

## CHAPTER V

### THE INEVITABLENESS OF THE SOCIAL QUESTION

A VETERAN in the trade-union movement of Massachusetts said at a dinner of the Twentieth Century Club: "We have not got very far in understanding the social question until we rise out of the atmosphere of personal blaming. A man who thinks it is all the fault of this or that capitalist, has not got very far. Our real trouble is not with specific rich men, but with the general system which makes possible the man of one hundred millions on one side, and a mass of laborers struggling for the means of subsistence on the other. It is not primarily the fault of the magnates; it is the fault of all of us who consent to the conditions out of which these dangerous extremes spring up."

A member of the London County Council, making investigations in the United States, heard these words, and added: "I have been interviewing your business men ever since I landed, but not once have I heard so impersonal a judgment. I have found the pick of your labor leaders far better instructed upon all sides of the labor controversy than business men. The business man is cocksure about the trouble. It is the labor agitator. If only he could be suppressed, all would be well." His explanation was that men of affairs were too busy to read. They were simply vexed

by strikes and by trade-union interference, and out of this immediate experience made their philosophy.

This is a very insufficient analysis. These large and impersonal views are exceptions upon both sides, but they are as frequently met among businessmen as among those who represent labor. The perpetual astonishment of the student is, however, that business men know so little of those organs of opinion into which the wage earner puts his most earnest and most honest thought. It is droll that one should have to make this comment, but I have never yet seen an employer who had given the least serious attention to this literature. I have known a manufacturer of machinery who had been through repeated conflicts with his men over questions raised by the union. He did not treat these disturbances as mere perversity. He had read much general labor literature and showed some pride in admitting that "great changes were certain to occur between labor and capital during the next generation." Yet among the men in his own business, a trade journal had been printed month by month for several years. In the successive issues, every point of difference between his own views and those of his men had been repeatedly discussed. All that his men hoped for and were trying to attain, was here set down, yet this employer had never thought it worth his while to read a line of it. His intellectual curiosity led him to much study of popular sociological books, but schemes for improvements fermenting in the minds of his own workers had interested him so little that in his own words, "It never occurred to me that there was anything worth reading in the journal of these mechanics."

I have known intelligent builders and scholarly architects who had long fought trade unions among their own workmen and yet had never even heard of the trade journals in these crafts. These have contained for many years the opinions of these workers upon every issue that enters into their relation to the employers. Cigar makers and garment workers are thought to rank lower in the scale, yet no one can look through a batch of their trade organs without a wholly new conception of the movements there represented. As religious bodies, political parties, and business interests have their own press for propaganda, so that part of the labor world, from which the chief industrial resistance comes, has created an extensive periodical literature far abler than is commonly believed. In this literature they discuss not only the conditions under which they work, — hours, wages, machinery, strikes, trade unions, — they also discuss every phase of the competitive régime under which the industrial struggle for existence goes on. From his employers and those who think with them, the workman hears the defence of this competitive struggle. He is told that under it men find their place according to their merit. "Talent and efficiency get their reward, mediocrity sinks to its proper level." He is told that in all wealth-making three factors are essential, land, labor, and capital, or, by more recent refinement, "natural opportunity, labor, and directing intelligence." Each, according to the service it renders, receives its portion of the product: land its rent, labor its wage, and organizing management its profits. He is assured that this triune relation has something of the sanctity of a divine decree, or at least the authority

of a natural law. Given a reign of "free contract," and a proper regard for competition, and industrially the best possible world is at hand, especially for the wage earner. The forces of distribution give him an ever increasing part of the product, while capital secures a relatively diminishing portion. This is the cheerful formula.

Meantime the victim of this instruction is busy with his own observations. He notes that the capitalist class enlarges its expenditure at a quite dizzying pace. The home, the equipage, the club, the sports and recreation, expand each year into more lavish and prodigal form. It is very apparent that dollar for dollar the interest on capital has fallen from a high to a low figure. It is apparent that dollar for dollar profits have in the majority of businesses also fallen, but the belectured wage earner sees that this jocund formula is modified not a little by the simple fact that the capitalist, during this fall in profits and interest, may somehow have doubled and redoubled his thrifty gains. If one possess four or five times more capital, his income swells though the rate of interest and profit falls. The laborer is not, however, left alone with his doubts. The world is full of very wise people, who tell him with great frankness that labor does not in any sense get its fair share. They tell him that through the manipulating of a thousand chartered privileges, labor is defrauded of a formidable portion of its product. There are no abler economists than dozens who make this declaration.

As for the competitive wage system with its "free contract," a troop of eminent men denounce it in

unmeasured terms. They denounce it economically, because of its wastefulness through unnecessary duplication of rival plants, with the orgy of advertising which this rivalry occasions. They denounce it morally with even more confident disapproval. They see in it the teeming source of the self-seeking which delights to take every advantage of another's weakness or ignorance, to "best" him in the bargain. They see in it the chief stimulator of the universal hunger for quick riches which spreads among us the methods and the spirit of the gambler. They charge it with setting such a premium upon mere sharpness and cunning that this type of success becomes the attractive idol for general worship.

It is easy to convict these charges of exaggeration in the sense that they ignore the positive and serviceable side of competition. It is not easy to deny that they carry with them a disquieting truth. It is upon this, and not upon the shaded qualifications, that the disaffected workmen seize. The speculative portions of the labor press have become the receptacle of the most accusing criticism against the business world as now managed — a criticism drawn not from the ranks of labor, but from the ranks of those who possess as much enlightenment as modern culture and opportunity usually give.

Few events during recent years have more significance than the growing popular sympathy with labor unions in these struggles, especially their struggles with semi-public corporations. This sympathy has had an almost universal expression in the recent anthracite coal strike. But for the unhappy fatalities of personal violence that break out in the later despair-

ing days of the strike, this public sympathy would become irresistible. The wholesome popular instinct for law and order is swift to react against any excess of ruffianly attack upon persons and property. The strike breaks when this deviltry becomes unmanageable. At this point every strong current of general sympathy deserts the strikers. Even for them it is better that it should be so, for to win by lawlessness would bring weakness and not strength to labor.

This fact carries in it, however, tragedy and pathos alike. Labor leaders have learned that they cannot and ought not to succeed by personal savagery against property or persons. I have never heard more honest and passionate pleading for law and order than from trade-union officials addressing their own men in time of strike. At such a moment John Mitchell said to his miners: "If you want to spoil your own cause and lose every sacrifice you have made for yourselves and your families, give way to your temper and commit some violence. Just a few outbreaks like this and the public good-will, to which we must look in last resort, will fail us and we shall deserve to lose it." These words were not spoken for outside use, but to his own men in council. Nor are they exceptional among the more disciplined leaders in this country. Yet what, meantime, do these leaders and their fellows also know? They know that many of these corporations against which their fight is carried on have been more dangerously lawless than can be any crude act which their own members are likely to commit. They know this because scores of the best-known men in the United States have told them so. They have read it in half the

great papers, in books, in economic studies, and hundreds of times have laid these opinions before their members in the labor press. Dr. Gladden, lecturing this year before Yale students, speaks in these words of the partnership between the politician and the consenting managers of certain corporations: <sup>1</sup>—

“There is no man in any prison in this country who has done a hundredth part as much to make society impossible as has been done by any one of half a dozen great political leaders. The man who by the corrupt use of money manipulates caucuses and conventions, and debauches candidates and voters, thus poisoning at their sources the streams of political power, is the most dangerous man in society to-day, albeit his guilt is shared by those managers of great corporations who furnish him with corruption funds. If our notions of justice were clearer, such men would not be abroad in society. Compared with the destructive influence of such men, how harmless are most of the criminals shut up in our prisons.”

Which is worse, to slug a fellow-workman or to purchase some immunity for a corporation by paying large sums to the local political “boss,” knowing well what this means for lawless and debasing effect at the very heart of our political life? This is but a single form that this corporate lawlessness takes on, and it would be very inane to infer that this greater wrong justifies the lesser wrong of the trade union. The two wrongs are brought together to show the kind of bitterness which thousands of the trade unionists are coming to feel when they are held so rigidly to law and order, while these greater fellow-criminals escape.

<sup>1</sup> “Social Salvation,” p. 105.

Another form of unfairness that is still less excusable is the popular explanation of the cause and continuance of many labor troubles. We are gravely assured that it is the "labor agitator" — the "walking-delegate." In half the papers of the country this sorry illusion gets repeated from year to year, until it is believed.

I met a little girl much agitated, in Pullman, after the great strike there. I asked her what the strike was about. She answered, "Oh, the workmen wanted to have their rents put up, and Mr. Pullman wouldn't do it." There is nothing funnier in this child's exposition than in that generalization under which the walking-delegate is naively written down as the cause of strikes. For trade unionism at large in the United States, the walking-delegate represents the opinion and will of his union more closely than most congressmen represent the opinion and will of their constituents.

We are sufficiently reminded that our best men will not go into the smaller politics. It is at least as true that the best labor men do not always get prominent positions in the unions, and essentially for the same reason. The kind of gift that is indispensable — fluent speech, for example — to active, stirring leadership is oftener found among men of lighter weight. On the other hand, there are no cooler or steadier heads in the labor movement than many of those who now control the unions in this country.

But the ends of capitalistic politics are in no way more admirably served, than by fixing the cause of these wasteful and annoying troubles definitely upon obnoxious individuals. During one of our severest



coal strikes, in which the public showed much sympathy with the miners, an editorial appeared in one of our best papers, saying that the causes were very obscure, that more light was needed for fair judgment. I showed this to an operator in the thick of the fight, urging that the public have a fuller account of the issues in dispute. He replied that there were no issues, "It's all the work of two or three labor fakirs who want to live off our men." "What makes me mad," he added, "is that I saw the manager of that paper and gave him the facts, and now the damned fool must talk about obscure causes and the need of light."

The leisure of a few evenings spent with the files of a dozen of our better labor papers will leave no doubt in the mind of any candid reader that all these unfair strictures against the unions produce most regrettable effects. They are interpreted to mean that the critics of the labor movement are wilfully ignorant of its chief purposes, or deliberately malicious in characterizing its efforts.

The labor movement rests on the assumption that the production and distribution of wealth, as now managed, ought to be and can be so far changed, as to give the laborer more power in deciding the terms under which he works. It is because increasing numbers of the wage earners are becoming convinced upon this point that society is afflicted with an almost unbroken series of costly labor disputes. This warfare excites caustic comments from the well-to-do, as if it were the deliberate perversity of churlish men.

Yet in a long and embittered strike no one bears so

heavy a burden as the striker and his family. There is no more poignant tragedy than the freely accepted suffering which thousands of fathers and mothers will undergo during the wasting months of a strike. With children to feed, these parents know all that it means to have every cent of income stopped for an indefinite future. They know that the little luxuries must disappear, that the petty saving must be quickly spent, and a plague of debts at once begin. They know all this, not as a curious observation, but as grievous human experience. They know it, and yet freely choose to suffer every sacrifice that the event carries with it.

We are told by their critics that they would not commit such follies but for the exercise of tyranny and compulsion. Yes, the trade union exercises the tyranny and compulsion of a majority vote as we do generally in our form of government. The other sagacious charge, that they are duped into the hardships of a strike by their own officials, is generally so far from the fact that the officials know better than all others that their own pay is likely to stop in a prolonged dispute, and if it fail, their prestige is at an end. It is the clear knowledge of this fact which leads trade-union officials every year to check hundreds of strikes, of which the public knows nothing. What is brought to the public ear is the most flagrant abuses of trade-union activity. Especially in cities that are politically corrupt, trade-union officials too often take on the local color. They know and practise every trick from which the common municipal life suffers.

The dishonest trade-union official, the mere talker, the fakir proper — these are all a part of the heavy

burden that organized labor has to bear. It knows these men better than the public knows them, knows their weaknesses often better than the employer knows them. I once thought myself doing a service to a trade union, by telling some trustworthy members that their leader was in the pay of an association of employers. They had bought him for the purpose of "keeping the union quiet." I found that the strong men in the union were perfectly familiar with the fact, but it was more than three years before they could rid themselves of this man.

The "cause" yet means so much to them that hard-worked men with meagre income will give time and strength and money, not spasmodically, but year after year, in order that their group welfare may not suffer. The sacrifices are great, and they are unremitting. The common fund which it has required years to gather, is swept away in the strike of a few weeks. Money that is destined for burial or sick benefit often goes with the rest.

Do multitudes of men continue to load themselves with these heavy encumbrances, except for reasons that in their minds bear some relation to the sacrifices involved? The struggle is as widespread as it is persistent. Without exception this struggle assumes that the present competitive wage system does not bring justice to labor. The revolt of the strike, the friction, the angry pressure of organized labor, stand for a protest against this system. The mass of labor disturbances is the measure of dissatisfaction with it.

Now it happens that our society is full of extremely influential persons who say point-blank that labor's

protest is in the main a righteous one that should prevail. This sympathetic assent adds, year by year, new power to the labor and socialistic movement. The workman no longer reads in his own papers merely the opinions of his mates, he reads there the opinions of so many of the world's intellectual leaders, that he naturally comes to believe that the highest and most disinterested talent is on his side in the struggle.<sup>1</sup>

My attention was first called to the real character of this influence by the use to which German labor papers put many of the leading writers in that country. The philosopher F. A. Lange wrote his epoch-making book on the labor question in the days when social democracy in Germany was in the first ferment of political organization. The moral weakness of the competitive system, the nature of the industrial struggle for existence, the defeat of higher ideal values in this scramble for private gain, never at that time had been told with such searching power as by this noble scholar. German workingmen were among the first to welcome it. They lectured upon it, wrote about it, and reproduced it in their literature. "Here, at last," they said, "is a university teacher in great vogue, who understands what our struggle means and has the courage to utter it."

From this volume ("Die Arbeiter Frage") the more thoughtful socialists were led to Professor Lange's greater work, "The History of Materialism," in which they found a mine of critical material. The disci-

<sup>1</sup> The mass of laborers even in trade unions are not habitual readers, but these thoughts in the speeches of their fellows or in conversation with those who do read, become a part of their life.

plined interest which Lange always took in economic studies, heightens his value for their uses. This more academic study also bristles with barbed paragraphs against the present industrial régime. In the chapter on "Political Economy and Dogmatic Egoism" the author analyzes the prevailing apologies for the struggle for existence as it appears in modern business. He finds in it a deification of self-interest that stands in deadly enmity with ethical idealism.

He says: "We may show a hundred times that with the success of speculation and great capitalists the position of everybody else, step by step, improves; but so long as it is true that with every step of this improvement the difference in the position of individuals and in the means for further advancement also grows, so long will each step of this movement lead toward a turning-point where the wealth and power of individuals break down all the barriers of law and morals, and a degraded proletariat serves as a football to the passions of the few, until at last everything ends in a social earthquake which swallows up the artificial edifice of one-sided and selfish interests. . . . The state becomes venal. The hopelessly poor will just as easily hate the law as the over-rich despise it. Sparta perished when the whole land of the country belonged to a hundred families; Rome when a proletariat of millions stood opposed to a few thousands of proprietors, whose resources were so enormous that Crassus considered no one rich who could not maintain an army at his own expense. . . . In mediæval Italy also popular freedom was lost through a moneyed oligarchy and a

proletariat. . . . It is characteristic that in Florence the richest banker finally became an unlimited despot, and that contemporaneously in Genoa the Bank of St. George in a measure absorbed the state. ”

He opens his chapter on Christianity and Enlightenment in these words: “The present state of things has been frequently compared with that of the ancient world before its dissolution, and it cannot be denied that significant analogies present themselves. We have the immoderate growth of riches, we have the proletariat, we have the decay of morals and religion; the present forms of government all have their existence threatened, and the belief in a coming general and mighty revolution is widely spread and deeply rooted.”

As the name of the musician Wagner rose in distinction, the socialist did not forget to rifle his “Kunst und die Revolution” for comforting opinions. “Art and the Revolution” is one fierce anathema. That the laborers should rise against commercialism is the one sign to this “poet-musician” that they have self-respect and intelligence. “This hatred,” he says, “springs from a noble instinct for a dignified joy in life; from the passion to rise from drudgery to art, from slavery to free humanity.” It is passages like these that gave Wagner the title, “The Karl Marx of poetry and music.”

From the weighty books of Dr. Schaeffle they took very early such utterances as these: “The unlimited sway of capitalism offers a widespread and fruitful field for the growth of immoral instincts,” “The factory system has come with its merciless exploitation of wage labor.”

During a later visit to Germany, I came to know a socialist workingman with whom I often argued about the rights and wrongs of the "present system." When the discussion once turned upon a question of authority and opinion, he took from his desk a scrap-book filled with clippings from German labor papers. These were passages condemning the industrial system as it now exists. With every degree of vehemence, the writers declared that labor was unjustly treated; that the wage system had much in it common with slavery; that capitalism was full of intolerable tyrannies. I do not say these opinions were either wise or true. I use them to show how surely they brought this mechanic to feel that his own views were justified, and had the approval of the masters of thought. His authorities were not merely the mordant cynicism of Heine or the rhymed hatred of Freiligrath. He had the censure he wanted from half the German economists. He had made excerpts from the first of German historians, like the following from Mommsen.

"Riches and misery in close league drove the Italians out of Italy and filled the peninsula partly with swarms of slaves, partly with awful silence. It is a terrible picture, but not one peculiar to Italy; whenever the government of capitalists in a slave state has fully developed itself, it has desolated God's fair world in the same way. . . . All the arrant sins that capital has been guilty of against nation and civilization in the modern world remain as far inferior to the abomination of the ancient capitalist states as the free man, be he ever so poor, remains superior to the slave; and not until the dragon seed

of North America ripens will the world have again similar fruits to reap." <sup>1</sup>

He had cut out the views of Tolstoi, of Ibsen, of Ruskin, of Carlyle. He turned upon me in triumph, saying: "If it is a question of opinion about our cursed society, all the men who think great thoughts, and dare to utter them, are with us. They all call it rotten, they despise capitalism, the politicians, and the lawyers that are its hirelings."

Few will be so unfair as to deny that this artisan got his impressions as honestly as impressions come to most of us. It will be admitted that his feelings were stoutly reënforced by the conviction that these men of learning were on his side. He was not likely to make nice discrimination as to the relation of these extracts to the author's completer thought. This discrimination is rare even among the educated. The poets, thinkers, scholars, clothed this saw-filer's rougher thought in the purple of their own distinction. They brought to him the mysterious sanction of those whom we all recognize as teachers. What he and his kind could only feel or poorly utter, they gave back to him in splendid or rugged phrases that redoubled their force and made them sacred to his imagination. If, then, this incident be multiplied million-fold, we get new insight into one source of unrest with the present social order.

My experience with this German workingman led

<sup>1</sup> This man was proud of having learned French enough to read Victor Hugo. He had taken from "Les Misérables" these radical words, "Universaliser la propriété (ce qui est le contraire de l'abolir) en supprimant le parasitisme social, c'est à dire arriver à ce but: tout homme propriétaire et aucun homme maître, voilà pour moi la véritable économie sociale et politique."



me to collect several hundred copies of European labor journals, popular pamphlets, and leaflets. They present a kind of anthology filled with telling quotations against the economic organization of society. A corresponding collection of our own labor literature in 1890 showed less systematic use of such criticisms, but this difference has now wholly disappeared. Even our more special trade organs are not less alert to welcome imposing authorities. Emerson, as in the following passage, is put to constant use: "As long as our civilization is one of property, of fences, of exclusiveness, it will be mocked by delusions. Our riches will leave us sick, there will be bitterness in our laughter, and our wine will burn our mouth. Only that good profits which we can taste with all doors open and which serves all men." Matthew Arnold's famous phrase does perpetual service, "Our present social inequality materializes the upper class, vulgarizes the middle class, and brutalizes the lower class." Even from the elder Arnold, I find these drastic words gleefully quoted: "It seems to me that people are not aware of the monstrous state of society, absolutely without a parallel in the history of the world, with a population poor, miserable, and degraded in body and mind, as if they were slaves, and yet called freemen. And the hopes entertained by many, of the effects to be wrought by new churches and schools, while the social evils of their conditions are left uncorrected, appear to me utterly wild."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I first saw in a French socialist paper this passage from that delightful writer, Professor Secrétan: —

"La prolongation du régime actuel est impossible. Pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de mettre en présence quelques-uns des éléments qui le

To say that four of Ruskin's volumes have been many times reprinted in labor journals is hardly too strong a statement. The following is a favorite passage, "To call the confused wreck of social order and life brought about by malicious collision and competition an arrangement of Providence, is quite one of the most insolent and wicked ways in which it is possible to take the name of God in vain."

The more recent developments of economic literature have put terrible weapons into the hands of the discontented. Thorold Rogers, former Oxford economist and a politician of large experience, tells the "dispossessed classes" why written political economy has been so solicitous to defend the vested rights of actual society. His two volumes of published lectures furnish twenty instances like the following: "In a vague way they (the laborers) are under the impression that the greater part of the misery which they see is the direct product of the laws, enacted and maintained in the interest of particular classes. *And on the whole they are in the right.*"<sup>1</sup>

This passage from the economist Professor Smart of Glasgow furnishes food for very pungent comments in a labor paper:—

"But when machinery is replacing man and doing the heavy work of industry, it is time to get rid of

constituent: les produits du travail dévolus exclusivement à l'entrepreneur capitaliste, l'immense majorité des ouvriers dépourvus de toute garantie d'existence, de toute sécurité pour l'avenir, vivant au jour le jour d'un salaire juste suffisant pour ne pas mourir de faim; puis en face de ce contraste économique, le suffrage universel chargé d'en assurer l'observation, enfin le salariat condamné dans la conscience des salariés, et la guerre sociale en permanence." (Charles Secrétan: *La Civilisation et la Croyance.*)

<sup>1</sup> The italics are my own.

that ancient prejudice that man must work ten hours a day to keep the world up to the level of the comfort it has attained. Possibly, if we clear our minds of cant, we may see that the reason why we still wish the laborer to work ten hours a day is that we, the comfortable classes, may go on receiving the lion's share of the wealth these machines, iron and human, are turning out."

Professor Cairnes has a great name among economists for ability and for caution. What, then, are thoughtful workingmen to think of words like these from his "Leading Principles"? I have seen them quoted three times in labor papers.<sup>1</sup>

"Unequal as is the distribution of wealth already in this country, the tendency of industrial progress — on the supposition that the present separation between industrial classes is maintained — is toward an inequality greater still. The rich will be growing richer; and the poor, at least relatively, poorer. It seems to me, apart altogether from the question of the laborer's interest, that these are not conditions which furnish a solid basis for a progressive social state; but, having regard to that interest, I think the considerations adduced show that the first and indispensable step toward any serious amendment of the laborer's lot is that he should be, in one way or other, lifted out of the groove in which he at present works, and placed in a position compatible with his becoming a sharer in equal proportion with others in the general advantages arising from industrial progress."

After Dr. Spahr published his volume on "The

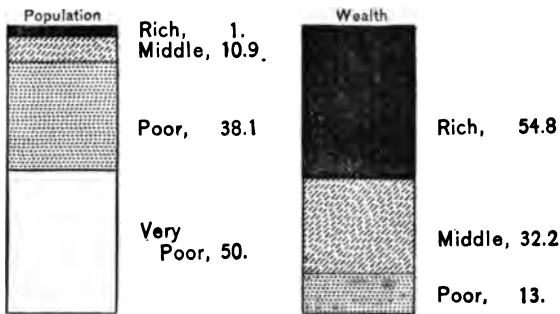
<sup>1</sup> American edition, p. 285. Let the reader curious to follow Cairnes's opinion read the entire fifth chapter, Part II.

Present Distribution of Wealth in the United States," I cut from the organ of the *American Federation of Labor* the following table:—

SPAHR'S TABLE OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN THE UNITED STATES

CLASS	FAMILIES	PER CENT	AVERAGE WEALTH	AGGREGATE WEALTH	PER CENT
Rich	125,000	1.0	\$263,040	\$32,880,000,000	54.8
Middle	1,362,500	10.9	14,180	19,320,000,000	32.2
Poor	4,762,500	38.1	1,639	7,800,000,000	13.0
Very Poor	6,250,000	50.0			
Total	13,500,000	100.0	\$4,800	\$60,000,000,000	100.0

DIAGRAMS SHOWING, BY PERCENTAGES, THE POPULATION AND WEALTH DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES ACCORDING TO SPAHR'S TABLES



A little later, I listened to a popular exposition of this table enlarged upon a blackboard before a labor audience. "The thin dark line of population (one per cent)," said the speaker, "own more wealth than the remaining ninety-nine per cent of us. The poor,

though they are eighty-eight per cent, own but thirteen per cent of the wealth, and yet we are expected to approve a system which has so little to say for itself as that."

I do not personally believe that trustworthy statistical sources exist that enable one to make tables of this character that are more than guesses at the fact. Yet if it were known what the possessions of the one hundred and twenty-six thousand richest families in the United States are, the result would be all that any agitator need ask. I reproduce the table here, to show how words like those of Professors Cairnes, Rogers, and Smart can be used to give authoritative support to extreme and indefensible inequalities. In the instance of the speaker just quoted, he held in his hand a trade-union sheet from which he read the passage from Professor Cairnes.

J. S. Mill furnishes so many extracts dear to the agitators that he appears to be still one of their constant contributors. What is the dissatisfied wage earner to think of this passage?

"The form of association, however, which, if mankind continues to improve, must be expected in the end to predominate, is not that which can exist between a capitalist as chief and work-people without a voice in the management, but the association of the laborers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers selected and removable by themselves."<sup>1</sup>

A man of splendid sobriety like Mill, with the best economic training of his day, subjects the cur-

<sup>1</sup> People's edition, p. 465.

rent communistic schemes to minute and fearless criticism. No weakness or danger in these collectivist hopes escapes him. He sees that at bottom it is all a question of securing and preserving the maximum of individual liberty. He will have nothing that puts this liberty in jeopardy, but he objects to society as now constituted because this real freedom of the individual for the majority of men appears to him in imminent danger. He writes his conclusion in these words, "Between communism with all its chances, and the present state of society with all its sufferings and injustices, . . . all the difficulties great or small of communism would be but as dust in the balance."

These words of Mill are a direct sanction to a very large part of what socialists claim in the way of economic reorganization. The illustrious author asks no less than the upsetting of almost every separate idol of the conventional business man's piety. What proposal could be more radical than to make the laborer an actual partner, to democratize industry, in a word, as we are trying to democratize politics? Another passage from his autobiography has the same frequent use:—

"Our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond democracy, and would class us decidedly under the general name of socialists. . . . The social problem of the future we considered to be how to unite the greatest liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all the benefits of combined labor."

One would not expect to find John Fiske in such company, but I have twice heard him quoted by

socialist speakers, and once seen these words printed: "Inherited predatory tendencies of men to seize upon other people's labor is still very strong, and while we have nothing more to fear from kings, we may yet have trouble enough from commercial monopolies and favored industries marching to the polls their hosts of bribed retainers."

Lowell, Frederic Harrison, John Morley, William Morris, Howells, each furnishes some stinging paragraph against the present social order. One of our foremost economists, Professor Henry C. Adams, is gratefully referred to by a labor editor as writing the following: "The laborer of to-day, as compared to the non-laboring classes, holds a relatively inferior position to that maintained in former times. The laborer interprets this to mean that the principle of distribution which modern society has adopted is unfair to him."

The dignitaries of the church furnish many a text for labor and socialist agitation. These words are taken from Canon Barnett of Toynbee Hall:—

"The policies which occupy the leaders' minds, the interests of business, the theologies, the fashions, are but webs woven in the trees while the storm is rising in the distance. Sounds of the storm are already in the air, a murmuring among those who have not enough, puffs of boasting from those who have too much, and a muttering from those who are angry because while some are drunken others are starving. The social question is rising for solution, and, though for a moment it is forgotten, it will sweep to the front and put aside as cobwebs the 'deep' concerns of leaders and teachers."

With one exception I have found, among the clergy, the learned Bishop of Durham oftenest in their sheets. The exception is Pope Leo XIII. These words from the famous encyclical of 1891 have been used in hundreds of labor organs, and repeated before innumerable labor audiences:—

“The momentous seriousness of the present state of things just now fills every mind with painful apprehensions; wise men discuss it, practical men propose schemes; popular meetings, legislatures, and sovereign princes all are occupied with it, and there is nothing which has a deeper hold on public attention. . . . The concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals, so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the masses a yoke little better than slavery.”

We should make very paltry estimate of this new energy added to the labor movement, if we tested this sympathetic assent by its agreement upon mere matters of material or administrative changes. Of incomparably more power than this is the purely moral force which these great names lend to the laborers' struggle.<sup>1</sup>

These citations are literally not a tenth of those

<sup>1</sup> Who among living writers has shown a subtler insight into the tendencies of his time than De Vogüé? In a masterly essay, “L'heure Présente,” he quotes Prince Carolath as saying that in Germany “the socialists have seduced innumerable idealists.” Though this is to De Vogüé *la folie rationnelle*, he yet adds: “Je veux seulement marquer le fait d'où découle tout entière sa nouvelle puissance: le socialisme a capté le courant d'idéalisme qui se reformait partout durant ces mêmes années. Une conspiration tacite, inconsciente, s'est nouée entre des gens que tout sépare, depuis le prolétaire qui se rue aveuglément contre la machine sociale jusqu'aux conducteurs patentes de cette machine; la conspiration commence à la haine d'en bas et finit à la vague pitié d'en haut.”



which I have noted in the printed record of social revolt. They are a scattered few taken from the labor and socialist papers of five countries. They represent opinions about present society which seem to range these eminent authors on the side of the agitators. No socialist recalcitrant uses more embittered speech against the fenced mass of vested prerogatives than these same teachers. Not only poets, artists, and men of letters, but savants from every field enter this list. They condemn a society that breeds and maintains such universal and revolting inequalities.

The question I wish to submit is this: what is the probable, yes, inevitable effect, upon the mind of the average wage earner who constantly reads or hears such sustaining sentiments from our most inspiring men? Can it have any result except to deepen every faith in him that his hope for social reconstruction has the sanction of the best men of the time? Their testimony appears to him, first of all, free from the bias of self-interest. It is the testimony of men of genius and insight, it persuades him, therefore, with redoubled force.