

## CHAPTER IX

### TRANSITION AND FULFILMENT

UPON all the heterogeneous but coalescing units of the social mass the group of magnates imposes its collective will. There are still disputes and rivalries among the rulers, and may ever be; but these are for the most part minor differences, to be settled among themselves and their mutual arbitrators, the judges, and qualify in no way the facts of a recognized community of interests and of collective purposes and plans. Whatever the individual rivalries, they result in no deliberate betrayal of class interest; practically every magnate maintains, at all hazards, his fidelity to the group. A sense of group honor may in most instances prompt this fidelity, but a lively sense of apprehension is also influential. For should any magnate become possessed of heretical notions, and thereupon make common cause with the public against a particular interest of his class, he would by that act banish himself from communion with his fellows, and jeopard his possessions to the last dime. There is, as every one knows, a definite seigniorial resolve that no strike of workmen on transportation lines or in public utilities shall succeed; and when such a strike occurs, every resource of the

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magnate class is brought to bear to resist and defeat it. Often there are attendant circumstances which might tempt a rival, for his own interests, to interfere on behalf of the workers. But the thing is never done; and he who should do it would declass himself as effectually as a mediæval nobleman would have done by enlisting in a peasants' rebellion. There is, furthermore, a definite seigniorial determination to withstand to the utmost the agitation for public ownership; every magnate, with his intellectual retainers behind him, makes of himself a modern Stonewall Jackson in resistance to this movement. Here, again, industrial rivalry might at times prompt a desertion to the public cause. But there is no such case; here, as elsewhere, the ruling class maintains its integrity. As is known, great strikes are sometimes won; and occasionally, in isolated places, an advance is made in the direction of public ownership. But neither is accomplished through desertions in the seigniorial group, and the instances prove only that its rule has not yet become supreme.

### I

The new Feudalism will be but an orderly outgrowth of present tendencies and conditions. All societies evolve naturally out of their predecessors. In sociology, as in biology, there is no cell without a parent cell. The society of each generation develops a multitude of spontaneous and acquired variations, and out of these, by a blending process of natural and conscious selection, the succeeding society is evolved.

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The new order will differ in no important respects from the present, except in the completer development of its more salient features. The visitor from another planet who had known the old and should see the new would note but few changes. *Alter et idem* — another yet the same — he would say. From magnate to baron, from workman to villein, from publicist to court agent and retainer, will be changes of state and function so slight as to elude all but the keenest eyes.

An increased power, a more concentrated control, will be seen. But these have their limitations, which must not be disregarded. A sense of the latent strength of democracy will restrain the full exercise of baronial powers, and a growing sense of ethics will guide baronial activities somewhat toward the channels of social betterment. For democracy will endure, in spite of the new order. "Like death," said Disraeli, "it gives back nothing." Something of its substance it gives back, it must be confessed; but of its outer forms it yields nothing, and thus it retains the potentiality of exerting its will in whatever direction it may see fit. And this fact, though now but feebly recognized, will be better understood as time runs on, and the barons will bear in mind the limit of popular patience. It is an elastic limit, of a truth; for the mass of mankind are more ready to endure known ills than to fly to others that they know not. It is a limit which, to be heeded, needs only to be carefully studied. Macaulay's famous dictum, that the privileged classes, when their rule is threatened, always bring about their own ruin by making further

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exactions, is likely, in this case, to prove untrue. A wiser forethought begins to prevail among the autocrats of to-day — a forethought destined to grow and expand and to prove of inestimable value when bequeathed to their successors. Our nobility will thus temper their exactions to an endurable limit; and they will distribute benefits to a degree that makes a tolerant, if not a satisfied, people. They may even make a working principle of Bentham's maxim, and after, of course, appropriating the first and choicest fruits of industry to themselves, may seek to promote the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." For therein will lie their greater security.

The Positivists, in their prediction of social changes, give us the phrase, "the moralization of capital," and some of the more hopeful theologians, not to be outdone, have prophesied "the Christianization of capital." So far there is not much to be said confirmatory of either expectation. Yet it is not to be denied that the faint stirrings of an ethical sense are observable among the men of millions, and that the principle of the "trusteeship of great wealth" has won a number of adherents. The enormous benefactions for social purposes, the construction of "model workshops" and "model villages," though in many cases prompted by self-interest and in others by a love of ostentation, are at least sometimes due to a new sense of social responsibility. A duty to society has been apprehended, and these are its first fruits. It is a duty, true enough, which is but dimly seen and imperfectly fulfilled. The greater part of these benefactions, as has already been pointed out, is

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directed to purposes which have but a slight or indirect bearing upon the relief of social distress, the restraint of injustice, or the mitigation of remediable hardships. The giving is even often economically false, and if carried to an extreme would prove disastrous to the community; for in many cases it is a transmutation of wealth from a status of active capital, wherein it makes possible a greater diffusion of comfort, to a status of comparative sterility. But, though often mistaken as is the conception and futile the fulfilment of this duty, the fact that it is apprehended at all is one of considerable importance, and one that carries the promise of baronial security in the days to come.

### II

Bondage to the land was the basis of villeinage in the old régime; bondage to the job will be the basis of villeinage in the new. The new régime, absolving itself from all general responsibility to its workers, extends a measure of protection, solely as an act of grace, only to those who are faithful and obedient; and it holds the entire mass of its employed underlings to the terms of day-by-day service. The growth of industries has overshadowed the importance of agriculture, which is ever being pushed back into the West and into other and remote countries; and the new order finds its larger interests and its greater measure of control in the workshops rather than on the farms. The oil wells, the mines, the grain fields, the forests, and the great thoroughfares of the land are its ultimate sources of revenue; but its strong-

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holds are in the cities. It is in these centres of activity, with their warehouses, where the harvests are hoarded; their workshops, where the metals and woods are fashioned into articles of use; their great distributing houses; their exchanges; their enormously valuable franchises to be had for the asking or the seizing, and their pressure of population, which forces an hourly increase in the exorbitant value of land, that the new Feudalism finds the field best adapted for its main operations.

Bondage to the job will be the basis of the new villeinage. The wage-system will endure, for it is a simpler and more effective means of determining the baron's volume of profits than were the "boon-works," the "week-works," and the *corvées* of old. But with increasing concentration on the one hand, and the fiercer competition for employment on the other, the secured job will become the laborer's fortress, which he will hardly dare to evacuate. The hope of bettering his condition by surrendering one place in the expectation of getting another will be qualified by a restraining prudence. He will no longer trust his individual strength, but when he protests against ill conditions, or, in the last resort, strikes, it will be only in company with a formidable host of his fellows. And even the collective assertion of his demands will be restrained more and more as he considers the constantly recurring failures of his efforts. Moreover, concentration gives opportunity for an almost indefinite extension of the black-list: a person of offensive activity may be denied work in every feudal shop and on every feudal farm from

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one end of the country to the other. He will be a hardy and reckless industrial villein indeed who will dare incur the enmity of the Duke of the Oil Trust when he knows that his actions will be promptly communicated to the banded autocracy of dukes, earls, and marquises of the steel, coal, iron, window glass, lumber, and traffic industries.

There were three under-classes in the old Feudalism, — free tenants, villeins, and cotters. The number of tenants on the farms has approximately doubled in the last twenty years, while in the great cities nearly the whole population are tenants. The cotters, with their little huts and small holdings in isolated places about the margin of cultivation, are also in process of restoration. The villeins are an already existent class, more numerous proportionately than ever before, though the exact status of their villeinage is yet to be fixed. But modern society is characterized by complexities unknown in any of its predecessors, and the specialization of functions requires a greater number of subordinate classes. It is a difficult task properly to differentiate them. They shade off almost imperceptibly into one another; and the dynamic processes of modern industry often hurl, in one mighty convulsion, great bodies of individuals from a higher to a lower class, blurring or obscuring the lines of demarcation. Nevertheless, to take a figure from geology, these convulsions become less and less frequent as the substratum of industrial processes becomes more fixed and regular; the classes become more stable and show more distinct differences, and they will tend, under the new régime, to

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the formal institution of graded caste. At the bottom are the wastrels, at the top the barons; and the gradation, when the new régime shall have become fully developed, whole and perfect in its parts, will be about as follows:—

I. The barons, graded on the basis of possessions.

II. The court agents and retainers.

III. The workers in pure and applied science, artists and physicians.

IV. The entrepreneurs, the managers of the great industries, transformed into a salaried class.

V. The foremen and superintendents. This class has heretofore been recruited largely from the skilled workers, but with the growth of technical education in schools and colleges, and the development of fixed caste, it is likely to become entirely differentiated.

VI. The villeins of the cities and towns, more or less regularly employed, who do skilled work and are partially protected by organization.

VII. The villeins of the cities and towns who do unskilled work and are unprotected by organization. They will comprise the laborers, domestics, and clerks.

VIII. The villeins of the manorial estates, of the great farms, the mines, and the forests.

IX. The small-unit farmers (land owning), the petty tradesmen, and manufacturers.

X. The subtenants on the manorial estates and great farms (corresponding to the class of "free tenants" in the old Feudalism).

XI. The cotters.

XII. The tramps, the occasionally employed, the unemployed — the wastrels of city and country.



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The principle of gradation is the only one that can properly be applied. It is the relative degree of comfort — material, moral, and intellectual — which each class directly contributes to the nobility. The wretches contribute least, and they are the lowest. The under-classes who do the hard work lay the basis of all wealth, but their contribution to the barons is indirect, and comes to its final goal through intermediate hands. The foremen and superintendents rightly hold a more elevated rank, and the entrepreneurs, who directly contribute most of the purely material comfort, will be found well up toward the top. Farther up in the social scale, partly from æsthetic and partly from utilitarian considerations, will be the scientists and artists. The new Feudalism, like most autocracies, will foster not only the arts, but also certain kinds of learning — particularly the kinds which are unlikely to disturb the minds of the multitude. A future Marsh or Cope or Le Conte will be liberally patronized and left free to discover what he will; and so, too, an Edison or a Marconi. Only they must not meddle with anything relating to social science. For obvious reasons, also, physicians will occupy a position of honor and comparative freedom under the new régime.

But higher yet is the rank of the court agents and retainers. This class will include the editors of “respectable” and “safe” newspapers, the pastors of “conservative” and “wealthy” churches, the professors and teachers in endowed colleges and schools, lawyers generally, and most judges and politicians. During the transition period there will be a gradual elimination of the more unserviceable of these persons,

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with the result that in the end this class will be largely transformed. The individual security of place and livelihood of its members will then depend on the harmony of their utterances and acts with the wishes of the great nobles. Theirs, in a sense, will be the most important function in the State — “to justify the ways of God [and the nobility] to man.” They will be the safeguards of the realm, the assuagers of popular suspicion and discontent. So long as they rightly fulfil their functions, their recompense will be generous ; but such of them as have not the tact or fidelity to do or say what is expected of them will be promptly forced into class XI or XII, or, in extreme cases, banished from all classes, to become the wretched pariahs of society. At times two divisions of this class will find life rather a burdensome travail. They are the judges and the politicians. Holding their places at once by popular election and by the grace of the barons, they will be fated to a constant see-saw of conflicting obligations. They must, in some measure, satisfy the demands of the multitude, and yet, on the other hand, they must obey the commands from above.

### III

Through all the various activities of these classes (except the wastrels and the cotters) our Benevolent Feudalism will carry on the Nation's work. The full measure of profit is its aim ; and having the substance of its desire, it shows a utilitarian scorn of the mummeries and ceremonials by which the overlordship of other days was formally acknowledged. The ancient

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ceremony of "homage," the swearing of personal fidelity to the lord, is relaxed into the mere beseeching of the foreman for work. Directness and efficacy characterize its methods. The wage-system, with its mechanical simplicity, continuing in force, there is an absence of the old exactions of special work. A mere altering of the wage-scale appropriates to the noble whatever share of the product he feels he may safely demand for himself. Thus "week-work," the three or four days' toil in each week which the villein had to give unrecompensed to the lord, and "boon-work," the several days of extra toil three or four times a year, will never be revived. Even the company store, the modern form of feudal exaction, will in time be given up, for at best it is but a clumsy and offensive makeshift, and defter and less irritating means are at hand for reaching the same result. There will hardly be a restoration of "relief," the payment of a year's dues on inheriting an allotment of land, or of "heriot," the payment of a valuable gift from the possessions of a deceased relative. Indeed, these tithes may not be worth the bother of collecting; for the villein's inheritance will probably be but moderate, as befits his state and the place which God and the nobility have ordained for him.

Practically all industry will be regulated in terms of wages, and the entrepreneurs, who will then have become the chief salaried officers of the nobles, will calculate to a hair the needful production for each year. Waste and other losses will thus be reduced to a minimum. A vast scheme of exact systematization will have taken the place of the old competitive

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chaos, and industry will be carried on as by clock-work. The workshops will be conducted practically as now. Only they will be very much larger, the individual and total output will be greater, the unit cost of production will be lessened. Wages and hours will for a time continue on something like the present level; but, despite the persistence of the unions, no considerable gains in behalf of labor are to be expected, except such as are freely given as acts of baronial grace and benevolence. The owners of all industry worth owning, the barons will laugh at threats of striking and boycotting. No competitor will be permitted to make capital out of the labor disputes of another. There may or may not be competitors. A gigantic merger of all interests, governed by a council of ten, may supplant the individual dukedoms and baronies in the different industries, or these may continue as now, the sovereign units of a federated whole. But in neither case can labor carry its point against them. Nevertheless, dissatisfaction must be guarded against as a possible menace to the régime. Wages and dividends will be nicely balanced with a watchful regard for the fostering of content; workshops and villages of yet more approved models than any of the present will be built, and a thousand Pelzers and Pullmans will arise. Old-age pensions, or at least the promise of them, will be extended to new groups, and by all possible means the lesson that protection and security are due only to faithfulness and obedience will be made plain to the entire villein class.

Gradually a change will take place in the aspirations and conduct of the younger generations. Here-

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tofore there has been at least some degree of freedom of choice in determining one's occupation, however much that freedom has been curtailed by actual economic conditions. But with the settling of industrial processes comes more and more constraint. The dream of the children of the farms to escape from their drudgery by migrating to the city, and from the stepping-stone of a clerkly place at three dollars a week to rise to affluence, will be given over, and they will follow the footsteps of their fathers. A like fixity of condition will be observed in the cities, and the sons of clerks and of mechanics and of day laborers will tend to accept their environment of birth and training and abide by it. It is a phenomenon observable in all countries where the economic pressure is severe, and it is yet more certain to obtain in feudal America.

### IV

The outlines of the present State loom but feebly through the intricate network of the new system. The nobles will have attained to complete power, and the motive and operation of government will have become simply the registering and administering of their collective will. And yet the State will continue very much as now, just as the form and name of the Roman Republic continued under Augustus. The present State machinery is admirably adapted for the subtle and extra-legal exertion of power by an autocracy; and while improvements to that end might unquestionably be made, the barons will hesitate to take action which will needlessly arouse popular suspicions.

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From petty constable to Supreme Court Justice the officials will understand, or be made to understand, the golden mean of their duties; and except for an occasional rascally Jacobin, whom it may for a time be difficult to suppress, they will be faithful and obey.

The manorial courts, with powers exercised by the local lords, will not, as a rule, be restored. Probably the "court baron," for determining tenantry and wage-questions, will be revived. It may even come as a natural outgrowth of the present conciliation boards, with a successor of the Committee of Thirty-six of the National Civic Federation as a sort of general court baron for the nation. But the "court leet," the manorial institution for punishing misdemeanors, wherein the baron holds his powers by special grant from the central authority of the State, we shall never know again. It is far simpler and will be less disturbing to the popular mind to leave in existence the present courts so long as the baron can dictate the general policy of justice.

Armed force will, of course, be employed to overawe the discontented and to quiet unnecessary turbulence. Unlike the armed forces of the old Feudalism, the nominal control will be that of the State; the soldiery will be regular, and not irregular. Not again will the barons risk the general indignation arising from the employment of Pinkertons and other private armies. The worker has unmistakably shown his preference, when he is to be subdued, for the militia and the Federal army. It is not an unreasonable attitude, and it is hardly to be doubted that it will be respected. The militia of our Benevolent Feudalism

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will be recruited, as now, mostly from the clerkly class ; and it will be officered largely by the sons and nephews of the barons. But its actions will be tempered by a saner policy. Governed by those who have most to fear from popular exasperation, it will show a finer restraint.

### V

Peace will be the main desideratum, and its cultivation will be the most honored science of the age. A happy blending of generosity and firmness will characterize all dealings with open discontent ; but the prevention of discontent will be the prior study, to which the intellect and the energies of the nobles and their legates will be ever bent. To that end the teachings of the schools and colleges, the sermons, the editorials, the stump orations, and even the plays at the theatres will be skilfully moulded ; and the questioning heart of the poor, which perpetually seeks some answer to the painful riddle of the earth, will meet with a multitude of mollifying responses. These will be : from the churches, that discontent is the fruit of atheism, and that religion alone is a solace for earthly woe ; from the colleges, that discontent is ignorant and irrational, since conditions have certainly bettered in the last one hundred years ; from the newspapers, that discontent is anarchy ; and from the stump orators that it is unpatriotic, since this nation is the greatest and most glorious that ever the sun shone upon. As of old, these reasons will for the time

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suffice; and against the possibility of recurrent questionings new apologetics will be skilfully formulated, to be put forth as occasion requires.

Crises will come, as in the life of all nations and societies; but these will be happily surmounted, and the régime will continue, the stronger for its trial. A crisis of some moment will follow upon the large displacements of labor soon to result from the shutting up of needless factories and the concentration of production in the larger workshops. Discontent will spread, and it will be fomented, to some extent, by agitation. But the agitation will be guarded in expression and action, and it will be relatively barren of result. For most ills there is somewhere a remedy, if only it can be discovered and made known. The disease of sedition is one whose every symptom and indication will be known by rote to our social pathologists of to-morrow, and the possible dangers of an epidemic will, in all cases, be provided against. In such a crisis as that following upon the displacement of labor a host of economists, preachers, and editors will be ready to show indisputably that the evolution taking place is for the best interests of all; that it follows a "natural and inevitable law"; that those who have been thrown out of work have only their own incompetency to blame; that all who really want work can get it, and that any interference with the prevailing régime will be sure to bring on a panic, which will only make matters worse. Hearing this, the multitude will hesitatingly acquiesce and thereupon subside; and though occasionally a radical journal or a radical



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agitator will counsel revolt, the mass will remain quiescent. Gradually, too, by one method or another, sometimes by the direct action of the nobility, the greater part of the displaced workers will find some means of getting bread, while those who cannot will be eliminated from the struggle and cease to be a potential factor for trouble. Crises of other kinds and from other causes will arise, only to be checkmated and overcome. What the barons will most dread will be the collective assertion of the villeins at the polls; but this, too, from experience, they will know to be something which, while dangerous, may yet be thwarted. By the putting forward of a hundred irrelevant issues they can hopelessly divide the voters at each election; or, that failing, there is always to be trusted as a last resort the cry of impending panic.

### VI

Gradually the various processes in the social life merge, like the confluents of some mighty Amazon, into a definite and confined stream of tendency. A more perfect, a better coördinated unity develops in the baronial class, and the measure of its control is heightened and extended to a golden mean which insures supremacy with peace. The under-classes settle in their appointed grooves, and the professional intermediaries definitely and openly assume their dual function of advisers to the barons and of interpreters to the people of the baronial will and ways. Laws, customs, the arts, — all the institutions and social forces, — change with the industrial transfor-

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mation, and attain a finer harmony with the actual facts of life. All except literature, be it said, for this has outdistanced its fellows in the great current and already reflects the conditions, the moods, and ideals of the society of to-morrow. Here, at least, the force of nature can no farther go, and no change is to be anticipated for the present. But the other institutions and social forces are gradually transformed, and when the full coalescence of all the factors is attained, our Benevolent Feudalism, without a shock, without so much variance as will enable any man to say, "It is here," passes to its ascendancy, and the millennium of peace and order begins.

Peace and stability it will maintain at all hazards; and the mass, remembering the chaos, the turmoil, the insecurity of the past, will bless its reign. Peace and stability will be its arguments of defence against all criticism, domestic or foreign. An observant visitor from some foreign State may pick a defect here and there; but the eloquent defender of the régime will answer: Look upon the tranquillity that everywhere prevails, and reflect upon the inquietude and anarchy of the past. The disturbances of labor have ceased, and sedition, though occasionally encountered, is easily thwarted and put down. The crudities and barbarities of other days have given way to ordered regularities. Efficiency—the faculty of getting things—is at last rewarded as it should be, for the efficient have inherited the earth and its fulness. The lowly, "whose happiness is greater and whose welfare is more thoroughly conserved

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when governed than when governing," as a twentieth-century philosopher said of them, are settled and happy in the state which reason and experience teach is their God-appointed lot. They are comfortable, too; and if the patriarchal ideal of a vine and fig tree for each is not yet attained, at least each has his rented patch in the country or his rented cell in a city building. Bread and the circus are freely given to the deserving, and as for the undeserving, they are merely reaping the rightful rewards of their contumacy and pride. Order reigns, each has his justly appointed share, and the State rests in security, "lapt in universal law."