

SOCIAL EVOLUTION. *

Few things in human history are more obvious than the effect upon social institutions in general of changes in economic conditions. Slave systems of labor have always reflected their baseness in the politics, the art, the morals and even the religions of the societies that have fostered them; while advances in economic freedom have everywhere been followed by improvement in all other spheres of social aspiration and effort.

This obvious historical truth could hardly be more impressively portrayed than in these eloquent words from the pen of Henry George:

Only in broken gleams and partial light has the sun of Liberty yet beamed among men, but all progress hath she called forth. Liberty came to a race of slaves cringing under Egyptian whips, and led them forth from the House of Bondage. She hardened them in the desert and made of them a race of conquerors. The free spirit of the Mosaic law took their thinkers up to heights where they beheld the unity of God, and inspired their poets with strains that yet phrase the highest exaltation of thought. Liberty dawned on the Phoenician coast, and ships passed the Pillars of Hercules to plow the unknown sea. She shed a partial light on Greece, and marble grew to shapes of ideal beauty, words became the instruments of subtlest thought, and against the scanty militia of free cities the countless hosts of the Great King broke like surges against a rock. She cast her beams on the four-acre farms of Italian husbandmen, and born of her strength a power came forth that conquered the world. They glistened from shields of German warriors, and Augustus wept his legions. Out of the night that followed her eclipse, her slanting rays fell again on free cities, and a lost learning revived, modern civilization began, a new world was unveiled; and as Liberty grew so grew art, wealth, power, knowledge, refinement. In the history of every nation we may read the same truth.

So manifest is this order of social phenomena whereby social improvement follows advances in economic freedom, and not only with reference to past times but also in

*By Louis F. Post, in "What's the Use," for March, published monthly at East Aurora, N. Y. Reprinted by permission of J. B. Howarth, publisher of "What's the Use."

our own day, that social progress seems to be generated by economic modes; and from that inference materialistic evolutionists draw far-reaching conclusions. Economics becomes to them a sort of social protoplasm out of which the higher institutions and even the ideals of society are progressively evolved.

The plausibility of this theory is greatly enhanced by the undeniable fact that institutions of higher degree are affected in character and direction by existing economic conditions. The economic struggle taints our politics with corruption, rests our morals on the shifting sands of utilitarianism, degrades our art to the commonplace or the sensational, and turns the high ideals of our religion into empty metaphors behind which lurks a loathsome dollar worship.

All this is because existing economic conditions force everybody into an all absorbing devotion to the problem of securing a living. The higher qualities of human nature have consequently but little opportunity to develop freely. It by no means follows, however, that economic systems naturally determine the character and direction of those qualities. Nothing more is proved than that economic systems which force men to become absorbed in the problem of securing a living, hold the higher qualities of human nature down to their own low levels.

We may still infer, then, when changes in economic systems are followed by improvement on the higher planes of social life, that this result is due to another cause than materialistic evolution. So far from being limited to the theory that improved conditions on the higher planes are generated by the economic change, we may fairly conclude that those conditions are attributable to the fact that the economic change has freed the higher qualities of men from the thralldom of bread winning. Instead of affording proof of materialistic evolution, such changes are instances of spiritual emancipation.

It is true, of course, that men must eat and drink and be clad before they

can think effectively about art or morals, or politics or religion, or in any other manner give free play to their higher faculties. They must, moreover, not only have all the bodily comforts that food and drink and clothing symbolize, but must also be reasonably assured of always having them, before their thoughts can soar very far above economic levels.

So long as economic necessities are forced into the foreground, higher impulses will be driven into the background. While the mind is worried with economic thoughts, moral and spiritual thoughts will be clouded. Any economic system, therefore, which perpetually stimulates a universal and obtrusive fear of want, must give direction and character to every other social institution. It does this, however, not by processes of generation or materialistic evolution, but by holding the higher functions of the mind in check.

Emancipate the higher human qualities by banishing want and fear of want, and social development will no longer be determined by economic adjustments. The higher human faculties, freed from the enthrallment of bodily needs, will rise toward their source—which is not material, but spiritual.

The theory that all social movement is generated and determined by economic adjustments, assumes that an effect can be greater than its original cause. It attributes the origin of the higher characteristics and possibilities of social life to the lower. And this extraordinary method of accounting for moral and spiritual qualities in man, is, heaven save the mark, sometimes called "scientific." It would be as scientific to assume that water naturally rises above its source, or that machinery naturally gives out more power than has been put into it.

Economic systems cannot be the original cause of institutions that rise above the economic. If morality, for instance, is evolved from economic conditions, an equal moral force must have been first involved into economic conditions. So, also, with art, politics, religion and all the rest. Nothing superior to economics can be got out of economics without hav-

ing first been injected into economics. But that implies what materialistic evolutionists deny—a first cause or force, a force which descends from highest spirituality to lowest materiality and then returns. It is a force that in this respect may be likened to rays of sunlight which upon striking the face of a mirror are reflected back. The mirror does not generate the light it reflects. Neither does the material generate the spiritual.

The manifestations of this force through the higher faculties of the human mind and heart may, indeed, be checked by obstructions along the lower levels through which it rises. But in no other sense can it be truly said to be directed or determined by those levels. They support and may be made to check it; but they have no vitality of their own to give. Remove the obstructions, and the higher faculties are no more determined by the lower functions than the volume of water in a reservoir is determined by the shape of the pipe through which it is received from its source in the mountain lake.

Given an economic condition from which the fear of want has been banished, and the higher functions of society will be determined, not by economic modes, but by moral ideals unobstructed and unpolluted by sordid anxieties and hopes and fears.

Nor need we think of such an economic condition as fanciful. On the contrary it is entirely natural in the social state. It would be a reality to-day, under the existing economic system, but for immoral political interferences with the natural distribution of wealth.

The possibilities of satisfying the material wants of mankind are always infinite. If all men who are willing to work for their living were allowed to work, and each who works were free to demand effectively the share which his work adds to current production, there would be neither want nor fear of want, but more than enough for all. But by setting up and perpetuating the institution of private property in the habitable globe, we have empowered a comparatively few to regulate by their own all-powerful

interests the amount and character of work to be done and the shares into which the result shall be distributed. We have thereby perpetuated the problem of want and the fear of want.

What keeps this problem alive is not our economic system in itself, but one of our political institutions reacting upon our economic system, and an immoral institution at that. To be more specific, it is not competition, the essence of our economic system, that keeps the problem alive; it is land monopoly, which obstructs competition and makes it lop-sided. Abolish land monopoly, and the want problem would banish itself. Abolish land monopoly, and our economic system, freed from obstruction, would emancipate the higher human faculties.

So long as these are held in subjection to economic systems, whether the systems be selfishly plutocratic or fraternally socialistic, just so long will their activities be directed and determined by the debasing spirit of utilitarianism. But immediately upon their release their activities would come under the influence of moral ideals, derived, without sordid pollution or distortion, from the original moral force of the universe. This is the only social evolution which, being sound in natural principle, is wholesome in all its processes.

NEWS

Pursuant to the President's proclamation (p. 759) the Senate of the 58th Congress met in special session on the 5th, when the President's message explaining his purpose in calling this session was read. As stated in the message, it is his purpose to obtain consideration of "treaties concerning which it proved impossible to take action during" the regular session; and he asks "special attention to the treaty with the Republic of Colombia, securing to the United States the right to build an Isthmian canal, and to the treaty with the Republic of Cuba for securing a measure of commercial reciprocity between the two countries." Having received the President's message, the Senate adjourned until the 9th, when it entered upon the consideration, in executive session, of the canal treaty.

An event of problematical importance in national party politics occurred on the 6th when Senator Gorman of Maryland, who now returns to the Senate, was elected leader of the Democratic senators. He was chosen by the unanimous vote of the Democratic senators attending the caucus—28 out of the 33, who are now opposed in the Senate by 57 Republicans. Mr. Gorman has appointed Senators Cockrell of Missouri, Martin of Virginia, Bacon of Georgia, Dubois of Idaho, Money of Mississippi, Bailey of Texas, Blackburn of Kentucky, Tillman of South Carolina and himself as the Democratic steering committee.

In local politics, the Republican nomination for mayor of Chicago is the most important event of the week. For several weeks John M. Harlan had been making a popular, or speech-making campaign, for the nomination, as a party man opposed to the party ring of which Congressman Lorimer is head center. He was opposed by Graeme Stewart, who is generally regarded as Mr. Lorimer's candidate. To understand Mr. Harlan's candidacy and Mr. Lorimer's opposition to him, it must be remembered that Mr. Harlan made a vigorous independent campaign for mayor at the spring election of 1897, and polled 60,000 votes. His strength was due to his excellent record as an independent alderman. Two years later he took no pronounced part, but in 1901 he contested the nomination for mayor within the Republican party, backed by a petition signed by 70,000 Republicans, and being defeated in the convention neither supported nor opposed the successful candidate. Coming before the Republican primaries this year, on the 6th, after a strenuous campaign against what he assailed as machine politics, he received a vote of 33,536, Mr. Stewart's vote being 39,543. Of pledged delegates to the city convention, Harlan had secured 337 and Stewart 596. The convention met on the 7th and upon roll call 598 votes were cast for Stewart and 342 for Harlan, whereupon Harlan addressed the convention, endorsing Stewart's nomination, which was then made unanimous.

The platform adopted at the convention declares as follows upon the local traction question: