

Public understands Socialism and desires to establish it there will be no difficulty about plans. Just get a number of your cleverest organisers and administrators into committee and let them formulate a scheme. Depend upon it they will produce a much better scheme than mine, though I think even mine is better than none at all, and as I said before I only offer it to give you an idea of the possibilities of the task before us.

This question of Socialism is the most important and imperative question of the age. It will divide, is now dividing, society into two camps. In which camp will you elect to stand? On the one side there are individualism and competition—leading to a “great trade” and great miseries. On the other side is justice, without which can come no good, from which can come no evil. On the one hand, are ranged all the sages, all the saints, all the martyrs, all the noble manhood and pure womanhood of the world; on the other hand, are the tyrant, the robber, the manslayer, the libertine, the usurer, the slave-driver, the drunkard, and the sweater. Choose your party, then, my friend, and let us get to the fighting.

CHAPTER XV.

THE INCENTIVE OF GAIN.

Supply-and-demand,—Alas! for what noble work was there ever yet any audible “demand” in that poor sense? The man of Macedonia speaking in vision to an Apostle Paul, “Come over and help us,” did not specify what rate of wages he would give! Or was the Christian Religion itself accomplished by Prize Essays, Bridgewater Bequests, and a “minimum of four thousand five hundred a year?” No demand that I heard of was made them, audible in any Labour Market, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, or other the like emporium and hiring establishment; silent were all these from any whisper of such demand; powerless were all these to “supply it” had the demand been in thunder and earthquake, with gold El Dorados and Mahometan Paradises for the reward.—*Carlyle.*

Each life's unfulfilled, you see,
It hangs still patchy and scrappy;
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired, been happy.

—*Browning.*

We will now proceed to consider some of the stock arguments used against Socialism.

Non-Socialists are in the habit of saying that Socialism

demands a complete change in human nature. They say Socialism is very pretty in theory, but that it is wrong because human nature is not good enough for Socialism. They tell us that we Socialists are mistaken because we have built up a scheme without first considering human nature. They are entirely mistaken.

The fact is that we Socialists have studied human nature, and that our opponents only object to Socialism because they do not understand human nature at all.

"Socialism," say these critics, "is impossible, because it would destroy the incentive of gain." The incentive of *gain*.

And then they quote the dogma of the political economist:—

The social affections are accidental and disturbing elements in human nature, but *avarice and the desire of progress* are constant elements.

Avarice, they say, is a constant element of human nature, and they proceed to build up what they foolishly call "a science" of human affairs upon this one single element. They ignore the second element, "*The desire of progress*," which I have marked in italics, and the only conclusion we can come to, after reading their stupid books and shallow articles, is the conclusion that they recognise avarice, that is love of money, as the ruling passion of mankind.

This assumption of the economists is due to ignorance, to the densest ignorance of the human nature which they tell us we have failed to study.

Political economy is a science of human affairs. Every science which professes to be a science of human affairs, must be built upon an estimate of human nature. If it is built upon a false conception of human nature, the science is a failure. If it is built upon a true conception of human nature, the science is a success.

Now the political economy of our opponents is built upon a false conception of human nature. In the first place, it recognises only one motive, which is sheer folly. In the second place, it assumes that the strongest motive is avarice, which is untrue.

These flaws are due to the fact that the founders and upholders of this system of grab and greed are men who

have never possessed either the capacity or the opportunity for studying human nature. Mere bookmen, school-men, business-men, and logic-choppers can never be authorities on human nature. The great authorities on human nature are the poets, the novelists, the artists, and the men whose lives and labours bring them into daily contact with their fellow creatures.

The only school for the study of human nature is the world. The only text-books are the works of men like Shakespeare, Hugo, Cervantes, Sterne, and other students who learned in that school.

But the effectual study of human nature demands from the student a vast fund of love and sympathy. You will never get admitted into the heart of a fellow-creature unless you go as a friend.

I remember as a child reading a fairy tale of a prince who had given to him a feather of magic properties. When he touched people with that feather they spoke what was in their mind. Such a feather with such powers you may have any day if you will, and the name of it is love. That is the magic feather of Shakespeare, of Sterne, and of Cervantes. If you would witness the manifestation of its power, go to your books and make acquaintance with Sancho Panza and Uncle Toby, and with Rosalind and Dogberry, and Mercutio and Macbeth.

The study of human nature is a most difficult one. Only specially-gifted men can master it; and that with much pains. Judge, then, for yourself whether the motley mob of ready-writers in the press are authorities on such a subject. Judge for yourself whether a man who spends all his days in the study of economics and the mathematic sciences is qualified to build up a system which depends upon a deep and wide knowledge of the souls of men. Go now and contrast the Frankenstein monster of the political-economist with Sterne's "Muleteer," Eliot's "Silas Marner," Shakespeare's "Hamlet," or Rabelais' "Panurge," and decide for yourself as to whether or not the study of literature is of any use in the study of Social Science.

Consider the lady nurse at the seat of war. Gentle, delicate, loving, and lovable, of high intelligence, of great beauty, young, refined, and educated, she leaves pleasure

and home and ease, and all the pomps and flatteries of courts and assemblies, to labour amid peril and hardship and all the sickening and dreadful sounds and sights of the battle-field, the hospital, and the camp. Amid pestilence and blood, amid death and mutilation, you find her, calm and gentle and fearless. Dressing loathsome wounds, soothing fevered heads, hearing the imprecations and the groans of delirious and sick men, always unselfish, always patient, always kind, with but one motive and that charity, without any crown or recompense of glory or reward—such is the lady nurse at the seat of war. It is a noble picture—is it not? Well, *that* is human nature.

Consider now the outcast Jezebel of the London pavement. Fierce and cunning, and false and vile. Ghastly of visage under her paint and grease. A creature debased below the level of the brutes, with the hate of a devil in her soul and the fire of Hell in her eyes. Lewd of gesture, strident of voice, wanton of gaze; using language so foul as to shock the pot-house ruffian, and laughter whose sound makes the blood run cold. A dreadful spectre, shameless, heartless, reckless, and horrible. A creature whose touch is contamination, whose words burn like a flame, whose leers and ogles make the soul sick. A creature living in drunkenness and filth. A moral blight. A beast of prey who has cast down many wounded, whose victims fill the lunatic ward and the morgue; a thief, a liar, a hopeless, lost, degraded wretch, of whom it has been well said, “Her feet take hold of Hell; her house is the way to the grave, going down to the chamber of death.” It is an awful picture—is it not? But *that* is human nature.

There is the character of Don Quixote, *that* is human nature, so is the character of Sancho Panza. The same applies to the characters of Sam Weller and Bill Sikes, of Hermione and Lady Macbeth, of Ancient Pistol and Coriolanus, of Corporal Trim and Corporal Brock, of John Knox and Charles II., of Voltaire and Martin Luther, of Grace Darling and Carmen, of John Wesley and Tom Sayers.

There is human nature in Raleigh’s spreading of the cloak before the Queen; in the wounded Sydney giving up the cup of water to the wounded soldier; in Nelson on the deck of the “Victory” with his breast ablaze with orders;

in Napoleon afraid to die at Sedan; in St. Paul's endurance of stripes and contumely; in Judas selling his master for thirty pieces of silver.

Human nature is a complex and an awful thing. It is true of man that he is fearfully and wonderfully made. But consider all these types of humanity, picture to yourself the soldier at his post, the thief at his work, the smith at the forge, the factory girl at the loom, the actor on the stage, the priest at his prayers, the sot at his can, the mother with her babe, the widow at the husband's grave, the judge in his wig, the Indian in his paint, the farmer at the plough, the beggar asleep in the ditch, the peer with his betting book, the surgeon with his knife, the street arab in the slums, and the young girl dreaming over a love tale, and then recall to your mind the bloodless, soulless abortion of the political economist, and the "unit" of "Society," whose purpose in life is to "produce," and whose only motive power is the "desire for gain."

The last refuge of Gradgrind, when he is beaten by Socialistic argument, is the assertion that human nature is incapable of good. But this is not true. Men instinctively prefer light to darkness, love to hate, and good to evil.

The most selfish man would not see a fellow-creature die or suffer if he could save him without personal cost or risk.

Only a lunatic would wantonly destroy a harvest or poison a well, unless he might thereby reap some personal advantage.

It is clear, therefore, that men will do good for its *own* sake; but they will not do evil except with the hope of gain. And this may be said of the lowest and the basest types of mankind. But of the highest, even of the intermediate types of mankind, how much more may be said? So much more, indeed, as may overthrow Gradgrind and his brutal theories, and bury him and them in the ruins of his arguments of ashes and of his defences of clay. For mankind turn to the sun, even to seeking it through fog and storm. They will obey God's commandment when they can hear it, and resist the temptations of Satan with such power as they possess. True are the words of Tennyson:—

We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Launcelot, nor another.

“Miserabler theory”—says Carlyle—“miserabler theory than that of money on the ledger being the primary rule for empires, or for any higher entity than city owls, and their mice-catching, cannot be propounded.”

Major Burke, of the Wild West, told me one day that on the prairies the cowboys went about finger on trigger, ever on the *qui vive* for an ambush. If a leaf stirred they fired, if a twig snapped they fired; and in about five cases out of a hundred they shot an Indian.

This is the state in which men live under a competitive commercial system. It is war. The hand of every man is against every man's hand. Men move finger on trigger, and fire at the falling of a leaf. But in a Socialistic state of society they would no more go armed and in fear of their fellow-creatures than did the Wild West Cowboys in London:

Then the Church speaks, saying that men are born bad. Now, I hold that human nature is not innately bad. I take the scientists' view that man is an undeveloped creature. That he is a being risen from lower forms of life, that he is slowly working out his development—in an *upward* direction—and that he is yet a long way from the summit. How far he is below the angels, how far above the brutes, in his pilgrimage is a matter for dispute. I believe that he is a great deal better than the Church and the economist suppose him to be; and that the greater part of what these superior persons call his “badness” is due to the conditions under which he lives, or in which he and his fathers have been bred.

It is no use arguing whether or not man is bad by nature, and without respect to circumstances. Man is a creature of circumstances. You cannot separate him from his surroundings, or he ceases to exist. We will waive the discussion of what man might be, and concede to our opponents the advantage of considering him as he is. We will consider man as we see him, and his circumstances as we see them.

The question asked is whether human nature is bad. We must begin by asking under what circumstances? Will a peach tree bear peaches? Yes, if planted in good soil and against a south wall, Will a rose tree flourish in England?

Not if you set it in an ash-heap and exclude the light and air. Is a river a beautiful and a wholesome thing? Yes, when it is fed by the mountain streams, washed by the autumn rains, and runs over a pebbly bed, between grassy meadows decked with water lilies, fringed with flowering rushes, shaded by stately trees; but not when it is polluted by city sewers, stained by the refuse of filthy dye-vats and chemical works; not when its bed is slime, its banks ashes, and when the light falling upon it is the flame of forges, and the shadows those of mills, and manure works, and prisons. Is human nature sweet, and holy, and fruitful of good things? Yes. When it gets light and air and culture, such as we give to the beasts of the farm and to the lilies of the field; but when it is poisoned and perverted and defiled, when it is crushed, cursed, and spat upon, then human nature becomes bad. Tell me, then, shall we, in judging rivers, take the Irwell; or shall we, in judging men, take the slums, or the City Council or the House of Commons, or the Bourse, or the Stock Exchange, or any other body where vulgarity, and aggression, and rascality, and selfish presumption are the elements of success? No thing on this earth can be good under adverse conditions—not the river, not the green grass, not the skylark, nor the rose; but if a thing can be good under propitious circumstances we say of it, "This is good." We say that of all the things of the earth except man. Of man we say, without hesitation and without conditions—"He is bad."

We will leave the Mongolian, the Turanian, and other inferior races out of our calculation, and take the Caucasian race as the type of humanity. Then it may be said that several intellectual qualities are common to all men. The average man, under average conditions, is fond of woman, fond of children—especially his own. He is also fond of himself. He likes to succeed. He likes to be admired. He enjoys his food and drink. He likes excitement and variety. He likes to laugh. He admires beauty, and is pleased with music.

Now consider how these qualities of the body and the mind may be acted upon by circumstances. We know how the pure passion of love may be debased. We know how men may become so brutalised that they will ill-use women;

that they will cease to love and cherish their children. We know how a man grows selfish and cruel. We know how he sinks to sottishness, to gluttony, to torpid, savage boorishness. We know we have with us vast numbers of rich and poor, of respectable and disreputable liars and rogues and beasts and dastards. Is that the fault of human nature? Or is it the fault of the evil influences that choke and poison human nature?

Gradgrind tells me that greed is the chief motor of the human heart. It has been so called by generations of shallow cynics and stupid dunces before him; and, as he never thinks for himself, he has never found out the error. But let any man look about him and think of what he sees, and I believe that he will agree with me that what phrenologists call "Love of approbation" is a hundred-fold a stronger force than greed. What observer of life will deny this? Is it not plain to all when the eyes are opened that the desire to get praise or admiration is a stronger motive than the desire to get money? Nay, this desire to get wealth is only one out of a thousand consequences of the love of approbation. Only a miser loves money for its own sake. The great bulk of our graspers and grubbers value money for what it will bring. A few and to a small extent because it brings them luxury, ease, indulgence. A larger number, and to a greater extent, because it saves them and theirs from the risks of penury and degradation. A great preponderance, and to the widest extent, because it wins them the admiration, the wonder, the envy, and the services of their fellows.

Greed is *not* the strongest passion of the human heart. A much stronger passion is vanity. Yet I will not say that vanity is the chief motor of human action. Is it too harsh a word—"vanity"? Perhaps it is—in some cases. Or perhaps it only sounds too harsh because often enough vanity is intertwined with other and nobler feelings. One would not call Nelson vain. He had a strong desire to win the love and admiration of his countrymen, no doubt. But twisted in with the threads of that feeling were the golden strands of patriotism, of courage, of duty. We cannot say how much of a hero's life is prompted by his wish to be loved by his countrymen, and how much by his own love

for his countrymen. I am inclined to think that wherever the desire for approbation can be disentangled from other feelings, it may be fairly written down as vanity.

And how far-stretched this vanity is—this love of approbation. From the Prime Minister, airing his eloquence on the integrity of the Empire, or polishing up his flimsy epigrams in his study, down through all the steps of the social ladder—the ambassador in his garter, the general in his plumed hat, the actor in his best part, and the costermonger with pearl buttons on his trousers—all are tinged with vanity, all have in them the desire, the yearning, to be thought well of. This desire is stronger than the thirst for pelf. Men who would scorn to be paid will not scorn to be applauded. It is so strong that *no* man nor woman is free from its influence. Indeed it must be of this importance, for divested of the love and respect of all our fellow creatures, life would cease to be endurable. But life is quite endurable without wealth. And there are many people who do not desire wealth.

Do you think the whole of the prosperous and wealthy classes would resolutely oppose Socialism if they understood it? I don't know about that. Do men seek or hold wealth for its own sake, or for what it will buy? For what it will buy. And the things they suppose they can buy with wealth, what are they? Admiration and enjoyment. Now if you could convince men that admiration and enjoyment could *not* be bought with wealth, but *could* be got without wealth, is it not possible that Mammon would lose his worshippers?

As society is at present constituted nearly every man gets as much money as he can. What are the ordinary motives for this conduct? Plutocrat says, "I can make a fortune out of the cotton trade, and why should I not? If I don't make it some other man will; and perhaps the other man will be a rogue." You see, men cannot trust each other. Under the operation of unfettered individual enterprise, life is a scramble. A man knows he could live on less than ten thousand a year, and he knows that multitudes are hungry. But if he foregoes the making of a fortune it will not benefit the poor. Some other man will seize on what he relinquishes, and the scramble will go on. So men

amass wealth because they think they might as well do it as let another do it in their stead.

There is another thing. Plutocrat will tell you he has a wife and family to provide for. He knows the world too well to leave a widow and children to the tender mercies of his brother graspers. It is every man for himself and the weakest to the wall. So he will grind other people to make money to prevent other people from grinding his children. He is right in a great measure. It is his duty to provide for his wife and children. And under our present system of robbery and murder by individual enterprise the widow and the orphan will find none to pity and defend them—unless they can pay for value received.

Again, in a commercial era and in a commercial nation wealth is the reward of merit, the crown of honour and the sign of virtue. Every Englishman dreads failure. Wealth stamps him with the hall-mark of success, and truly that hall-mark is borne by some very spurious metals; some most evident Brummagem jewels.

It seems, then, that to deprive money grubbing of its power to mislead we must make great social changes. We must assure men that in *no* case should their children want. We must assure men that the possession of wealth will not bring them honour. We must assure men that justice will win them respect and not contempt, and that the good man who forbears to fill his coffer at the public expense need not fear to see some rascal render his generosity abortive.

The Gradgrind supposes greed to be the ruling passion because in the Society he knows most men strive to get money. But *why* do they strive to get money? There are two chief motives. One the desire to provide for or confer happiness upon children, on friends; the other the desire to purchase applause. But in the first case the motive is not greed, but love; and in the second case it is not greed, but vanity. Only a *miser* covets money for its own sake. Both love and vanity are stronger passions than greed.

Will the desire of gain make progress? Suppose a man to have a thirst for money and success, but no genius. Can he for a prize of ten thousand pounds invent a printing press? No. For though the impetus is there

the genius is absent. But suppose he has the genius and no prize is offered! Can he then invent the machine? Yes. Because he has the genius to do it. We see, then, that greed cannot invent machines, but genius can.

Now, if a prize be offered for a new machine, will a man of no genius make it? No. He will try for the sake of the prize; but he will fail for lack of brains. But no prize being offered, will the man of genius, seeing a use for a new machine, invent it? He will. History proves that he *will* invent and *does* invent it, not only without hope of gain, but even at risk of life and liberty.

It seems, then, that genius without mercenary incentives will serve the world; but that mercenary motives without genius will not.

In proof of which argument look back upon the lives of such men as Galileo, Bruno, Newton, and indeed the bulk of the explorers, scientists, philosophers, and martyrs. Love of truth, love of knowledge, love of art, love of fame, are *all* stronger motives than the love of gain, which is the *only* human motive recognised by a system of political economy supposed to be founded on human nature.

It is the mistake of a blockhead to suppose that because sometimes genius can make money therefore money can always make genius.

For the sake of love, for the sake of duty, for the sake of pity, for the sake of religion, and for the sake of truth, men and women have resigned their bodies to the flames, have laid their heads upon the block, have suffered imprisonment, disgrace, and torture, and starvation. Who will do as much for *money*?

Money never had a martyr. In Mammon's bible the text of the Christian Bible is altered. It reads, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?" Men will *fight* for money; but they will not die for it. Now millions have died for honour, for love, for religion, for duty, for country, for *fame*. And how then can any sensible person stand by the base and brutish dogma that *greed* is the chief motor of the human heart?

It seems an amazing thing to me, this persistence in the belief that greed is the motive power of humanity. The refutation of that error is forever under our noses. You see

how men strive at cricket; you see the intense effort and the fierce zeal which they display at football; you see men nearly kill themselves in boat races, on cycling tracks and running grounds; you *know* that these men do all this without the hope of a single penny of gain, and yet you tell me in the face of the powerful football combinations, and rowing clubs, and cricket clubs, and with a quarter of a million of volunteers amongst you, and with the records of Inkerman, and Lucknow, and Marston Moor on your shelves, and with the walls of the hospitals, and the lifeboats of the Royal Humane Society, and the spires of your churches, and the convents of the Sisters of Charity, and the statues of your Cromwells, and Wellingtons, and Nelsons, and Cobdens, all ready for you to knock your stupid heads against, that the only reliable human motive is—the desire for gain.

Look about you and see what men do for gain, and what for honour. Your volunteer force—does that exist for gain? Your lifeboat service, again—is *that* worked by the incentive of dirty dross? What will not a soldier do for a tiny bronze cross, not worth a crown piece? What will a husband endure for his wife's sake? a father for his children? a fanatic for his religion? But you do not believe that Socialism is to destroy all love, and all honour, and all duty and devotion, do you?

And now I have addressed you in a homely, simple fashion, allow me to quote a passage or two from Carlyle, and note how he in his magnificent language and with lavish wealth of dazzling pictures, says what I have said in my weaker and cruder way. Maybe, if you do not think my words of weight, nor my name of force sufficient, you will respect the utterances of one of the greatest thinkers and speakers England ever bred. I quote from "Past and Present":—

Let the captains of industry retire into their own hearts and ask solemnly if there is nothing but vulturous hunger for fine wines, valet reputation, and gilt carriages discoverable there. Of hearts made by the Almighty God I will not believe such a thing. Deep-hidden under wretchedest God-forgetting cants, epicurisms, dead sea-apisms; forgotten as under foulest fat Lethe mud and weeds, there is yet, in all hearts born unto this God's world, a spark of the Godlike still slumbering.

And again, my friend:—

Buccaneers, Choctaw Indians, whose supreme aim in fighting is that they may get the scalps, the money—that they may amass scalps and money—out of such comes no chivalry, and never will. Out of such come only gore and wreck, infernal rage and misery, desperation quenched in annihilation. Behold it, I bid thee; behold there, and consider. What is it that you have a hundred thousand pound bills laid up in your strong room; a hundred scalps hung up in your wigwam? I value not them or thee.

And yet again:—

Love of men cannot be bought by cash payment; without love men cannot endure to be together.

The incentive of gain!

CHAPTER XVI.

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF ———?

In Cœur-de-Lion's day, it was not esteemed of absolute necessity to put agreements between *Christians* in writing! Which if it were not now, you know we might save a great deal of money, and discharge some of our workmen round Temple Bar, as well as from Woolwich Dockyards.—*Ruskin.*

The quotation at the end of the last chapter brings us naturally to the subject of competition.

Of all the many senseless and brutal theories which practical men support, the most fatuous and bestial is the theory of competition.

I use the word theory advisedly. You practical men are fond of scoffing at all humane systems of thought or government as mere "theories." It is one of the vainest of your vanities to believe that you have no theories at all.

Why, John, you practical men have as many theories as any Socialist. But the distinctive marks of all your theories are their falsity, their folly, and their utter impracticability.

For instance, your practical man swears by political economy. But it is by the political economy of the older writers. It is the science of the men who were only blundering over the construction of a rude and untried *theory*. The later and wiser political economy you practical men either do not know or will not accept. You