

ARTICLE II.

THE NATURAL THEOLOGY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE.

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No. IV.

LABOR AND CAPITAL.

LABOR is the element of production which man furnishes ; it is exertion which has value. In strict analysis all that labor can directly accomplish is transfer, a movement of bodies as wholes ; a removal or readjustment of their parts ; a commutation or commingling of particles preparatory to vital or to chemical action. All beyond this, and even much of this, is accomplished by natural forces. The farmer breaks up the soil and casts in the seed, and for the present his labor is ended. The manufacturer unites fitting material, or brings together appropriate ingredients, but does not impart the strength of fiber which binds the cloth, the cohesive force which compacts into a machine the wood and the metal, nor the affinity which causes the oil and the alkali to unite in soap.

This resolution of manual labor into simple mechanical changes has no particular importance, as the objects contemplated in the transfers are very different, and give the ground of its chief decisions. A first object is increase of quantity : a multiplication of that complete in itself, but deficient in amount. This end gives us the department of agriculture. The laborer works with the vital forces of nature, and meets their mechanical conditions in breaking up, enriching, planting the soil ; in feeding herds and sheltering flocks, It becomes the study of the farmer to understand the laws of vegetable and animal life, and to avail himself skilfully of those forces which work reproduction. He is, in the highest sense, a producer, employing powers little less marvellous than those of creation.

The second aim of manual labor is to change the form of that already secured. This gives us the department of manufacture. The laborer avails himself of the cohesive and chemical forces of nature; relies on the qualities given by the one and the new compounds secured by the other; selects material for the offices it has to subserve, shapes it to its position, and combines those elements which are the ingredients of his dyes, paints, or medicines. There is here a change of form in that which has been gained, but no increase of its quantity. In this department a lower grade of forces is employed. It is molecular and mechanical, not vital, properties that the artizan considers.

The third object of labor is a transfer in place. This transfer is not obscure, incidental to some other process aimed at, but is itself the immediate end. If a thread of wool barely cohesive is twisted, we change the position of its fibres; but this change is not wrought for itself, but for the modification of form, and the increased strength which follow from it. If a skein of yarn is plunged into the dye, its place is changed, yet only in reference to a change of color; but when merchandise is shipped from place to place, the transfer is the obvious gain contemplated. This department is that of commerce. Here the laborer works only with the power-agents, the mechanical agents of nature. If, as in the consumption of fuel for the creation of steam, he employs other forces, it is only that he may resolve them through cylinder and piston into simple mechanical power. As in both the other departments of labor there is involved constant mechanical transfer, the power-agents are there also present to aid in its accomplishment. Though simple force is the whole manual contribution of man to the productive process, he is yet provided with inexhaustible, versatile, and mobile power-agents for furnishing even this. His ultimate attitude is that of a master, not of a servant: he obeys till he has wit to command.

It is worthy of note, that there is descent in the forces primarily employed as we pass from agriculture through

manufacture to commerce, from production to adaptation and exchange. In the first, we are operating with the ascending, in the second more frequently with the stationary, and in the third, with the descending, forces. The power which builds up the plant and animal is organic; is securing more complex, delicate, unstable compounds, and assumes what is termed an ascending action. Simple, elementary forces, like those of light and heat, are lodged in wood, oil, flesh, in a latent and more or less permanent form; ready, however, on slight provocation, to slip from these high points of composition back to their first rudimentary level. In the use of steam this actually takes place. There is a quick descent of elements to their simple forms. The heat is evolved which had long since been lodged in the fuel in the organic, upward movement. So is it also in the waterfall. The forces of evaporation and saturation compared with those of precipitation and the flow of rivers to the ocean, are constructive; inducing a more complex, advanced, and unstable state. The agriculturist belts on to drums driven by those forces through which nature breaks in on simple, mechanical equilibrium, and pushes forward its growth; while the power-agents, the chief instruments of the merchant, spring from the subsidence and return of elements to their first balance, when released by heat or by cold, at some high points of composition from the chemical or the vital powers. The manufacturer, intermediate between the two, uses chiefly the stationary affinities and cohesive forces of matter. Nature, whether quiescent, or flowing forward to the physical height of the rain drop, the figurative height of the organic products of wood and muscle, or ebbing thence in the rush of rivers to the ocean, the sinking of vital compounds into the heat and light and simpler elements which gave occasion to them, is ever yielding something to the labor of man.

This relation of agriculture to vital and ascending forces, so delicate and secret in their action, constitutes one among other reasons of its comparatively slow growth. It is only the most careful and balanced thought that is prepared to deal successfully with organic phenomena.

The efficiency of labor will depend on the character of the natural agents at its disposal — the fertility of the soil, its mineral wealth, the mildness of the climate, the available power-agents; on the amount and form of capital at its service, on the intelligence of the laborers, and on the freedom and security afforded by civil institutions. Liberty and justice are not causes, but conditions of the highest production. They give full play to those desires which impel acquisition. Suffering labor to reach its complete reward, they stimulate the producer with the hopes of unimpeded success.

The returns which nature yields to man's exertion may be, as we have seen, too great or too little. In a nice balance of ease and difficulty lies the highest stimulus — a relation that makes effort and skill necessary, yet amply rewards them. Though the fruits of the earth are sometimes too spontaneous for the highest industry, at least in low and savage life, her other resources are held in closer guardianship. The minerals, metals, oils, acids, gums, dyes, mechanical forces of the world, all require exertion and thought to secure and use them.

The amount and form of capital which labor possesses are determined by its previous exertion, are the momentum it has acquired by past movement. If capital has assumed the form of improvement, of tools, of varied and abundant machinery, of the manifold appliances of art, it places labor at once on a high vantage ground, makes its present tasks easy and its further progress natural. This, more than all other considerations, determines the immediate efficiency of labor, and implies the presence of the other conditions of success. But as capital, especially in these forms, is the result of past thought, it is the element of intelligence that is truly fundamental in labor. The other conditions are either already given, or are sure to follow, if this is present. While intelligence, spreading through all ranks, carrying with it liberty and safety, quickening desire and invention, is the root of production, it is evident that wide-spread thoughtful-

ness and control must be fed and maintained by a high moral and religious state. These, when universal, are light and heat shed down from heaven, not the glare of beacon-fires made conspicuous by the darkness, and casting in the air gigantic shadows of those who stand about them. We observe this in passing, waiting a later point for the full development of the dependence.

The several kinds of labor differ from each other in many particulars—in the skill they require, in the exertion they exact, and the trust they repose; in cleanness, respectability, and certainty of success; in the time required for the acquisition of skill, in the pleasure and play of mind they afford, and in the aid they demand of capital. Hence, between different kinds even of manual labor there is great diversity of wages. The more difficult employments receive a return not only apparently higher, but one actually so. The barriers which a demand for high skill, patience, or integrity oppose to success in any occupation prevent so many from engaging in it that there is left to those who possess the needful qualities a decided advantage. Though customs, prejudices, and social institutions may limit its action, competition is the final regulator of price in labor. With each rise, therefore, in the endowments of the laborer, there is a rapid falling off of competitors and a corresponding advance of wages. As in the pyramid narrowing on every side each successive platform gives a greatly reduced area, so with every increase of skill and character there is a rapid reduction of those who can meet the conditions, and hence an advance of recompence greater than the extra exertion or previous expenditure of time and money require.

He who furnishes mere muscle stands in such unfortunate competition with the inanimate and animate forces and with the most numerous and degraded class of his own species, as to find himself often pressed to the very verge of extinction, to a bitter, biting struggle for mere bread. Talent, on the other hand, united to education, secures an easy command of the market, and is able to put its labors at a price

which, contrasted with the wages of others, seems exorbitant. Though the lower ranks of life may be crowded to suffocation, there are air, light, comfort above. Not only is thoughtfulness thus made the chief element of success; with each increase of it, the reward is made unexpectedly great. Prizes are scattered in growing amounts along the upward way; and with each obstacle surmounted there comes a sudden gain of advantage. To him that hath is given, and he has more abundance.

The skilful laborer, also, while engaging in but one pursuit, can command a kindred degree of skill in other directions, or a proportionately larger amount of coarser work. The lawyer may repay by a half hour's thought a week's hard labor with saw and axe, one, two, or four days of mechanical labor, according to its craft, or five minutes of surgery. With his own power he works for himself in every employment — digs his garden with the force of ten Irishmen, builds his house with the hands of a half-dozen carpenters, or purchases his garments with an exertion but the tenth of that they have actually cost. He carries his own efficiency everywhere, and the mastery of one form of labor becomes a virtual mastery of all. The poor day-laborer, on the contrary, gets the pay of a drudge, whether he takes it in pill or writ, in food or clothing.

Toil itself, also, is made more and more optional as the workman advances in skill and increases his reward. Not only are the forms of it offered to us more various; we may put leisure among our gratifications, and, readily meeting the necessities of life, secure a command of time — of ourselves. The pressure of labor becomes lighter, its claims less imperative; and we are manumitted at least from the toil of a slave. Ignorance and dulness, in the meantime, are driven with a scourge; they are field-hands, sore of back and foot, under an un pitying task-master. To stop is to starve; and to advance is but to renew the pain of life, its unrequited toil and hopeless labor. The more civilized the nation, the wider apart have its upper and lower classes

usually fallen, both in character and advantages. With relatively greater severity have the laws of labor pressed upon those who by ignorance, vice, or misfortune have been placed at their mercy. Civilization is attended with an enlargement of population. The intelligence of which progress is the result is not evenly distributed; elements of barbarism still linger in some classes; and the several ranks, therefore, of society move forward with unequal rapidity; the advance leaving that hindermost negligent column upon which simple manual labor falls to endure a relatively larger share of the burdens and suffer an increasing disadvantage in the competition for success. When, with civilization, come the means of improvement, those who do not avail themselves of them fall under a still more severe regimen, a more tormenting discipline. The liability and the opportunity grow together, and the forces become more declared which bear us either backward or forward.

Labor is laid upon all; and the only avenue of escape is through intelligence; of general escape is through intelligence and morality. In barbarous forms of society the minimum amount of labor being sought for, the minimum amount of life is the result. As the race degenerate they approach extinction; and only as they accept more faithfully, fully, and intelligently the toil laid upon them, do they so increase in numbers and strength as to meet extensively and readily the difficulties of their position — as to accumulate in cities and villages, in machinery and implements, in the means of water and land carriages that enginery of capital which makes existence easy and luxury possible. By accepting, not by shirking toil; by marching through, not by shunning difficulties, does the race truly evade them.

In the the lowest state of society it is the highest type of manhood there present that rises, that separates itself by a little from its fellows, and shifts the heavier load on the weaker, in the main the baser. Knowledge overmasters ignorance; courage, cowardice; cunning, dulness; strength, weakness; activity, indolence; and the law becomes only

the more harsh, physical, and direct in its application as men sink in civilization. It may be felt by some that this is a hard law, difficult to be borne in the light of mercy and moral obligation; yet is it a most beneficent law, applicable to that low level of life which develops it. As men fall into barbarism, as they cease to be reached, not only by morality, but by the motives of ordinary thrift and foresight, they still fortunately find a governing force, a regenerating tendency; that which can reach them at the bottom of the lowest abyss. The fall is piteous; but the law which follows is a ray of light shot across the otherwise unbroken darkness. Disease, famine, violence, press upon these fugitive ranks; thin their numbers; sweep to oblivion those bearing the heaviest entail of sin; compel them to some activity, lodge power with the strongest, and force a foreign will on wills too weak to work reform. If that natural selection is good by which the most vigorous male leads the herd, by which the weaker brute is pushed to the earth by the stronger, and life gains ground by its own just ascendancy, not less are those natural forces which sift and winnow savage society, and, with terrible waste of the worthless, preserve a little seed that may become the source of a better harvest.

In the march of civilization, the same foes still press on the hindmost; with the gain on the one hand, that the road to improvement is more plain before them; and with the very common loss on the other, that the few have stolen so many advantages as to be able to hold the masses in easy, abject submission. Here, again, there is no extrication except through character. Ignorance may not stand on equal footing with knowledge; this would arrest progress by removing all motive to it, by relieving that cogent pressure which can alone impel nations onward. Men move on much as flocks are driven; with one in advance to call the leaders, and one in rear to spur the loiterers. It is fruitless and foolish to regret the severity of laws which, after all, no more than reach the exigency, which are the only laws that the stupidity, inertia, and obstinacy of the parties will suffer them to

feel. We need to draw attention constantly to the internal, subjective state, as that which is truly sad, truly to be regretted, to be labored with by what means and processes it is capable of; and not to lament those external conditions which can alone handle and control and hold fast, if not draw upward, the semi-rational, semi-moral beings to whom they apply. Let us come suddenly on the outside accidents and loathsome consequences of sin; let us contemplate these as simple; sensible, immediate facts, aside from the moral history they tell and state they indicate; aside from the sweep of the healthy, holy law which eliminates them, casts them up to the surface, and works an ultimate riddance, and our feelings will be very much those expressed by the novelist:

“How difficult to believe that anything so precious as a germ of immortal growth can have been buried under this dirt-heap, plunged into this cesspool of misery and vice. As often as I beheld the scene, it affected me with surprise and loathsome interest, much resembling, though in a far intenser degree, the feelings with which, when a boy, I used to turn over a plank or an old log that had long lain on the damp ground, and found a vivacious multitude of unclean and devilish-looking insects scampering to and fro beneath it. Without an infinite faith there seemed as much prospect of a blessed futurity for those hideous bugs and many-footed worms as for these brethren of our humanity and co-heirs of all our heavenly inheritance. Ah, what a mystery! Slowly, slowly, as after groping at the bottom of a deep, noisome, stagnant pool, my hope struggles upward to the surface, bearing the half-drowned body of a child along with it, and heaving it aloft for its life, and my own life, and all our lives. Unless these slime-clogged nostrils can be made capable of inhaling celestial air, I know not how the purest and most intelligent of us can reasonably expect ever to taste a breath of it.”

The resources of the globe are limited. It is capable under the best of cultivation of supporting only certain numbers. The reproductive powers of the race are without limit; and acting without check, proceed by a geometrical

ratio. They might, therefore, cause population quickly to reach the nutritive power of this, or indeed of any, globe. If then the treasures of production were all instantly available, if there were no obstacles to the complete occupation of land, and the immediate use of its utmost resources, it is evident that the final barrier might be quickly and violently approached, the wave of population breaking in foam thereon. The consequences of such a rapid increase and sudden arrest of life are fitted to startle the fancy of man, and impress his mind strongly with a sense of disproportion between the force employed and the provision made for its expansion. Facts, however, indicate a conclusion quite the reverse of our fears. The occasion of alarm is very much the same as in insect life, whose fecundity expressed in pure mathematics might seem about to darken the air with one impenetrable, unbroken swarm of diverse insects, and hide the ground from the revolted eye with their creeping larva, as if a sudden vital force had come to possess each particle of the crawling earth, and every molecule of the hot, humming air. Practically, however, the checks and compensations are so many and so adequate, that no very inconvenient multiplication for any length of time, or any large area takes place, and our marvel is directed to the balance and not to the disproportion of forces.

The restraints on population are not brought to bear suddenly, but begin at once to be felt, are not so severe in the later as in the earlier stages of growth, do not so much oppress the future as darken the past. The gifts of nature are withheld, are purchased only by increasing skill; her storehouses are unlocked one after another by growing intelligence, and any great increase of numbers must wait, therefore, on that wisdom and prudence which are able to provide for them. The earlier checks on savage and semi-civilized life are indeed severe; hardships, neglect, famine, pestilence, war, cannibalism, cruelly waste life which is left wholly exposed to them; and all the productiveness of the race is hardly sufficient to force into this state and maintain

there the merest fraction of that population which the world, more wisely handled, is waiting to nourish.

The checks are physical, such as the world has long been familiar with in its darker portions, and are much like those by which the multiplication of one class of insects is balanced by the greedy feeding of others. In barbarous life, a state of warfare is habitual; and one tribe is preyed upon by another, as carnivorous beasts destroy and straiten each other in their hunting. In semi-civilized life, where numbers are greater, famine not unfrequently sweeps through a nation, desolating large areas. In previous centuries, famines in Europe and in England were common and severe, and now occasionally overtake some peculiarly poor, or poorly cultivated, country, as India or Ireland. Yet every step in civilization carries a people farther from this danger. Famine in its extensive and terrible forms is even now hardly possible in the more wealthy, commercial nations. Most of the physical checks, exposure, war, epidemics, famine, are already, in the progress of society, either greatly mitigated or wholly removed.

As intelligence is the means by which alone we can secure in any good measure the gifts of nature, can draw from her bountiful storehouses the means of subsistence, it is chiefly in the savage and lower forms of human life that the positive checks of increase are constantly and severely applied, reducing man like his fellows of the field, to a constant struggle for existence.

As increasing knowledge rapidly develops the resources of the globe, it makes way for a corresponding growth of population, and, at the same time, provides a new system of mollified checks. Ambition, prudence, the hope of what may be gained, the fear of what may be lost, come in to do more unobservedly, and far less painfully and more perfectly, that which was previously accomplished by physical restraints. The more advanced classes are scarcely aware of any restriction of their actions, so fortified are they in prudence by custom, forecast, and common sentiment; yet they of all

others hold fast the advantages which nature and their social positions have granted them, enlarge upon these, and transmit them to their children. In enlightened nations, at the two extremes of society are seen respectively those still subject to physical checks, and those who impose the simple restraints of wisdom; who refuse by any act of their own to put social rank and privileges in jeopardy.

There is, then, no danger from growth: quite the reverse. Intelligence not only makes nature liberal, but imposes the simple checks of patience and prudence, teaches us to wait on her liberality, and not to squander the future by the haste and indiscretion of the present. It is the blind prolificness of low life that is devoured up by every accident, preyed on by disease, swept into the maw of famine, and trodden like dirt under the heel of war. Forces are matched to those who are to experience them, and we have but to discover the forecast of knowledge in what we do, to soften the harshest laws of nature. War still lingers so long among us, because there are so many who are willing to be, or can easily be pressed to be, its food. Did every common soldier leave an abundant and delightful home the ranks of armies would not be so easily filled.

The more densely populated parts of the globe are usually those in which the greatest comfort prevails. This is true not only of Europe and America, but even of China and Japan. No portion of the world has reached its maximum of population while the larger share of it lies comparatively waste. Yet tracts the most sparsely occupied have been frequently overpeopled, when judged by the ability of the inhabitants to secure sustenance; and departments of labor have been often crowded by those who would have found abundant employment if they had brought more skill and forethought to their tasks. Their race has never approached an exhaustion of the resources of nature, though it has often found occasion to shift and improve the means of their development; as unwise agriculture may speedily impoverish a soil that under more thrifty handling would constantly

develop new power. It is not wise men, but fools, that nature objects to multiply; these she presses to extinction, while still liberal with those. The more virtuous and intelligent a population, the more numerous and prosperous may it be; the more vicious and ignorant, the more is it open to every fling of fortune and bolt of fate. There have been too few men, not too many, to make life easy hitherto.

The point at which the pressure of population presents a problem of practical interest is chiefly that of the poorer classes. It has not been found possible to relieve the natural penalties of indolence and improvidence, to take men out from the laws and forces to which their own characters subject them without the rise of some unexpected and severe evil. Poor-laws that are ample and lenient tend to feed the mischief they are designed to remedy. The indolent cannot be laid as a load upon the industrious without becoming at once a dead weight, losing all remains of helpfulness, and settling into a state of contented dependence. The harsh spur of poverty is not found too severe for the tough skins and blunted sensibilities of the majority of those to whom it is applied; and aid must come in the way of opportunities opened, incipient enterprise nourished, a chrysalis of intellectual and spiritual life spun, rather than by any decided modification of the conditions and forces under which the problem of prosperity is wrought out. The refractory indolence of the prisoner is sometimes corrected by placing him in a position in which he must work or die, must pump the water, or allow it to rise and suffocate him. Such stern disposition do the laws of God make of the most dull and perverse of his subjects — of savage man :

“ A creature, squalid, vengeful and impure ;
Remorseless, and submissive to no law
But superstitious fear and abject sloth.”

As the work of sin deepens, the curse strengthens, and “ In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread ” becomes a most painful and persistent fact.

Another device which a hasty philanthropy has hit upon whereby to relieve the sad features of the world — to undo by a trick of management and new relations the work of sin, and unbind its heavy burdens — has been socialism, an artificial equality of labor and reward. Akin to this is the plausible, but equally impossible, claim of Ruskin, that all labors of like amounts should receive the same reward; that a scheme of justice weighing out wages according to the exertion expended should supersede commercial law. Such systems have no imperatives, no final persuasive to compel the purchase of the unprofitable labor, to impose the divided burden, each parcel to its own place. Nothing remains, therefore, but to let the willing do the work of the unwilling, the industrious, of the indolent; or to allow these last to accept and suffer the consequences of their own action. But this leads us back to God's method, and leaves us subject to those same fearful forces that have wrought such a melancholy work of scourging on the backs of the blind and perverse. Outside philanthropy finds itself in the dilemma of either robbing intelligence and industry of their reward, — every praiseworthy citizen taking a beggar to his shoulders, and travelling hopelessly with a burden of faults not his own, — or of casting off the unworthy, hemming them in once more to the fruits of their folly, till the bitterness of sin shall aid in working its cure, and help to create an appetite for something better.

A still graver difficulty with reforms which rest in a readjustment of natural relations is, that they confound justice and benevolence, and thus destroy the latter; that they require of the strong and faithful as a duty, as a direct obligation to their fellows, what is at most a gift, a kindness, the play of affection. If I am bound to the common service, if I am made its drudge, if my own is not after all my own, then benevolence can find no true play, and my spiritual life is choked by the tight-clasped hands of the the parasitic, portable poverty, wherewith God and nature have loaded me. Nothing can be spontaneous, religious;

since a false notion of law has made it necessary, obligatory.

God demands a growth in character as the final and indispensable condition of increasing prosperity; and this demand even philanthropy cannot evade. It must learn to work with it, and reach the external chiefly through the internal, the actions through the disposition which inspires them. A new state of things is of little moment save as it is accompanied by or gives rise to a new state of thoughts, of desires, a new balance of impulses. Such has always been the fool's paradise. God suffers it no more in nature than in religion. He conditions success on the presence of the mental qualities which secure it. The incipient movement is in mind; while growth is continued and completed by the favoring results of its own action, as life develops and builds up the very functions and organs which are to maintain it. The earlier Christians, under the force of their first love, held all things common — a system which they had by no means sufficient religious power to support. It presented at once to Ananias the fatal temptation, and drew forth the murmurings of the Grecians against the Hebrews. The church had much longer to travel the hard road of discipline which the selfishness of the human heart prepares for it, before it could safely enter into an equal and easy partnership of physical gifts.

As long as the staple with which Providence has to deal in the races of men is ignorance and indolence interstratified with sin, — stupidity made heavy, solid, opaque, and gritty with a wicked will, the unpliant and stubborn mass can only be broken and ground and reformed by the strongest and harshest of machinery. Unpitying poverty, absolute and severe want, must be allowed to force action, to sharpen instincts, to strengthen the will. War and pestilence must winnow the feeble races, lest they swarm in vile, unprofitable life. The gold-bearing quartz is to be crushed, and in separation to be mainly lost. If any race or individual discovers a rugged physical strength greater than that of others, he is

to find in the prizes of violence motives for activity and development. Such a state is scarcely a moral one; physical forces have sway, and death is of little moment if it plays into a higher life. The insects that feed the bird meet their destination. The savages that are trodden out of a stronger race are in the line of progress. It is well that the Tyrian, Carthaginian, Greek, Roman, struggling into civilized life, should rule, should more and more trample and subordinate the weaker races; for in them is the bud of development, and it cannot be expanded without the nutriment of the whole plant, without this apparent usurpation of rank and position.

We — we as interpreters — are not to bring higher and impossible motives and feelings into a lower field. Mere life and naked life is nothing. God allows us to feed constantly upon it to teach us its subordination. He sets half the jaws of the world preying upon it, to show that only as evolved into that which is higher is it of worth. Not in stolid maintenance, not in hopeless pause, not as mere cunning mechanism, is it sacred and heaven-cherished; but in its upward tendencies, in that growth by which it is more and higher than all about it, and may be infinitely greater than it now is. Hence that which is best in it, low as this may be, has the field, is trained into statelier growth. Such has been the plan foreshadowed from the beginning. The vast losses of the process in human society spring from the worthlessness of the material, the low range of motives at work, and thus belong to that debased state of transgression which makes other instrumentalities ineffectual and transcendental.

That tenderness of life which we meet in natural theology confronts us again here. It argues against the mercy of God from the simple presence of suffering. It isolates the naked fact of pain, and, with the exasperated sympathies of a child, refuses to contemplate the sweep, grandeur, and high character of the plan which includes it, — which, with the weight and splendor of its ultimate attainments sinks

out of sight this rugged, angular stone of the foundations. It forgets that we must sacrifice the whole, or accept its parts.

We need not fear a return to darkness, to physical checks. These have sway in savage life. Every century of Christian progress carries us farther and farther beyond them. Extreme poverty, cruel tyranny, the ravenous impulses of the barbarian, give us the lowest government of which human society is capable, yet a government, and one in perfect keeping with the appetites and passions thereby handled and trained.

When in any race the germ of growth is found; when intelligence meets with a reward, and is quickened by the reward with which it meets; when the degradation, weakness, and poverty left behind, the rank, strength and luxury gained, have aroused the mind to full activity, we at once discover the possibility and the play of higher motives, the setting in of new social forces producing, to the eye at least, better results. Thought and activity become the recognized means of success. These soon gain large gifts from nature, and population rapidly increases. Honesty and the virtues of thrift claim a place in public sentiment and institutions. We have now a government of self-interest — not that blind, passionate, brute selfishness, which knows not how to prosper on that it plunders, but a determined, restrained, intelligent self-interest, which finds an adequate motive for industry in the good to be gained, and also a reason therein for some measure of justice and mercy.

As the rewards of skill increase, as the stimulus to production becomes great, appearing in varied forms of pleasure and power, all classes of the community are affected thereby, yet very unequally. Those more susceptible of intellectual excitement, more ambitious of success, come at once and so fully under the forces which secure material progress as to exercise almost unconsciously that forecast, prudence, and diligence which are its conditions. The lower classes, in the meantime, relatively little quickened by the new incitements, still press and punish each other with competition in

a labor-market overcrowded with the proffer of mere brute strength.

The loitering, unambitious poor still reserve for themselves the lash of necessity, are checked in increase on their narrow basis of skill by hardship and disease, and left under the severe hand of physical law, treating them according to the dulness and sin that is in them. While the motives in an enlightened community securing progress are less and less of an external character; while they have with some very complete power, and reach all with a measure of influence, there is sure to come, in a society relying chiefly on the selfish impulses, an arrest of material and intellectual growth. Other stronger and more generous forces must take up the social movement, bear it into a higher field, and complete it in a nobler life. Failing of these influences diffusing themselves from above, the nation is first checked, then weakened, by the conflicting forces of evil, and at length dissolved and thrown back into the elemental and chaotic state in which physical laws are pre-eminent.

These nobler impulses, which must early intervene and at length assume the government, — wanting which all is imperilled, — are those of our moral and spiritual nature. Religious love can no more be robbed of its field than can self-interest. Certain stages of growth demand its presence, cannot be passed or maintained without it. The advanced ranks will, as we have seen, more and more take the lead in the march of improvement, will secure a degree of attainment and consequent power which will enable them easily to shift the common burdens back on those who have fallen behind. Indeed, the tendency of natural law is to make hard terms with servants; and when avarice, arrogance, and tyranny add themselves thereto, they are able to lay a load of difficulties on the abject classes or subject races, which, ceasing to stimulate, discourages and overwhelms them.

Though the most just and long-sighted self-interest does, indeed, include a regard for others, and make way in free competition for their development, ambition for wealth and

distinction is so relative, seeks so little what is absolutely good, is so excited by immediate and comparative superiority as always and certainly to avail itself to the full of the power over inferiors which falls into its hands. Slavery, labor pressed to the lowest limits of the market, classes left without educational, or denied social and religious, privileges, or excluded from the ownership of the soil, are quite consonant with self-interest seeking in the readiest way the eminence and influence it craves. So long, therefore, as those forces prevail which mere intellectual development calls forth, the lower ranks often find the increasing inducements to effort more than compensated by the social barriers and inabilities which have sprung up in their path, and that they are absolutely little nearer, and relatively farther off, from their true social rank than in barbarism.

Thus the slaves of Grecian republics, the populace of Rome, the bondmen of America, the colliers and kindred classes of England have been so anticipated and outstripped in the race of progress as to become the pack-horses of the more powerful. They have not been able to emancipate themselves from the reign of physical law, in part because of the savage element lingering in them, and in part because those who have gone before them have sedulously hedged up the way against them.

Another cause from which we are sure to find progress resting on intelligence alone, ultimately thwarted is, that the very qualities which self-interest at first disciplines, it at length allows to decay. The desire of wealth, a high estimate of the comforts and elegances of life call forth industry, quicken skill, impart patience and courage; but when prosperity begins to follow, when the returns of labor multiply, the sinews of strength are first relaxed, then lost. The desire is both pallid and disappointed by gratification. Indulgence, luxury, hatch their brood of vices, character becomes more intensely selfish, less courageous, less manly. The virtues which were called forth and disciplined in acquisition slowly disappear, and, the support of character

being lost, the accident of possession is sure to disappear. Open to all violence from within and without, the state, the nation, enervated by its own success, its power lost in the arrest of its momentum, is certain, sooner or later, to fall. To the impulse of interest a rapid movement onward, a new world to conquer, a fresh motive wherewith to break up the camp and resume the march, are indispensable; since it knows not how truly to inherit good, or quietly to hold what it has won, and profit by it. The arts of peace which are the arts of virtue; the pleasures of enjoyment which are the luxuries of holiness, it has not learned; and therefore, checking itself in no indulgence, it sinks into debauch, and perishes, like Alexander, at what seems to be its goal.

Self-interest, therefore,—though quickening the minds of men, though inciting long and rapid strides in civilization, though powerfully operative, even when moral forces assume the lead,—cannot sustain progress; since it cannot close up the ranks of the straggling army, cannot put it at harmony with itself, cannot win rights, opportunities for the lowest, cannot even satisfy and firmly nerve from generation to generation those who take the lead. It may break, like Hannibal, through the Alps, and carry victory down their slopes; but is sure to find its forces waste away amid the delicacies and indulgences of conquest. In neglecting the lowest it destroys the highest ranks of society, and both perish together.

To prosper the languid movement, then, to lift men into permanent enlightenment, those moral forces for which intelligence makes way must come into the ascendancy. The laborer must find his mind quickened, his hand made skilful, his heart enriched, by the aid and sympathy of those who have preceded him; while those who hold the advance must be strong to maintain their ground in the temperance of virtue, must measure and enjoy the good they have won in its moral and spiritual ministrations, in the inheritance of substantial, peaceful acquisitions, in the pleasure of social affections, and benevolent impulses. Thus the community is knit together,

strong against the shock of armies and decay of time. The wilderness is passed, and a promised land reached and rested in. How impossible that this Beulah of the race should simply give rein to passion and scope to desire. With character the foundations of good give way. When man approaches the moment of indulgence, there must spring up afresh the strength of a spiritual life or the debasement of a physical one.

There are here three grades of law; each lower passing into the higher, and only capable of completion, fulfilment, by it. We have sheer physical necessity, a law of violence acting on the savage with the constant and close checks of famine and pestilence. Lifted by diligence from this stage of development, self-interest furnishes society a very wide and varied and powerful class of motives; and prudence supplies a check to increase which is hardly felt in comparison with those close limits which barbarous life had rendered necessary. Later, the moral impulse comes in to regulate, temper, and maintain that of self-interest; and the moral affections so assume dominion over the appetites, that the forces of life are made to expand and occupy vacancies, are fitted to exigencies and opportunities without any sense of collision or restraint.

Man is first driven to work and becomes a laborer; he is then urged by all those motives which cluster about success to acquire skill, and later finds the ground he has gained is worth little and cannot be held without virtue. Thus the forces below link themselves with those above, and serve their purpose in preparing for, and giving way to, this higher order. The savage in becoming a producer is civilized, but seeking to retain and enjoy that which he has gained, has need of the manhood of virtue.

There is here no intimation that the race have travelled, or are to travel, *seriatim*, through these three grades of law. In some instances, nations have sunk from the second to the first, in others partially risen to the third. For the present, we merely mark these strata of forces, as always acting, or

ready to act, on society; that nations cannot by disobedience fall below the lowest, nor by growth fail to reach the highest as a necessity in its completion. The only permanent, universal, safe, protective progress of the race, then, lies in the line of those religious forces which God has established, maintains, and pushes by natural and supernatural agency to their consummation.

Capital is the third great agent of production, the third force working for physical good and the conditions of high, social life. Natural agents are first present, affording that with which and on which labor is employed. Labor, then, comes in as the effort of man by means of these to improve his position. But he soon finds that effort productive of progress must contemplate long periods, cannot be a simple transfer of food from hand to mouth. The results of present exertion must be held in reserve, ready to accrue with increased gains at some future moment. This necessity gives rise to capital. Capital is any commodity or commodities retained to be employed in production.

It involves an arrest of consumption, a defer of returns, that these may in the end be larger. The forms it assumes are two—fixed and circulating. Under the first we have tools, machinery, buildings, vessels, railroads; under the second, material in the processes of production, wages, products on sale. In fixed capital, the product retained is not destined for direct, but indirect, mediate, consumption. It is made and held as a means to something else.

The necessity of capital in production is most obvious and most urgent. There can be no conjoint labor, and hence no division of labor, without capital. For this the processes of production must be separated, broadened, enlarged in their scale, admitting the labor of many, and assigning each step of manufacture to its own agent. A corresponding amount of material is at once involved, a meeting of present necessities with other resources, a waiting for the future, and frequently

somewhat remote, aggregate return of toil to compensate present expenditure. In proportion, therefore, as labor involves itself, rolls up into great establishments, into a powerful, complex, and massive agency; in proportion as it divides its functions, multiplies its instruments, gets skill and precision at many and diverse points, increases, as it were, its specific powers and senses, and then organizes all into a single, compact, mechanical body, a branch of manufacture, sending diverse materials through many hands and processes to bring them at length together with marvellous aptness and precision of adaptation, a finished whole, clock, watch, or rifle; according as it spreads yet relates its action, giving to an express company ramifications that cover a continent, yet a unity and consistency of movement that scatters to all quarters and gathers from all quarters the bundles and boxes of cities, villages, and hamlets, with the system and regularity with which the heart sends the blood to the extremities, and draws it again to the seat of life; in the measure that labor gets to itself power, becomes grand and massive in some railroad corporation, sets a thousand employés, scattered over hundreds of miles, with incessant, vigilant toil, to bear, without delay or danger, the onward and refluxing waves of travel, chasing each other in interminable and rapid succession along the great thoroughfares of a nation; in the degree that labor understands and accepts these its great tasks will it find the storehouse of its material, the magazine of its strength, in capital.

Nor is this organizing and compacting of labor till it becomes truly formidable, equal to the greatest undertaking, any more marked result of capital than the resources which are placed at its disposal in tools, machinery, buildings, and the appliances of commerce. The present efficiency of labor is almost wholly dependent on these: they are the fruit of past thought, the seed of future harvests. It is in the mechanical arts that we find the grade mark of present physical prosperity. Stripped of these results of past labor, society relapses instantly into a barbarous state, as much as the individual turned naked into the forest.

The length backward of that line of connections by which every present productive result is bound to the past, the multiplicity of directions into which it divides, the perfect and extensive net-work of relations which it finally forms, can hardly be better illustrated than by a simple supposition : I break the blade of my knife ; with the present appliances of art an accident of little moment ; a few minutes of labor may replace it. Suppose me now cut off from the aid of previous labor, from the advantages of all forms of capital, and called on to restore the steel. Grant me the skill necessary in all the mechanical branches connected with the manufacture, and my food and clothing while in the pursuit of my purpose, and yet a hundred years might not suffice to replace in its perfection the broken instrument. I reach, on foot, the distant ore-bed, and there I find myself with no pickaxe to break the ground, or shovel to remove the soil. I can only arm my naked hands with a stick, picked up at random. If I would either point or flatten this to make it more serviceable, I have no tool at hand for the purpose. To shape, therefore, the rudest implement, without which I cannot penetrate the soil to any depth, I must learn to manufacture stone into knives and hatchets, and with these hew out the wooden instruments for which I have occasion. Once in possession of the ore, I have no smelting-furnace wherein to separate the iron ; and in the construction of this shall have sore need of some steel tool, wherewith to fashion the stone, and bring them to their places. The pig-iron secured, and a second furnace erected for annealing and making pliant the metal, I have no sledge wherewith to hammer, no anvil whereon to hammer, the half-molten mass. The nearer the process approached completion, the more difficult should I find it to handle, shape, draw, weld iron without iron. I might be compelled to abandon my brittle unmalleable stone-tools, and seek to work first some of the easier, purer metals, as copper, that by means of more efficient instruments, I might later manage the iron. My knife once brought to full perfection, and the means at my disposal of extracting ore and

carrying it through the entire process by which it at length becomes a well-shaped, sharp, and polished blade, I should find, when I had replaced my less fit instruments through the entire manufacture with those of iron, that I had opened a path which successive races and nations have occupied many hundred years in exploring, and which lies central amid those great thoroughfares of art along which the mechanical invention of the world has advanced. I should have traced a line of progress from its very first effort in infant human society to its very last result, and have marked every step with a new tool, a new resource, a fresh accumulation of capital. When we observe how this simple, straight line of effort connects itself with every other, — with work in stone, wood, and metals other than iron, with invention in directions which accompany and call forth invention in this — the civilized man shaping the light, elegant, pliant blade of his pen-knife, daintily forming and beautifying its handle, and closing the two with snug and easy clasp, only because his whole life is one luxury — we shall understand what an accumulation of previous labor and thought, what complexity of capital, what potentialities of execution, of cunning, adroit, nimble craft, are back even of so simple an enjoyment as the slender knife that I use for a moment, and hide in my waistcoat pocket.

Capital, then, is the mechanical grainery of the race, the storehouse of its efficiency, the arsenal whence art sends forth her troops with arms and siege-trains. Its power is not due to its present value, but to the potentiality that is in it, — to the ease with which it creates products and renews itself. It is like the farmer's seed, of no great worth if more can be obtained, but of inestimable worth if it be all. But this power is not lodged in mere capital, in tools, machinery, and appliances. These are nothing without the skill of the workman; can no more avail by themselves than can that skill without them. To make the warrior, there must be both the sword and the right hand to wield it.

In the arts, these two powers so essential to each other,

physical and mental efficiency and the instruments they require are usually separated, and we have two classes, the capitalists and the laborers. These are either enemies, opponents, or coadjutors, according to the growth of the society of which they form either wing. So long as force retains ascendancy, and violence is the bond of order, there will be but little capital, and laborers will refuse all exertion not laid upon them by necessity and the exactions of others. As, however, a nation advances in production, as the power of capital begins to be felt, and the sceptre passes into the hands of the wealthy, the relation between the laborer and capitalist ceases more and more to be one of force, and becomes that mutual, commercial dependence which opens advantage and furnishes incentives to all. There do, indeed, linger here and there traces of the earlier condition. Slavery and serfdom, heirlooms of the reign of violence, a solution by force of the interests of society and the rights of men, may, stubbornly fortified in the selfishness of a few, hold for a while their ground. Though this state of things is no more an economic answer to the problem of society than it is a moral one, it yet rarely happens that the purely productive power, the simple commercial principle, unaided of religion, is able to make a stand against wedged, compact customs, drifting down from ages of rapine and violence, like ice-fields from the north; to break them up, and secure in the once more mobile elements of society a free field for the play of its own forces. When the commercial relation is not obstructed by serfdom and law, it often is by the slighter but most serious obstacles of ranks and classes, rooted in the customs of society and the opinions of men. Thus certain races are debarred from the free use of their powers, and the female sex from many employments.

Society is in its productive organization no further commercial than it rests on simple economic forces, and suffers competition to determine the condition of individuals and classes. So far as any are bolstered by custom, shielded by hereditary privilege, or armed with legal power, the remains

of an earlier and lower state are seen—the wash and ploughing, the grinding and scouring of a glacier period.

Commercial rule, though certainly far in advance of that of violence, with strong features in it of liberty and just law, though leaving each with the fruits of his own forethought and industry, abstinence and skill, may yet in many phases of society—phases which all civilized communities more or less widely present—rest with a heavy hand on those who fall with narrow resources of intelligence and opportunity into its power.

The fulcrum across which labor and capital act on each other is competition. If there is little capital and much labor, the former has the long arm of the lever, and the latter must put forth the more strength or be crushed. If the reverse is true, the situation of each is reversed. It is the competition of capitalists with capitalists for laborers that compels them to lay aside their reserve, forfeit the advantage of distance, and approach the workmen with favorable proffers. On the other hand, it is the crowd of workmen besieging the doors of capital that puts them at the mercy of the employer who, with a short, tight nip, warps them to his terms. As a superior hand, a skilled foreman, singles himself from many, we at once see the length of leverage he secures, and the easy conditions he makes between competing capitalists. The strictly commercial attitude of the laborer and capitalist is one of rivalry; each finding it for his interest to push the fulcrum toward his opponent, nothing determining that it shall rest in the midway region of justice save the joint intelligence of the parties.

Unfortunately, we may say,—yet fortunately, if we consider the motives of progress and the exigencies of society,—capital always in the outset has the advantage. It comes in small amounts later than labor, and finds this depressed by its poverty. Hence it learns to make its own terms, and acquires a prestige and arrogance which are not easily shaken off. While the early advantages of the capitalist

give an unusual stimulus to that industry and abstinence by which a most indispensable agent of progress is secured, they also impose a prudence and thrift on the laborer he is not always prepared to accept, and failing of which he slips into the hands of his employer.

Though the principles on which social forces act are ever the same, the forces themselves are constantly varied. As the current of the river now cuts one bank and now the other, and again glides quietly midway in the channel, so the competitive power of trade is now pressing one class of agents, sweeping the ground from beneath them, and now, leaving these, turns to another. If we take any single moment in the productive history of a nation, the share of the common products which capital will, when both agents are free, be compelled to yield to labor, and the amount it will be able to reserve, will depend on the present relation of the two. The more numerous the capitalists compared with the laborers, the more liberal will be the portion which the latter will obtain. If, however, the wages-fund be small and the workmen many, the quotient will be correspondingly reduced. From this determination of the problem there is no immediate escape. The forces which have established the present relation of the parties lie in the past, and cannot be approached. The most that can be done is to modify the agencies now at work, and through these reach future results; to introduce new conditions into the problem, and thus secure new solutions. Each succeeding period is determined by preceding ones, and itself in turn settles the character of those which come after it. The economic transitions of society are gradual, giving forethought, diligence, patience, their perfect work. Possession, control, are gained here exactly as in the individual conflict with mutinous passions and the tyranny of circumstances. Single points are painfully won, and these at length united in compact, easy dominion. Looking at a single unfortunate section of life, we seem to be the bondmen of fate; tracing a series of faithful and skilful struggles, we show ourselves the masters of events.

On the part of laborers, the quality which chiefly determines their relation to capital is intelligence accompanied by virtue. Intelligence gives versatility to the laborer, and enables him to relieve the pressure in one place or in one occupation by turning to another. It makes the joint product of itself and capital greater, thus enlarging and stimulating the latter; it suits its action to its circumstances, and prevents the speedy and premature devouring of limited resources, the destruction of seed-grain, the increase of mouths on provision. Thus the shore is slowly lifted up, the current diverted, and labor enabled easily and firmly to maintain itself.

On the part of capitalists, that which improves the condition of the laborer, indeed of all, is primarily abstinence, the addition of profits to capital. This great instrument in its increase not only places the best and most numerous facilities at the disposal of labor, but on the cheapest possible terms. The increase of capital incident to progress in production is attended with a relative loss, compensated by large absolute gains. The rate per cent sinks as wealth increases. Capital is more readily acquired and consequently loaned on easier terms.

The progress of production, then, tends to a relative gain on the part of laborers, and a corresponding loss by capitalists. The absolute and relative share of the former, the absolute share alone of the latter, is enlarged. In the earlier stages of growth, the chief demand is for capital; hence a powerful motive is present, searching far and wide for the required agent. As this want is met the demand slowly subsides; a counter desire springs up for intelligent labor; the advantage sets steadily with every step of real progress in this direction; till, at length, the industrious and prudent masses hold the sceptre. The capitalist is to the very end a gainer, but not so unqualified and great a one as the laborer. The profits of capital necessarily tend to their own reduction, since they in part, at least, are thrown into competition with the very capital from which they were realized. A high per cent

cannot be long maintained, as capital so rapidly increases under it as to reduce the value of its use. Though the returns of capital must, by simple, normal growth, ever diminish, those habits and desires in the meantime on which abstinence depends become so settled and powerful, that the rate of interest may fall off without arresting the accumulation of capital.

The gains of the laborer, on the contrary, may steadily increase, and this, so far from being in itself an occasion of a future reduction, will, by the social rank and advantages conferred, only tend to prepare the way for further growth. Labor in the end enters fully into all the advantages of superior productiveness, the gains of skill, discovery, and invention, and also acquires an increasing control of its chief instrument, capital. The normal growth then of society is toward man, not toward mechanism; it lodges more and more power with the person, the laborer, and makes the accumulations of capital, the ponderous wheels and appliances of production, increasingly subservient to him.

There is not at bottom and finally any real diversity of interest between the laborer and capitalist. The absolute gains of each depend far more on the cordial co-operation of each, the union of the best and most willing skill with the most complete instruments under the stimulus of generous dealing, and the consequent increase of the sum-total of products, than on securing a somewhat disproportionate share in a greedy division of present returns. Capital that remorselessly scrapes all that it can into its own coffers, that presses ill-paid labor to the last point of competition, so weakens the character, undermines the strength, and reduces the motives of its chief agents, as to render the highest production impossible. The quality of labor is so dependent on the quality of manhood, on social and intellectual rank, that these cannot be overlooked in securing the highest results. Productive power is proportioned to skill and integrity: qualities that are born and bred on generous, spiritual fare. The moral element must thus begin early to permeate

society, that the productive element may reach full expression. Only as selfishness is steadily softened into a just and generous regard of the good of others, will the friction of society cease, and concurrent wheels bear all rapidly to the goal.

But while this ultimate harmony of interests waiting to be developed by the religious impulse is most undeniable, it will not reveal itself, or become very potent in controlling the action of men, till late in the progress of society. The earlier, the more habitual attitude of parties, after the period of violence has passed, and that of law, of civil rights, has commenced, will be that of sharp competition, of a stern and unscrupulous use of the advantages which the market affords. Indeed, this is the basis of simple justice, of pure economic right, and therefore the only one on which the claims of all parties can find firm, constant, and conclusive adjustment. All beyond this is charity on one side and supplication on the other. If a workman wishes higher wages than the employer is willing to pay, he has but one test of the validity of his claim, but one method of constraint; and that is his ability to secure elsewhere the sum demanded. From the alternative which the workman is thus able to present, the capitalist has no appeal; he must pay the wages claimed, or yield the laborer to the competing proffer. Here is commercial law, commercial justice, a practical and final decision of all questions, beyond which there is the opportunity for no claim, as there is for no coercion. Indeed, a claim implies an actual or possible means of its enforcement, some law resting either on social justice or natural forces for its maintenance. But in trade, whether in labor or in commodities, there can be laid no constraint on the will of the parties beyond that springing from their own desires, and neither party has a hold on the desire of the other, by which to force an advance except as he has potentially at least a better proffer. His power to do better is the vantage ground of the seller, and the injunction, "Do better if you can," the adequate commercial basis and retort of the buyer in a free market.

The constant and familiar aspect, therefore, which this relation of labor to capital everywhere assumes is one of trade; the employer buying the services of the employé according to their nominal quality at the lowest possible rate. The harmony of interests is in a strictly commercial stage a speculative truth rather than a practical one, and suffers long eclipse amid the hardships of coarse, unqualified labor, amid the heartless pressure of stern forces that seem capable of no immediate and adequate mitigation. The capitalist goes to the market for his laborers as for his material, takes them as possessed, in the rough and on an average, of a given grade of efficiency, pays them what they can get elsewhere, and, with rare exceptions, lays little stress on any peculiar willingness they are to bring to his tasks, or any new skill they are to develop under personal stimulus in his own and their behalf. An average of efficiency and character is all that is expected, all that is usually recognized or paid for. If more than this is shown, it may become the means of rising into a higher class; if less, of sinking into a lower one. As yet it is the exception that the workman brings the more obscure yet effective virtues of character to enhance the price of his labor, or finds a willingness to pay wages in the hopes of developing more hearty, skilful, and frugal labor. The estimates of the capitalists are too hasty, too much in the gross, while the sensibilities of the laborers are too feeble and fluctuating to make this method extensively prevalent. Blunt, rude forces must, or at least will, be dealt with in the quick, careless methods of approximate justice. In a much higher degree is this true when there is found in a wealthy community a large class of degraded laborers much below the standard of respectable citizens.

It is not, moreover, absolute but immediate good that the employer chiefly aims at. Men make haste to be rich. They expect more from reducing the expenses of production, from a close handling of its agents, than from their education and the stimulus of generous incentives. It is relative advantage, superiority, display, the instant assumption of

rank, that those in the acquisition of wealth more frequently covet ; and this end, to the greedy, grasping nature of man, seems about to be reached most quickly by a scramble for ascendancy which leaves to the devil the hindmost. Selfishness, unscrupulous, urgent, mole-eyed, remains the prevalent, effective force of production, adjusts the relation of parties, and will not close up the ranks of labor in solid columns for a quiet, firm, patient march of progress.

Nor, in the school of God's training, is this altogether loss. Independence and strength are as much to be developed as generosity and forbearance. Not, therefore, till character has been beaten, felt firm under much pressure and many blows, are the poor ready to be united to the rich in mutual, generous co-operation. As long as the one party is so weak as to be willing to load the generosity of the other, it is not without significance that these are so selfish as pitilessly to spurn the burden. First independence, then favor ; strength, then beauty, is the line of development.

In this close, sharp traffic of labor with capital which the productive world still presents, the capitalist usually holds the balance of advantage. In some of the most enlightened nations a numerous class of improvident, hungry laborers press each other to the limits of life, and hang in perpetual squalor and destitution on the verge of extinction. A second class rises into the possession of necessities, a third, of decencies, and a few, of luxuries. In more fortunate countries, as our own, the first or lowest class is nearly wanting, and the remaining classes are correspondingly more numerous. But the laborer, whatever his rank, — whether standing on the crumbling brink of poverty, ready to be carried by a week's illness or a month's idleness into pauperism, or planted on a firmer ground, fortified by the earnings of years, — has less reserved power, less mobility, fewer resources than the capitalist ; and when, therefore, the endurance of the parties is tested, as by a strike, is usually compelled to yield.

A strike is a species of commercial warfare, hazardous, attended by severe loss, and of rare application. As a

perfectly voluntary compact of workmen, it is the simple assertion of a right, and, save as ineffective and wasteful, cannot be condemned on moral and commercial grounds. So extreme a measure, however, is rarely necessary. The causes which justify a rise of wages will usually, by the inevitable laws of trade, quietly secure that result. If the clamor becomes loud and the measures violent, the fact more often marks the absence than the presence, in the relation of the parties, of those grounds which render the claim just. It is only rarely that one party to a trade so falls into the hands of the other that an open market furnishes no means of quiet and speedy redress. Yet it must be admitted that workmen more frequently than others, trafficking as they do in a single commodity, a peculiar form of labor, are liable to find themselves with no immediate and adequate resource. Thus employers, frequently few in number, can easily come to a tacit understanding without attracting public attention, and steadily resist the natural forces which are tending to press up the price of labor. The workmen, on the contrary, cannot easily shift their abode or their occupation, and feel keenly the immediate necessity of continuing labor on the best terms they can make. There is, indeed, with us a good deal of mobile labor, but it usually takes up its vagabond habits at the expense of prosperity.

On any sudden inflation of prices laborers are sure to be relatively the losers. Goods may rise repeatedly, till profits become enormous, and yet the operative secure but a slight, a very inadequate increase of wages. In the years of war which followed with us the rebellion, profits in most branches of manufacture were very unusual; while the advance of wages, though considerable, by no means kept pace with prices; and the condition of workmen became, and remains, more trying than before. It may be thought that if the laboring class receive less than their portion of unusual gains, they also suffer less when profits fall away. This is very often not true. Many branches of manufacture are suspended in times of depression, and thus an almost insup-

portable burden is thrown upon workmen. While we do not think, then, that laborers, fastened by limited means and skill to a single place and employment, and pressed to the immediate sale of their services, command the advantages of the market in an anything like the same degree as the capitalist, neither do we think that in an extreme measure of resistance, a strike, they are likely to carry their point, unless sustained by such obvious justice, such a pressure of natural forces, as to render the measure with a little more patience and management unnecessary. In a mere struggle of passion the capitalist has the position. Immediate production is rarely a necessity to him, and is so, oftener than otherwise, to the laborer. It is hard work to starve out a garrison that starts with more provision and resources than the encompassing host. Unless, therefore, natural forces vigorously second a strike,—unless the exigencies of the employers are urgent, and their sources of relief inadequate,—such a movement cannot often be successful; and if these advantages do belong to the workmen, and are brought skilfully to bear, it cannot often be necessary. A relapse into open conflict is a disastrous retreat for both parties from the commercial position they have reached. It indicates a passion so violent as even to disregard self-love.

It is the character of the natural forces at work, the actual balance of advantages in the market, that must finally settle the rate of wages. The most successful strike cannot push them long or much above the trade-mark, nor the most absolute injustice of capitalists press them much or long below it. The competition of laborers will correct the one, and of capitalists the other, evil. Profits cannot be depressed without a reduction of capital, a falling off of employment, and a quick transfer of the burden, sadly increased, indeed, back again to the working classes. What the laborer requires is skill to develop the market, to bring out and avail himself to the full of all its advantages. Nature, not his co-workers, must be made more generous. This power is more effective than strikes; and strikes without

it are delusive and pernicious. They retard production, waste the savings of the poor, use up reserved power, check the growth of capital, provoke passion, and thus lessen at once the ability and inclination of the employer to advance the condition of those in his service. These efforts as a whole should be classed among the foolish, frantic efforts of persons to improve their condition without personal progress, to secure better terms than the stringent justice of trade allows them—a kicking against the pricks most fatal to those who practise it most frequently and persist in it most faithfully. We say this with most hearty sympathy for those as a class who have undertaken them, and because we believe there is a better, wiser way.

Another method, besides this of compacts among workmen, aiming also to affect the scale of prices in their favor, is legislation. The end sought for is a diminution of the hours of labor. There is here a most desirable object, but also a grave mistake as to the office and power of legislation. A contract loses its character when the law steps in on behalf of either party to assign its conditions. A contract constructed under such legal constraints is a contract only in name, is often, in fact, a legalized plunder of one class by another. In saying this, we proceed on the supposition that both parties to the contract are adults, each able and at liberty to pursue his own interests, with no other restraints and disadvantages, with no other powers and advantages, than those which spring from the natural forces indicated by the condition of the market. If law may interfere with these inherent, spontaneous influences in apportioning the advantages of a contract, a principle is established which would allow the regulation of all prices, the division of the proceeds of labor between the parties to production, at the discretion of the legislature—a substitution of civil for natural law.

But this effort to secure a legal advantage beyond that of a free market must prove as inefficient as it is inadmissible. Indeed, the impotence of the effort is the best safeguard

against its ignorance. The aim, of course, is to limit labor to ten or eight hours without a corresponding reduction of compensation. The workman is left at liberty to labor for himself as many hours as he chooses, but not at liberty to sell his labor to one person for more than eight hours in one day. It is not generally the desire of laborers to reduce the hours of work so low as eight if the full loss of production must fall on themselves. This is seen in the many employments which readily admit this restriction of time, and in which, with appropriate abatement of wages, no opposition would be experienced on the part of employers. To expect, however, to be able to reduce the time of labor from ten to eight hours with the same wages and no change secured in the condition of the market, by the mere force of law, is an anticipation arising in entire oversight of the forces at work. So far as such an effort should be successful it would result in immediate and severe discouragement of capital. Some branches of business might be ruined by it, and all would be in a measure depressed. As capital is fluent, sensitive to every unfavorable condition, its growth in the locality of the law would be at once retarded or wholly arrested. It would gradually loosen itself from present engagements, and seek elsewhere more favorable conditions, a free enjoyment of all its natural gains. Now no parties are more interested in the rapid growth of capital than the working classes; since it is the demand for labor that this occasions that gives them full and profitable employment. Their own effort, therefore, to secure a legitimate gain in a hasty and unjust way would quickly result in abridging capital, through this the demand for labor, and finally the wages of the workman. A serious and permanent evil would arise, which could only be removed by a complete restoration to capital, the most needful of agents, of all its lost advantages, its natural incentives; and by a fresh and longer lease of patience under a depressed labor-market, slowly regaining the ground lost by the check and withdrawal of this great instrument of production.

These considerations apply with greater force as the hours of labor decrease. In passing from thirteen to ten hours, it is fairly urged that the services rendered are as great in the shorter as in the longer period, since this passes the limits of attentive, sustained exertion. Such a statement is not applicable to a substitution of eight for ten hours, as the strength of most men is not overtaken by the larger number. The ostensible purpose, then, of a law establishing eight hours is to secure the same wages for less service; against this, honesty and wisdom alike protest.

In an exceedingly prosperous community, such legislation may repress growth without wholly arresting it, and thus seem enduring, even beneficial. Yet in fact, it will only defer the possession of those full, natural advantages which will finally give to intelligent labor by inalienable, irresistible right every reasonable claim. Our own thriving condition as a nation often disguises the effects of an unfortunate policy. A healthy constitution will throw off much poison. Legislation that is at war with natural law rarely does the amount of mischief by the analysis of causes attributable to it, since it is seldom able to secure any tolerably complete execution. When both parties find a contract for their common interest, and that neither can secure it on easier terms, the requisitions of the law are readily forgotten, and there is no moral or interested sentiment present for its execution.

We have touched this point in passing, not because we do not regard the end aimed at as desirable, but to show more distinctly the impossibility of evading the natural laws under which we are at the time acting, the impossibility of affecting favorably or shifting the conditions of society except in connection with the forces that give rise to them. Our remedies must be more interior and radical, recognizing the seat of the difficulty in character, and confronting it with moral forces. Man is bound to the conditions of progress society has already laid down, is baffled in his attempts to infringe on natural justice or natural liberty, is held sternly off from the rights of others, and compelled to advance in personal power as the

price of superior position. God rules, and will not allow the repeal or suspension of his laws.

The reduction of the hours of labor is sure to come; and when it shall come as the fruit of healthy growth, a most desirable result will it be. We object to legislation only because it disappoints and perplexes itself, retards the action of forces certainly and safely seeking the desired end; and because, if prematurely successful, it confers a good on many who are not prepared to appreciate and profit by it. The demand for leisure comes in gratification of the later and higher wants of our nature; it is a demand instituted in behalf of our intellectual, social, and moral tastes. Until the impulse and desire come from these quarters, leisure is an opportunity more full of fear than of hope. A holiday, a saint's day, in which mere ignorance, appetite, and criminal hilarity break loose, is to be dreaded as much as coveted; is more potent for degradation than elevation.

The natural relation of the productive forces is such that the desire for leisure and the power to secure it increase with increasing intelligence, as do also the pleasure and profit which it yields. Neither the safety, the harmony, nor the growth of society allow the later rewards of skill and cultivation to be forestalled and wasted by the vicious, the improvident, and the indolent. These qualities, all of them, depress labor, keep it on small returns, and thus under the constant spur of necessity. The severity of law holds back the dull and brutal from a good they would turn into evil, from an opportunity they have not fairly won, must soon forfeit, and for whose abuse there is sure to be exacted a severe penalty.

But how may this progress of the workman toward that command of the market which shall put leisure among his luxuries be accelerated? We will not dwell on intelligence as the essential condition, enabling the skilful laborer to press into and widen every opportunity, to discover and open new ones, to win independence, and command terms by the value, the indispensable character, of the services he renders.

In addition to this, labor should strive constantly to acquire the capital it needs to make an easy and feasible path from station to station in toil, from those positions in which wages are received to those in which a partnership is secured, and the use and profits of capital obtained. This constant aspiration of the workman for a more independent and commanding position, the joining of his means with those of his fellows to establish a new manufactory; this grading down of capitalists to laborers and grading up of laborers to capitalists; this cherishing of those intermediate employments and branches of business which allow capital and labor to centre in the same person, are of the utmost importance in pressing the lower ranks upward, and in allowing the advantages of accumulated wealth to descend freely downward with numerous and varied proffers of employment and openings for enterprise. When midway-men are extensively swept from between the two classes, as by heavy taxation, unequal legislation, and the disturbances of currency and production incident to war, the enormous accumulation of capital in the hands of individuals makes competition difficult, opens a gulf in the path of labor which it is too weak to bridge, and leaves it, relaxed by perpetual discouragement, to swarm and chafe hopelessly on the farther side, or push its foremost ranks in blind passion into the chasm. Joint-stock companies, copartnerships, the enterprise and talent of individuals, constitute the engineer-corps of the laboring classes, which is to re-open old, and establish new roads into the field of capital. Only as these Vandals of the workshop break in on the luxuries of the effete and effeminate, only as these Goths of the field bring sturdy and multitudinous powers wherewith to freshen and re-invigorate the pursuits and customs of society, rescuing to a new growth the seeds of civilization, shall we reach that later state, wherein the inheritance of kings and aristocracies becomes the abundant and sufficient possession of the people.

We now see the grades of change and of law through which that most important of social and productive classes,

the capitalists, pass. As tribes increasing in numbers, turning from a nomadic and plundering mode of life, begin to lay the foundations of a broad, growing, and permanent society, influence and power pass rapidly into the hands of those who are acquiring, or have acquired wealth. Not only do they reap its direct, immediate advantages, but as the community becomes increasingly commercial, they find new opportunities perpetually pressed upon them. Those who control the productive processes, who add to the national wealth, and furnish the sinews of war and the luxuries of peace; who command every variety of service and commodity, experience more and more the power of this new agent, and are stimulated to its further accumulation. Capital being required to open a fresh career of progress, to carry the nation on in growth, all forces concur for its creation by giving it large rewards. Economic, social, and political power gravitate toward the capitalist, and incite him to fresh efforts.

The selfish impulses of our nature are played on more intensely and unintermittedly than in the reign of physical strength. Every form of advantage, honor, luxury, display, arouse and stimulate the mind in its pursuit of wealth. The extent to which one motive is everywhere and every instant present, running through all classes and ages, one appeal sure to meet a response, one power certain to be felt in a commercial community, a large metropolis, is astonishing. Here is a force reaching all,—bringing to the counter every variety of commodity and service, enabling us to buy directly or deftly everything but virtue.

So intense does this desire for capital through these its advantages act on the mind, that it occasions a passion the most remorseless, unflinching, un pitying of all—avarice. Here, then, is a government intense enough, universal enough, to reach all classes, plying everywhere the sharpest spur of desire, quickening the foremost into a gallop, and helping the jaded laggard on the road.

Again, we inquire how far this grade of law, this stroke of force, can bear men and society toward the goal? Nor

have we to look long for an answer. Here is, indeed, a power which works toward morality, and yet more toward decency, which arrests and controls those who do not feel or will not abide under moral motives, but also one which altogether fails to anticipate the higher impulse or approach the results possible to religious love. The insufficiency of the economic incentive is seen in the instant, intense selfishness it begets, prompting the eager capitalist to wrench his full advantage from the reluctant hand of the workman, and press with long, quick strides into the ranks of the wealthy. Nor is it less seen in the passions and appetites it feeds, and which, in truth, lie at the bottom of its power. Vanity, among the more harmless of these, is yet thoughtless, unsympathetic, intensely grasping, and delights in that very separation of classes which makes perpetual poverty with its social and moral incidents the inheritance of half the human race. The merely selfish motive, therefore, capable as it is of arousing the mind, is not able to turn the strength of the higher classes backward and make it minister to the growth of the weaker and lower; but continually draws the nutriment of all upward, as the wick the oil to the light, that it may be consumed in the pride and luxuries of the few, till, the nerve and courage and patience of the nation burned out, it falls, like Rome of old, with strength all too little to bear the strokes of fate.

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