

LABOUR V. CAPITAL.

THE great distinctive movement of the age, a movement beside which all other movements fade into insignificance, is the ever widening and intensifying struggle between Labour and Capital. Some say it should be called the struggle between Labour and Monopoly. Possibly that is what it ought to be, but that is not what it is. As a matter of fact, the workman strikes against his employer, who seldom has any monopoly at all.

Not only is this struggle ever widening and intensifying, but it is fast changing its whole character. Instead of being, as it originally was, a series of desultory disconnected risings of this man's employés, or of that trade or branch of trade, it is becoming a vast organized rising of Labour as Labour against Capital as Capital; a rising in which one trade helps another trade, one county another county, and even one nation another nation, and which is forcing Capitalists to form combinations on their side.

Every campaign is now more carefully thought out and planned, better organised and provisioned, wider extended, more prolonged, more bitter, and approaching ever nearer to armed insurrection and civil war. The Broken Hill and the Shearers' strikes in Australia, the Carnegie and Chicago strikes in America, and the Hull and Wales strikes in England are cases in point. The attitude of the upper classes, of the press that chiefly represents them, and of the economic authorities generally, is distinctly antagonistic to the workers' claims, or

to their actions (the only actions by which they can enforce their claims).

The Economist and the Statesman alike admit that the labourer's toil is long and his pay poor, but declare that the Government cannot help him. Some say that the remedy is in his own hand, as wages are a matter of free contract, and it is his own business to insist on better terms; which seems almost like a notice to him to strike, seeing that no one can be simple enough to suppose that the employer in these days of intense trade competition will grant more pay or exact fewer hours merely because the labourer asks for it, or thinks he ought to have it; others, again, say that it is the result of an iron law of nature for which there is no remedy, poverty being the necessary lot of the unfit and the superfluous in the struggle for existence; while others again declare that it is all the labourer's own fault for multiplying too fast, for being improvident, for this, that, and the other thing; but above all, for his mad folly in fighting against Capital, which they declare to be the friend and support of Labour, and to consist of the requisites of production, briefly expressed by the terms food and tools.

It is with the last of these declarations that I propose to deal.

Is Capital the friend and support of Labour? Does it consist of food and tools?

Words are but the arbitrary signs of ideas; they have no natural and inherent meaning; their meaning is determined solely by custom, the custom of those who habitually use them in daily life. But the question before us is not as to the meaning of a word, but as to the nature of a thing, the thing the quarrel is about, the thing that, rightly or wrongly, the disputants call Capital, and in the name of which the one party makes a claim and the other resists it; the thing which, under the name of Capital, rules the market, buys goods, hires

services, starts enterprise; which the State levies as taxes, which the rich lend and the poor borrow, which fetches interest; the thing, in short, which the striker and the locker-out, the employer and the employed, the producer and the consumer, the buyer and the seller, the borrower and the lender, the whole working world in short, without exception, recognises as Capital, and which the Economist himself, directly he quits spinning definitions out of his inside, and goes out into the street as a citizen to do business, recognises as Capital, lends or borrows as Capital, receives or pays interest on as Capital. If the Economist does not mean by Capital this well-known, universally recognised Capital, but some ideal abstraction which is dependent on definitions, then it is no matter what he means, he is merely quibbling about words, he is talking of one thing when the dispute is about another, and he need not be surprised (though he is, and shocked, too) to find that the parties to this dispute pay no attention to him.

He says it is food and tools. If so, then the producer of food and the manufacturer of tools being the creators of capital, and able to create as much as may be required, should be lords of the industrial world, whereas we constantly find the food-producer with his barns full of wheat, so cheap by reason of its abundance, that he declares he can't live, and the tool-maker with his warehouse crammed full of unsold tools, both on the verge of bankruptcy for want of this Capital, and going for it to the man who has neither food nor tools; that is, no more food than what he buys for his own consumption from day to day, and no tool more effective than a pen-knife or a walking-stick; and this man, with a mere stroke of his pen, advances them the Capital they want—on good security and for a consideration.

What is this Capital that he supplies to them? Obviously the way to find out is not to sit back in your chair, close your



eyes, and spin definitions, but to take the thing and inspect it, and so looking at it you will see at once that it is money; not money in its occasional and restricted sense of mere coin, but in its larger, more general, more practical business sense of Purchasing Power—of command of the goods and services of other people—the power to obtain these goods and services without rendering any fresh goods or services in return—the power of getting them for nothing, in short, by virtue of a claim registered in a bank ledger, on a title deed, mortgage, Government debenture, or scrip of some sort; a claim registered *somewhere*, which, for convenience sake, we shall call a bank balance, and which, though made *through* some particular person or firm, is really *on* the general stock of goods and services, all which claims, if wiped out with a sponge, would leave the sum total of real wealth, of food and tools, of goods and coins, of articles of every kind absolutely unimpaired. (I am not proposing to wipe them out, I am only pointing out the unsubstantial character of this so-called “Capital.”)

When a man is said to have £1,000, it is never understood for a moment that he has 1,000 sovereigns. No one ever has 1,000 sovereigns, or, if he has, he promptly proceeds to “deposit” or “invest” them, to get rid of them to someone else, and so convert his “money” into a standing claim on that someone else. The moneyed man, or Capitalist, never has any sovereigns (worth mentioning); the sovereigns are all out, circulating from hand to hand among the people who have “no money.” The Capitalist’s capital has no substantial existence at all; it is a mere recorded claim on other people’s earnings: Rothschild’s, on the revenues of certain States; Colonel North’s, on the proceeds of certain nitrate beds; everybody’s, on the goods produced by other people. Often it never had any substantial existence even at the beginning, but originated in rent, *i.e.*, a claim on somebody for mere permission to utilise a certain portion of the earth’s surface, a

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permission (or privilege to deny permission) which obviously in itself adds nothing to the stock of real wealth.

Even when it had a substantial existence to begin with, that substantial existence has long ago disappeared. If it consisted in money lent, the money was promptly passed on by the borrower, and is lost in the general circulation, as it was its function to be. There is no more of it in consequence of the Capitalist lending it instead of spending it himself. If it consisted of goods, those goods have long ago been consumed. If it consisted of work done, then the work was done, and the results of it alone remain. In all cases alike all that remains to the Capitalist is his claim for repayment and for interest till the repayment is made. Neither claim for repayment nor claim for interest add anything to the general wealth. Yet it is all that the Capitalist's capital consists of.

Capital is food and tools! What then means this financial crisis, this check to production and stagnation of business, this cry of "no money"? What mean these insolvencies in all directions for want of capital to carry on, these willing workers unemployed for want of capital to employ them, and Government and private employer alike stopping useful works, and bidding men throw down their tools, while the farmers are crying of ruin by reason of the cheap abundance of food, and tools gleam unsold in the shops, or rust idly in back-yards? There is no want of food and tools here; yet all agree there is want of capital.

Everyone recognises the owner of a Bank balance as a Capitalist therefore a Bank balance as Capital; but no one recognises food or tools, or goods of any kind as Capital, unless they are convertible by the owner into "money"; unless he can either sell them or put them to some profitable use. Profitable, mind; not useful. The usefulness is neither here nor there. They would be usefully employed in feeding or assisting poor people who would put them to good use, but

could not pay for them ; but that would not be "profitable." They might, on the other hand, be used to run a totalisator, which merely facilitates gambling ; that would not be useful, but it would be "profitable." Goods that could be put to the latter use would count as Capital ; to the former use, not.

The very expression "realising one's capital" shows what is the meaning of the term, for everyone understands by it turning goods into money, not money into goods. Notwithstanding all this, I have been condemned by certain economic critics, because, in treating of these only too common disputes between employers and employed, I have used a common business term in the common business sense as the disputants do.

I am told that economists are agreed that the thing which the parties are contending about, and which they call "Capital," is not Capital at all ; but that "Capital" is something else quite different, *viz.*, food and tools ; and that, therefore, I am only abusing terms, and creating confusion, and should be promptly ruled out of court.

But surely it is not I who am creating confusion.

What if a Zoologist in the same way in a dispute amongst Americans as to the nature and habits of their buffalo, telling them they did not know what they were talking about, and were only abusing terms and creating confusion, because there are no buffaloes in America at all ; the animal so called being really a bison, and the true buffalo a quite different animal, only found elsewhere ?

In addressing the outer world you must use the language the outer world understands if you want to be attended to. And not only does the outer world invariably understand by "Capital"—money power, and not actual food and tools—but the economist himself invariably does the same, where he is dealing with practical issues instead of spinning definitions.

The Capitalist's claim may be quite legitimate, you will say.

Possibly ; but at present we are not concerned with the ethics of the case, but with the facts. We want first to realise clearly what Capital is—this thing which the parties at issue call capital, and are fighting about. We are constantly told that Capital is necessary to progress ; but yet, if it consists of a mere claim by one person on the earnings of another, it clearly is not necessary, no matter how legitimately such claim may have arisen.

The Capitalist is resolvable into three types :

1st. The Landlord-Capitalist ; so called to distinguish him from the landowner who has been compelled to buy the limited area he holds for personal use, as the only way of obtaining security of possession, and the fruits of his own labour in the future.

Land and Capital, I am aware, are quite different things, and therefore the landowner, as such, is not the same as the Capital owner, as such. He differs from the Capitalist, or money-owner, in many important respects ; in owning that which no one has produced, but only appropriated ; which is not a product of nature but nature herself ; which is limited in extent and impossible to increase, and which is the first necessary of life, being the source from which all other necessaries proceed. Still it belongs to the recognised Capitalist or tribute-levying class, the class against which Labour is rising ; he makes common cause with the others of that class, and is the ultimate cause of the failure of all strikes by withholding land, and so producing a class of unemployed whose competition for employment breaks down Trades Union resistance. He acquires land not for personal use, but as an investment of Capital, that is, not to use, but with the avowed intention of preventing anyone else from using it, except for the highest rent which the widest and keenest competition can secure, and with the legal right to hold it back as long as he pleases, thereby producing an artificial scarcity of land, and

forcing up all land values; and this, notwithstanding that labourers remain unemployed, tools unused, wants unsatisfied, through this denial on his part of access to the land, the ultimate source of all industry. His land, in short, is to him a mere investment of his Capital; a mere plea to demand back-sheesh from anyone who wants to use it.

Moreover, land and Capital have been exchanged backwards and forwards so often that it is a mere chance whether any given Capitalist at any given moment holds his Capital in land or in money. The Landlord is the fundamental Monopolist, the owner of the one monopoly from which all other monopolies proceed, no matter how apparently unconnected with the land. Still he is a Monopolist, and a tribute-levier like the rest, and the chief of them; one of the class against which, under the name of Capitalism, Labour is rising, and for present purposes we include him with them, as the world at large does.

The Landlord-Capitalist, then, is one who has invested his Capital in acquiring exclusive possession of a certain portion of the earth's surface, and who makes his income by exacting tribute from others for mere permission to use it. He exacts this tribute in either of two ways: by allowing the user to use it as a tenant only, paying him rent, or as a hired servant only, producing goods which are to belong, not to him who produces them, but to the landowner who permits or employs him to produce them, the real producer receiving only "current wages." The Landlord's income thus rests upon a claim, a claim to land. He lives by graciously allowing other people to put the land to use—for his enrichment—and great honour is accorded him for permitting them.

2nd. THE MONEY-LENDER.—Of actual coin the money-owner, as we have seen, has next to none; but he has the COMMAND of it, and through it of all purchasable things, by virtue of some registered claim on somebody else, and his loan of money consists of a mere transfer to the borrower of power to draw

upon this claim (that is, on that somebody else) to a specified amount. He supplies no coin, no goods, no tools; it is the "somebody else" who supplies all these, but it is the Money-lender who gets paid for them.

3rd. THE INVESTOR.—This is supposed to be a Capitalist of a quite different and superior type to the Landlord and the Money-lender, for these last clearly contribute nothing that was not already present, and take no part in enterprise, but only demand tribute, one for the land which he did not create, but only monopolises, and the other for the food and tools which he does not produce, but only commands. But the Investor is looked upon as the very life and soul of enterprise, its originator and director, a sort of worker *in excelsis*, without whom no work of any magnitude could be attempted.

But the fact is that he only differs from the other two in this: That they are non-working tribute-leviers, naked and not ashamed, while he is a non-working tribute-levier masquerading as a worker. For example, A B and C have saved £1,000 each. A buys a piece of land, and, sitting comfortably at home, lives without labour on his tenant's rent; B lends his, and lives without labour on his debtor's interest; while C takes shares in a railway, and lives without labour on the profits produced by the *employés*. Not one of the three provides or does anything towards producing the rent, interest, or dividends on which he lives.

Take an example from actual life, say, the Broken Hill strike. On one side were the miners who, with their strong arms, supplied the labour. On the other were the investing shareholders who by their capital supplied—what?

The food and tools? Nothing of the sort. The people who supplied the food were the farmers and farm hands who grew it. The people who supplied the tools were the manufacturers and factory hands who made them. To work the mine supplying everything, two sets of men only were wanted: one

to produce the food and tools, the other using these to extract the ore. The shareholders no more provided the food and tools than they extracted the ore. They produced nothing, they provided nothing, they did nothing. The food-growers and tool-makers on the one hand, and the miners on the other, provided and did everything; but, unfortunately, they had not the money, the purchasing power to command their own products. This was all concentrated in the hands of the Capitalists, and the Capitalists used it to exploit both sets of workers alike, commanding first the food and tools produced by one set, afterwards the ore produced by the other set, and standing ready with the profits so acquired to command the next enterprise, whatsoever it might be, and by whomsoever originated and carried on.

Were the Capitalist and his Capital—his accumulated claims commanding everything in advance—to disappear, nothing necessary to the work would have disappeared; the two sets of workers combining could have produced and used the food and tools (which the Capitalist now commands) to extract the ore (which the Capitalist now commands), and share between them the profits (which the Capitalist now commands).

It is a tremendous power, this power of the Capitalist, who produces nothing, provides nothing, does nothing, but commands everything. It rests upon his sovereign will whether the soil shall be cultivated, whether the minerals shall be extracted, whether the city shall expand, whether the labourer shall work or starve. He, the one useless being, holds the keys of heaven and hell, so to speak, and the millions, who bear all the toil and produce all the wealth, are but the pawns with which he plays his game.

Never does the labourer get the chance to come into possession of the fruits of his own labour.

The Capitalist gets credit for many things with which his Capital has nothing to do. He is constantly being represented

as the captain of industry, the originator and director of enterprise. But the two characters, though sometimes combined in the same person, are quite distinct. In ever increasing degree the initiation and direction of industry are parting company from the ownership. Large enterprises are ever swallowing up small ones, and at the same time merging into companies and syndicates, wherein the originators are paid, perhaps, by the allotment of a few shares, and the directors and overseers receive salaries and wages, but the concern, as a whole, is owned by, and the proceeds divided amongst, a number of shareholders who, for the most part, know little or nothing about the concern, except that they believe it likely to be a "good thing," and have practically no more to do with its control than they have with the control of the British Navy. They buy their shares and they draw their dividends. That is all they have to do with the matter. It is the mere power of the purse that commands and appropriates everything, giving nothing in return.

But the Investor takes the risk (?). Some of it, but nothing to what the labourer does. If the venture fails, the Investor loses so much, but generally has plenty left to be comfortable on, for few people are so foolish as to put all their eggs into one basket; while the labourer loses his employment, his sole means of living, and is often long before he can find other employment. But apart from this, the labourer risks life and limb and health constantly. He risks lead-poisoning in one mine, explosion or suffocation in another, rheumatism here, mangling by machinery there, disease and accident in a thousand forms. If he is maimed or killed, it is he, not the Investor, who suffers the pain, and his wife and children, not the Investor's, who lose their breadwinner.

But the plea is a sham in every way. Suppose someone else appropriated the fruits of the Capitalist's investment on the same plea that he appropriates the fruit of the labourer's em-

ployment, *viz.*, that this "someone else" takes the risk, ensuring the Capitalist against absolute loss (though the Capitalist does not ensure the labourer against this by any means, as I have pointed out), and in return allows the Capitalist just about as much to live on as the labourer gets, I think the Capitalist would denounce it as both an impertinence and a robbery. Yet there would be less wrong done in this case than in the other, for the Capitalist is not compelled to find investment for his Capital as the labourer is compelled to find employment for his labour. He can live on his Capital (so long as it lasts) instead of investing it, and then work like other people, while the labourer must find employment, and quickly, or starve. The claim of the labourer for work is the natural and just claim to the opportunity to earn a living by honest work in supplying the wants of himself and others, either by direct access to nature, or, if that be denied him, then by some useful work set him by those who presume to close nature against him; while the claim of the Capitalist to the opportunity to get interest or profit is the claim to live on other people's labour. Moreover, this claim to take the risk—and the profit—is rather a thing to be resented. The labourer will always only too gladly take the risk if he may have the profit. The prospecting miner, for instance (almost the only labourer who gets the chance of taking his own risks), will gladly work for weeks and months, on and off, as he can find the means, on the mere chance of success, a chance which (in mining) is always heavily against him; while Capital is notoriously timid, and always asking for "security."

As to Capital representing the savings of the Capitalist. What has he saved? Food and tools? These are what Labour is producing from day to day.

If the Capitalist could save these he would be doing more harm than good. To "put by" food when people are starving, or tools when people are idle, would be to do a cruel wrong and

waste a good opportunity. Food is produced to be eaten, tools to be used—not put away. Moreover, food and tools cannot be saved to any appreciable extent. The food would generally spoil quickly, the tools rust slowly, both meanwhile lying uselessly idle instead of rendering useful service.

The Capitalist, however, saves neither food nor tools, nor yet goods of any kind ; he only accumulates claims on other people. It is right enough to put by such food and tools as will keep when they are in excess of present wants, but not otherwise. However, they are not put by to any extent. Mill has shown clearly that what are called accumulations of Capital are (in so far as they consist of utilities and not of mere claims) the result of continuous reproduction, and the great mass of what is of any age, such as houses, furniture, etc., never has been “put by” at all, but used from the very beginning, only being of durable materials has outlasted the use. It is the claims that accumulate and figure as Capital, and the more these claims accumulate, the heavier grows the burden that industry has to bear.

But, again, it is said that even if Capital is after all only a claim to take, it is a claim that represents past services rendered, and is therefore fairly earned.

Capital represents past services ! Suppose it did. No conceivable service could be so great as to give the renderer and his successors for all time this all-embracing, ever-increasing power—this command of all the opportunities, and the requisites, and the products of production from generation to generation, rolling up fortunes that grow the bigger in ever-rising rents and ever-accumulating interest and profit the farther they get from the original service-renderer.

And the greatest services rendered never have established such a power. The greatest service-renderers of the human race have been the Moral Reformers, the Scientific Discoverers,

the Martyrs for Truth and Liberty; and such men are not paid in base money, nor found a race of Capitalists.

The Capitalists' claims have for, by far, the most part originated in no service at all, but often very much the reverse. Here and there a man like Brassey, or Geo. Moore, or Edison, has made a large fortune by great gifts usefully applied, but such cases are the brilliant exceptions. Fortunes have for the most part originated from unjust Monopoly, by acquiring land and waxing rich on the unearned increment; by rings and syndicates, and tricks played with the market; by inheritance put out to interest and compound interest; by wild but fortunate speculation; by heaps of ways conferring no benefit on society, and often grievously injurious.

But let the original service (where there was any) be never so great, it could not be great enough to win for the successors who did not render it, as well as for the original person who did, this tremendous, this crushing power over the workers, and command of all the opportunities and fruits of work.

Meanwhile the Capitalist remains king and lord of all.

Are minerals discovered? Then they are either on private or on Crown land. If the former, the Capitalist Landlord claims them; if the latter, it is Capital only that can buy up shares in the Company that has to be formed. Does some worker invent a machine? He must find a Capitalist to take it up, and content himself with such share of the profit as the Capitalist may agree to leave him. So with a railway or any other enterprise that may be started. No matter who originates it, who plans it out, who provides the requisites, who carries on the work, it is the Capitalist, the money-owner as such, and not the worker as such, who gets more than current wages, who skims all the cream.

It is the same all through. While it is work that alone produces real wealth (*i.e.*, goods) it is money that makes money. There is not an opportunity for work, or a requisite for work,

or a product of work but the Capitalist commands it, virtually owns it, in advance. This is the grievance that the worker is rising against. He utterly disbelieves that it is the unalterable law of nature that the proceeds of work shall go not to the man who does the work, but to someone else who has no hand in it whatever, but who, by some maladjustment of our social arrangements has been allowed to get the command of everything and to live in idleness on the earnings of others by his power to practically prohibit all work except by his permission, on his conditions, and for his profit.

Pray observe that I am not suggesting any new meaning to an old word ; I am only dragging to light the meaning that people already really have without fully realising it. I am only pointing out that whatever Political Economists may declare in their definitions, the idea that everyone has in his mind (even the Economist himself when he means business), when he uses the word Capital, is MONEY. Not goods, but purchasing power ; not food and tools, but the command by one person of the food and tools produced by another. And I further point out that this command and virtual ownership of the food and tools inevitably gives the command and virtual ownership of the goods which the food and tools are used to produce.

This Capital, this accumulation of claims commanding everything (the possession of which, in real life, confers upon its owner the title and power of a Capitalist), so far from assisting industry, actually hinders it, and in this way : An industry that will simply maintain a single man (let alone a family) is *ipso facto* a productive industry, and as such should be allowed to proceed—may we not say has a just RIGHT to proceed ? Yet every such industry must be in some place, that is, on some piece of land, and therefore at some Landlord's mercy ; and unless it will not only maintain the worker, but also yield rent to a Landlord, or interest to a Money-lender, or profit to an

Investor, tribute to some person who does nothing—it is not allowed to proceed, and the man who could easily and would gladly maintain himself must wander the country, begging for work or charity, living one way or another on somebody, and therefore at the country's expense, bringing down other people's wages by his eagerness for employment, and suffering moral deterioration through his enforced idleness, his acquisition of vagrant habits, his constant receipt of charity, which break his hope and spirit, and gradually destroy his self-respect.

The Land Nationaliser says that Land Monopoly is the great enemy. The Socialist says it is Capitalism. Each is right in his own way. Land Monopoly is at the bottom of the whole business. But for this so-called right of the Landlord to bar access to natural resources, to limit the field of employment, and to extort tribute for permission to work, Capitalism could never have arisen. Land Monopoly, in short, begot Capitalism. But the child has outgrown its parent. The Landlord, owning the prime requisites of production, commands the stream of industry at the fountain head, but the Capitalist now commands *him*. The great Landowners are being ruined, the outside Capitalists are buying them up, and combining the two characters in one. Whoso owns land, but not Capital, will soon cease to own land; but whoso owns Capital can own land whenever he likes; and often does virtually own it already—by a mortgage.

The Economist tells us that this tremendous power of the Capitalist (or of Capital, as he expresses it) is a part of the Economic law, which is the law of nature. But we know better. We admit that the laws of Political Economy are the laws of nature, but we think that the laws of Political Economy are one thing, the laws of the Political Economist another. As for the law of nature, we know that it is all the other way. The law of nature is that the industrious shall prosper, and the idle come to naught; that he who produces much and

consumes little shall have abundance in his old age, while he who produces little or nothing, but lives luxuriously and wastefully, shall starve ; and that the more disagreeable, or dangerous, or unhealthy the work is, the higher the pay that the worker will expect for doing it. But under existing conditions all this is reversed. The man who can live luxuriously and wastefully, and yet not come to want, is the man of "independent means," that is, the man who produces nothing, but lives on the produce of other people in rent and interest, and whose future is thus assured, while those who work the hardest and the longest, and at the most monotonous and depressing, disagreeable, or dangerous work, are, as a rule, precisely those who are the worst paid. This is neither the natural law (the law of necessary sequence) nor the moral law (the law of desert), and the workers are beginning to realise that there must be something radically wrong in our institutions (though they do not yet see clearly what it is) to produce such results, and that it is quite possible, though it may take some time, to set it right.

If Capital consisted of food and tools, of coin, or of goods of any kind, it could in itself have no power over Labour. If I have access to land whereon I can make myself a home, grow my own food, and employ my Labour usefully either in direct supply of my own wants, or in exchange of mutual service with my neighbour, though I may not become rich, I am at any rate a free man, with a sufficiency in the present, and a hope in the future. If in such case a man with much money settles on one side of me, and a man with many appliances on the other, I am no worse off, but the better ; for the one will be able to pay me with his money and the other with loan of appliances for services which each will want, and so long as I have this access to land I need not take service with either unless they make it well worth my while.

SO LONG AS I HAVE ACCESS TO LAND.

But let either of them get hold of my land, and I am a free man no longer. I can hold my old home no longer except on my Landlord's sufferance, and must get him, or someone, to employ me on any terms, or I die.

The evil, the one great wrong that lies at the bottom of wage slavery, and of the whole industrial difficulty, is Land Monopoly; the cutting up of the whole surface of the available earth into square pieces, and allowing the rich to buy it all up and charge the poor for the mere permission to live by their own labour.

The Economist tells us that far more Labour is employed off the land than on; in working up and distributing the raw products of industry than in merely producing them; and the inference he suggests is that Land Monopoly cannot do so much harm after all.

The statement is true; the inference is false. It is all the other way. What the fact really indicates is the enormous power of obstruction possessed by the man who owns the land, the source of all these subsequent industries. He stands at the fountain head of industry, and can stop the whole stream at any moment as suits his interest or pleasure.

For 100 men employed in producing iron ore there are thousands employed in working this up into (say) rails, in transporting the rails, in laying them, in making the engines and carriages, without which the rails would be of no use, in running the railway, and so on. And the mineral landowner, who, by demanding an exorbitant royalty, compels the mining company either to throw up the work or to bring on a gigantic strike by the attempt to force down wages, not only throws the 100 miners out of employment, but the many thousands more who would have been employed in making, transporting, and laying the rails, and running the railway, besides the thousands more who were employed by the wages which all these people spent, but which are now stopped.

Future generations will wonder how we, with all our scientific attainments and diffused education and political rights, could have tolerated, much more believed in, a system which allowed and encouraged the rich to buy land AS AN INVESTMENT—that is, not to use, but with the sole and avowed purpose of preventing anyone else from using it, except on payment of the highest rent that could be got out of him; that is, for the utmost he could be got to give rather than go without the land and HAVE NO means of living, and that it was further perfectly allowable for the purchaser to hold back as much of this land as he chose, for as long as he chose, either to force up its price or for mere purpose of sport or any idle whim; that he might forbid the soil to be cultivated, the minerals to be worked, the city to expand, though land values were rising all around through the artificial scarcity of land so produced, and thousands were without work, tens of thousands without homes, and hundreds of thousands forcing down each other's wages, or cutting down each other's trade profits, in their desperate competition for employment or custom.

Make property in the PRODUCTS of Labour as secure as you can, but abolish, gradually if you like, but resolutely, all ownership in the *opportunities* of Labour—in that which is the ultimate source of all industry, the land. Secure the *user* of the land in his possession, in his improvements, in the fruit of his Labour, but abolish the right of the irresponsible despot to say to one man, you may be homeless, but you shall not build here; to another, you may be foodless, but you shall grow no food here; to a third, you may be without employment, but you shall do no work here, simply because I am the lord of the earth—of this part of it, at any rate—and I choose to forbid you. The man who owns the opportunities of Labour owns its fruits, and practically owns the men who must live by producing them. He, indeed, may be over head and ears in debt to

other people, and so be none the better off, but that does not free the labourer.

If slavery may be defined as the power of one class to hold another in subjection, and appropriate the fruits of its Labour, then slavery is as rampant now over the whole civilised world as it was in the days when men and women could be bought and sold like cattle. It may be changed in form, it may be mitigated in degree, but it is the same in kind. There is, as before, one above who does nothing but lives on the Labour of those below, only he is no longer called a slave-owner, but a Landlord or Capitalist. Under him are others who, for better pay than the lowest workers, direct the work and extort the wealth which the big man above receives, only they are no longer called slave-drivers, but Capitalist tenants, superintendents, or middlemen of one kind or another. Below are the working millions, who toil for bare subsistence, and many of whom can hardly get that, though they it is who do all the hard work, and produce all the wealth.

The new form of slavery is better than the old in some respects, worse in others. Better in that the labourer can no longer be bought and sold like a beast, kicked and flogged, nor have his family taken from him; but worse in that the patriarchal tie that formed the one redeeming feature of the old system is gone, and there remains but a cold-blooded commercial transaction, with the mockery of a free contract.

The law, or custom, and public opinion, required the old slave-owner—at least, in recent times—to see that his slaves had enough food and shelter and clothing, and was expected to keep them in sickness and old age; but the modern Landlord, or Capitalist, has no responsibility of this kind, and may send his men adrift directly they cease to be of use to him, not exactly (nowadays) to die, but to be maintained grudgingly and ignominiously at the expense of the people.

We may put it that the old slavery was individualistic, the

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new collective; that is, that under the old system each slave had a recognised master whom he was bound to serve, and who in turn was bound to maintain him, so that between the two there was a mutual responsibility; while under the new system the worker is an ownerless slave, who is bound to find a master for himself. The Capitalist class collectively thus owns the working class collectively without any individual responsibility for any one of them.

And all this is solely because Labour is denied access to natural opportunities—to that source of all industry, the land. The worker may not make himself a home in the neighbourhood of his work, though land fit for sites and practically unused abounds; he may not grow his own food, may not find employment in producing and working up, singly or in co-operation, the grain and the roots, the milk and the meat, the flax and the wool, the timber and the bark, the lime and the stone, the gold and the tin, the coal and the iron, the raw materials in all their countless shapes, all of which come from the land, and all of which together go to form the countless utilities and comforts, for the want of which they suffer poverty, but are thrown upon an “overstocked labour market” to scramble for a master, only too glad if they can get one on any terms; and so wages are determined, not as they ought to be by the moral law, not as they would be by the natural law (by the amount the labourer could get for himself by direct access to natural opportunities), but by that cut-throat competition for employment which tends to reduce wages to bare subsistence, and is fast driving the working classes into Socialism and open revolt.

We constantly see the three prime requisites of production left idle; men unemployed, tools unused, land either not put to use at all, or put to far less efficient use than is required of it. But we never see raw products lying idle. We never see cotton or wool, wheat sheaves or sugar cane, bricks or boards, bar iron or sheet copper, silver or tin, kicking about neglected.

There is always a scramble for the privilege of working these up.

But why should there be a scramble? Why should there not be enough of these raw products to keep all hands constantly going working them up into the countless utilities that are so badly wanted? It is not that the land will not produce them, and to any extent that may be required. It is that there is a privileged obstructionist somewhere at the back who prohibits their production, either by a blank refusal, or by asking such excessive tribute as to be tantamount to a refusal.

Strikes are obstructive and wasteful; they entail suffering and engender hate; still, they are better than war, and even war, cruel and destructive as it is, is sometimes necessary. Disorder is sometimes the only way to settled order, war the only way to lasting peace; and what is wanted just now is not Peace but Justice. Till Justice is obtained it is not desirable to have Peace. Whenever there is a great wrong there should be agitation against that wrong, resistance in whatever form may be necessary.

I grant freely that the wrong is done unwittingly; that the people who do it have no idea that it is wrong, and even that many of them deplore the evils they see around them, and are earnestly seeking a remedy, quite unconscious that they themselves are the sole cause. But that is almost always the case with a great wrong. The despot, under whose tyranny the people groan, is fully persuaded that he is the instrument chosen by Providence to rule, that he knows better than his people what is good for them, and that it is the first principle of law and order that his will be enforced at all costs. The religious persecutor also fully believes that a right faith is necessary to salvation, that his faith is the right faith, and that it is therefore absolutely necessary to suppress heresy at all costs. The Southern Americans, again, were as honest and kind and well-meaning a people as any, and even noted for

their chivalry ; but nothing would convince them that there was anything wrong in slavery. Not only the actual owners of slaves, but the whole of the superior, the slave-owning race, defended slavery as instituted by Providence, as necessary to civilisation, and as being the very best thing on the whole for the slaves themselves.

You will never get the holders of any improper powers or privileges to recognise any harm in their having these powers or privileges, but only in the gross abuse of them, and very often not then. At any impeachment of Capitalism, the Capitalist class—not only the rich man himself, but all his brothers and cousins and clients and dependents, even if they are not rich—remark contemptuously, “Capital! Capital is food and tools,” and the speaker turns away fully convinced that that settles the matter to any fair-minded man, and that every labour-leader and agitator is a rogue and his followers fools ; and yet if he would but consider the matter for one moment he would see that Capital does not in anyone’s mind, not even in his own, mean food and tools, but only the command by one person of the food and tools produced and used by other people, and of the goods they produce with them.

So with Landlordism, which is merely the pedestal on which Capitalism stands, and which, if knocked away, would bring down Capitalism with a crash. You will never get the Landowning class—neither the Landlord himself, nor his brothers, nor his cousins, nor his menservants and maidservants, or the people who are honoured by his notice, or who profit by his custom ; above all, the Capitalist tenants, who live by hiring his improper powers—to see any harm in private ownership of land—that is, in one class claiming all nature as their private property, to grant or withhold access to her at their sovereign will, and charge other people for the mere permission to live by their own labour.

This is the wrong you have to abolish. Whatever method of doing so you may choose (and there are several to choose from), the process will take time, and meanwhile the Capitalist profits by the wrong as much as the actual Landowner, and should bear his share of the cost of emancipation.

It is not fair to throw the whole cost, as the Single Taxers propose, on the unfortunate who happens, by pure accident, officially to represent the wrong at the moment by owning a bit of land for which he has probably paid full value.

The man who sold land yesterday is deeper implicated, and has profited more than the man to whom he sold, for land always sells at prospective value; and the Capitalist, whether he ever owned land or not, benefits by the enormous power which Land Monopoly has given to mere "Money."

Therefore it seems to me a progressive tax on all unearned incomes should accompany a land-tax, at any rate until the Land Monopolist's power of obstruction has been so crippled, and withheld resources so far forced into use that incomes have ceased to represent tribute to any great extent, and are coming to represent earnings of work.