

The Socialist Catechism,

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I.—DIVISION OF TOIL.

Q. Why is it necessary that any work should be done in the world? *A.* Because men require food, clothing, and shelter; and these cannot be obtained without work.

Q. Is the work which must be done in order to produce these necessities either very hard or very long? *A.* It is neither the one nor the other. After all the necessary work has been done, there is ample opportunity for the enjoyment of leisure and the production of beautiful things.

Q. Then why do immense numbers of men spend their whole lives in doing work which gives them no pleasure, while the enjoyment of leisure is an impossibility for them? *A.* Because there is another large class of men who keep all the available leisure and pleasure for themselves.

Q. How may these two sets of persons be roughly distinguished? *A.* As employers and employed; idlers and workers; privileged and plundered; or, more simply still, as rich and poor.

Q. Cannot the poor provide the rich with food, clothing, and shelter, and yet have enough time for leisure even after they have done this? *A.* Certainly; but the rich are not content with exacting simple necessities from the poor.

Q. What more do they compel them to contribute? *A.* Luxuries; and there is no end to the amount of labour which may be wasted in the painful production of useless things.

Q. Why do the poor consent to produce by their labour all these necessary and unnecessary things for persons who do nothing for them in return? *A.* Simply because they cannot help themselves.

Q. But how does it happen that they are in this helpless position? *A.* It is due to the fact that society is at present organised solely in the interests of the rich.

Q. Why cannot the poor organise society on a system which will prevent their being robbed of their own production? *A.* Because the existing organisation itself keeps them ignorant of its own causes, and consequently powerless to resist its effects.

Q. What is the first step towards a better state of things? *A.* The education of the poor to understand how it is that their own excessive work enables the rich to live in idleness upon its fruits.

Q. What is the most hopeful sign that they are ready for enlightenment on this point? *A.* Discontent with the disagreeable and degrading conditions of their own lives.

Q. What is the first principle to which they may appeal for relief from these conditions? *A.* The principle of justice, since it is manifestly unfair that those who do all the work should obtain the smallest share of the good things which it produces.

Q. What is the alternative to the present unequal distribution of work and good things? *A.* That all should be obliged to do their fair share of the work, and to content themselves with a fair share of the good things.

Q. Are those who insist upon the practical enforcement of this principle Conservatives or Radicals? *A.* They are neither, since they are necessarily opposed to all political parties.

Q. What then are they called? *A.* From the fact that they wish to displace the present system of competition for the bare means of subsistence, where each man is for himself, and to establish in its stead the principle of associated work and common enjoyment, where each is for all and all for each, they are called Socialists

II.—THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM.

Q. What is wealth? *A.* Everything that supplies the wants of man, and ministers in any way to his comfort and enjoyment.

Q. Whence is wealth derived? *A.* From labour usefully employed upon natural objects.

Q. Give instances of labour usefully employed? *A.* Ploughing, sowing, spinning weaving, etc., etc.

Q. Give instances of useless employment of labour? *A.* Digging a pit for the purpose of filling it up again, making a road that leads nowhere, supporting people in absolute idleness by presenting them with food and clothing for doing nothing, etc., etc.

Q. What do we mean when we say that an article has value? *A.* That it is useful or agreeable to human beings.

Q. When is an article said to have an "exchange value" in addition to its usefulness or "use value"? *A.* When it embodies a certain amount of generally useful labour.

Q. Are the two sorts of value ever identical? *A.* They cannot be compared at all.

Q. Explain by an instance what you mean by this? *A.* The hunger of a starving man who enters a baker's shop does not affect the exchange-value of a loaf, which is measured by the amount of labour which has been expended in making and baking it.

Q. What is its use-value to him? *A.* Its use-value is infinitely great, as it is a question of life and death with him to obtain it.

Q. What is its use-value to another man? *A.* Its use-value is nothing at all to a turtle-fed alderman, sick already with excessive eating, but its exchange-value remains the same in all cases.

Q. Is there no exception to this rule? *A.* If the baker has a monopoly of baking, and no other loaves are anywhere obtainable, he can charge a much higher price than the amount of his expended labour entitles him to demand.

Q. Is this often done? *A.* Every monopolist does it, as a matter of course.

Q. Who are the chief monopolists? *A.* There are two great classes. The landlords monopolise the land, and the capitalists the machinery.

Q. What is capital? *A.* Capital is the result of past labour devoted to present production,—machinery and factories for example.

Q. How does the landlord secure his profit? *A.* By extorting from the labourer a share of all that he produces, under threat of excluding him from the land.

Q. How does the capitalist act? *A.* He extorts from those labourers who are excluded from the land a share of all that they produce, under threat of withholding from them the implements of production, and thus refusing to let them work at all.

Q. On what terms does the capitalist allow the labourers to work? *A.* The capitalist agrees to return to them as wages about a quarter of what they have produced by their work, keeping the remaining three quarters for himself and his class.

Q. What is this system called? *A.* The capitalist system.

Q. What is it that regulates the amount returned to the labourer? *A.* The amount that is necessary to keep him and his family alive.

Q. Why does the capitalist care to keep him alive? *A.* Because capital without labour is helpless.

Q. How is this amount settled? *A.* By competition among the labourers, and the higgling of the labour market.

Q. Is it invariable? *A.* It varies with all the variations of trade and locality, and the different degrees of skill of the different labourers, but it constantly tends to a bare subsistence for the mass of the labourers.

Q. By what name is this law known? *A.* The iron law of wages.

Q. How can it be proved? *A.* By reckoning up the amount of food and clothing consumed by those who produce them.

Q. Is there any independent testimony to its truth? *A.* The witness of all doctors who have studied the subject.

Q. What evidence do they give upon it? *A.* They declare that diseases arising from insufficient nourishment are constantly present throughout the labouring classes, and that "the poor are permanently afflicted with one disease—starvation."

Q. What remedy for this do Socialists propose? *A.* Simply that the labouring classes should become their own employers.

Q. What effect would this have? *A.* The classes who live in idleness on the fruits of the labour of other people would be improved off the face of the earth, every one being obliged to take his share of honest work.

Q. On what compulsion? *A.* The alternative of starvation would stare them in the

face, as soon as the labourers ceased to supply them gratis with food, clothing, shelter, and luxuries.

Q. Are not the "upper classes" useful as organisers of labour? *A.* Those who organise labour are always worthy of their hire, though the hire may be fixed too high at present; but it is only the absolutely idle, and those whose work, however hard it may be, consists in perfecting and organising the arrangements for plundering the labourers of their reward, who are simply the enemies of the workers.

Q. Are shareholders in companies, for instance, useful in organising labour? *A.* As a rule they employ others to organise labour, and the work done by the company would go on just as well if the shareholders disappeared.

III.—SURPLUS VALUE.

Q. In whose interest is present production carried on? *A.* In that of the employing classes.

Q. Explain this. *A.* The labourers produce the machinery, which the employers take away from them as soon as it is made. The labourers are then employed to work it, in order to produce profit for their masters at a faster rate.

Q. What interest have the labourers in the continuance of capitalism, that is, the capitalist system? *A.* Manifestly none.

Q. Is capital, therefore, useless? *A.* Certainly not. The way in which it is used is attacked by Socialists, not the thing itself.

Q. How is it possible that it should be used in the labourer's interest? *A.* Only by means of a democratic State, acting in the interest of the producers.

Q. In what way would the State effect this? *A.* By taking into its own hands all the land and capital, or "means of production," which are now used as monopolies for the benefit of the possessing class.

Q. Is there any precedent for this? *A.* As the State has already taken over the Post Office and the Telegraphs, so it might take over the Railways, Shipping, Mines, Factories, and all other industries.

Q. Is the Post Office worked on Socialist principles? *A.* Certainly not. There is no pretence that the interests of its labourers, the postmen, are considered at all.

Q. What principle regulates their employment? *A.* That which regulates the employment of all other labourers, competition, reducing their wages to the lowest possible point, except in the case of the higher officials, who are paid much more than would willingly be accepted by equally capable men.

Q. Cannot the workers combine together by co-operation to defeat this principle of competition? *A.* Co-operative societies cannot defeat this principle, unless the whole body of workers are included in one society, and that is simply Socialism.

Q. Why cannot different societies defeat competition? *A.* Because they are compelled to compete against each other, to exploit those labourers who are not members of their body, and to be exploited by others in their turn.

Q. What do you mean by the word "exploit"? *A.* To exploit is to get more than one gives in a bargain.

Q. To what extent is the exploitation of the labourers commonly carried? *A.* The employers give them a bare subsistence, and take from them all the rest of the fruits of their labour.

Q. What is the difference between the two called? *A.* Surplus-value.

Q. What proportion expresses its amount? *A.* The proportion between the two or three hours of necessary labour, and the ordinary ten, twelve, or more hours' work.

Q. What do you mean by necessary labour? *A.* That which would feed and clothe and keep in comfort the nation if all took their part in performing it.

Q. Is any individual employer responsible for the exploitation of the labourers? *A.* No, the blame applies to the whole class. Individual employers may be ruined, but the employing class continue to appropriate the surplus-value.

Q. How do you account for this? *A.* Because competition is as keen among the capitalists as among the labourers.

Q. How does it act with them? *A.* It determines the division of the spoil, different sets of people struggling to get a share in the surplus-value.

Q. How does this competition above affect the labourers below? *A.* It does not affect them at all. It is assumed that the plunder is to be shared among the "upper classes," and the only question is in what proportion this shall be done.

Q. How do the upper classes label this plunder? *A.* By many names, such as **rent**

brokerage, fees, profits, wages of superintendence, reward of abstinence, insurance against risk, but above all, interest on capital.

Q. Are all these deducted from the labourers' earnings? *A.* There is no other fund from which they could possibly come.

Q. Is surplus-value paid for at all? *A.* By no means. It is the produce of unpaid labour, and is simply taken for nothing, just as a thief accumulates his stolen goods,

Q. Does not the progress of civilisation decrease the amount of the surplus-value? *A.* On the contrary it largely increases it.

Q. How is this? *A.* Improvements in agriculture, method, and machinery, which civilisation renders possible, multiply manifold the productiveness of the labourer's toil; but competition among the labourers prevents them from reaping the benefit.

Q. Does not competition among capitalists in the same way lower the rate of interest? *A.* Certainly it does, but the rate of interest has nothing whatever to do with the rate of exploitation or of surplus-value.

Q. What is interest? *A.* Interest is a fine, paid by the private organiser of labour out of the surplus-value which his labourers supply, to the idle person from whom he borrows his capital.

Q. What is the tendency of the two rates of interest and surplus-value? *A.* The rate of interest falls, while the rate of surplus value rises.

Q. Why is this? *A.* Because with the storing up of the increased surplus-value by the capitalist, or in other words, with the accumulation of capital, the competition among capitalists who are anxious to lend on interest becomes keener, and each individual is obliged to be content with less.

Q. Does not this lessening of the rate of interest benefit the labourer? *A.* No; since it is only due to the multiplication of those who share in his surplus-value, the result being the same as it would be if he were allowed to pay a penny to six people instead of sixpence to one.

Q. How do the capitalists adjust their own conflicting claims? *A.* It is a question of division of spoil among plunderers. If the surplus-value is high, there is more to divide among the capitalists, but if the capitalists are numerous there is so much less for each individual among them.

Q. Explain this by an example *A.* Take the case of Belgium. The labourers are there exploited to the uttermost, there being no "factory laws" to restrain the greed of the employer, but since capital is plentiful, the surplus-value is shared among many capitalists, and the rate of interest is low.

IV.—METHODS OF EXTORTION.

Q. What did you mean by saying that capital without labour is helpless? *A.* The most ingenious machinery can do nothing but rust or rot unless it is kept going by labourers.

Q. Why do not the labourers decline to work the machinery for the capitalist? *A.* Because they have no other means of making their livelihood.

Q. How could this be remedied? The State could compete with the capitalist by providing employment for the labourers, and paying them the full value of their productions.

Q. What would be the effect of this upon the private capitalist? *A.* His power would be gone at once, since no labourers would work for him, except on such terms as would leave him no surplus-value whatever.

Q. Is not the existence of capital in private hands an evil? *A.* Yes, certainly; but capital, as such, would cease to exist.

Q. Is not wealth in private hands an evil? *A.* Large accumulations of wealth by individuals are an evil, but the evil is different in kind, for they could no longer be used to carry out the capitalist system.

Q. Why not? *A.* Because the capitalist system presupposes the existence of two factors, and is unworkable and impossible without them.

Q. What are these two factors? *A.* First, private property in accumulated wealth; and, secondly, the presence of property-less labourers in the market who are forced to sell their services at cost price.

Q. What do you mean by cost price? *A.* The wages which will give them a bare subsistence and enable them to work on the morrow, this being the cost of the daily reproduction of the force or power to labour which constitutes their sole property.

Q. Could not the capitalists obtain labourers by offering them the full value of their

productions? *A.* Possibly, but since the only object of the capitalist system is to produce for profit, they would cease to wish to employ them when the source of interest and profit was cut off.

Q. But supposing, in spite of their previous principles, they still wished to employ them, what would be the result? *A.* The labourers would have nothing to complain of in this case; but the result would be that private capital would gradually dwindle away, since it would not be replaced by surplus-value, and the capitalist could not compete with the State on equal terms.

Q. What has hitherto prevented the workers from combining for the overthrow of the capitalist system? *A.* Ignorance and disorganisation.

Q. What has left them in ignorance? *A.* The system itself, by compelling them to spend all their lives upon monotonous toil, and leaving them no time for education.

Q. What account have they been given of the system which oppresses them? *A.* The priest has explained that the perpetual presence of the poor is necessitated by a law of God; the economist has proved its necessity by a law of Nature; and between them they have succeeded in convincing the labourers of the hopelessness of any opposition to the capitalist system.

Q. How is it that the labourers cannot see for themselves that they are legally robbed? *A.* Because the present method of extracting their surplus value is one of fraud rather than of force, and has grown up gradually.

Q. Has this not always been the case? *A.* Certainly not. Under the slave-owning system there was no fraud involved, but only force.

Q. What similarity is there between the slave-owning and the capitalist system? *A.* The parallel is complete, with the single exception that force was used in place of fraud.

Q. Explain this. *A.* The slave-owner received the produce of the slave's toil, and returned to him part of it in the shape of food, clothing, and shelter. The capitalist takes the whole produce of the labourer's toil, and returns to him such proportion of it as will provide him with necessaries.

Q. What constitutes the chief difference between capitalism and slave-owning? *A.* The fact that the capitalist goes through the form of bargaining with the labourer as to the amount of the portion of the produce that shall be returned to him.

Q. What is this farce called? *A.* Freedom of contract.

Q. In what sense is it free? *A.* In this sense—that the labourer is free to take what is offered or nothing.

Q. Has he anything to fall back upon? *A.* He has absolutely nothing in countries where the tyranny of capitalism is untempered by any form of Socialism.

Q. What is the case in England? *A.* Humanity has revolted against the reign of the capitalist, and provided the workhouse as a last resource for the labourer, taxing the capitalist for its support.

Q. How has the capitalist turned this piece of Socialism to his own ends? *A.* By rendering the workhouse so unpleasant to the poor that starvation is often thought preferable; and by insisting that no useful work done in the workhouse shall be brought into his market, where its presence would disturb his calculations, and impair his profits.

Q. Why does he allow it to exist at all? *A.* Because he knows that its existence may stave off for a time the Revolution which he dreads.

Q. What do you mean by the Revolution? *A.* The complete change in the conditions of society which will abolish all unjust privileges, distinctions of rank, or difference between wage-payers and wage-earners, and will render the workers their own employers.

Q. What other method of appropriating surplus-value has prevailed besides those of slavery and capitalism? *A.* In purely agricultural countries, as for instance in Ireland and South-Eastern Europe, different types of landlordism have been quite as effectual.

Q. Does landlordism represent the forcible or the fraudulent method? *A.* Force is its chief element, since it labels the surplus-value 'rents,' and uses all the resources of civilisation in the shape of police and soldiery to enforce their payment by the people, but the element of fraud is present, since the labourer is told that he is free to give up his holding if he does not wish to pay rent.

Q. Mention a special type of landlordism? *A.* The system called *corvée*.

Q. How does this work? *A.* The labourer is allowed to work on his own land for a certain number of days, and to keep for himself all the produce of his toil during that time, on the condition that he spends all his remaining time upon the land which belongs to the landlord, who appropriates its fruits.

Q. How does this differ from the capitalist method of appropriation? *A.* Chiefly in the fact that the labourer knows exactly when he is working for his own benefit, and when for that of the landlord; while under the capitalist system there is no line of distinction and neither he nor anyone else can tell precisely the exact length of time during which he gives away his labour gratis, although it is clear that his first two or three hours are for himself, and the remaining seven or eight for some one else.

Q. Can you show this to be the case? *A.* As the producers only get from one-fourth to one-third of the total produce, the remainder of their work obviously goes to benefit the non-producers.

V.—MACHINES AND THEIR USE.

Q. What is the use of machinery? *A.* Labour-saving machinery is used, as its name indicates, to reduce the cost of production.

Q. What do you mean by the cost of production? *A.* The amount of human labour necessary to produce useful things.

Q. How ought this reduction of the necessary hours of labour to affect the labouring class? *A.* It ought to benefit them in every way, by increasing their wealth as well as their opportunities of leisure.

Q. Has it done so? *A.* Certainly not.

Q. Why not? *A.* Because the capitalist class has appropriated to itself nearly all the benefit.

Q. What, then, has been the result? *A.* The available surplus-value has largely increased, and the idle classes have become more numerous and more idle.

Q. Support your opinion by that of an economist? *A.* "It is questionable," says John Stuart Mill, "if all the improvements in machinery have lightened the day's toil of a single man."

Q. In what aspect of the case is this correct? *A.* In respect of the whole labouring class as a body.

Q. What is the effect upon individuals of the introduction of a labour-saving machine? *A.* It lightens the day's toil to a certain number of labourers most effectually, by taking away their employment altogether, and throwing them helpless on the streets.

Q. Is such a lamentable event frequent? *A.* It is a matter of every-day occurrence.

Q. What is the result to their employer? *A.* He "saves their labour" in the sense of getting the same work done by the machine without having to pay their wages.

Q. Is this a permanent advantage to him individually? *A.* As long as he has a monopoly of the machine, it is a great advantage to him, but other capitalists soon introduce it also, and compel him to share the spoil with them.

Q. In what way is this result obtained? *A.* By competition. The owners of the machines try to undersell each other, with a view to keeping the production in their own hands.

Q. How far does competition beat down prices? *A.* Until the normal level of capitalist profits is reached, below which they all decline to go.

Q. What inference do the economists draw from the result of competition? *A.* That the whole nation shares equally in the advantage of the machine, since prices are everywhere reduced.

Q. What fallacy underlies this argument? *A.* The same fallacy which vitiates every argument of the economists, and that is the assumption that the labourers have no right to complain so long as the employers are content with taking only the normal rate of profits as their share of the surplus-value.

Q. What other consideration is omitted by the economists? *A.* The fact that society is divided into two classes of idlers and workers. They assume again that the workers have no right to complain, so long as they seem to obtain an equal share with the idlers in the advantage gained by the saving of their own toil.

Q. How do they seem to share this advantage? *A.* By the reduction in cost of articles which they buy.

Q. Is not cheapness of production a benefit to the workers? *A.* It is only an apparent, not a real benefit.

Q. How could it be rendered real? *A.* It would be real if all who consumed were also workers. As it is, the working-class get all the disadvantage of the low wages, and of the adulteration, which has been described as a form of competition.

Q. What makes the reduction of cost appear advantageous to the wage-earners? *A.* The fact that their wages are paid in money.

Q. How is this? *A.* The money-price of all articles has risen enormously during the last three centuries owing to the increased abundance of gold. The money wages have risen also, but not in anything like the same proportion.

Q. What has prevented them from rising in the same proportion? *A.* The cheapening of the labour-cost of the necessaries of life, which has thus been rendered an empty boon to the wage-earners.

Q. Give an instance of the misapprehension of these facts. *A.* The regular boast of the Free-Traders, recently reiterated by John Bright, is that the Liberals have given the labourers two loaves whereas the Tories wished them to be content with only one.

Q. What is this boast based upon? *A.* The undeniable fact that bread is cheaper in England under Free Trade than under Protection.

Q. Then how can you tell that the labourer does not get twice as much bread as he would otherwise enjoy? *A.* Simply because it has been proved again and again on the highest authority that the labourers as a body at present obtain so bare a subsistence that it does not suffice to keep them in health; therefore they could not at any time have lived on half the amount.

Q. What would be the effect if bread became twice as dear? *A.* Wages would necessarily rise. A Wiltshire farm labourer could not maintain his family on half their present food; and though capital cares nothing about individuals, it takes good care that the labourers shall not starve in a body.

Q. What, then, is the general result of the cheapness which is caused by the introduction of labour-saving machinery? *A.* The advantage of the cheapening of luxuries is obviously reaped directly by the idlers, since the workers cannot afford to purchase them. In the case of necessaries the advantage seems at first sight to be shared between idlers and workers; but ultimately the idlers secure the whole advantage, because money-wages are proportioned to what money will buy, and the iron law keeps them down to the price of a bare subsistence.

Q. Do the labourers suffer any direct disadvantage from machinery? *A.* Certainly they do. Numbers of them are thrown out of employment at each fresh invention; their position is rendered precarious in the extreme; and there is a constant tendency to replaced skilled labour by unskilled, and men by women.

Q. If this is so, would not the workers be wise to destroy the machinery? *A.* To destroy what they have themselves produced, merely because it is at present stolen from them, would be absurd.

Q. What course should they pursue? *A.* Organise their ranks; demand restitution of their property; keep it under their control; and work it for their own benefit.

VI.—DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH.

Q. Is it the case that the prices of articles would be raised if the community were organised on Socialist principles? *A.* Not necessarily, nor in most cases; but in some this would certainly be the result.

Q. On what principle? *A.* The principle governing the price of all ordinary things would be that the worker should receive the full value of his labour.

Q. Would not this always raise the price of his production? *A.* No, it would only ensure its being paid to him instead of to an idler.

Q. Explain this? *A.* In many cases the full labour-value of an article is paid by the consumer, although the producer gets only his bare subsistence, all the surplus-value being intercepted by the numerous unnecessary middlemen.

Q. Why is this not always the case? *A.* Because the employer of labour, instead of always dividing the surplus-value among middlemen, often competes with his neighbours by offering a share of it to the consumer.

Q. How can he do this? *A.* Simply by selling his goods below their full labour-value.

Q. Give an instance of this? *A.* A notorious example of this occurs in the match-box trade, for although several middlemen secure their share of the surplus-value of the match-box makers, they are still sold to the public at a lower price than their full labour-value, the buyer thus becoming a partner in the employer's theft by receiving a share of his stolen goods.

Q. Who are the middlemen who intercept and share the surplus-value produced by the labourer? *A.* The unnecessary agents and distributors, the holders of stocks, bonds, and shares of every description, and all those who are supported by the wealth-producers either in idleness or in useless labour, of which latter class of persons flunkeys are a conspicuous example.

Q. Do not the rich support their own flunkeys, and maintain in comfort those who produce luxuries for them? *A.* Certainly not. These people are maintained entirely by the workers, though the maintenance is passed through the hands of the rich, who therefore imagine that they produce it.

Q. Is not expenditure for luxuries "good for trade," and so beneficial to the workers? *A.* It is only good for the trade of the producers of luxuries by exactly the amount which it withdraws from the producers of useful things.

Q. Would not the money employed upon luxuries otherwise be idle? *A.* By no means. The rich are not in the habit of keeping their riches in a stocking, and the bankers are compelled to keep all the money lent them in full use, or they would themselves be ruined.

Q. What then is the result of spending money upon luxuries? *A.* The destruction of a certain amount of wealth and the absolute waste of the labour spent in reproducing it.

Q. Does not the expenditure of a wealthy man in keeping up a large household benefit the poor? *A.* Decidedly not.

Q. What then is the result of spending money in maintaining flunkeys? *A.* The utter waste of all the food and clothing they consume.

Q. Would not they in any case consume food and clothing? *A.* Certainly: but they would repay the waste by producing useful things themselves.

Q. How does all this work affect the labourers? *A.* It compels them to produce more food and clothing than would otherwise be necessary, or else to consume less of it themselves.

Q. How is this? *A.* Because the food which the flunkeys eat cannot be also eaten by the labourers; while the labourers are obliged to produce it, since somebody must do this, and it is perfectly evident that the flunkeys do not.

Q. Does not this apply to all the idle classes? *A.* Certainly. We have only to ask where the food which they eat and the clothes which they wear, come from, and we see that they are produced by somebody else without any return being made for them by the idlers. That is to say, they represent unpaid labour, or in other words surplus-value.

Q. Then if one man is living in idleness, what is the inevitable result? *A.* That another man is producing what he consumes; or that several are each doing more than their fair share of work to make up for his deficiency.

Q. How would Socialism deal with this question of work? *A.* It would compel every one to do his share of the necessary work of the world.

Q. Under what penalty? *A.* Under penalty of starvation, since those who refused to work would get nothing to eat.

Q. What would happen to the old and infirm and the children? *A.* They would be, as they are in any society, a perfectly just charge upon the able-bodied workers, increasing the necessary work of the world by the amount which must be devoted to their maintenance and education.

Q. Would the workers then receive the full value of their toil? *A.* Deductions from it for such purposes as those just mentioned are, of course, inevitable, and must be made under every form of society, as well as certain other deductions for other measures of public utility.

Q. What deductions can be prevented by Socialism? *A.* Nothing could be subtracted from the labourers' reward for the purpose of maintaining in idleness any persons whatever who are capable of work, nor for the aggrandisement of private individuals, nor for the furthering of objects of no public utility merely to satisfy individual caprice.

VII.—THEORIES OF PROFIT.

Q. What is the use of money? *A.* It facilitates the exchange of articles, especially those of unequal value.

Q. How is this effected? *A.* If A produces wheat, and B cloth, money serves as a convenient measure of the labour-value of each. A exchanges his wheat for money, and buys cloth with that. B exchanges his cloth for money and buys wheat with that.

Q. Are they both enriched by the bargain? *A.* Not in the matter of exchange-value, since wheat which has cost a day's labour exchanges for cloth which has cost the same, but in the matter of use-value they are both enriched, since each gets what he wants, and gives what he does not want.

Q. Is this always the case? *A.* Always, in the ordinary exchange between producers who are working for their own benefit, and exchange goods for money, and that money for other goods.

Q. Can a profit be made out of money transactions altogether apart from the exchange of goods? *A.* Yes, by gambling either on the race-course or on the stock-exchange, but in this case one gambler's gain is another's loss.

Q. What other form of exchange now prevails? *A.* That of those who, not being workers, produce no goods, but yet have command of money.

Q. How do they use it? *A.* They exchange their money for goods, and those goods back again into money.

Q. Then what is the use of the process if they only get money at the end, when they had money at the beginning? *A.* Because at the second exchange they get more money than they gave at the first.

Q. How has this fact been explained by economists? *A.* By the mere statement that the money-monger either gave less money than the goods were worth at the first exchange, or got more than they were worth at the second.

Q. What consideration did they omit in this theory? *A.* The fact that these same money-mongers are in the market both as buyers and sellers, and that without a miracle they cannot all gain on both transactions, but must lose in selling precisely the amount they gain in buying.

Q. What other inadequate explanation has been put forward? *A.* The theory that in buying machinery they buy something which has the power of adding an extra exchange-value to the goods upon which it is employed.

Q. What made this theory seem plausible? *A.* The fact that with a machine the labourer can produce goods much faster than without it.

Q. Does not this add exchange-value to his productions? *A.* Not unless he has a monopoly of the machine, and can thus fear no competition except that of hand-labour; otherwise the exchange-value of his goods sinks in proportion to the increased rapidity of their production.

Q. Explain this. *A.* If he can make two yards of cloth in the time which he formerly devoted to one, and all other weavers can do the same, the price or exchange-value of two yards sinks to the former price of one; though, of course, the use-value of two is always greater than that of one.

Q. Are not monopolies frequent? *A.* No individual capitalist can keep a monopoly for any great length of time, as all inventions become common property at last, and, although it is true that the capitalists as a body have a monopoly of machinery as against the workers, which adds a fictitious value to machine-made goods, and will continue to do so until the workers take control of the machinery, yet this extra value is too small to account for a tithe of the profits of the money-mongers.

Q. What is the one thing needful, which they must be able to buy in the market, in order to make these profits? *A.* Something which shall itself have the power of creating exchange-value largely in excess of its own cost, in order that at the end of the transaction they may have secured more money than they have expended.

Q. What is to be bought in the market having this power? *A.* There is only one thing with this power, and that is the labourer himself, who offers his labour-force on the market.

Q. On what terms does he offer it? *A.* Competition compels him to be content with its cost price.

Q. What is this? *A.* Subsistence wages, that is, enough to keep himself and his family from starvation.

Q. What does this represent in labour? *A.* The value produced by his labour expended usefully for two or three hours every day.

Q. Is he, then, at leisure after two or three hours' work? *A.* By no means. The bargain between him and the capitalist requires him to give ten hours or more of work for the cost price of two or three.

Q. Why does he make such an unequal bargain? *A.* Because, in spite of all so-called freedom of contract, he has no other choice.

Q. Has the capitalist no conscience? *A.* Individuals cannot alter the system, even if they would; and the capitalist is now often represented by a company, which, if it had a conscience, could not pay its five per cent.

Q. After the labourer has produced the price of his own wages, what does he go on to do? *A.* To produce exchange-value, for which he is not paid at all, for the benefit of the capitalist.

Q. What is the value produced by this unpaid labour called? *A.* Surplus value, as we said before.

Q. What does the capitalist do with the surplus value? *A.* He keeps as much as he can for himself under the name of profits of his business.

Q. Why does he not keep it all? *A.* Because out of it he has to pay landlords, other capitalists from whom he has borrowed capital, bankers and brokers who have effected these loans for him, middlemen who sell his wares to the public, and finally the public, in order to induce them to buy from him instead of from rival manufacturers.

Q. How does he justify this appropriation of surplus-value by his class? *A.* He tries to persuade himself that capital has the power of breeding and producing interest by as natural a process as the reproduction of animals.

Q. Can he find any dupes to believe in so absurd a theory? *A.* He instils a genuine belief into himself and others that this is really the case.

Q. What is the inference from this? *A.* That the labourer ought to be grateful to the capitalist for furnishing him with employment.

Q. For what have the labourers really to thank the capitalist? *A.* For defrauding them of three-quarters of the fruits of their toil, and rendering leisure, education, and natural enjoyment almost impossible for them to attain.

VIII.—INADEQUATE OBJECTIONS.

Q. What kind of objectors do Socialists mostly meet with? *A.* Those who from interested motives prefer the present anarchy to the proposed organisation of labour, and those who consider Socialists as a set of well-meaning persons busied about an impracticable scheme.

Q. What objection do they chiefly urge against Socialism? *A.* That Socialists, if poor, are interested schemers for the overthrow of an excellent society, in order that, being themselves idle and destitute, they may be able to seize upon the wealth accumulated by more industrious people.

Q. What have they to say against Socialists of wealth and industry? *A.* That they must obviously be insincere in their Socialism, or they would at once give away all their capital, instead of denouncing what they themselves possess.

Q. How should Socialist working men meet the charge? *A.* With contempt. The idea that people who are treated with injustice have no right to demand justice because they would be gainers by its enforcement, is too absurd to require refutation.

Q. How should wealthy Socialists reply? *A.* They should point out that, so long as the capitalist system remains, it is impossible to evade the responsibility of wealth by merely transferring it to other persons.

Q. Explain this by an instance? *A.* In a capitalist society the mere purchasing of an article in the market involves the exploitation of the labourers who produced it; and this is not in any way remedied or atoned for by giving away the article afterwards to somebody else.

Q. How does this illustrate the case? *A.* The owner of capital cannot prevent it from exploiting the labourers by giving it away. It cannot be used as Socialism enjoins except under an organised system of Socialism.

Q. Can the wealthy Socialist do nothing to frustrate the capitalist system? *A.* He can mitigate the severity of competition in all his personal relations. Beyond that he can do nothing except use his wealth in helping on the Socialist cause.

Q. How may Socialists reply to the taunt that their scheme is impracticable? *A.* By quoting the opinion of J. S. Mill that the difficulties of Socialism are greatly over-rated; and they should declare that, so far from being an impracticable Utopian scheme, it is the necessary and inevitable result of the historical evolution of society.

Q. How can they prove this? *A.* They can point to the fact that production is becoming more and more socialised every day.

Q. Explain this? *A.* Production, which was once carried on by individuals working separately for themselves, is now organised by companies and joint-stock concerns, by massing large numbers of producers together, and uniting their efforts for a common end.

Q. For what end? *A.* For the profits of the shareholders of the company.

Q. How could the State take advantage of this? *A.* By taking into its own hands the organisation which the capitalists have prepared for it, and using it for the benefit of the producers alone.

Q. Would not the capitalists start fresh companies in opposition to those managed by the State? *A.* They could no more compete with the State than they can now with the Post Office; and they would be equally helpless in the case of the Railways and all the great industries.

Q. Would it not be easier for the capitalists to compete with the State in the case of smaller concerns? *A.* It would in any case be impossible for them to get labourers, since the State would be paying the labourers the full value of their labour, and they would therefore decline to work for the capitalists.

Q. Would the expropriated capitalists be entitled to compensation? *A.* As a matter of principle it is unjust to compensate the holders of stolen goods out of the pockets of those who have suffered the theft; but it might be expedient to grant some compensation in the shape of annuities.

Q. What is the tendency of the evolution of society? *A.* It tends always towards

more complex organisation, and to a greater interdependence of all men upon each other; each individual becoming more and more helpless by himself, but more and more powerful as part of a mightier society.

Q. Is it true that individuality would be crushed by Socialism? *A.* On the contrary, it is crushed by the present state of society, and would then alone be fairly developed.

Q. What does J. S. Mill say on this point? *A.* "The restraints of Communism would be freedom in comparison with the present condition of the majority of the human race. The generality of labourers in this and most other countries have as little choice of occupation or freedom of locomotion, are practically as dependent on fixed rules and on the will of others, as they could be in any system short of actual slavery."

Q. What does Mr. Fawcett say on the same subject? *A.* That there is no choice of work or possibility of change for the factory hand; and that the boy who is brought up to the plough must remain at the plough-tail to the end of his days.

Q. What other objection has been urged against Socialism? *A.* That it will take away all the incentives to exertion, and induce universal idleness in consequence.

Q. Is this the case? *A.* On the contrary, it will apply the strongest incentive to all alike, for all must work if they wish to eat, while at present large classes are exempted by the accident of birth from the necessity of working at all.

Q. Name another common objection. *A.* That Socialism will destroy culture and refinement by compelling the leisured classes who have a monopoly of them to do some honest work.

Q. Is this the case? *A.* On the contrary, it will bring the opportunity of culture and refinement to all by putting an end to the wearisome labour that continues all day long; while the leisured class will learn by experience that work is a necessity for perfect culture.

Q. What other objection is often urged? *A.* That State management would give rise to jobbery and corruption.

Q. How may this be answered? *A.* By pointing to the present State organisation either of the police or the Post Office, in neither of which are jobbery and corruption conspicuous features.

Q. Would not the State be in a different position as regards the people? *A.* At present it is the people's master, but under any democratic scheme of Socialism it would become their servant, and merely be charged with carrying out their will.

Q. Name another objection to the practicability of Socialism? *A.* The cuckoo cry that "if you make all men equal to-day, they will all be unequal to-morrow, because of their different natural capabilities."

Q. What equality do Socialists aim at? *A.* Equality of opportunities, not of natural powers.

Q. What is the Socialist view of the duties of those who are especially gifted by nature? *A.* That they owe a larger return to the community than those who are less naturally gifted.

Q. What is the capitalist view of their rights and duties? *A.* That they are independent of all duties, and have the right of taxing the community, which supports them, for luxuries and waste to the full extent of their individual caprice.

Q. In accordance with this view, what method do capitalists take in dealing with them? *A.* Capitalists arrange that persons of extra industry and talent shall have every opportunity of enslaving their less fortunate neighbours, thus adding an inequality of conditions to the natural inequality of talent.

Q. What is the Socialist method? *A.* Socialists insist that the talented as well as the cunning shall be restrained by the organisation of society from appropriating the surplus-value created by their less fortunate neighbours.

IX.—GLUTS AND THEIR RESULTS.

Q. To what is the periodical depression of trade, with its accompanying distress among the labourers, due? *A.* To the fact that individual capitalists are striving to enrich themselves alone, instead of co-operating to supply the needs of the community.

Q. Explain this? *A.* During a period of activity, when prices are high and the markets for goods are not over-stocked, a great competition goes on among capitalists, who wish to take advantage of the high prices and produce more quickly the goods which can command them.

Q. What is the effect of this competition? *A.* All the available labourers are employed; all the machinery is set going; and no effort is spared by the manufacturers to produce the utmost quantity of the goods which are in demand on the market.

Q. What is the inevitable result? A. A glut is shortly created of these goods. Far more than were wanted have been made. All the store-houses are full, and no more purchasers are to be found.

Q. What is the next step in the process? A. The capitalists soon get tired of heaping up what they cannot sell, and wish to stop production.

Q. How can they manage this? A. They turn off all their extra hands, and propose such a reduction of wages that the rest agree to strike rather than accept it.

Q. With what result? A. Production is stopped for a time, and the capitalists are not obliged to pay wages, or else agree to pay only for half time until the glut has gradually disappeared, as the goods are absorbed by the public.

Q. What follows? A. A fresh demand arises. The workers are all employed again, and the glut recurs with the utmost regularity.

Q. Is there any necessity for this periodical distress? A. Not the smallest,

Q. What is it that vitiates the whole system of production at present? A. The prevailing idea that goods are not to be produced for the sake of their usefulness, but for the sake of making a profit for capitalists and giving employment to labourers.

Q. What definite evil is the result of this idea? A. Adulteration and fraud of every description; cheap and nasty wares driving expensive and sound goods out of the market.

Q. Who are the greatest sufferers from all this? A. The workers themselves.

Q. In what way? A. Being the least able to protect themselves against adulteration and fraud, they are cheated to a fearful extent in all that they buy; and are the first to suffer from a glut in the market.

Q. How is this? A. Because they are first compelled to produce more food and clothing than can possibly be sold at a profit, and then are deprived of the means of buying what they have themselves produced, although they are in urgent need both of food and clothing, because the capitalists throw them out of work as soon as their work ceases to pay its percentage.

Q. What advice is given to the labourer by well-meaning reformers who do not understand the labour question? A. To be sober and thrifty.

Q. Is this advice sound? A. As addressed to the individual struggling against his neighbours under the capitalist system, it is excellent.

Q. How can it benefit the individual? A. It may enable him to "rise" into the capitalist class; that is, to exchange his position in the ranks of the oppressed for one in those of the oppressors.

Q. What is the Socialist criticism of this advice? A. That as a panacea for the wrongs of the system, or as a cure for the sufferings of the labourers *as a class*, it is inadequate, because a general improvement in intelligence, thrift, and sobriety, if shared by the whole class of labourers, merely supplies the capitalist class with a better instrument for the production of surplus-value.

Q. What is the result of improvement in the ability of the workers in the present system? A. The same result as an improvement in machinery, namely, that goods are more rapidly produced by the workers, and accumulated by the capitalists; so that the periodical glut, with its accompanying crisis, depression, and distress, is more quickly achieved than before.

Q. Is there any possibility of an incidental advantage to the labourers? A. Only in this respect: the labourer is a two-edged tool in the hands of the capitalist; and when it becomes sharper and more efficient for his work, it becomes also more likely to cut the hand that uses it.

Q. Explain what you mean by this? A. A general improvement among the labourers in intelligence and sobriety will probably be followed by improved organisation, with a view to expropriating the classes that confiscate the fruits of their labour.

Q. Is this the end at which so-called "social reformers" aim? A. By no means; but they seem incapable of understanding either the inefficacy in one way, or the efficacy in another, of their well-meant advice to the labourers as a class.

Q. What advice do the Malthusians give to the labourer? A. To limit his family, as they think that overpopulation is the cause of the distress.

Q. Is this the case? A. It has never been so in England.

Q. How can this be proved? A. By the fact that the amount of wealth produced which might be exchanged for food for the workers, if the capitalist system did not prevent it, has always increased faster than the number of producers.

Q. Why is this? A. Because the labour of those who are working in concert is far more efficient than that of isolated workers, and machinery vastly enhances this efficiency.

Q. What is the element of truth in the Malthusian theory? A. It is perfectly true that a limited space of land cannot support an unlimited number of people, but as even England, to say nothing of the world, has not reached that limit to population, it has at present no bearing on the case.

Q. What is the element of truth as regards families? *A.* It is perfectly true that in the present capitalist system the man who has no children at all is in a better pecuniary position than the man with a large family, since, just as in actual warfare, children in the modern competitive battle-field are an encumbrance, where every man has to fight for his living, and maintain his family as best he may.

Q. How does the standpoint of the Malthusians differ from that of the Socialists? *A.* The former accept the basis of the capitalist society, namely, the existence of two distinct classes of wage-payers and wage-earners, and merely advise the workers to attempt to secure a larger wage.

Q. How do Socialists regard this advice? *A.* They consider that the discussion as to whether the workers shall enjoy one-half or one-third of the wealth which they have produced is comparatively unimportant, and they continue to urge the rightful claim of the workers to the full value of their own productions.

Q. How soon is this claim likely to be attended to? *A.* As soon as ever the majority of the workers really understand their own position, and consequently become convinced of the advantages of Socialism.

Q. How can the capitalists be converted to the same view? *A.* Appeals to justice may make isolated conversions of individual capitalists, but nothing short of a display of organised force will enable the idlers as a body to perceive the advantage of taking their due share in the necessary work of society under a just system of Socialism.

X.—REVOLUTION.

Q. On what ground do capitalists defend the principle of competition? *A.* On the ground that it brings into play a man's best qualities.

Q. Does it effect this? *A.* This is occasionally its result; but it also brings out his worst qualities, by stimulating him to struggle with his fellows for the relative improvement of his own position rather than for the absolute advancement of the interests of all.

Q. Why does this happen? *A.* Because in ordinary competition one man's gain is another's loss.

Q. What is the theory of the Survival of the Fittest? *A.* That the class of persons who are most fitted to live and propagate their race in the conditions with which it is surrounded, is certain to survive the rest.

Q. Are the existing social conditions favourable to the survival of those persons whose character renders them most valuable to society? *A.* On the contrary, they favour the survival of the most valueless.

Q. What is the final result of such conditions and surroundings as the filth, foul air; and squalor of a town rookery? *A.* The crushing out of those who are least able to adapt themselves to these surroundings; and the consequent survival of those who are most fit for filth, but least for decent social life.

Q. Does the law of the Survival of the Fittest affect men in the same way as it affects the lower animals? *A.* No; because it is possible for men to alter their surroundings, while other animals must simply adapt themselves to them, whatever they may be.

Q. What is the Revolution for which Socialists strive? *A.* A Revolution in the methods of the distribution of wealth corresponding to that which has already taken place in the means of its production.

Q. What change has already taken place? *A.* Wealth is now almost entirely produced by the associated effort of great numbers of men working in concert, instead of by individual effort as in former times; while individuals still possess command of its distribution, and use their power in their own interests.

Q. How are forms of government changed so as to re-adjust them to the economical changes in the forms of production which have been silently evolving in the body of society? *A.* By means of Revolutions.

Q. Give an instance of this? *A.* The French Revolution of 1789.

Q. Did that Revolution fail to attain its objects? *A.* Certainly not; but its objects were not those at which Socialists aim.

Q. What were its objects? *A.* The political expression of the fact that feudalism was demolished, and the reign of capitalism established on its ruins.

Q. What do you mean by this? *A.* The overthrow of the political supremacy of the landed aristocracy, and the establishment of a bourgeois plutocracy; that is, putting the political power into the hands of the merchants and money-lords of the middle-class.

Q. What change in the forms of production had rendered this inevitable? *A.* The

fact that the possession of agricultural land had ceased to be the chief means to the attainment of wealth.

Q. What, then, had taken its place? A. The possession of capital and the use of machinery.

Q. In what sense was that Revolution a selfish struggle? A. After the displacement of the upper by the middle-class in political and social supremacy, the latter established its own power irrespectively of the rights of any other class.

Q. Is not the struggle which precedes and heralds the Social Revolution one of selfish class interests in the same way? A. By no means; Socialists do not aim at the supremacy of a class or section of the community at the expense of other sections.

Q. Do they not wish the workers to control the State? A. Certainly they do.

Q. Is not this the supremacy of a class? A. No, for they insist that every able-bodied person of sound mind should do a fair share of necessary work. When all are workers, the workers will be no longer a class, but a nation.

Q. What, then will become of the class-selfishness of the workers? A. Selfishness will then become public spirit, when the motives which formerly led men to work for the interests and advancement of themselves alone, operate for the benefit of the whole human race with which their class has become identified.

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