapside is not on your own land. What is the ground rent for that?"

"I pay $2,500 in ground rent; of course, besides my shop, there are offices which I sublet."

"Then you see these $2,500 which you formerly paid into private pockets will now go into the state coffers, as the price of 'natural opportunities withheld.' This will more than compensate the state for the reduction of taxes made to you and your fellow-tenants. The annual value of ground rents amounts to more than $1,000,000,000, which is far

above the total expenditure; that for last year was only $800,000,000. But on this we will be able to economize a good deal—so that the tax will be sufficient for both imperial and local needs—and spend it more usefully. What was spent on poor law, police, prisons, hereditary pensions to people who had done nothing to earn them, sinecures and gewgaws, will now be devoted to more useful purposes. We shall also save a great deal by abolishing custom houses and by the simplification of taxation, which will enable us to do away with much unnecessary machinery; or at any rate, employ it more profitably. In short, instead of hampering trade and industry, we shall try to help it on."

"But for all of that you have made a poorer man of me. Yesterday I could have sold my house and land for $5,000."

"You can still sell your house!"

"Yes, but I would get nothing for the land."

"No, but you could buy another block at the same price."

"So—I—could," he muttered with amazement, as if this truth had only just dawned upon him.

"And your children won't have to toil and scrape for years before they will be allowed to have a home in their native land."

"That's enough, sir!" he exclaimed. "I was a blockhead to have given you all this trouble for nothing. What a fool! Actually wanted to keep up land monopoly because it has made my life hard;

and never to think that if kept up it would make it as hard for my children. Good-day, sir. I am more than satisfied with the change."

CHAPTER V.

A SOCIALIST.

My conversation with the shopkeeper seemed to have a salutary effect on a good many besides himself; for as he left, a large number of those who were waiting their turn left with him, evidently pleased and well satisfied with what they had heard.

As they left, one of the crowd rushed eagerly forward. He was excited, but with that kind of excitement which honest men feel when they think wrong has been done to others. He was a rather lean man, well dressed, with high forehead, and very intelligent looking.

"It is plain that you have given every satisfaction to the middle class, and have earned the gratitude of the whole bourgeosie," he said with a bitter sneer. "They are to have their taxes reduced, railways and telegraphs provided, so that they can increase their profits, and have their children educated for nothing; and the working men are to be left to the mercies of the capitalist, without even a workhouse to go to, lest the bourgeoisie might have to be taxed. Is this your idea of equal rights and equal liberties?"

For this kind of opposition I was scarcely prepared. But there was no mistaking the sincerity of the man, nor his honesty of purpose. To tell him that he was mistaken in thus interpreting my actions, and bid him have patience, that all would come right in the end, and so forth, was clearly out of the question. The man was not to be pacified unless he could first be satisfied. And as it was my aim to enlist the sympathies of the people for my reforms, and to avoid as much as possible unnecessary friction, I said, after some moments of reflection:

"I am only enforcing the constitution, for which, among others, you yourself have voted. If I put a wrong construction on it I sin in ignorance, and shall be thankful to you for putting me right."

This molified him somewhat, and I could not help thinking at the moment how wrong it was for people who should pull together, to fall out with each other on account of difference of opinion as to the best methods for attaining their common end.

"What are my particular errors of omission or commission?" I asked.

"In the first place you have established no national workshops."

"On the contrary," I interposed, "the whole country is one great national workshop, in which each can work to his heart's content; when, where, and how he likes." But heedless of my interruption he continued:

"You have made no laws to restrict the powers

of the capitalist, to limit the hours of labor, the rate of wages, or of interest."

"But such laws would be against the spirit of the constitution, which provides that every citizen shall have perfect liberty, limited only by the like liberties of his fellow-citizens. If I should tell a man how many hours he is to work, or what he is to give in exchange for certain services, would this not be a flagrant interference with his personal liberties? Besides such legislation is absolutely mischievous, and could result only in the re-establishment of class rule and class legislation, from the evils of which we are just now trying to escape."

"Not only have you omitted doing these things," he continued, again disregarding my answer, as, if solely intent on his own thoughts, "but you have actually abolished what few taxes the capitalists had to pay—the income and property tax, probate duties, etc., thus allowing the wealthy to go scot free."

"But surely you do not wish to abolish the well-to-do? I always was under the impression that you objected to poverty, and that the object of good government was to exterpate *this*, root and branch."

"Oh, certainly, if you put it that way! But how do you set about it?"

"By encouraging industry, in the first place, thrift in the second. Surely it is good that the nation should possess as much as possible of all the good things which add to its comfort. Can it be that

you regard wealthy citizens as an evil, and therefore wish to put a tax on them?"

"Come, sir, you evade the question. Is it not a fact that the few have piled up their millions at the expense of the many? And if they are not checked by taxation, what is to stop them from continuing the same thing?"

"They *are checked* from getting what belongs to others, since all have now equal opportunities; but there is no check on anyone to prevent him from producing wealth, or from accumulating it, if he so choose. A person should not be fined for building a house or planting a tree; nor should a premium be offered for indolence or improvidence."

"Fined for building a house or planting a tree? You speak in enigmas."

"Not at all. Every tax levied on industry is of the nature of a fine; that is, even if not intended as such, has the same effect as a fine. A tax on dogs tends to diminish their number. Or, supposing it were thought there were too many bachelors, then a bachelor's tax, if high enough, would encourage matrimony. In the one case you practically fine a man for keeping a dog; in the other for not getting married."

"Well, if dogs and bachelors are objectionable, is it not right to tax them?"

"Yes; and if wealth were objectionable we might tax that, too. But my object is to exterminate poverty, and not wealth."

"That's all very well. But if one man were not allowed to accumulate more than a certain amount, the remainder would be distributed among the others."

"How do you know there would be any remainder? Suppose that we did determine that a man should not own more than a certain amount of wealth; is it not possible that he would waste more, or else stop production when he reaches his limit."

"Well, I don't know. You are trying to theorize. This fact remains, however, that people with money grind down the poor, and while idlers roll in wealth many workers are starving."

"That *was* a fact; and did but indicate that as a remedy for such a deplorable state of things we should discourage idlers and encourage workers."

My socialist visitor remained silent, and so I continued:

"It is for this reason that I spoke as I did to the first applicant, whom you call a working man. He was not a worker by his own confession, although I hope he is one now. You should not fall into the error of calling every poor man a worker and every rich man an idler. You can find both workers and idlers in all classes."

"Then why not treat them all alike?"

"That is precisely what I am directed to do by our constitution. There are now equal opportunities to all and favors to none. Whosoever likes to work is now free to do so, and may enjoy the full

fruits of his labor. And if any would not work, neither should he eat, be his name Jack or Sir John."

"Then, after all your fine promises, you simply mean to pursue the 'let-it-alone' policy?"

"If by 'let-it-alone' policy you mean that each person is to be allowed to employ himself and enjoy himself as he or she may think fit, without anyone having the right of interference with their liberties, then 'Yes!' that is indeed the spirit of that principle for which you and the whole democracy have been fighting for years past."

"Then you mean to allow the capitalist to grind down the workers without affording the latter the the protection of the law?"

"I merely substitute freedom for club rule. Under such conditions everybody can look after himself. You wish to rule by whims and fancies; I carry out principles."

"Not by whims and fancies, but by *law*."

"What you call *Laws* are but whims and fancies of people. *Laws* are not and cannot be made by man, but are as old as the universe itself. All man has to do is to discover them—I mean, of course, the laws of Nature; but these you ignore entirely, and think that by writing your own opinions—your whims and fancies—on parchment, you have manufactured a 'Law.' If such enactment fails in its intended purpose, you set about amending it; then amend the amendment, and so keep on tinkering from year's end to year's end—call it wis-

dom, statesmanship, legislation. And when anyone points out to you that your enactments run counter to every natural law, then you exclaim 'Theory, theory!'"

"You are simply a slave to principle."

"Yes, I confess my guilt on that head. I certainly have greater faith in the principles of Nature than in the opinions and the haphazard guesses of man. Men have been tinkering at legislation these many centuries, and with what result you know. Under these circumstances, do you not think it high time to give Nature a trial, were it only to demonstrate the worthlessness of her laws compared with human wisdom."

There was no reply to this, and so I continued in a more conciliatory tone:

"If this principle, upon which you and I and all schools of political thought are agreed, is a true one, let us have faith in it, and follow out its dictates to the letter. For if the principle is wrong, or if principles are not to be relied on at all, then pray by what can we be guided? Would you have us return to party government, with its appeals to ignorance, religious prejudices, and racial animosities, without either reason or principle? Or re-establish the rule of might?

My visitor was not yet convinced. "That is all very well in theory. I commend your abolition of the land capitalist; but that in itself will be useless unless you at the same time abolish all other capitalists and establish a system of state-directed production and distribution."

I glanced at the people behind him whom, up till now, I had somehow regarded as a deputation of workmen on whose behalf he was pleading. But on closer examination I saw, to my surprise, that all those present were well dressed, and betrayed none of the characteristics of workmen. I called my visitor's attention to this fact, and he replied at once that he had not come with *those* people, but had headed a large number of unemployed, and that he could not explain how it was they had all left. "These gentlemen," he added, "probably came to thank you for your partiality toward them;" this with another sneer.

An idea struck me. I saw plainly that an object lesson would be far more convincing to this man than abstract arguments; and I could read in the looks of those present that they come for other purposes than to express any gratitude toward me. So I said:

"Sir, you are right; we must not allow the laborers to be ground down, if they are really in that helpless condition you represent. If they can not take care of themselves, we—that is, you and I—will look after them, and nurse them as we would helpless babies. To be honest with you, I myself do not think that your fears are well grounded. I think that in a fair and open field every true man is able to hold his own and look

after himself. If I am mistaken in this, then I am on your side; for already have I made provision for the maimed and helpless. But first let us see what this influential deputation have come for; perhaps it may throw some side-light on the points which you have raised. So please remain where you are, and listen to their representations.

CHAPTER VI.

DEPUTATION OF RAILWAY DIRECTORS.

My surmises were correct, and my socialist opponent had not long to wait before he could see that these people had not come to thank me for anything I had done; but rather to urge upon me the adoption of the same measure as he himself advocated—viz., to tax capital rather than land values.

They were boisterous, but not very self-confident, and gave me the impression that they intended to overawe and frighten me into submission.

Their spokesman, a rather portly gentleman, commenced in an imperious tone:

"We have come to demand the instant repeal of these disastrous proclamations which are working the ruin of the country. We shall not submit to—"

Here I interposed, reminding him that I represented the sovereign people, and that I must insist on more respectful language. That while they were free to place before me their complaints, and to expect redress if they could make out a good case, they were not allowed to refuse obedience to the law as it stood.

"If the law is bad," I continued, "you are free to agitate for its repeal; but while it is in force it must be obeyed. You know this doctrine, since you have preached it so often yourselves. Now you may proceed. What is it you have to say?"

"We have to inform you, then, that since your proclamation has been issued the country has been ruined. Millions of capital have been destroyed, and unless there is a speedy repeal of this in—er—this—er—this disastrous law, bankruptcy is staring the nation in the face."

I was not much alarmed by the statement; for, though there were many of them, they were neither the whole nation nor representatives of the whole nation. So I said calmly:

"Will you please state who you are, and what interests you represent? Clearly you cannot mean the whole nation, since many who have been here before you have expressed their satisfaction with the new administration."

"Yes," replied the spokesman; "those whom you have benefited by plundering us."

I again sternly rebuked the speaker, and warned him against again using such disrespectful language. He then explained that those present were directors of the several railway companies, and that since this new proclamation their companies had been utterly

their accustomed swag. We find that others can run faster than ourselves and get the prizes. For myself I will not complain, but throw off the old traditions which are now hampering me, and try again my strength under the new conditions."

"Instead of explaining, you only puzzle me more and more."

"I will be plain then. You have opened up the natural opportunities to the people, and now everyone is able to make the best of his abilities. At first I too considered your proposals sheer madness, because I thought that, even if you did open up the land, everybody would not be fit to start farming. I don't know why, but the idea of land reform always suggested to me that it meant everybody should be a farmer. But I now see that it is neither necessary or even possible. You have certainly taught us that railway dividends come as much from land as do potatoes. The farmers, who are now making good profits, employ builders to improve their habitations, buy carpets, furniture, clothing, and all manner of other conveniences. The manufacturers and tradespeople are all busy, and, of course, earning good money. These too try to improve their conditions. Most of them were really out at elbow, barely having been able to provide themselves with the merest necessities of life. But now that they are in a position to do so everybody is buying and sending out orders on one hand, and supplying others with such articles as they themselves produce or deal in. This gave a sudden and great impetus to all the trades, and, of course, also to all the railways. The army of unemployed vanished as if by magic. Under these conditions everybody naturally demands for his services an equal counter-service. The laborer has no longer to beg for employment, and unless people are willing to pay him what he thinks his labor is worth, he refuses to part with it. I cannot blame him for we do the same; we have raised our rates on the railways, and people pay cheerfully."

"Yes; but have we anything of it?" asked the former speaker. "Does it not all go away again in wages or in taxes?"

"It does, certainly. Those who work the railways get the benefit, leaving to us about enough to recoup us for the wear and tear of rolling plant, and such return as would be about an equitable return for the rent of our buildings and other plant."

The deputation got a little noisy, each of them attempting to remonstrate at the same time with the last speaker for his frankness, for which they called him a Judas and other coarse names.

I again interfered, and after some difficulty succeeded in restoring quiet. Turning to the first speaker, I said:

"This is a somewhat different picture to what you drew, and is most satisfactory and gratifying. Instead of having ruined the nation, I find the nation

is prosperous; and I fail to see what you have come to complain about. If the wages of all those engaged in railway work are higher, surely you, as the managers of the concern, must share in the general prosperity. For if each man is in a position to put his own price on his labor, you, as the most important officials, must be able to command good salaries for your services. I mean your wages of superintendence."

The man whom I addressed bit his lip and was silent, as were the rest, excepting the gentleman who made the former frank statement.

"If you will pardon me, sir, for saying so," he said, "I think my friend was right when he said you were ignorant on many points of railway management. We, as directors, have nothing to do with the management or superintendence of railway work proper. Our business is, or I should rather say was, to receive the balance-sheet and the earnings of the men and to declare dividends. Of course there are still earnings, and still dividends to be declared; but now a rent collector could perform the work for us."

"Well, and is that so bad? I should say your rents for buildings, and so on, should be more secure now than formerly; and considering that houses and rolling stock represent labor, and that labor is well paid, their value, I should think, would be enhanced."

"It is. But railway carriages and buildings do

not last forever as does the land. Nor was our chief revenue derived from this source. As population increased and trade improved, so the value of our lands improved. Our shares formerly went up whether our carriages were new or old. Now they go down every day if we permit our plant to depreciate."

I saw that the deputation was becoming uneasy and there was a disposition on the part of the leaders to bring the interview to an end.

"Gentlemen," said I, "I have been unable to find that you have a real grievance. By your own admission I find that the nation is prosperous and that there are no unemployed. You have told me that railroad traffic has increased and that the returns are sufficient to not only yield a fair rate of interest on the actual investment of capital but also to pay increased wages to all those actively engaged in the railway service. What you are really complaining of is the loss of the power to appropriate the value of the land over which you run your trains and on which you have built your stations and terminals. This land or franchise value, which has heretofore enabled you to live in luxury and idleness, belongs to the people who create it. We have no place for loafers, whether attired in rags or in broadcloth. You must render an equivalent for what you receive; you must turn your abilities in more legitimate and what will no doubt prove more profitable channels."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIRECTORS OF THE NEW RIVER COMPANY.

Things happen strangely and oddly in dreams, and yet everything appears perfectly natural. The directors of the railway company had not left my presence, nor do I remember anyone having entered the room while they were there. But notwithstanding this I had before me another deputation. The men were the same, but not the interest—or concern, rather—which they represented. This time it was on behalf of the New River Company that one of their number addressed me. Fixing his eyes upon me he said:

"I hear that you are very fond of facts, and that you will not believe anything that cannot be demonstrated to you. Here, then, are some hard facts for you to digest." And he held up to me two copies of Stock Exchange quotations. "Look on this picture, and on that."

I did so, and read in one "New River Company, $600,000." And in the other, "New River Company, $60; no business done." I also noticed great reductions in other stock, though not to the same extent; and opposite many of the companies there were either no quotations at all, or the legend "In Liquidation."

"Are you convinced now that we are putting facts before you?" he asked.

"I am; and most surprising facts they are," I replied.

"Most surprising!" echoed the socialist.

"Within the last few months," continued the spokesman, "billions of dollars' worth of capital have been destroyed."

The allusion to the last few months astonished me more than the amount of capital destroyed. "Dear me!" I exclaimed; "have I been in office so long? How the time does fly!"

"Over ten billions of dollars, if a cent," he continued. "I am prepared to make good my statement."

"Oh, I take your word for the amount," I said smilingly. "But would you be kind enough to tell me what kind of capital has been destroyed, and in what manner?"

"If you will come with me to my office I will show you a strong-room full of what was most valuable stock, but which is now so much waste paper—or nearly so."

"Dear me! have the moths got into them, or mice, or rats?"

"Neither of these, but the blight and canker of your cursed government," he said with ill-suppressed anger.

"I fail to see how I could have done anything to spoil goods locked up in your strong-room."

He gazed at me with angry amazement. "I ver-

as these gentlemen are concerned. They have left them their works and pipes, and have erected a new plant, belonging to the community; and now, of course, the people will no longer buy their water at a higher rate than that at which they can be supplied by the parish pumps."

"You do not give all the facts," interrupted the complainant. "Nor do you mention that you acted as an agitator against our interests."

"Oh, if you wish me to go into details I will do so with pleasure," replied the acute Police Commissioner. "There was, as I said, a perfect revolution. The people wanted to take possession of the waterworks, and pay the present owners at valuation. I drew a cordon of police around the works to protect the property of the company. I then explained to the people that they had no right to force people to surrender aught against their will, nor fix the price of their service, any more than the company could force people to work for them at *their* price. But I advised them, certainly, that if they were dissatisfied with the company's prices they could erect a plant of their own. They decided to do so and were about to tap the river when the directors of the company came to me with a parchment, claiming the sole right to the whole river. Now, sir, your proclamation was that no one should be disturbed in his present possessions, and I again promised the company full protection, but pointed out that, *inasmuch as the river itself*

is a natural opportunity, if they wished to have exclusive possession of it they would have to pay for the privilege."

"And we made a liberal offer."

"You did; but it did not come up to the liberality of the constitution, which demands the full value of all natural advantages. I said to them that so long as everybody can have free access, and there is water enough for all, the rent or tax would be *nil*, since in that case there would be no monopoly. But if there should be competition for the water, the tax would be the full value which this competition would give it. They refused to pay the tax, and so the local authority tapped the river. Under these circumstances—there being no monopoly—of course there is no rent for either party. Nor need I say that the company is not paying now any other taxes, since they have all been abolished, excepting only, of course, the ground rent for land occupied by their buildings, reservoirs, etc."

"And no capital has been destroyed?"

"None whatever. What these people call 'capital' was a certificate which gave them the right to levy a tribute from the citizens of the district, before they allowed them to quench their thirst or have a bath. The enormous value of their 'shares' or 'scrip' only shows the extent to which this blackmailing has been carried on. Now that people have access to the natural opportunities, they no longer pay for what they can get for nothing. The com-

I smiled, and handed him the estimate I had just received from the surveyor, which gave the total of the waterworks at $175,000. He looked at me in amazement.

"This," I said, "is the full value of their plant, buildings, engines, pipes, and meters, all included."

"And what has become of the rest of their capital?" he asked.

"The rest you can get at the price of waste paper, since it is nothing else, and never was anything else. For that which you still call 'capital' consisted of nothing but parchments and papers—the bogies of which you and your school are so terribly afraid."

"But these shares represented capital."

"Very little indeed; and so far as shares represented real capital—that is, wealth in some form or other—it was harmless. But such shares as those of the water company, or the title-deeds of land, represented no *existing* wealth at all, but wealth to be produced in the future. That is, the holders of such deeds had *a lien on future production.*"

"I do not quite follow your meaning."

"I will explain then. Suppose I owned you narrow footpath leading down to the river or lake, and that this enabled me to levy a toll on every passer-by before I allowed him to quench his thirst. You, seeing I am doing a profitable business, propose to buy me out. I agree to sell—but what? Not the toll I have already collected, but the *opportunity of levying toll in the future.* I speak to you thus:

My revenue from this river is $500 annually; but the city is growing, and this the only source of water for miles. As people increase, so my toll-money must increase. Hence I want you to pay down equal to what I think I might be able to collect in the next twenty-seven or thirty years; or, in round figures, I require $15,000 for 'my property!' This at once constitutes me a 'capitalist' to that amount; yet the only real capital I have, that is 'wealth' in the shape of human labor, may consist in a gate to lock out the people. In the course of events, natural opportunities are declared common property, and the revenue derived from them goes into the public treasury. What offer would you then make me for my property?"

"None at all; excepting, perhaps, a few shillings for your wooden gate," he said laughingly.

"Precisely. And that explains why the shares of the water company have fallen from $600,000 to $60. You know now what has become of their other capital. In other words, it had no existence except on paper. You will clearly understand, of course, that by real capital I mean something that is due to human exertion—accumulated labor; that is, wealth to which its rightful owner is entitled by virtue of his exertion."

"Well, all wealth is due to labor, for that matter."

"No, it is not. This is a great and fundamental error on your part. Labor has the smallest part in the production of wealth."

"What!" he exclaimed in surprise, "wealth not due entirely to labor, when you yourself admit that capital itself is only accumulated labor?"

"Oh, bother capital! It is a perfect Mrs. Harris in political economy. The two factors in the production of wealth are *labor* and the *forces, or raw products of Nature.* Without the later the former is absolutely impotent. Without the former but little is to be had. These two factors then—*Nature* and *human labor*—co-operate everywhere, though in variable proportion in different localities, in the production of these commodities men require. These commodities you may call wealth, or capital, or whatever else you please. Where Nature co-operates more freely, men are well off. Where Nature's share is less, men are worse off. But in most cases the greater part is done by Nature. Woe betide the people who are so situated that labor has to do the greater part of the work."

"Do you know of such a place?"

"Yes, Aden, for instance, which is lying in a desert. Their very firewood has to be fetched in small bundles on camels from a distance; and their drinking-water has to be distilled from sea water, and is sold by hawkers from house to house as milk is in our streets."

"But how does that bear on our question?"

"It has an important bearing on it. You and many others were always clamoring for 'the fruits of your labor.'"

"Of course; and so we are still."

"Well, if you had 'the fruits of your labor' only, you would be worse off than the people of Aden; for these folks have at least the sea water for nothing. What you should have asked for is *free access to Nature* and an *equal share in the bounties of Nature.* The fruit of your toil would then be yours as a matter of course, since then no one could enslave you."

"And you think you have effected this with the single tax?"

"Certainly. For whatever of value is due to Nature now goes to the community, and the expenditure of the revenue thus derived, benefits all alike. And all having an equal interest in the spending, care is taken that it is usefully employed. All being thus placed on an equality as regards the opportunities of production, no one can lord it over the other. In other words, now a truly free contract between buyer and seller, employer and employe, is possible."

"But still there will be some more skillful than others and thus produce more."

"Yes, and these are the very men we wish to encourage, to be emulated by the others. What we have achieved by the single tax is this: The road is now open to all, and every one can run as fast as he pleases. The fastest runner will get the highest prize, but no longer at the expense of those less gifted. Nor can he by being the fastest runner,

prevent others from reaching the same goal, though perhaps a little later. He can shut no gate, and erect no barriers. The road is to remain open to all and forever. There is a prize for every one in the race, and the magnitude of the prize is determined by everyone for himself. Blanks there are for only those who are too lazy to take part in the race."

"Answer me another question. Why is it that you have not taxed the Water company for the use of the river? For, according to your view, this is a natural opportunity."

"It is. But we charge only for natural opportunities that are monopolized. These people do not now monopolize the water, but supply it to whosoever wants it. They simply act as carriers, and anybody else can do the same. If we charged them for the water, would we not tax those who use it?"

"Yes. And since the water is used by a portion of the nation only, whereas it belongs to the whole, should not those who enjoy it pay for it."

"Oh, that is what you mean. There you are right. But then the people do pay for that already; since whatever advantage there is in being near a river attaches to the value of the ground occupied."

"I hardly see your point."

"And yet it is plain enough. Suppose there are two blocks of land in every respect alike, save that the one is near the river, whereas to the other the water must be carted by some means. Say now that

this would mean an annual expense of $25. Would you not, in that case, esteem the former block of land worth more than the latter to that amount?"

"That is my point."

"So that you would agree to take the latter block at $25 less rent only?"

"Yes."

"But the water being piped, the two blocks will now be of equal value. If we charged for water, ground rent in the outlying districts would be proportionately less. But both water and ground rents belonging to the community, there is no need for separate charges, while it simplifies and cheapens the collection."

"Yes, you are right. It is very much the same as if one hotel charges half a dollar for bedroom and twenty-five cents for service, while another hotel charges seventy-five cents for both. Nevertheless, the theory seems to be entirely in favor of the capitalists."

"In favor of the capitalists?"

"Very much so. You have remitted all their other taxes, and now do not even tax them for the use of the river. I must confess, however, that I am very much confused about the whole matter, and not the least as regards yourself. I will be frank with you. At first I suspected you of collusion with the capitalists; but somehow they do not seem to be very grateful to you. And yet——"

"And yet?"

"I hardly know what to say. I am now satisfied as to your good intentions; but yet why are you so strenuously opposed to a Property or Income Tax?"

"For various reasons. In the first place because it is against the principle of our constitution—that is, it is a direct interference with the liberties of the citizens. In the second, because such taxes falls on industry, and to that extent check or, at all events, hamper production."

"These cannot be your only reasons, nor even the weightiest. You cannot mean to say that by taxing the millioniare, who has acquired his wealth at the expense of the workers, you would check production. Why not recover at least a part of what they have stolen from others?"

"By a property tax?"

"Yes."

"Listen, and I will try to clear up the matter for you. But first I would draw your attention to the essential difference between the production of industry and the raw products of Nature—or, briefly, *land*. Suppose I owned a piece of land which yielded me an annual income of say $25, and that the current rate of interest were five per cent. You know that the selling value of such a piece of land would then be $500."

"Of course."

"Next we will suppose that a tax of 50 per cent. is levied on ground rent; so that, after levying this tax, the net revenue from this land would only be $12.50, then——"

"Then your land would be worth at the outside $250. And if the tax is 100 cents on the dollar, its capital value would be gone entirely. That you have already demonstrated wholesale; but it does not bear on my contention."

"I'll show you that it does, if you will out be patient. Let us now see how a property tax would work. Instead of $500 worth of land, say that I possessed $500 worth of coal or bread, or any other industrial product, and that you imposed an all-round property tax of fifty cents on the dollar. What would be the result of that? You are silent. Well, then, I will answer the question myself. My coal would at once be worth $750. But that is not all. In selling the coal, I put on my profit of say ten per cent. This, before the tax, would have amounted to $50; but after the imposition of the tax I would get ten per cent. profit on $750 instead of on $500, or $75 instead of $50. Who do you think would gain most by this transaction—the workers or the capitalists?"

"Go on!"

"This, is one of the reasons why I am opposed to taxing the products of human labor under any pretense whatever. Before giving you any of the others, I want you to realize and commit to memory this stern fact: *A tax on produce always falls ultimately on the consumer, and that because a*

tax on any artificial commodity always enhances the price of that commodity."

"That's true enough. The custom duties always increased the price of commodities, and their burden fell upon those who consumed them. But is not the same true of taxes on the raw product?"

"Confining the term raw product to the raw material of Nature—*i. e.*, land—No. For if you tax the value of land, people are compelled to produce in order to be able to pay the tax, or else they must give up the land to others to use. And since a tax on land values absorbs only the difference in the values of the different natural opportunities in use, its effect is simply to place the occupants of land of different qualities on an equality. That is, the opportunities of production would be the same to all, no matter what may be the difference in the land each occupies. But the value of commodities produced will be determined by the cost of their production; that is, by the amount of labor expended. Hence, if you tax the manufactured article, you will thereby enhance the cost of the commodity; and if intending purchasers refuse to pay the increased price, any such commodity will cease to be produced."

"And your other points?"

"We have not yet finished with the first. You object to 'capital.' Now I have already drawn a distinction between real and fictitious capital: the former being represented by accumulated labor, the

latter by parchments. In the one case you pay to recoup past labor—as when you pay for the use of a spade, a plane, or a house; in the other you pay for access to Nature."

"I understand that distinction."

"Well, then, let the plow represent ten days' labor (or its equivalent in gold), and the tax on it one day's labor——"

"I see your point. The return would then have to be altogether eleven days' labor."

"Exactly. Then note the second economic principle. *A tax on land values destroys ficticious capital, while a tax on industry creates it.* This may help you to understand why those gentlemen would prefer to have their property taxed rather than the land, and why the land tax has made waste paper of their scrip. There is yet another well-ascertained economic principle bearing on this point. *Every tax that falls on industry, no matter in what form imposed, can be, and always is, shifted on the ultimate consumer.* But a tax on land values cannot be shifted, because, as above explained, it only places the occupants of different qualities of land on a footing of equality."

"I don't quite see that."

"And yet it is plain enough; but let me give you a concrete case. Supposing two farmers, A and B; the one possessing land that yields say 20 bushels of wheat, while the other, with an equal outlay of labor and capital, yields 30 bushels. Now

if we taxed the latter 10 bushels, this would simply equalize their respective gains. Each would now retain a net produce of 20 bushels. And manifestly the taxed farmer could not put an extra price on his wheat, because no one would pay him more for his wheat than they would to the other. But supposing we impose a tax of 25 cents per bushel of wheat——"

"That will do; I can see it now."

"Then we can pass on to the next point. My object being to prevent people reaping where they had not sown, I have, of course, to destroy all fictitious capital; for then they could only demand service for service and value for value. But had I only imposed half the present amount of land value tax, I should have abolished only half of this fictitious capital, leaving the lucky owners still in possession of half of their privileges. And if, to supplement the revenue, I had imposed an equivalent tax upon property, I should have re-created as much fictitious capital as the land value tax had destroyed; that is, things would have remained pretty much as they were before.",

"Good! You have now made it impossible for people to rob their fellows in the future. But how about the millions they possess already?"

"Good heavens, man! Millions of nonsense. Have I not already made clear to you that these millions existed on paper only? that the wealth of these millionaires did not consist of what they

actually possessed, but *in the share of the annual produce they could command?* Take any millionaire you please, and make an inventory of his present possessions. Two or three costly palaces, now rather expensive luxuries, with no rents coming in and a heavy ground tax to pay. Some fine furniture, a few ornaments, a few pounds of gold and silver, and a cellar full of scrip. How long can these perishable things last at best? And what harm can they do to anyone while they last? What better means of 'getting at them' can you possibly devise than prevent them from plundering, and make them pay the full value of any privileges they wish to retain—so long as the few gimcracks in their possession will enable them to defray the expense thereof."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIBERTY AND PROPERTY DEFENSE LEAGUE.

"They were long in coming, but they have come at last. I thought they would."

This I whispered to my Socialist friend, as our conversation was interrupted by a large and "influential" deputation, which entered the audience chamber in procession, and with much ceremony. They consisted of Dukes, Lords, Lawyers, Bishops, and Stock-jobbers. There was some confusion among them about the order in which they should

follow each other, and it was some time before they could settle the delicate point of "precedence" between lawyers, bishops, and "financiers"—as they euphemistically called those who thought they knew how to make ducats breed. But at last they agreed that each bishop should be supported by a lawyer on one side, and a financier on the other, himself turning his face toward the ceiling, as if unconscious of the presence of either—as I heard the M. C. of the deputation arrange.

One of their number, oddly dressed, and "supported" by still more odd-looking creatures (carrying sticks, coronets, coats-of-arms, gold-keys, etc., evidently designed to impress me with the speaker's importance—so it appeared in my dream) stepped forward and addressed me in a haughty manner. He said:

"I have not deemed it necessary to interfere sooner, because I felt sure that you would see the folly, if not the wickedness, of your doings. But it seems that, like the class to which you belong, it is hopeless to expect that you would be guided by any moral considerations and so——"

I cut short his oration by asking him on whose behalf he was speaking and what business brought him and his comrades here.

"I am speaking on behalf of the following influential organizations, of all of which I am a prominent functionary—president of one, vice president or chairman of another, as the case may be:

And with these words he handed me a card, on which were printed a long list of various organizations, but of which I will mention only a few:

"The Property and Liberty Defense League."
"The Farmers' Protection Association."
"The London Ratepayers' Defense League."
"The United Empire Trade League."
"The Imperial Extension Committee."
"The Working Men's Block League."
"The Society for Promoting the Interests of Farm Laborers."
"The Religious Tract Society."
"The League for Spreading Morals and Religion among the Working Classes."

A cold shudder came over me as I looked from the card to the speaker and his allies, and from them to the list of cunningly worded titles of leagues and associations; for the "Councils" of these various organizations consisted of a long list of dukes, earls, lords, and baronets, with just a few "esquires" at the tail-end, but not a single farmer, laborer, or "commoner" under the status of £ with six figures to it. I could not help thinking of some of Æsop's fables, especially that of the wolf and the lamb.

"Poor fellows," I sighed involuntarily. "Fancy the mice appointing a council of cats, hedgehogs and ferrets to plead their cause and guard their interests!" But I endeavored to suppress my prejudices as much as I could, and resolved to treat their case on its merits.

"Well, then," I said, "in what capacity and on whose behalf are you speaking now?"

"In my capacity as chairman of *The Liberty and Property Defense League*, since this is the parent institution of all the others; that is, if the principles of this League were fully carried out, there would be no need for further agitation."

"In that case your language simply surprises me," I replied, "since I am only putting into practice and am enforcing those very principles which the said League have taken so much pains to disseminate. Allow me to read to you from your own *Liberty Annual* for 1892. There you say:

"What are human rights? They depend, as we *Liberty* people are constantly pointing out, in the frank recognition that every man or woman is the one true owner of his or her own body and mind; that, as a consequence, we have no right to limit or to restrict the use by any person of his own faculties (*always having in mind the limitation involved in the law of equal freedom as formulated by Herbert Spencer, i. e., every man has freedom to do all he wills, provided he infringes not on the equal right of any other man*); that each person must be free to employ his faculties, or the product or gain of his faculties, according to his own choice, and to his own best advantage; that he must be free to acquire or possess, to contract and exchange, to sell and to buy, to hire and to let, just as he

himself, and those with whom he enters into free relations, think right.'"

"So you think your acts are in accordance with these true political principles?" he asked haughtily.

"I do, indeed; in strict accordance therewith."

"But, sir, it is this very principle of individual liberty you are violating."

"Indeed! I was not aware of it. Please enlighten my ignorance; and if your liberties are in any way being encroached upon, your grievances shall receive prompt redress."

"I will state then, emphatically, that you *are* interfering with our liberties to dispose of our possessions in any way we like. You seem ignorant of the real meaning of true freedom. You have quoted one portion of our publication, but have ignored the other, which I will now read to you. We there say:

"'This freedom in the use of faculties not only means free labor in the widest sense, but it means free exchange. It not only means that no man is to prevent my producing the articles of my own industry in my own way—whether they are farthing match boxes or the highest works of art; but it also means that no man is to limit or restrict my exchanging what I can produce through my faculties, in return for what my fellow-men produce or acquire through their faculties."

"Sir," I interposed, "I heartily concur with every word. Why, these principles are the very essence of our Constitution."

"You admit all this?"

"Yes, heartily and entirely."

"Well, then"—here he raised his voice—"I will finish the quotation, which goes on to say:

"'How does this apply to the case of land? It means that no person has the right to obstruct the free market for land—to do anything which prevents another man from acquiring land by exchanging against it the products or gain of his own faculties. In a word, it means that no man, or body of men, has the *moral* right to prevent any fellow-man from buying in an open market such land as he wishes to buy. The open market for land is a human right, just as sacred as the open market for bread or corn, and no one has the right to close it against his fellow-men. The buying of land is an integrel part of the right of exchanging all articles of use one against another, which is derived from the primary right of exercising our faculties as we will. Whoever restricts that right of exchange makes war upon the ownership of each person of his own faculties—makes war upon the primary right of the human race.'"

I knew that paragraph; it was heavily scored in my own copy of that sophistical publication. I also knew the difficulty of briefly exposing the many sophistries it contained. It would, I recognized, be absurd to try to convince such men of the essential difference between the claims of the individual to the fullest possession and control of such things

as were due to human exertions, and of the claims to control the *sources* of such things. I might succeed in convincing the ignorant, but not the titled members of a Liberty and Property Defense League. What ever else may be true of them, I did not consider them ignorant people. So I said:

"Be it so; but if it is a human right to own land, is it not a right of *all* human beings?"

"It is; for those who happen to possess it, or who have acquired it through their faculties."

"Pray, by what faculties have you acquired your land?"

"That has nothing to do with the question."

"Excuse me but it has a good deal to do with it, my lord. I have had a man here, the first applicant on assuming my office, now known as the reformed loafer, who possessed special faculties for acquiring land, and also other things for that matter. And had I not restrained his liberties he might have measured his faculties against those of your lordship."

"Then you *have* restrained a man? You have violated the liberties of man? By your own confession you have committed such an iniquity?"

"Yes, because it was one of those cases falling under the Spencerian limit, *'where persons employ their faculties to interfere by force or fraud with others in the equal use of their faculties.'* The liberty which that man claimed was to knock your lordship down, so that he might acquire by his own

faculties the right of buying or selling and in the open market."

At this my opponent changed color, and altered his tone.

"Oh, that, of course, alters the case! In that case you were quite right to interfere. But you have no right to prevent me from doing with my land and my property as I please."

"None whatever, my lord. You may do with yours just as you please. Who prevents you from doing so?"

"Who? Why you, of course. What business of yours is it whether I care to keep a deer park or not?"

"None whatever, as far as I can see. You may keep as many deer as you like, and I even think you might thus render a good service to the community by supplying the people with good venison, and so make a handsome profit for yourself."

"I am not a trader," he said indignantly. "And under your unrighteous rule I could not afford to keep deer for sport."

"Very well; then your lordship is at perfect liberty to dispose of your estate as you please. No doubt there are plenty of people ready to take it."

"But no one wants to pay for it."

"Well, if they do not want to, I have, according to your own doctrines, no power to compell them."

"It will do no good for you to assume this innocent ignorance. You know perfectly well that you have taxed away all the value of my land."

"No, not all the value; none of it which is due to the 'human faculties,' but only that which falls under the *Spencerian limit*. I have not taxed away the yielding power of the land; on the contrary, I have removed every tax and incumbrance whatever from industry, and any crop your lordship may raise from the land is free from every burden save that of producing it."

"But I do not raise crops. I leave such pursuits to my tenants."

"In that case, as your lordship is also president of the Farmers' Protective Association, you will be glad to learn that *their* crops are free from every encumbrance. And the fact that you can leave the farming to your tenants is evidence that your liberties are not interfered with."

"But they are, because all the crops that are raised on my estate are retained by the farmers, while I get nothing, or next to nothing."

"Probably because you do next to nothing. But I fear that we have wandered from the subject. You came here on behalf of farmer, artisan, working man, liberty, justice, and so on. I do not see on your card anything about landlords, or landlordism. Yet clearly you are advocating your own cause all this time."

"And am I not at liberty to do so?"

"Clearly. Only in that case we should get

nearer to our purpose by plain sailing. Let us drop our masks, my lord, and speak plainly and to the point. I have abolished all taxes, direct and indirect, and have imposed a tax on unimproved land values. That is, I have resumed, on behalf of the community, and which in a free state must belong to the community, or else equal liberties are impossible."

"Why so? Explain yourself."

"Because all men cannot be said to enjoy equal rights to life or liberty, while some of them have to pay to the others for permission to use the soil, to breathe the fresh air, or to bask in the light and sunshine. These things have not been produced by human faculties. They are essential to life, and to deprive others of them restricts them from employing their own faculties according to their choice and best advantage. Such acts clearly and pre-eminently fall within the Spencerian limit. See here what your present champion and chosen authority, Mr. Herbert Spencer, wrote on this subject."

And picking up a paper from the table, I read as follows:

"'Equity, therefore, does not permit property in land. For if *one* portion of the earth's surface may justly become the possession of an individual, and may be held by him for his sole use and benefit as a thing to which he has an exclusive right, then *other* portions of the earth's surface may be so held, and our planet may thus lapse altogether into private hands. Observe now the dilemma to which this leads. Supposing the entire habitable globe to be so enclosed, it follows that if the landowners have a valid right to its surface all who are not landowners have no right at all to its surface. Hence such can exist on the earth by sufferance only. They are all trespassers. *Save by the permission of the lords of the soil, they can have no room for the soles of their feet.* Nay, should the others think fit to deny them a resting place, these landless men might equitably be expelled from the earth altogether. If, then, the assumption that land can be held as property involves that the whole globe may become the private domain of a part of its inhabitants, and if, by consequence, the rest of its inhabitants can then exercise their faculties—*can then exist even—only by the consent of the landowners*, it is manifest that an exclusive possession of the soil necessitates *an infringement of the law of equal freedom.* For men who cannot live and move and have their being without the leave of others, cannot be equally free with these others."*

"But Mr. Spencer himself has renounced this utterance of his," said his lordship.

"He may have *renounced*, but he has not *disproved* it," I retorted.

At this moment the noble lord turned round, as if looking for someone, and I noticed an elderly

* Spencer's "Social Statics," (original edition) Chapter IX.

person gliding out of the room, shielding his face behind his hat.

"The land I own has been in my family since the Conquest. No one has ever claimed it or could claim it."

"Ah," said I, "there was no Liberty League in existence, you see, to teach people their inalienable rights."

"With your abstract morals I have no concern," he burst out indignantly.

"So it seems, my lord; yet you came here burdened with moral duties and moral indignation. But I suppose you find morals distasteful when you are required to observe them yourself."

"None of your impudence, sir. Are we to have our ancient rights thus interfered with?"

"Time, my lord, may be a great legalizer, but it cannot make a wrong into a right. Nay, the longer the wrong endures, the greater does the wrong become. You say your family owned certain lands for centuries. That means that your family has plundered the people, and deprived them of all their natural rights, for centuries. Do you not think it time that this practice were discontinued?"

"But what compensation do you offer?"

"Compensation for what? For ceasing to take from the farmer the best part of his crop? Compensation for allowing Britons to live on British soil? For allowing them to use their faculties for the satisfaction of their own needs? Be advised by me, and mention 'compensation' no more. Consider what you and yours have taken from the people since the time of the Conqueror. The buildings and other improvements on your estate are still secured to you as being due to human labor. You are aware, however, that it was not *your* labor which built them. You are left in their possession because we do not wish to legislate retroactively, and because we wish to bury the past. Though unrighteously gotten, we leave you in possession of *past plunder*, and enjoin you to sin no more. I would therefore advise you not to start the cry of *compensation*, lest those who have been your victims may take it up. Verily, you would find it hard to give adequate compensation to those over whom your family has lorded it for these many centuries, and for the many broken hearts your rule has occasioned. Let the sleeping dog lie, my lord, is my earnest advice to you. Be satisfied with our mercy, and ask not for justice, lest you might receive more justice than is to your liking."

CHAPTER X.

LAWYERS' QUIBBLES.

His lordship looked exceedingly uncomfortable, not to say mortified, and this caused great embarrassment among his confreres. He was about to say

something, as if anxious to restore his dignity—which seemed to have completely deserted him during the lesson I read him about compensation—but could only stammer a few incoherent words about cruelty, theft, and illegality. His followers, seeing his embarrassment, pushed a lawyer forward—a little man with a huge wig, under which he almost disappeared.

"We want none of your rhetoric, nor your insolence either, but shall insist on having our legal claims recognized," he burst out. To which I quietly replied:

"As for *legal* claims, you have absolutely none. As a lawyer you ought to know so much, that a legal claim can only be made under existing law, and not under laws that once had existence but have been repealed. You know what the present law is; and according to that your claim could not be granted, for the simple reason that would be contrary to law, and hence *illegal*."

"By what right have all these statutes been annulled?"

"Rather a strange question this for a lawyer. What right does it require to repeal any Act of Parliament save another Act? I repeat it again, if you have nothing better to urge in support of your claim than the *law*, that is, the written enactments of the stronger party, then you may as well save yourself further trouble. You are free, however, to appeal against the law on the grounds of *equity*—that is,

you would have to argue your case by what you call 'rhetoric.'"

"Is sentiment to take the place of law?"

"No; but law must be based on principles of equity, otherwise the law is *inequitable*; or, as the same term is spelled in modern times (whereby its true meaning is half hidden), *iniquitious*. You know perfectly well that 'laws'—that is, lawyers' justice—have always been changed and altered, making illegal to-day what was legal yesterday, and *vice versa*. There is nothing new, therefore, in changing a law, nor enforcing obedience to it after it has been changed. Indeed, it was always the business of your profession to enforce the law as it stood, whether it was just or unjust. With you lawyers the word 'justice' had but one meaning, namely, the enforcement of the provisions of the law. No matter whether it made awards to scoundrels and crushed the innocent, so long as it could be shown that judgment was in accordance with the written law it passed under the name of justice."

"We want no lecture from you, but our rights."

"I am giving you your 'rights'—your legal rights—since you will have it so. You appeal to 'law,' and sneer at the principles of justice and equity as 'rhetoric.' Be it so. My judgment then is that the law is against you. Is not that all you can reasonably expect on those terms?"

"But this law is monstrous, as it benefits some

at the expense of others. Is that your idea of equity?"

"No, it is not. If you can show that the law is iniquitous, you have made out a good case; but you decline to discuss principles of justice."

"I decline to recognize any new principles of law or legislation. There is no precedent for such a monstrous iniquity, such wholesale robbery."

"Very well; since you will have it so, I allow you to argue the justice of the law from your own point of view, that is, on grounds of precedent. I have already told you that there is ample precedent for changing a 'law'—more correctly speaking, an *enactment*. Our present enactment may be neither just nor wise. What of that? Is there not ample precedent for enforcing such a law, nevertheless?"

"On what ground?"

"On the ground of *expediency*, the leading principle of all past legislation."

"But law has always been held to protect property and liberty, while this law deprives people of both. This is an arbitrary law, which favors some at the expense of others."

"Can you mention a single law you have helped in passing that did not do the same; one that was not therefore *arbitrary* in the strictest sense of the word? Since you refuse to discuss principles of equity, let us get at your own principles of legislation. You have taxed people—forced them to make certain contributions to the public revenue.

was that not equivalent to taking part of a man's property?"

"But taxation is necessary, as without it government cannot be carried on. You will say perhaps that you can plead the same thing. But then you are singling out one class only for taxation—landowners."

"Not land *owners* but land *values*, and that because we hold that these values belong to all. But, of that, more when you will condescend to discuss principles. At present, to give you every advantage, I will admit, for argument's sake, that it is a class tax. What then? Precedence is all in favor of class taxation, as I will show you. Have you not singled out people who kept horses or valets for special taxation?"

"That was done because people who can afford such things can also afford to contribute to the public revenue."

"Good! Then I take it that one of your canons of taxation is that people who have should be made to pay, simply because they have it, and irrespective of how they got it. Is that it?"

"Provided you do not take too much."

"I see. Then, you think it would not be *arbitrary?* You have also taxed tea, currants, coffee, chicory, beer, and tobacco. You are aware that this tax was not, in the majority of cases, paid by well-to-do folks. What was your guiding principle in this case?"

"These are very stupid questions. A revenue we must have somehow, and this is about the easiest way of getting it. Besides, the people who pay it are not even aware of it."

"Oh! we are getting at your principles of justice by degrees. Then, according to your moral code, pilfering in the public interest is justifiable, provided it can be done deftly, without the people from whom you take it being aware of it?"

"But the taxes which the state collects for public purposes are not pilfering."

"I thank you for this admission, although I do not share your view. If a man is made to pay more than he receives in return, it is theft, by whomsoever it is committed. For in that case, are not some benefited at the expense of others?"

"The customs tax was levied on every person without distinction, and was therefore perfectly equitable."

"That is not true. It was not collected on absentee landowners; and even if it were, the tax did not fall equally heavy on all. For instance, a child in a mill earns a dollar a week. Out of this he had to pay, in taxes on tea and currants, at least ten cents or one-tenth of his earnings. Did your lords and dukes pay one-tenth of their incomes in custom duties? And even if they did, would the taking of $10 from a weekly revenue of $100 mean the same thing as the taking of ten cents from one hundred cents?

"We cannot enter into that. We stand here for our rights."

"So do the millions of people to whom you have denied their rights these many centuries. You want law according to precedent. Well, what precedent is there? This—*might is right.* For your laws, were they not all enactments of the stronger party made in party interests?

"Guided by principles of justice."

"Oh, fie, fie on your cowardice to pretend such a thing! Have you not admitted yourself that you got your revenue as best you could, and that the only principle by which you were guided was the getting of it—no matter how you got it and what were its consequences?"

"Its consequences were law and order."

"Every brigand who has power to enforce his mandates maintains law and order, according to your view of law. But let us look further into the principle of your laws. You have taxed the poor toiler and rich land owner, taking from the former an incomparably larger percentage of his earnings than from the latter. But how did you apportion the benefit bought with these taxes?"

"Every citizen shared alike in the benefits of government."

"That was a legal fiction, or, in plain English, a gross and palpable falsehood. If a road was made out of this fund, did the landless toiler benefit as much by the expenditure as the owner of the land?

Or did the poor drudges in mill and mine benefit equally with your classes when millions were spent in foreign wars? Was it in the interest of the toilers that you maintained armed forces in Egypt and Ireland, and not rather in the interest of bondholders and landowners? Is it not true that whenever improvements were made out of the public funds, the rents of the landlord and the taxes of the tenants were increased at the same time? Was it not but yesterday that a proposal to assess such increased expenditure on the property, the value of which was enhanced by it, was strenuously opposed by your clients?"

"Because it was against law; an innovation which was resisted by landowners because it was against their interests."

"Just so. And therefore the masses have now so altered the law that it should be in their own interest. Is it not simply a question of which party or class can best serve its own interests? On that score, then, we can cry quits. We might reply that we tax landowners because the taxes are needed, and they can best afford to pay it—seeing that rents are earned without any effort whatever. But we have much stronger grounds than that to justify our mode of raising revenue. We say that these ground rents are paid by the people, *the whole of the people*, alike, and are due to the presence of the people and the public expenditure; hence in taxing the revenue derived from the presence of the people

for public purposes we are taxing all alike. I might also point out to you how differently the well-being of the community is affected by such a substitution of a land value tax for other forms of taxation; but I fear that would have no interest for you—that you would call it——"

"Rhetoric and nonsense!"

"Quite so. Therefore I have no more to say to you. You want to hear practical common sense only—legal common sense. Well, it is this: the people do not find it any longer practical or expedient to toil and to moil and allow a set of idlers to take all of their earnings from them, and to be starved both in mind and body. They have been taught by your class that this was being done in obedience to 'law,' and that this was your only sanction. They have therefore so altered this law that such things shall no longer be legal. This, gentlemen, settles the legal aspect of your case. But you are free to appeal on higher grounds—on grounds of equity and justice—against the validity of the law itself; for we do not base our claim to the land on the fictions of the law, but hold that we all have an equal and inalienable right to it. Show that we are wrong in this, and you have won your case—no matter what the consequences may be."

"Very well, I will."

CHAPTER XI.

SOME MORE LEGAL LEGERDEMAIN.

Here follows the subsequent conversation between the lawyer and myself, to the best of my recollection:

LAWYER: You have endeavored to prove that on *legal* principles the community has a right to deprive some people of their property. In the same breath, however, you denounced these legal principles as iniquitous. Will you state now a principle that will justify this monstrous law?

I: I have done so already. It is the principle that every individual has a right to himself.

L: Whence that right? Are you aware that great authorities, both legal and scientific, have not only denied the existence of what are called natural rights, but have actually proved that there are none? I will only mention Maine and Professor Huxley.

I: I am aware of the fact, and will admit at once the force of their arguments. They have convinced me that I have no natural rights whatever. But in doing so, they have convinced me that no one else has, since their arguments apply equally to all human beings.

L: And does it not follow from this that, inasmuch as you have no natural rights, that you have no right to the land either?

I: It does. But it also follows that you and

others have no right to it either. It amounts to this: If you would press this doctrine as a justification of your claim to the land, because of the absence of any specific 'natural law'—whatever you may mean by that term—you could defend it against others by brute force only. For to say that nobody has a right to it is tantamount to saying that one person has as much (or as little) right to it as anybody else. That is, the party of 'law and order,' who are preaching this doctrine, are now driven to the extremity of proclaiming lynch law as the highest authority of their possessions. For on that theory the land can be yours only until somebody is strong enough to drive you off of it, or knocks you on the head."

L: A nice doctrine that, is it not?

I: Pray, do not saddle me or the people with it. It emanates from your own party. I only admitted the force of the logic by which this new doctrine has been arrived at. Not so new, either; as it has been acted on in the past, and is still being acted on in savage communities. Not only were people dispossessed of land and all forms of property, but themselves have been made into chattel slaves. Under such conditions security to life, liberty, or property was out of the question. Everybody lived in constant dread of robber or assassin. The greatest scoundrel, the most cunning, was the most dreaded, and homage was paid to him as the Koning, Konig, or King. We need not enter into the history of

civilization. Sufficient for us to know that the people got tired of this ceaseless strife and feud, and at last agreed to live neighborly together on principles of equity—that is by recognizing in each other the right of equal freedom.

L: What principle is there in that?

I: This, that when A toils, he has the right to enjoy the fruits of his labor, and B has no right to take it forcibly from him; since in that case A would be B's slave to that extent. On the other hand, A is not allowed to prevent B from exerting himself in a similar manner. They respect each other's freedom for the simple reason that if A denied the rights of B, he at the same time would deny his own rights, and could henceforth defend his life and liberty by main force only.

L: Then you hold that land cannot belong to an individual?

I: Not as his exclusive property.

L: Does it not follow, then, that if it cannot be owned by an individual, neither can it by a number of individuals? Oh, you admit it. Then, since the community is made up of individuals, it cannot rightfully belong to the community either?

I: That is so.

L: And what follows inevitably from that admission?

This question was put in a tone of triumphant expectation. Seeing the *Liberty Annual* in his hand, whence he took his inspiration, I knew what answer he expected. In that publication some over-grown, but not over-clever, schoolboy argues from the above premises that since land cannot be rightly owned by the community, therefore it must be left in possession of a class. I smiled at the silliness of such reasoning. The lawyer mistook this for embarrassment, and so repeated his question with greater emphasis:

L: If the land cannot rightfully belong to the community, what follows from this admission?

I: This: *That the community has no right to dispose of it;* and that if at any time the community did take upon itself to say how or by whom the land shall be owned in future, such an act would have no greater validity than if I now tried to dispose, without your authority, of your watch or of your own person.

L: Oh!—h'm! But suppose I gave you that authority, would you have the right or the power to dispose?

I: Then neither would be required. Then practically it would be yourself who disposed of yourself.

L: And cannot a whole nation do the same?

I: Each for himself—yes! But not one for another. You could become my servant or my slave if you liked. But you could not barter away the liberties of your descendants. Of course you might sign a paper promising that your descendants shall be the slaves of my descendants forever. Whether your descendants will be fools enough to

obey such instructions, or whether they will simply laugh at the idiocy or villainy of their grandsire is another matter.

L: To whom does the land belong then?

I: To nobody. I have already told you that the people can do one of two things. Either fight and devour each other, or agree to live peaceably together on *equal* terms. From this we derive our principle of *equalness* or 'Equity'; perfect equity meaning that no one should enjoy an advantage over his fellows at their cost or to their detriment. The land belonging to no one, they must agree to use it in such a manner only as is consistent with this principle. This at once precludes the possibilty of disposing of the land forever. For, even if all the people were agreed at any time on a division of the land among themselves, they could not decide for generations as yet unborn. Hence we contend that the land can never become the exclusive property of any number of individuals, but can only be held in usufruct.

L: So you deny the right to private property altogether?

I: No; on the contrary, I contend for the sacredness of that right. Since every individual has a right to himself, he has a right to the things which are due to his own exertions. To deny him this right, or to deprive him of the results of his labor, is to deprive him to that extent of his personal liberty.

L: I quite understand that. But if you deny private ownership in land, you must deny private ownership in everything else. For have you not yourself admitted that all things consist chiefly of the raw materials of nature—that is, land? You deny us the right to land because, you say, we have not made it. On the other hand you claim a right to your watch because, you say, you have made it. Have you made the silver also? And if not, have not all an equal claim to the silver of that watch, especially since the quantity of silver, like that of land, is limited?

I: You had an equal right to it, and that is the reason I had to compensate you—that is, the community—for it before I could have the exclusive use of it. That is just why we claim that all rents and royalties must go to the community.

L: That does not help us over the difficulty. I will state to you the objection in the precise words of our *Liberty Annual:* "If in any real sense, as distinguished from a rhetorical sense, the land belongs of right to everybody, then everybody, without exception, must at all times and all places be able to have the use of it. We must have a communist anarchy in the most thorough sense. There must be no plot of land used by A which is not equally open to B or C to use also; for if there were such a plot of land reserved to A, then everybody who is not A would be defrauded of his rights." What answer can you give to this?

I: A Scotch answer, by asking you another question. Did his lordship, in the days of his supremacy, have the use—the *actual use*—of what he then called *his* lands?

L: Well, his tenants used them.

I: And did then his lordship consider himself defrauded of his rights?

L: No; because he reserved to himself the revenue from it.

I: Then, if A has the exclusive use of a particular plot of land, and for this privilege pays whatever advantages accrue to him therefrom to all those who are not A, how can you make out that they would be defrauded of their rights?

L: Who is to decide? For—to again quote from our *Liberty Annual*—"If the land belongs to *everybody*, then it is everybody (minus nobody) who must decide how it is to be disposed of. In such case no majority and no government can dispose of it, just because neither a majority nor government is *everybody*."

I: That is very well reasoned. It is precisely the view we take of the matter, and hence the government does not interfere. It does not say this block of land is to be occupied by A, and this by B or C, but lets the people decide that for themselves and among themselves. All the government does is to collect from each occupier the surplus value, the "unearned increment." So long as this is paid, the occupier is left in undisturbed possession,

since what he produces is his own. Without such security of tenure it were not possible to insure that those who sow shall reap. All we need do is to take from the harvest on behalf of the community that part which is due to some natural advantage, and therefore belongs equally to all.

L: But who is to decide what shall be the rent?

I: We all have a word in that, and decide it—mostly unconsciously—as the rent has always been decided, viz., by supply and demand. Sites differ both in position and fertility, as do the tastes and the occupations of the people. Some sites are more desirable than others, and it often happens that several people wish to occupy some particular plot; the result is that the rent of such plot goes up. Suppose you wanted to live in Belgravia, and you found the Square already occupied; the government could do nothing for you, but you yourself could. You could offer to buy someone out, offer a high price. The owner does not move. Others do the same thing; he still remains. Will not that send rents up at once? So that although the possessor of that plot would enjoy an enviable position, he would have to pay for it to the community as much as the demand for it would make it worth.

L: How will you set that machinery to work?

I: That machinery is already at work, and has been for centuries. For if rent in Belgravia is higher than in Homerton, it is because there are more applicants for it. And if some prefer living else-

where notwithstanding, it is because they do not set the same value on the privilege of living there as do those who consent to pay the high rent. The whole principle is a very simple one, and I will illustrate it to you: A man left to his five sons five cottages, one to each, without stipulating which should belong to this or that man. But inasmuch as the cottages differed in size and quality, he provided that whoever should choose one of the better cottages should make adequate compensation to the others, the sons to decide among themselves both how the cottages were to be divided, and what compensation there should be paid, and to whom.

L: And each of the sons, of course, wanted the best cottage, and tried to make out it was the worst.

I: It came to that, and not being able to come to an understanding——

L: They went to law.

I: They would have done so had they been fools. But not having a taste for lawyers' justice, and, without being necessarily bad or unduly selfish, desiring to possess what was willed to them by their father, they put up the cottages at auction among themselves. You perceive what followed. There was bidding against each other, until one or two of the brothers thought that they preferred the price offered rather than the privilege of living in that particular cottage, and so dropped out of the competition. Then the three continued bidding against each other, and so on, until the last bid was higher than either of the others thought it worth.

L: (Grumbling): Such practices, were they to become common, would be the ruin of the legal profession.

I: This is the principle by which rents are determined. You see it was "everybody minus nobody" of those concerned who determined who should possess each of the cottages, and also fixed the amount of compensation. I need hardly tell you that the money which the five brothers paid for the cottages was equally divided among them.

CHAPTER XII.

LEGAL ETHICS.

I am compelled to record that the lawyer made me lose my patience, a circumstance which will surprise nobody acquainted with legal methods. His object was clearly to confuse rather than to argue. Instead of endeavoring to show that the people behind him had a right to the soil, he insisted on raising side issues. He argued either that others had no better right to the land—a point on which I heartily concurred with him—or that the administration would not be perfect, and so forth; matters which, however important, have nothing whatever to do with the right claimed by individuals to own the sources of nature.

"What you have to show," I said rather impatiently, "is that your clients have a right to own land, and not that others have not. On the latter point we are agreed, of course. It is not our intention to take the land from Lord Rigmarole and give it to Patrick O'Mahony, as some semi-idiots used to propose. We propose to leave the possession of land where it is. We claim that every man, woman and child born into this world has an equal right to the use of it and the only way to secure this right is to compel those who withhold portions of it for their exclusive use to pay to those whom they exclude what such privilege of exclusion is worth.

"Nor to carry out this plan is it necessary that the state should bother with the letting of lands, and assume the chances of favoritism, collusion, and corruption this might involve. It was not necessary that any new machinery of government should be created. The machinery already existed. Instead of extending it, we have reduced and simplified it. By taxing each holder of land a sum equal to to the rent the land will yield, secures for everyone their common right to the use of the earth."

L: Our contention is this: You object to the old system of taxation because it permits the state to confiscate private property—because it taxes products of labor—and permits the land owners to appropriate the rent of land which is created by the community, and encourages the holding of valuable lands out of use, thus limiting the opportunities for

the production of wealth. We now prove to you that even under the single tax system everybody will not get a full equivalent for his labor.

I: From which you argue that inasmuch as our system may be faulty, therefore we should continue the worst possible. This conclusion does not follow from the premises, and certainly does not make good your claim. At best, you might submit such a proposal as an alternative method of disposing of the land, which the community may accept or refuse. But then again you would practically abandon your claims to the soil.

L: But that we have not admitted yet.

I: Then it is no business of yours to discuss how the land should be dealt with, by those who, you contend, have no right to it. The raising of such side issues can then have one meaning only, viz., to divert attention from the main point by throwing dust into people's eyes. Confine yourself to proving that you have a valid title to the land, and not that you are good landlords, or the community bad administrators. If you cannot do this the land belongs to the community to use.

L: And if we can?

I: Then we must abide by the consequences. The people stand up for their *rights* and not the law. If the land is yours, then you have a good *legal* right, if you choose, to give notice to all your tenants to quit, and turn the land into deer parks or sheep walks. *If the land is yours*, then you are

legally entitled to say that you will not let your land to Baptists or to Methodists, nor allow people who vote Radical or Liberal to settle on your land. You may then decree when, where, whom, and how people should marry——

"That would be an interference with the rights of liberty," suggested someone behind me sarcastically.

I: So it would; and these gentlemen are all members of the Liberty and Property Defense League. But could they nevertheless not say, "I don't let *my land* to Baptists or Radicals or carroty people. Thus, for instance, you are *free* to be this and that, and I am *free* to do with *my* land as I please. Have not such things been done? Nay, are not the very objects of this sophistical league to secure to a comparatively few individuals the power to do with the rest of the community as they pleased? Is not that the kind of liberty for which they are fighting?

L: Is not that remark beside the question?

I: I fear it is. Well, let us come to the point. Have you anything to support your claims?

L: Yes, I am coming to the point, as you desire it. You have yourself admitted that there are no natural rights. Hence, the only existing right is that which the law gives. Here then are *our* titles (throwing a bundle of parchments to me), where are *yours?* Can you show a better title than we do?

I: Oh, oh! That is your little game. To that end then you have employed philosophers to show

that there are no natural rights. But, good sir, your philosophy falls somewhat short of common sense; for if there are no *natural* rights, then the "rights" on which you rely might be suspected as being *unnatural*. Can I not make you understand that this is a great question of equity, of *right* or *wrong*, and that such questions cannot be decided by cunning word-conjurings? You want a better title than your parchments. In yonder field a man is digging up potatoes. He tilled the field and planted the potatoes, and now thinks he has a right to the result. I say to the man that he has a right to the whole crop unless, if by letting the land on which it has been raised, he would have an income simply as landowner, in which event he should be required to pay into the public treasury what he might have received for the mere permission to use the land. Is it not right and natural that the man who claims part of the crop should be required to show a better right to it than the man who raised it? This is the real issue. Show what better right you have to the produce than the man who produced it.

L: Nay, I put that question to you. Our right is here, secured to us by these deeds.

I: Signed by whom? By the original owner—*the producer*—of the soil?

L: Signed by kings, in the name of the nation, and ratified by the common consent of the people.

I: If that were true, it would not establish the validity of these deeds, since no generation has the

right to command to future generations how they shall live on this globe. But it is not even true. When has this common consent been given, or even asked for? When the Romans butchered the ancient Britons? When the Danish hordes devastated the country? Or when the Norman bastard and his fellow-robbers invaded these islands? Or when some king handed over whole tracts of country to his paramours or his bastard sons?

L: The kings have acted in the name of the people, and these have not protested, which is equal to common consent.

I: Another of your legal fictions, and one of which you ought to be heartily ashamed. Is it not true rather that the people have continually protested against the tyranny of arbitrary rule, but have been answered by dungeon or the gallows? Look down the list of your statutes, the penalties that were imposed on free speech, on "sedition," as every kind of protest against tyranny has been called, and you will find in the laws that have been passed to suppress these *protests*, ample evidence of their reality. What were all the popular risings but protests? What, even in more recent times, were the meetings of people in parks and squares, but loud protests against tyranny and arbitrary rule, which you have suppressed, whenever you could, by main force?

L: You refer to illegal assemblies.

I: Because, after having robbed the people of

their birthrights, their protests have been declared illegal. So that even granted that the people, either from inability or ignorance—it is immaterial which—have not protested sooner, they are protesting now. Let it be granted that the validity of these deeds is now questioned for the first time. Is it a good answer to say that because you have exacted tribute by false deeds for so long, therefore you have a right to continue the practice?

L: You do not put the case fairly. We say our legal claims have always been held to be good.

I: Never! All you can say is that they have not been scrutinized before too closely. Let me read to you what Blackstone, your legal authority, has written on the subject:

"'There is nothing which so generally strikes the imagination, and engages the affections of mankind, as the right of property; or that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe. *And yet there are very few that will give themselves the trouble to consider the original and foundation of this right.* Pleased as we are with the possession, we seem afraid to look back to the means by which it was acquired, *as if fearful of some defect in our title;* or at best we rest satisfied with the decision of the laws in our favor, without examining the reason or authority upon which those laws have been built. We think it enough that our

title is derived by the grant of the former proprietor, by descent from our ancestor, or by the last will and testament of the dying owner; not caring to reflect that (accurately and strictly speaking) there is no foundation in nature or in natural law why a set of words upon parchment should convey the dominion of land; why the son should have a right to exclude his fellow-creatures from a determinate spot of ground because his father has done so before him; or why the occupier of a particular field, when lying on his death-bed, and no longer able to maintain possession, should be entitled to tell the rest of the world which of them shall enjoy it after him. These inquiries, it must be owned, would be useless and even troublesome in common life. It is well if the mass of mankind will obey the laws when made, without scrutinizing too nicely into the reasons for making them——'"

The lawyer coughed and wiped his spectacles, but made no reply. I continued:

"Nor has the land ever been regarded as your absolute property, even by the law, bad as it was. What did the fixation of judicial rents and compulsory expropriation mean but a denial of that exclusive right which you claim? If the land had been held to be yours in the same sense as you may claim ownership of a watch or a table, why this interference? And why did you submit to it so meekly? I will answer this last question for you. Because your title was bad, and you were afraid to urge your claims to extremities lest the fraud might be discovered."

L: The law——

I: The law as it stood right up to 1893, imposed a tax on ground rents of 20 per cent. But though this was the law, the tax had nevertheless not been paid.

L: But it has been paid according to assessment.

I: That is, in Latin a *suppressio veri*, or, in English, a lie, and you know it well. The tax was paid on assessment made about four hundred years ago, but the rent was collected on present values; so than in some parts of London, instead of twenty per cent., the tax did not amount to more that a fraction of one per cent. The entire twenty per cent. meant only one-fifth of what the people were defrauded annually, and should, *according to law*, have been paid, and was yet withheld—withheld contrary to statute law. Was this, too, by *common consent*.

L: We cannot enter into that; nor can we reopen things of the past. It is a novel thing to come down on people to-day for acts committed, or supposed to have been committed, centuries ago.

I: Now it is you who state the case unfairly. We claim no restitution for acts committed in the past; but on the other hand, do not allow that a wrong may be continued to-day because it has originated long ago. Let me illustrate the case. His lordship there told us that his family has been in

possession of certain estates since the Norman invasion. A long time indeed. Supposing now, that he discovered the steward of his estate had defrauded him of a certain amount of his revenue annually, would it be a good defense if the steward pleaded that these frauds had been in vogue by his predecessors ever since the Conquest, and therefore claimed to be allowed to continue in abstracting a certain sum annually forever? This is precisely your case. You can show no valid title to the land; indeed, you have hardly attempted it. All you say is this tribute has been collected by your predecessors for centuries.

L.: And that we are not responsible for past actions.

I: True. Nor was the steward responsible for what his predecessors had stolen. That is not the point. The question is, whether his lordship, on hearing his steward's singular defense, will say to him, "Ah, that is all right then. Had you been thieving from me for a few years only, I would have sent you to the treadmill. But since you say this thieving has been going on for centuries, and that you actually paid my former steward a large sum for the privilege of stealing from me, as he and others have done before, I recognize your right to continue the theft forever," or whether his lordship would not rather put a summary stop to the practice as soon as he discovered the fraud.

CHAPTER XIII.

PRIEST AND PEASANT.

My last utterance provoked the Bishops. Not that they needed much provocation; for all through the interview I could plainly see their eagerness to interfere, and that they were only waiting for some plausible excuse that would enable them to veil their partisanship under the cloak of spiritual duty. My simile of the dishonest steward afforded them a splendid opportunity, and they did not miss it. About half a dozen of them nudged the one who had the broadest phylactery, and whom I therefore regarded as their chief. But how I came to know his name, or why he should have been known to me as the Right Reverend Caiaphas, D. D., LL. D., I am unable to tell, since I do not remember anybody having introduced him by that or any other name. With a solemn, but not an angry face, he said:

"I protest against your likening landlords to thieves. Such language should not be used of honest men, however humble their station, still less of gentlemen who occupy the foremost places in church and state, and who on every occasion where christian work is to be done——"

"Your indignation, sir," I interrupted, would be perfectly justified had I done so. I did not liken land owners to thieves, but only wished to illustrate that land monopoly was not a single wrong act, which might be forgiven and forgotten, but is a

perpetual wrong, and that the monopolist is in a position of exacting tribute *in continuity*, so long as his monopoly is allowed to exist."

"Still there is no need for using such offensive language.

"I am sorry if my words have given offense. But, although aware of the unsavoriness of the simile, it was not meant to apply to persons, but to the *institution of landownership*. And this being in my opinion morally indefensible, I naturally—and as I think, legitimately—am endeavoring to present it in its native ugliness. The simile was, perhaps, an unfortunate one, and I hasten to substitute another one for it. We will suppose, then, a village community living on what they produce from woods, fields and meadows, and that the only road which leads from the said woods and fields to their habitations was *owned* by an individual, and that this individual, by virtue of his exceptionally advantageous position, did—well, did not *take* from the people, but had the power to *make them give* a certain amount of gate-money before they could carry their crops to their homes. Suppose, also, that the amount of this 'toll' was determined by the quantity which the people have raised in the fields; or worse still, by the quantity which the man on the road thought they *might or could have raised;* taking all from those whose crop did not come up to his expectations, and nearly all from those who did exceptionally well; leaving them just sufficient

to support life, so that they might be able to come again that way with fresh supplies, and thereby enable him to take fresh booty——"

"Stop," exclaimed the bishop. "Instead of softening, you only aggravate your offense. Why, you are now actually describing a highwayman."

"That's very unfortunate for your cause," said I, "for I was only describing the functions of landlordism."

"Then you had better leave it alone altogether. Your similes are most objectionable. I know your views and agree, in the abstract, with much that you say. As for the poor, I need hardly tell you that they have all my sympathies. But——"

"But?"—I asked impatiently, at hearing once more these stale, threadbare platitudes.

"My son," replied the Bishop with pious emotion, "two wrongs do not make a right. You cannot right past wrongs by committing new ones, perhaps more grievous than the first."

"Good Heavens," I exclaimed. "Do you call it wrong to *stop* wrong-doing?"

"You are interfering with ancient customs and institutions."

"Would you have us understand that the injunction 'THOU SHALT NOT STEAL,' does not apply where theft can be shown to have been an ancient custom?"

"You are again using strong language. These gentlemen here have their documents, which secure

to them certain rights. God forbid that the nation should break its moral obligations."

"Obligations! Moral obligations! Where is the morality of the thing? Is it in the fact that millions of people are daily born into this world without a resting-place for the soles of their feet?"

"I fear you are too worldly minded, and think of people's soles before you think of their souls."

"Because they have *soles* first; and if there is no sure resting-ground for these, the soul cannot healthily develop. We will pass by the untold misery, the starvation, the disappointed hopes, and broken hearts of the millions of disinherited people, occasioned by this confiscation of the soil. I will not reason with you that all this suffering need not have existed but for this monstrously iniquitous institution, which, until now, deprived the masses of their patrimony (for surely to you my reverend sir I may speak of the land as the PATRIMONY of the people without fear of being reminded that there are no natural rights!) but will confine my remarks to the share this *ancient custom* had in producing crime and vice. Did it never occur to you that fully ninety-nine per cent. of all crime and vice may be traced to land monopoly?"

"That is a ridiculous statement to make. Lying and hypocrisy are great vices, but I fail to see any connection between these and land monopoly.

"Because you are blind, reverend leader of the blind. Bethink yourself, and see whether most of

the crimes and vices are not begotten of poverty or *the fear of poverty?* Burgling, stealing, cheating, swindling, forgery, legacy-hunting, arson, child murder, and suicides; are not all these crimes committed out of need or for the sake of pecuniary gain? And is not this eagerness for wealth, where it is not occasioned by actual poverty and want, due to a *fear of poverty?* Even lawyers' quibblings, the perjuries in the law courts, and certainly *simony*, may be included in the list of sinful acts which springs from this source. Now, I put it to you whether there is any necessity for that fear of poverty; whether, if each pair of hands were free to work, each mouth could not get its loaf of bread; whether, if the people were not denied access to bountiful Nature, there would be that stern necessity for taking thought for their life, what they shall eat, or wherewithal they shall clothe themselves?"

"Ah! it's perverse human nature."

"You libel human nature, which is capable of greatness and nobility, were it not stunted by unnatural conditions. Human nature is prompted by the natural instinct of self-preservation. Put no impediment in the way of their existence, and men are kind and noble. Threaten their existence, and they become fierce and ferocious. When you are sitting at your sumptuous table, with full knowledge there will be more than enough to satisfy the appetites of all those present, you are kind and attentive to your neighbor. The food that has been

placed before you, you pass courteously to him, because you know you will not lose by your politeness. But fancy yourself on a desolate island in company with several thousand fellow-beings, with just a few ship-biscuits, barely sufficient for a day's provisions, and with no hope of immediate relief. It is under conditions like these that human nature becomes perverse. There is a general stampede and rush for the means of life—a struggle for existence, in which the beastial instincts gain mastery over the finer qualities of man. And if some of the nobler souls escape becoming murderers of their fellow-men for the sake of a morsel, it is only because they have hearts stout enough to take their own lives by preference.

"That's a horrid picture!"

"It is the picture you have beheld all your life, and the loss of which you are now lamenting *on moral grounds.* I repeat my challenge. Excepting the crimes due to the jealousies of the sexes, or occasioned by mental aberrations, could you name me a single crime that is not traceable, directly or indirectly, to poverty or the fear of poverty? Add to that the thousands of poor wretches who, under the shadow of your own palace and cathedral, walk the streets in shame, forced to it mostly by poverty—or ignorance, the result of poverty—and then tell me where the *moral obligation* comes in to perpetuate the institution which is the primary cause of all this."

"You introduce a lot of irrelevant matter. These deeds," pointing to the parchments, "secure to their owners certain rights which can be withheld only by the committal of an immoral act."

"You argue more like a lawyer than a bishop. That is, you are pleading morality as a justification for perpetuating the grossest of all immoralities."

"Sir!"

"Oh, you need not be outraged! Maybe you are doing so in ignorance. But the fact remains, nevertheless, as I will show you. Suppose I owe a man a sum of money, but that he has neither a note from me nor any witnesses to prove me his debtor. Would it then be *moral* in me to refuse payment because the creditor could not prove my indebtedness?"

"That would be grossly immoral, indeed."

"Or suppose that a man did possess a writing which set out that I was his debtor, but also suppose that I had paid the debt or never received the loan, or that the writing was a forgery. Indeed, I allow you to suppose any explanation you please, the facts being that I did not owe any money to Jones, although he possessed a deed to the contrary. Would, Jones, under the circumstances, still have a *moral* claim on me? And would it be my *moral* duty to thrust those dependent on me into hopeless poverty, and pay Jones the amount set forth in the document?"

"Certainly not."

"Then your moral argument, based on the fact that these people possess parchments, falls to the ground if you cannot show the *justice* of the claim. You would have to show first, *what none of your clique has yet attempted*, that the earth belongs *of right* to the parchment lairds."

"You travesty the bible."

"No; it is you who travesty it. The bible says, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullnesss thereof.' Show me a parchment signed by *this* Lord, and its provisions shall be carried out. Of course," I added, as a precaution, recalling the great talent for "interpretations" which bishops sometimes display, "you would have to convince me first of the genuineness of the signature."

There must have been a sting in my last remark, for the Bishop, hitherto full of meekness and humility, suddenly flared up.

"The Lord you speak of has given us certain commandments," he said in a severe tone, "which it is my duty to see should not be broken. You have the masses with you because you appeal to their sordid natures, and tempt them ,with filthy lucre. It is for this reason that we are here, to remind you and the people, 'Thou shalt not covet.'"

This piece of ecclesiastical strategy took me by surprise. I had no immediate reply ready, and had no time to think of one. For before the Bishop had finished his little impromptu sermon, a brawny man with an honest sunburned face, wearing a smock and

slouched hat, sprang forward, like a lion suddenly roused, on hearing the words, "Thou shalt not covet." His appearance was so sudden and unexpected, his countenance so earnest and determined, that it froze the rest of the sentence in the Bishop's throat.

"Thou—shalt—not—covet," he repeated with great deliberation, making a short pause after each word. "That's me, Bishop. It's I who am so covetous as to want a loaf—*a whole loaf*, mind you—for every one of my children. Each one of them has been sent by God, and every one of them has a mouth; and you have told me that God never sends a mouth but what he sends a loaf. I want delivery of what He sent for my children. I will not stand by any longer and see them robbed of their share. I am covetous, you see. I covet what is theirs, and will not see them starving, and give them cause to curse the hour that has made them see the light of life, while the gifts of our All-Father, intended for them, are taken from them under the authority and with the sanction of the church."

"There, there!" said the Bishop. "Do you see now the fruits of your doings?"

"The fruits of *his* doings?" continued the farmer. "Let me tell you first the fruits of *your* doings."

And turning toward myself—"You spoke of a man owning the road that leads from the fields to the village. I have passed that road, and had to unload many and many a time. But it's not quite

correct as you told the story. The landlord not only owned the highway, but the fields and huts as well. And he didn't keep watch on the road to plunder the wayfarer, as you said he did, but spent his time in France and Italy, while I had to toil from day to day until I could barely rest my wearied bones for pain. Had he been on the highway when I carted home my crop, and robbed me there of it, it would have been mercy compared to the agony I had sometimes to endure."

And after a pause, broken only by the sobs of a few women and children behind him, he continued:

"No; my landlord has never stopped me on the road. I was allowed to cart the crop home; I had it under my roof, with the children crying for food, and I durst not touch it—dared not take a handful of grain to make them a porridge—because I was backward with the rent. The crop I had gathered was not sufficient to make it up, and I under notice to quit if I could not pay up within twenty-four hours. This is far more cruel than being robbed by a highwayman—to stand between one's own hungry children and the food, warding them off lest they might be turned out of doors. I am telling you nothing but a fact, sir. The wife cut up carefully the last crust she had, divided it among our hungry children, moistened—aye, literally drenched—with her tears. Ah, my Lord Bishop, had you seen the children that night eagerly snatching the the bits of crust from their mother's trembling

hands, while their father was guarding his lordship's *rent* against their hunger, you would have seen what a covetous lot they were. Yet of such is the kingdom of heaven—of children who, before they had yet learnt the Sacred Rights of Property, are already conscious of the sacred *Rights of Life*. I drove to market, sold the loaves which God had sent for my hungry bairns, and took the money to his lordship's agent."

"You have then acted as an honest man," interposed the Bishop.

"No; I acted as a thief to my own children, and may God forgive me the sin. For when I came home one of my children, the youngest, was dead, because the mother had no milk for it; and the wife died the next day of a broken heart. And in all this misery I was threatened to be turned out of my home because I could not pay up the whole of my arrears."

"You are ungrateful, John," remonstrated the Bishop, who seemed to know him well; for at the time, your case having been a very hard one, a collection was made for you."

"Yes, to pay his lordship with. It is he who received every penny of what the kind folks—Heaven bless them for it—have given me. It was for *him* I was begging, so that we should not be turned out of *our* home in the midst of winter. I say *our* home," he added, after wiping away a tear, "for it was *we* who built it, the children helping to

carry the stones; but it has been stolen from us under cover of law. You did not then preach of covetousness to his lordship."

"How ungrateful of you, John, to speak thus of his lordship, after all the kindness and forbearance he had shown you. Only last Christmas he gave all the poor of the parish a free dinner, and you and your children had a good feed."

The poor farmer, overcome by grief or shame, or both, made no reply, but buried his head in his hands. The socialist answered for him:

"They would not have been in need of his degrading charity, had he not first robbed them of the fruits of their toil."

"Oh, what wicked language!" remonstrated the Bishop; "to say this of one of the kindest landlords. Only a few years ago he granted a plot of land, and to Dissenters too, for a chapel——"

"How kind! Actually permitted Englishmen to worship their God in England!"

"And granted two acres of land to the parish at half-price, for a cemetery."

"And you think it wise to remind us of the fact that the people could not even rot in their native land without his lordship's sanction?"

"What wicked language! And that of one who did the bidding of his Master by giving to the poor——"

"Who was it that made them poor?"

"Alas! it is the inscrutable will of the Lord. 'The poor ye have always with you,' and he made some poor and some rich, so that the latter should manifest their charity toward the former." *

"It is a lie and libel; it's rank blasphemy!" exclaimed John, who was stung by this remark. And had I not interfered in time, it might have gone hard with the Bishop. There was considerable confusion for some time, and I had great difficulty in restraining John's sinewy arm. At last I succeeded. And in the meantime all the bishops had disappeared, and with them, as I thought, the last plea of landlordism—namely, the plea on moral grounds.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPITAL'S LAST THREAT.

The influential deputation now withdrew somewhat abruptly and without ceremony. The Bishops were first to leave; next followed the Lawyers, who, prior to their departure, intimated to their several clients their desire for a prompt settlement of their accounts. The Financiers had already withdrawn to one corner of the room, evidently awaiting an opportunity of speaking to me on their own separate business. The bond that had held nobles, bishops, lawyers and financiers together was broken; each was now only solicitous for his own individual wel-

* *Vide* a sermon by Bishop of Salisbury some time back.

fare, and the class interest of each group asserted itself.

It was almost piteous to see the once haughty and insolent members of "Our Old Nobility" slinking as unsuccessful suitors out of the hall in which they had once reigned supreme. Farmer John, as they filed past him, not daring to meet his eyes, seemed quite moved by their dejected demeanor; and as soon as the door had closed on the last of them, the kind, honest, simple-hearted man, forgetful of his own past sufferings, commenced to plead for them.

"Poor fellows!" he said; "they were great sinners it is true. But, sir, were they not as much sinned against as sinning? I mean, were they not as much the product of false institutions as were the rest of us? And what are they going to do now? They are not used to work, as I am; and my joy and that of all of my fellows would be marred if we thought they were now to be condemned to undergo the pangs and sufferings from which we have just escaped. You should do something for them to reconcile them to their lot."

"My dear, good, honest John," I replied, much moved by this evidence of his noble nature; "your sympathy for them does you credit. But they really neither need nor deserve it. No hardship has been done them, and certainly no injustice. They have been deprived of nothing to which they have any right; on the contrary, they have been left in possession of much to which others—yourself, for instance—could show a much better claim."

"They are welcome to it, I am sure, for now I and men like me can soon acquire as much as we want."

"To be sure you can. Nor need you be troubled on their account. The majority of them have more than sufficient to enable them to live in ease and comfort; and as for their children——"

"It was of them I was thinking."

"As for their children, they will grow up under new conditions, and learn to adapt themselves to the new order of things. They will enter into the new world—a world into which none need to be afraid to enter; a world in which no one willing to work shall suffer from poverty, or be haunted by the fear of it; a world in which the struggle shall be between man and Nature, and not between man and man; a world in which each will enjoy the fruits of his own toil, in which none will be secured privileges at the expense of his fellows, in which work will not only be the only passport to life, but also to true nobility."

"Nobility!" exclaimed the socialist. "We have had enough of nobilities and aristocracies."

"Nay, we have heard too little of true nobility, too few real aristocrats. The better worker is always the better man, and the best worker the best citizen. The more self-made or Nature's aristocrats we have, the better for all. The Newtons, Shakespeares and Nightingales; the Watts, Cartwrights, and Darwins;

such are the real aristocrats, the leaders and torch-bearers of civilization. 'Our old nobility,' like your 'capital,' was made up of sheepskins and paper. *True nobles*, like *real capital*, can only benefit, and not injure, and should be encouraged instead of being feared or fought."

"I am ready to agree with you on the first point; but as to capital——"

"What!" I exclaimed in surprise. "Not yet cured of your madness? What harm has *real capital* ever done to any one? Or, at any rate, what harm can it do to anyone where the opportunities of Nature are free to all? Across the street is a plowshare maker. Is he not a laborer, are not his plows—*the type of real capital*—accumulated labor? You say he may demand exorbitant prices. But you forget that the iron and coal mines are open, and the forests free. Have you ever known a trader sulking with his goods by demanding exorbitant prices unless he had a monopoly of some sort? Is not quite the contrary true? Were not your great and standing grievances keen competition and low prices?"

"Yes, for manufactured articles, but not for capital."

"But now we have no other capital in the market except what is manufactured, and that is precisely *real capital*. Not, indeed, because there is any need for the term 'capital' at all. For a plow, a saw, or a plane might just as well be called a 'commodity' as a shirt or a loaf of bread. And anything which is not in the nature an artificial commodity is no longer vendible."

"Hold hard! Let me digest this fact."

"If you want a definition of capital that will be of real use to you in arriving at an intelligent understanding of this question, let me read to you from 'Progress and Poverty' the definition given by Henry George:

"'Land, labor and capital are the three factors of production. If we remember that capital is thus a term used in contradistinction to land and labor, we at once see that nothing properly included under either one of these terms can be properly classed as capital. The term land necessarily includes, not only the surface of the earth, as distinguished from water and air, but the whole natural universe outside of man himself. * * Therefore nothing that is freely supplied by nature can be properly classed as capital. A fertile field, a rich vein of ore, a falling stream which supplies power, may give to the possessor advantages equivalent to the possession of capital, but to class such things as capital would be to put an end to the distinction between land and capital, and, so far as they relate to each other, to make the two terms meaningless. The term labor, in like manner, includes all human exertion, and hence human powers, whether natural or acquired, can never properly be classed as capital. In common parlance we often speak of a man's knowledge,

skill, or industry as constituting his capital; but this is evidently a metaphorical use of language that must be eschewed in reasoning that aims at exactness. Superiority in such qualities may augment the income of an individual just as capital would, * * but this effect is due to the increased power of labor and not to capital. Increased velocity may give to the impact of a cannon ball the same effect as increased weight, yet, nevertheless weight is one thing and velocity another.

"'Thus we must exclude from the category of capital everything that may be included either as land or labor. Doing so there remain only things which are neither land nor labor, but which have resulted from the union of these two original factors of production. Nothing can be properly capital that does not consist of these—that is to say, nothing can be capital that is not wealth. * *

"'But though all capital is wealth, all wealth is not capital. Capital is only a part of wealth—that part, namely, which is devoted to the aid of production. * *

"'If the articles of actual wealth existing in a given community were presented *in situ* to a dozen intelligent men who had never read a line of political economy, it is doubtful if they would differ in respect to a single item as to whether it should be accounted capital or not. Money which its owner holds for use in his business or in speculation would be accounted capital; money set aside for household or personal expenses would not. That part of a farmer's crop held for sale or for seed, or to feed his help in part payment of wages, would be accounted capital; that held for the use of his own family would not be. The horse and carriage of a hackman would be classed as capital, but an equipage kept for the pleasure of its owner would not. A coat which a tailor had made for sale would be accounted capital, but not the coat he had made for himself. * * As Adam Smith put it, that part of a man's stock which he expects to yield him a revenue is called capital.'"

"What need the people care now," I continued, "if any man likes to dress himself in velvet and ermine, and to call himself a lord, and the parchments in his pockets 'capital,' so long as the land with all that is in or on it—that is, with all its potentialities—is free. All that man requires comes from land."

Here our conversation was interrupted by a short, stout, vulgar, self-satisfied-looking man; one of the fore-mentioned financiers, whose presence I had forgotten for the moment.

"I am sorry to interrupt you," he commenced, "but your time may not be wasted in listening to what I have to say. I am a practical man, and as such have been consulted on many questions of importance by those in almost as exalted positions as yours. I have not come to discuss with you abstract theories about justice, morality, liberty, and all that

kind of thing; that's not in my line; I don't deal in sentiment. Doubtless you want to do something for the poor. Now I don't object to that in moderation, and might even render you valuable assistance if I approve of the means. But I deem it right to warn you of what must inevitably follow if you should kill off all enterprise."

"Our object is to encourage enterprise, not to kill it; provided, of course, that the enterprise is not of a mischievous character."

"But your legislation, sir, will kill out all enterprise, and drive out all capital, upon which the workers are entirely dependent, out of the country."

I involuntarily burst out laughing. Here was a man—a *capitalist* as my socialist friend would call him—threatening to run away *unless I taxed his capital rather than land values;* while the socialist thought of driving him out of the country by a property tax. I exchanged glances with the socialist and said:

"Pray be a little more explicit. In the first place, how will it stifle enterprise?"

"Well, you see, it's like this: A man desirous of making provision for the future accumulates his money instead of spending it; but, in the hope of future gain, instead of letting it lie idle, may start some useful enterprise. Such actions ought to receive every encouragment."

"Yes; industry, energy, and enterprise ought to be encouraged; and now that every citizen is secured

in the full possession of that is due to his industry and enterprise——"

"That's just what you do not do, and I will prove it to you. Let me give you a typical case. Supposing I took up some useless waste land—say a plot on some out-of-the-way moor—and built a hotel or hydropathic establishment, trying to make it into a health resort. You could not call that an illegitimate enterprise. Now, how would you tax me?"

"You would be taxed according to the unimproved value of your land. That is, you would not be taxed according to the use you were making of the land; nor according to the value of the buildings; nor the trade you may be doing; but according to the value of the bare land, irrespective of improvements. In the case you have supposed, you would at first be taxed according to its value as moor land. Surely that is more encouragement to enterprise than when, as in old times, which you seem to regret, you were threatened with property taxes, local rates on the property you have built, in addition to a ground rent, and that whether your business paid or not."

"So far so good. But supposing my venture turned out a great success, and that people are attracted in large numbers, buildings springing up all around me, until my hotel forms the center of a thriving town. This, of course, would send values up, and my plot, I will presume, is the most valua-

able. Would you then still tax away all the 'unearned increment' as you call it?"

"Certainly, and much to your own advantage. For in that case there would be required a local fund for roads, lighting, drainage, etc., which would add to your comfort as well as improve your business prospects. You could not, in common fairness, be exempt from contributing your quota of public expenses."

"But to tax away all the value of my land under such circumstances would be unjust, since it is I who gave it the value."

"How so? You do not create land values by building hotels on it. So long as your hotel remains planted on the moor, you would pay a tax on moor lands. When the moor passes into a city, you will pay a tax for city land, and that because you have not made the city."

"And suppose I built a whole township on the spot on speculation, and people then came to live in my houses?"

"That would not alter the case. The principle is the same. Why should you be exempt from its operations?"

"Because I have risked my money. If my speculation failed would you compensate me?"

"If it failed? Will you please tell me what elements of failure and success you are thinking of?"

"Why, suppose I erected a thousand houses, and nobody came to live in them?"

"In that case there would be no increased value, and hence no increased tax. But if the people did come to live in your houses, then any increased value of the land would be due to *their* presence, and hence they are entitled to share in its benefits."

"And what reward have I for my enterprise?"

"A successful business; and, if your foresight was really a good one, the most envied position in the town."

Here followed a short pause, after which the enterprising spokesman of the financiers resumed:

"In that case you'll drive all the capital out of the country."

"But why?"

"Because there is no outlet for it. Nobody will care to invest his money on such terms. You simply put an end to all legitimate opportunity for investment."

"Not at all. *Legitimate* opportunities for investment are more plentiful than ever, since you may do with your 'capital' what you please without let or hindrance."

"That's all very fine talk; but what good is my capital to me?"

"If you have no use for it yourself, offer it to your neighbors. And if they have no use for it either, then it is clear that that particular form of wealth is not wanted at all—that, in fact, there is an *over-production*. And this will demonstrate to you

that over-production does not mean want, as you have been taught, but profusion."

"That may be all very well in theory, but as I told you, we are practical men, and did not come here to theorize. We now know what to expect because of your legislation, and we intend to leave this country at once, taking all our capital with us."

"Take *what* with you?"

"All our capital."

"Yes, yes; but what? The land?"

"N-o-o. Not the land."

"The mines, rivers, air, sunshine, or perhaps the rain."

"N-o-o-o; but our capital."

"That's just what I am trying to get at. What are you going to take? Roads, harbors, docks, building, mills?"

"We own many of these."

"But will you take them with you, or pull them down, so as to take the material with you?"

"No, neither."

"Well, what will you take then? Spades, plows, sewing and other machines, or the mining and manufacturing plants, which now, indeed, are as fully employed as they can be?"

"Well, they are ours."

"Not quite all of them; and even if all the existing machinery did belong to you and your friends; as our forests and mines are now open to the people, they would soon make as many more as may be

required. But, as practical men, do you seriously propose taking such things with you?"

He hesitated, and I saw that he was commencing to recognize the hollowness of his threats.

He then said: "If we withdrew all our machinery, have you considered what the consequences would be?"

"No; I have not thought much about it; but, nevertheless, I can imagine what would happen. America, Germany, France, and other countries would probably be glad to learn that there is a country of over thirty million inhabitants in want of all kinds of implements, and would glut our market—several nations competing with each other. Have you considered what effect that would have on the value of your old spades and plows?"

"But with what will you purchase these things if we take our capital away?"

"With the grain and wool, and iron and coal, and all other kinds of produce, of which you and your ilk used to deprive us. Talk about what thirty-five million workers in one of the richest countries on the face of the globe are going to buy with! Sir, you must have studied your political economy at Oxford or Cambridge, else you could not possibly ask such foolish questions.

"That's all very well, but by withdrawing our capital we could throw the people out of employment, and thus *force* them to our terms."

"No, no, my good sir, that you cannot do, and

you know it. The position is simply this: You possess certain houses, mills, and machinery. On leaving the country you can choose between taking with you so much old iron and timber as you may find convienent, or else sell it prior to your departure for what you can get for it. And having a rather high opinion of your business abilities, I have no doubt in my mind as to which course you will prefer. The only loss we shall sustain is that of your presence."

"You will then have to close the Stock Exchange, as there will not be an individual left to frequent it."

"Even in that you are mistaken. Instead of closing the building we shall make a true Exchange of it, a place where people shall exchange their several products and conduct legitimate business; and then the inscription above its portal will have more meaning than at present. So if you think of leaving the country, all we can say to you is——"

"Good riddance," interposed the socialist; and Farmer John added, "Amen!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

"Good riddance," was echoed by a thousand voices outside, as the small band of monopolists left the

hall folding up their parchments. And, truth to tell, even I felt my spirits revive when relieved of the presence of this very objectionable class; people who, at their best, are but human magpies, and at their worst, vultures and hyenas. Still greater was my delight when presently I saw a small band of earnest, intellectual-looking men enter the hall, headed by one whom I recognized as the chairman of that memorable meeting at Trafalgar Square, at which I was elected to the high office I now held.

"Why, it's Neighbor William," I exclaimed cheerily, stretching out my hand to greet him. "You are indeed a most welcome guest."

"I hope I may prove so," he said, not coldly nor unkindly, yet with a certain reserve. "But that will depend on how far we shall be able to agree on certain points."

"What!" I exclaimed, somewhat taken back at this rejoinder; "surely you, of all men, have not come here as an opponent of the new order of things."

"By no maans. We come as friends to assist you to complete the good work you have so well begun. But whether our help will be welcome to you, is a question on which I have some misgivings."

"Will you then please tell me at once the points of possible disagreement?"

"Yes, certainly. You have purged the national hive of the drones, the national temple of the money-changers. The country now belongs to the nation

in its fullest and truest sense. The people have plenty of all they desire. But man liveth not by bread alone. *Our* ideal of a model State does not consist of an assemblage of so many million human cattle with plenty of fodder and good shelter."

"Nor mine either, good neighbor. I know your ideal and share it. I have read that charming book of yours, *News From Nowhere*, with its fascinating and beautiful picture of the England that is to be. And as I too set greater value on the development of the spiritual, or purely human, as distinguished from the animal qualities of the race, I would fain see it realized."

"Then why in the name of duty did you not use the absolute power at your command to abolish a system that has reduced mankind below the beasts of the field? Why champion individualism and competition with all the force of a keen, cold-blooded logic? Is not *individualism* but a euphemism for *egotism?* Does it not involve a struggle between brothers for individual advantages? Is it not, both in name and essence, identical with selfishness?"

"It is, good neighbor," I replied. "I understand the causes of your indignation. I am anxious myself to see mankind enter the beautiful land you have described to us. But I wish to get there by a safer and surer road. Even the delights of Paradise itself would be dearly purchased if we had to travel thither over the murdered bodies of our brother-men. That shooting in Trafalgar Square of which you

dreamt was a terrible affair. I would not like to witness such a tragedy."

He looked serious, sad, almost in despair; his noble countenance fell, and his eyes filled with tears. "Cruel evils may require cruel remedies," he replied. "Anything rather than the perpetuation of a system which continuously demands fresh human sacrifice. Rather a sudden death for a few than the perpetual damnation of the many. Besides, *then* I saw no other way out of the slough of despond. But to you there has been another way opened. What we want to know is, why *you* have not used the power with which you have been entrusted to abolish once and for all this degrading cut-throat system of competition which sets brother against brother; this product of incarnate selfishness."

"*Incarnate* selfishness. Yes, that's just it. You have practically answered your own question. If selfishness were a thing apart from man, and not incarnate in him, you might demand that it and its results should be destroyed. But selfishness is inherent and natural to human beings. It springs from the instinct of self-preservation, and can neither be ignored or eradicated. But still, the evils it produces can be remedied; and it is just on this very instinct that I confidently rely to right them."

"What! on selfishness? Can selfishness ever be a factor for anything but evil?"

"There is no property or agency in man or

nature which cannot be a factor for either good or evil; it all depends upon circumstances. This one fact is patent and immutable; self preservation is the strongest instinct both in and animals. It is a law of nature, which you cannot repeal at St. Stephen's. It has always been, and forever will remain, the mainspring of all human actions. Where people are so conditioned, by their own artificial institutions and regulations, that the struggle for existence is everywhere between man and man, and not between man and Nature; where the profit of one necessarily involves the loss of another; where, in short, the interests of the members of a community are, in consequence of bad legislation, antagonistic, instead of being identical; there this principle of self-preservation will always produce just that kind of selfishness—or say rather merciless greed—we are all deploring."

"Again we ask—and now rather more surprised than at first, seeing that you agree with us on the main point—why have you not put a summary stop to this policy of selfishness?"

"I will tell you, if you will but have a little patience with me, for my answer must necessarily be a long one. In the first place, let us be clear as to what are the points that need reforming. You continually harp on the one string—competitive system. But reflect for a moment, and you will find that what you have been aggrieved by was not the competitive system, but the inequalities in human

society and the injustice done to the many. Why you fought against the competitive system was simply because, in *your* opinion, *that* was the cause of all the trouble. Why *I* do not fight against it is because I do not share that opinion. But this only by the way, for I cannot say that I myself am enamored with the commercialism of to-day. And why I would not meddle with it is because it is but a consequence of a general derangement, and will disappear with the disease, of which it is *not* the cause, but a mere *symptom*. The point at issue, then, is as to what should be the precise polity which should regulate the conduct of the community. That point we would have to leave to be decided by the community; that is, each member for himself. You would have me coerce their social relations into some prescribed form; that is, prescribe to the people the habits and customs they should follow."

"You're talking nonsense when you talk of prescribing habits and customs."

"I am glad you see it in the same light as I do; it is just the point I wanted to bring home to you. People will behave, whether individually or collectively, according to their habits and customs. But habits and customs are not changed suddenly by Acts of Parliament, but are the result of old wont and usage. You desire that people should live together in love and harmony. I agree. But remember that such results can only be brought about

elation, a beacon light illuminating the road along which reformers will have to travel if they would speedily and safely reach the desired goal. It has shown me the many pitfalls in the way of the pilgrims, and the dangers of the many fair, but delusive promises by which many of our earnest leaders are diverted from the one true path. To me the whole dream has but one meaning and but one moral. It is this: Let all the various sections in charge of the van of progress cease their internecine feuds, their petty differences and jealousies, and, instead of pulling in so many different directions, unite their efforts toward one common aim. Nor is their any doubt in my mind as to the direction in which they should proceed. They all wish to reform the institutions of the land. Then let them first reclaim the land from the monopolists, and, if necessary, quarrel about the methods of governing it after the enemy has been driven out. To do this they would make common cause against the common foe, and inscribe high on their banners the legend:

"THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE."