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## The Degradations of Capitalism

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TO untold millions of the inhabitants of so-called civilized countries the concept embodied in the term "capitalism"—a concept born of tradition, and steeped in propaganda, implies, above all other considerations, an unlimited opportunity for grand achievement: but to those who happen to be endowed with a measure of class-consciousness, nothing can appear more degrading in its effects than the influence of modern conditions of existence on the general character of the rising generation, involving, as they do, not only the physical but also the mental servitude of the whole civilized world.

Looking backwards from this second view-point over the vista of time, the cause of this servitude may be observed in the inexorable encroachments of our commercial and industrial institutions on the freedom of humanity—encroachments due to antagonistic economic forces, incidental to which the interests of the present clash with those of the future. The dominant force, however, since it is the dominant force, is the dominant force.

It is now over a hundred years since President Madison of the United States of America predicted as a result of the development of industry the sequence of circumstance in which his country finds itself today, and we might add, in which the world finds itself: "We are substantially free," said he, "but the day will come when our republic will be an impossibility. It will be an impossibility because wealth will be concentrated in the hands of a few. A republic cannot stand on bayonets, and when that day comes, when the wealth of the nation will be in the hands of the few, then must we rely upon the wisdom of the best elements in the country to read just the laws of the nation to the changed conditions."

With the wording of this statement most people will agree. It might however, be possible that opinions would differ as to what class of society was entitled to consider themselves, "the best elements in the country": as to the rest, it would be well to take note that this wealth, not only of the nation, but of the world, is already in the hands of a few, and the fact that it is so ought, on general principles, to give rise to much anxiety, not so much of their ownership of the wealth, but because possession of it confers on men, however vulgarly indifferent to the progress of the race they may be, the power to confine the mental activities of practically the whole civilized world to those channels of thought that are connected with the baser part of our common human nature.

William Fielding in his book "Auto-suggestion and How it Works" makes the following obviously true statement (page 20):

"The average newspaper reader is content with reading and circulating the hearsay opinions of others, reads without professing any credence in them. However, the newspaper reader's opinions are based upon these caricatures of thought which he reads in his favorite paper; in this connection Badouin makes the following observation: 'The grain planted in him when he reads, has germinated in the subconscious. He has made up his mind and he believes that his opinion is established upon reason. The rul-

ing class turns this law skilfully to account when it wishes to drive human 'sheep of Panurge' to the slaughterhouse.'"

Here is another excerpt taken from the same author's "Puzzle of Personality": "Incidentally there is offered today with all the great popular mediums for the dissemination of ideas, an unprecedented opportunity to pervert the natural-born curiosity (or desire for information) in the interest of special privileged groups, who use the mediums they control to perpetuate their economic mastery."

A man influenced in this manner is living in a false world. He is helping to detract from, instead of adding to, the knowledge that the human race must have of its economic environment before it can make its activities correspond with the same as a condition of further progress. To locate the blame for his condition is difficult. It must be attributed in part to environment, partly to the apathetic indifference of his class, and partly to the influence of hireling propagandists concerning whom the author quoted above has this to say in his "Auto-suggestion and how it works." On page 36 occurs the following: "The greatest tragedy in human life, and it is universal, is the tendency of the majority of people to close their minds to new ideas. The fault is, of course, largely due to the traditional training of instilling into the mind of youth a mass of preconceived notions, and labelling it 'truth.' As they have 'the truth' and the 'whole truth,' what more is to be desired? The trouble becomes apparent when every sect, creed, nation, race, and social group, has got a monopoly of what they call 'truth,' and it is all different from the other fellow's 'truth.'"

It is hardly necessary to state that this worldwide condition is most regrettable, incidental as it is, to preconceived notions in the minds of the masses, notions that cause them to become the victims of vain hopes, in the political effect of which all become involved. In this latter circumstance lies the cause of much concern to the class-conscious citizen who sees that the only hope for the future of humanity, and for the maintenance of his own self-respect, is in doing what he can, in a way necessarily very small owing to a tacit opposition as extensive as the influences of capitalism itself, towards exposing the real nature of the sinister influence of the propagandist over the masses, who in accordance with their prejudices, if they were turned by a fairy godmother into flocks of geese, and were escaping on a raft from a shipwreck, with their exploiters turned into a pack of foxes, would still believe that the interests of all were permanently identical, when in reality they were only so in as far as they could both help to improve the condition of all concerned by regulating the course of the raft to where it could be abandoned.

Metaphorically speaking, that raft, is Capitalism. But the discarding of capitalism, as all readers of the Clarion know, is only a matter of discarding its degradations. The system will have by that time accomplished a useful purpose. It will have been the instrument of socializing industry, and of forcing an international union of world governments. It will have been virtually the means of compelling the acknowledgment of the brotherhood of man. The term "capitalism" distinguishes the puerile stage

of human society, but when it attains its majority and becomes a young adult its more dignified condition will be recognised under some such name as Socialism, which will imply the administration of the natural resources of the world in the interests of all its inhabitants. It will then be possible to use the myriad millions that are now spent on war and defence, for educational purposes and for the development of the untold wealth-material, moral and mental that would inevitably accrue as a consequence of such an expenditure.

Vastly different is this, the real conception of what the advent of socialism would mean, from the ideal entertained by those who imagine that a socialist government is even now established in England, or that of our unlearned (at least on this subject) professor who, having the reputation of a leading economist, was not ashamed to make the following statement in an article in the "Yale Review" for January, 1924, entitled: "The Logic of Capitalism": says this shining light:

"To attempt to raise the condition of the poor by abolishing Capitalism, is like a proposal to shipwrecked sailors in mid-ocean to bore a hole in the bottom of their boat. It would not only be impossible to destroy Capitalism without entirely changing human nature, but if it could be done, it would remove the very agent by which, as shown by all economic history, production has been amazingly increased."

One would imagine from this ridiculous peroration that socialists proposed to idiotically destroy the institutions built up by Capitalism in the natural course of evolution. Evidently our friend got his concept of Socialism from the "piffle" on the subject often published in the capitalist press. Just as well might a candidate for holy orders seek instruction from the devil. He would get it, no doubt,—such instruction as would suit the ends of his sable majesty; and as far as the necessary alteration in human nature goes, we shall find little difficulty in agreeing with the poet that the idea is culturally, not only neolithic, but also palpably absurd. Human nature under proper conditions is delightful, as notice the attitude towards each other of people who meet for amusement on a public holiday. It is the struggle amongst men for existence that makes it appear different. What we need is an alteration in our code of ethics, a code that is inherent in capitalism and therefore one that can only disappear with the destruction of that system as soon as its peculiar service to humanity has been accomplished.

The gist of the import of our present code is expressed in this little sentence: "Business is business," and this, we naturally infer, serves as an excuse for dealings that might otherwise, from scruples of conscience, be regarded as "shady."

It is an open secret that transactions of this nature, are regarded as quite conventional. Authority for them emanates instinctively from the habit of continually regarding the code of moral; yet, how any other code could exist under Capitalism is hard to understand.

It is the code modified to suit conditions that governed the dealings of man with man, outside the bonds of kinship, in the days when primitive society ruled the world. It is a code in which the modifica-

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