

4. Under Socialism: Who would get the salmon, and who would get the red-herrings?

Let us follow the system I suggested, and reverse the question. Who gets the salmon and who gets the red-herrings now?

Is it not true that the salmon and all other delicacies are monopolised by the idle, while the coarse food falls to the lot of the worker?

Perhaps under Socialism the salmon might be eaten by those who catch it. At present it is not.

Or perhaps the dainties would be reserved for invalids and old people, or for delicate women and children.

But certainly we should not see a lot of big, fat, strong aldermen gorging turtle and champagne while frail girls worked sixteen hours a day on a diet of crusts and coffee.

It is quite possible that even under Socialism there might not be enough salmon and pineapple for all. But it is quite certain that there would be enough bread and beef and tea for all, which there certainly is not *now*.

And so much for that question; and, if you care to follow it out more fully, I must refer you to my answer to Richter's "Pictures of the Future."

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### PAID AGITATORS.

You will find, if you think deeply of it, that the chief of all the curses of this unhappy age is the universal gabble of its fools, and of the flocks that follow them, rendering the quiet voices of the wise men of all past time inaudible.—*Ruskin*.

The capitalist Press, probably because they cannot controvert the theory of Socialism, are in the habit of abusing Socialists. Socialist writers and Socialist speakers, and very often Trade Union leaders, are commonly described as "Paid Agitators;" and our Labour papers are charged with "pandering to the worst passions of the mob," and with "battening on the earnings of ignorant dupes."

This is pretty much the same kind of language as that which the Press employed against John Bright, Ernest Jones, C. S. Parnell, Charles Bradlaugh, and other

advanced reformers. It is the kind of language which reformers expect from the Press, and also, I am sorry to say, from the Church. It is the natural language of shallow, or timid or interested people, who are startled by the dreadful apparition of a new idea.

The agitator is not a nice man. He disturbs the general calm; he shakes old and rotten institutions with a rude hand; he drags into the light of day some loathsome and dangerous abuse which respectable rascality or cowardly conservatism has carefully covered up and concealed under a film of humbug. He tramples upon venerable shams; he injures old-established reputations; he bawls out shameful truths from the house-tops; he is fierce and noisy; uses strong language, and very often in his rage against wrong or in the heat of his grief over unmerited suffering, he mixes his own truth with error, and carries his righteous denunciations to the point of injustice. The privileged classes hate him; the oppressed classes do not understand him; the lazy classes shun him as a pest. He finds himself standing, like Ishmael, with every man's hand against him.

Oliver Wendell Holmes compares the dawning of a new idea to the turning over of a stone in a field. After describing all the blind and wriggling creatures who live beneath the stone, he says:—

But no sooner is the stone turned and the wholesome light of day let in upon this compressed and blinded community of creeping things, than all of them which enjoy the luxury of legs—and some of them have a good many—rush round wildly, butting each other and everything in their way, and end in a general stampede for underground retreats from the region poisoned by sunshine. . . . You never need think you can turn over any old falsehood without a terrible squirming and scattering of the horrid little population that dwells under it.

Every real thought on every real subject knocks the wind out of everybody or other. As soon as his breath comes back he very probably begins to expend it in hard words. These are the best evidences a man can have that he has said something it was time to say.

But though the agitator is not a nice man, he is a useful man. Your pleasant, cultured, courteous, easy gentleman is a nice man, but he is the unconscious upholder of all that is bad, as well as of a little that is good.

There was a time when women were tortured for witchcraft; when prisoners were tortured into the confession of crimes of which they were innocent; when good men and women were burnt alive for being unable to believe the dogmas of other men's religion; when authors had their ears cut off for telling the truth; when English children were worked to death in the factories; when starving workmen were hanged for stealing a little food; when boards of capitalists and landlords fixed the workers' wages; when Trade Unionism was conspiracy, and only rich men had votes. Those days are gone; those crimes are impossible; those wrongs are abolished. And for these changes we have to thank the agitators.

The agitators, from Christ downwards, have been the salt of the earth. It is only such as they who save society from dry rot and putrefaction.

Then, again, there is the practical hard-headed man who always comes forward to prove every new thing impossible. We English have done many impossible things. Was it not demonstrated to the general satisfaction of the hard-headed ones that Stephenson could not make a train go twelve miles an hour? Was it not proved that railways would exterminate horses? Was it not proved that the Atlantic cable could not be laid? Was it not made manifest that the Catholic Emancipation Acts, the Ballot Act, the Factory Acts, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws would plunge the nation into Popery, and anarchy, and ruin? Yet all these reforms were accomplished by little bands of agitators, in the face of tremendous opposition, and in spite of yells of execration, and virulent charges of "battening" and "incendiarism." To return to our own time. There were never any men more virulently assailed than are the present leaders of the Labour movement. The favourite lie is the charge of charlatanism. The man who conducts a strike or organises a trade union is alluded to by the Press as a "paid agitator;" the Labour paper is accused of "battening on the earnings of ignorant dupes."

When a paper calls a man a paid agitator, what does the charge imply? It implies that he is a liar and a rogue, who is preaching what he knows to be false and preaching it for the sake of making money. So when a writer is accused

of battenng on the earnings of ignorant dupes, he is accused of wilfully gulling poor men for the sake of profit.

Such charges are uttered and reiterated with such malicious persistence, that thousands of worthy people have come to believe that the "paid agitator" has an easy and lucrative trade, and that the Labour paper is rolling in ill-gotten wealth as the result of its deliberate treachery to the poor.

Now, I will simply confront the slanders with the facts.

If Labour leaders were dull and incapable men, who could not hope to make money and position except as demagogues; if the work of the paid agitator were easy and showed no signs of zeal and talent, if the "paid agitator" and the Labour writer preached only to ignorant people, if they preached doctrines which could not be maintained, against the cleverest and best informed leaders of the parties of privilege and plunder, if the salaries of the "paid agitators" and the "Labour writers" were high and their lives luxurious and easy, then there might be as much ground to suspect the *bonâ fides* of these men as there now is to suspect the *bonâ fides* of professional patriots, and of pressmen, who are bound by the tenets of their agreements always to prove Mr. Gladstone in the right, or always to prove him in the wrong.

But if "paid agitators" and Labour writers are proved to be men of industry and ability, who choose the thorny path instead of the flowery one; if their doctrines can withstand successfully all the attacks of their enemies; if they can be shown to be living sparsely, working hard, and earning very little, then it seems to me it will be unnecessary to defend their honour against the furtive slanders of nameless and incompetent writers who *are* well paid, and who *do* sell their consciences in the open market and to the highest bidder.

It is a very effective picture, that of the paid agitator feasting on champagne and turtle or of the Labour writer driving his carriage along the Brighton promenade. But it has the fault common to Press pictures—it is a *lie*.

Let us begin with the paid agitator. Is the trade so easy? Is it so well paid? Take John Burns. He is an engineer. Being a good workman John Burns could earn

two pounds a week easily and not work more than fifty-five hours. Now, I don't believe John has averaged two pounds a week as a Labour leader; and his wages have not been promptly paid; and I can remember an appeal for subscriptions to raise his present income of one pound a week, paid by the Dockers' Union, to two pounds; while as far as work is concerned, his labour is endless and his working hours are *all* the hours he can spare from sleep.

The first time I saw him was during the Glasgow strike. He had made five long speeches that day. He was so hoarse that I could hardly hear him speak. He looked utterly fagged out, and at night he went to a second-rate temperance hotel and had weak tea and bread and butter for supper. This is not so fine a picture as the other; but it is *true*.

A paid agitator gets hard work, low pay, ingratitude, and vilification. He will be an old man before his time; but a rich man never.

So much for the paid agitator. Now as to the Labour papers. We are confronted with the assertion that we batten on the earnings of misguided dupes. The men who write for the party papers do not batten on the misguided dupes. The rank and file of the political parties are *not* dupes.

They are intelligent and discerning men. The writers on the party press are not hireling hacks. They are honourable men. It is merely a coincidence that their consciences always happen to fit in with the exigencies of the Liberal or Tory situation. They are quite different from the Labour writer. He "panders to the mob." He battens on the foolish. He rolls in ill-gotten wealth.

Well, let some of the superior pressmen try it. Let them seek out the "dupes" and go in for "battening." They will find that the "dupe" does not yield much "batten" to the square inch. They will very soon have cause to sing the song of the disappointed Pirate—

We boiled Bill Jones in the negro-pot,  
To see how much fat Bill Jones had got,  
But there wasn't much fat upon Jones.

To prove that all Labour writers are honest and earnest men may be difficult; but to prove that the British

workman is not in the habit of bestowing his money on Labour leaders and Labour writers is *quite* easy.

Does the Labour journalist wallow in the wages of the worker? Not a wallow.

You leave that to the worker. He has money for beer, he has money for betting, he has money for parsons, he has money for missionaries, he has money for party politics, but he does not like his champions and his servants to get fat and lazy, and he takes precious good care they *don't*.

Proofs? Certainly. In bulk. No Labour paper ever yet paid its way. No Socialistic paper ever paid its way. There is not a single Labour leader nor a single Labour writer in England to-day who is getting one-half the wages he could earn if he turned his back on Socialism for ever, and went in for making money. Not *one*.

Mr. Cuninghame Graham is a Labour leader. I don't suppose he ever made a five-pound note out of the cause. I *know* he has spent above a hundred five-pound notes, besides his time, in the cause.

Mr. de Mattos is a Fabian lecturer. He spends his whole time in lecturing on Socialism. He never gets a penny of pay.

Mr. Charles Bradlaugh was literally crushed to death, *killed* by debts contracted in fighting the battles of the democracy. The democracy let him die.

None of these men seem to have wallowed very deep in the earnings of their "dupes." But I hear that the *Times* and the *Telegraph* pay their writers well. *Comic Cuts* and the *Police News* are making fortunes. Messrs. Gladstone, Goschen, Salisbury, and Balfour get a decent living as politicians, and I have no doubt that Mr. Schnadhorst receives a better salary than John Burns.

There is nothing pays an English paper better than racing reports, betting tips, and prurient details of divorce trials. A Socialist paper will not stoop to any of these dirty ways of making money.

I commend these facts to the dailies. *They* write articles against gambling and print the tips, the betting and the stock and share lists. They are honourable men.

If any of our readers have an idea that Socialism is a paying trade, I hope they will do us the justice to abandon

that idea at once. Socialism is in its infancy as a cause. Socialism is not popular. The Socialists are few in number. Twenty years hence all this will be changed, and then the dailies will discover that early Socialists, though crude thinkers, were useful in preparing the public mind for the great utterances of the press. In fact, we are preparing the ground for the harvest which other men shall reap. So mote it be.

The Pope calls the pioneers of Socialism, "crafty agitators." That word crafty implies that these "agitators" are seeking their own ends. I know many Socialists, and many Socialistic leaders. I know none who can make profit of it. *Most* of the leaders, such as Ruskin, Morris, Hyndman, Carpenter, Shaw, De Mattos, Annie Besant, and Bland, would lose in money and position were Socialism adopted now.

We Socialists don't complain about these things, but we respectfully submit the evidence to the jury, and ask for a verdict of acquittal on the charge of "Battening." We claim that we give our time and strength to the poor, and that we get but little in return but suspicion, and envy, and slander. God bless the poor, say I, and pity them. They are hard task-masters, and as thankless as they are foolish, but they cannot help it, poor creatures, and we hope to do them good.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### LABOUR REPRESENTATION.

The practice of modern Parliaments, with reporters sitting among them, and twenty-seven millions, mostly fools, listening to them, fills me with amazement.—*Carlyle*.

Being a practical man, John, you will naturally say to me that having told you what I believe to be the true solution of the Social Problem, I ought to show some plan for working that solution out.

I think that the best way to realise Socialism is—to make Socialists. I have always maintained that if we can once get the people to understand how much they are wronged we may safely leave the remedy in their own hands. My work is to teach Socialism, to get recruits for the Socialist Army. I am not a general, but a recruiting