

feathers has a hen?"—Bangor Commercial.

THE VULNERABLE POINT OF OUR CIVILIZATION.

Extracts from a paper on "Private Business is a Public Trust," by Albion W. Small, Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, published in the American Journal of Sociology for November, 1895.

It will possibly be news to many men, who look from the calm heights of professional position upon the struggles of organized wage earners, that only those children who inherit a title to land or its use are born into a legally protected right to earn a living. Other children may inherit money or equivalent personal property, and so long as it lasts the law will protect them in its use. Then they must apply, with the crowd born without inheritance, to those who possess the land, for the privilege of working in further support of life. They have no legal right to the pursuit of the occupation in which they have previously tried to bear their share of the world's work, nor to any of the revenues of that occupation. Our institutions guarantee them no right to be men; they simply enforce a claim to a share of paupers' dole. True, only comparatively few men suffer in their purse from this condition. Neither did the southern slaves as a rule endure physical privations in excess of those which they have borne since emancipation. As in the case between the American colonies and Great Britain, however, it is not the money cost but the manhood cost of submission that makes the relation oppressive. A quickened social consciousness is calling for reconsideration of this phase of our social order. Impeachment of our industrial organization is meanwhile not an attack upon men, but judgment of a system.

The vulnerable point in our present society is not its permission of large wealth to some of its members, but its maintenance of institutions which, in the last analysis, make some men's opportunity to work for wealth under any conditions dependent upon the arbitrary will of other men.

In so far as agitations for social changes squint toward the notion of equal reward for unequal work, or equal division of the products of industry, they seem to me covetous not only of the impossible, but of the unjust, the unreasonable, and consequently of the altogether undesirable. So long as men contend for such extravagances, the real vice of our civilization will be obscured. A social system which incorporates the assumption that a por-

tion of society may righteously monopolize the productive forces of nature, so that other men must ask the permission of the monopolists to draw on the resources of nature, practically denies to the unprivileged class not merely a rightful share of goods, but an intrinsic claim to any share at all. In other words it establishes at least two castes among men, the caste of the propertied and the caste of the pauperized.

The resources of the world are divided up among the members of the propertied caste, and the remainder of men depend upon the members of this caste for permission to get a share of nature by labor in improving nature.

Equal revenues from unequal services is an immoral conception. Desire for such a condition deserves no sympathy from honest men. Desire for equality in title to a place in the world where happiness may be pursued without power of veto by any other human being is an outcropping of our common humanity.

Security of right to be on the earth and to use the full measure of personal power to gain happiness, is not yet completely assured in human society. Every human being who belongs in society at all belongs there as a citizen, not as a suppliant.

The men who cleared parts of Manhattan Island a hundred years or more ago, deserved generous returns for their labor. If any of their remote grandchildren are collecting large ground rents from the success of the family in compelling other people to go out of their way and improve less desirable land, the legality of their claim may be undisputed, but its justice is more than doubtful. I should be much surprised to learn of an economist today so mortgaged to tradition as to believe that our present system of landed proprietorship corresponds with the largest interpretation of equity. It is defended simply as a lesser evil.

A WARNING.

For The Public.

The first half of this story appeared in the last issue of *The Public*. The hero, an Englishman named Dick Norris, is relating to his home friends in England his experiences during a visit to the United States, made presumably in the latter part of the coming century. The republic has decayed and its civilization has almost disappeared under the shadow of a huge autocratic industrial socialism, which not regarding land-ownership as an evil, has developed two classes—the bloated landlords who are petty kings; and a degraded slave class which works at all grades of employment for a bare sustenance. Dick had no alternative upon landing in America, but to live at a hotel, become attached to a landlord, or enter a government work-

shop. Having made several trials to attach himself to a landlord, but without success, he applied to the state industrial bureau, and after examination as to his ability as an engineer was assigned to a workshop. He was at the same time given citizenship papers conferring the right to vote. For that right, though no longer actually exercised by the working classes, still existed in legal theory. The second and concluding part of the story begins with Dick's first experiences in the government workshop.

To return to the government workshop. The superintendent is an important personage of undoubted loyalty to the landlord interest. Combined with the United States commissioner of industry, the superintendents determine, subject to congressional indorsement, all matters pertaining to manufactures and their disposition. They also have, in connection with a subdivision of the census bureau, another important office. They receive and award annually a certain number of marriage permits, whose issue is regulated with a view of controlling the increase of population. Marriage is not made compulsory, but the superintendent has the power of awarding or withholding these permits at his discretion.

Every workshop is policed with a guard of militia, commanded by a commissioned officer.

Well, I received further honors. Upon leaving the superintendent's office I was ordered to doff my civilian's clothes and don the workers' uniform. I was also informed that I was number 1,260, and I had already been informed that I would have to obey under penalty the orders of the foreman of my department, and that in return for my services, I would be supplied, free of charge, with board, clothing and implements.

The factory buildings were arranged around a hollow square, on one side the workshop, on another the dormitories, one for each sex, and one for the married workers; on another the restaurant, if so dignified a title could be used. The entrance, guarded by a sentry, was flanked on either side by sleeping quarters for a small guard of militia. There was also a hall for religious worship, at which attendance on Sundays was compulsory.

The visible origin of these workshops was, generations back, in prison labor. Against this there were many protests from the labor unions of those days, which at one time promised to become powerful bodies. Some laws, indeed, were passed in their favor, but they might as well have tried to sweep back the ocean as hope to maintain labor's rights while tax laws giving landowners the power to control and rob industry remained in force.