

The Children of the Poor

Eugene V. Debs.

No fledgling feeds the father bird!
No chicken feeds the hen!
No kitten mouses for the cat—
This glory is for men.
We are the Wisest, Strongest Race—
Loud may our praise be sung!
The only animal alive
That lives upon its young.

—Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

The wages of vast numbers of workmen are so small that they and their families are reduced to the barest existence. Life means nothing to them but a hopeless struggle which ends only with death. Poverty is their lot and misery their heritage. Their sad condition is irrevocably fixed. They toil, skimp, worry, suffer, despair and die. There is not much else in the "simple annals" of the poor.

The children of these workmen, who are poverty-stricken only because they are exploited of what they produce, come into life in an environment and under conditions that almost inevitably predetermine their wretched fate. Poverty is their sole inheritance. The cottage in which they are born, unless it chances to be a tenement or a hovel, is limited to the necessities of existence. The walls are bare, the bedding scant, the furniture cheap, the food coarse, and the clothing shoddy. The most rigid economy is self-enforced. Life is hard and hopeless here in poverty's breeding pen.

The father returns after his day's exhausting toil to revitalize himself for the next day's slavish task—that is all that home means to him. The mother—prisoner of poverty that she is—knows nothing of the joys of home, the ecstasies of motherhood. She is not a mother at all in the sense in which that term is breathed in reverence, but only "a female that gives birth to young."

Love is not apt to dwell long in such a lair, if it enter here at all. And this is the unhappy lot of millions of laboring people who are foredoomed to such a bleak and barren existence, and from which there is no escape this side of the grave.

This condition of penury, want and social debasement is fixed and permanent in the existing industrial system, and no amount of maudlin sympathy or patronizing philanthropy can materially alleviate its horrors, a fact our dilettante charity-ball reformers unwittingly confess in their favorite and oft-repeated scriptural injunction, "The poor ye have always with you."

It is under these harsh and gloomy conditions that the children of the poor come into life and are joined to misery at its very threshold. Denied all that makes home the haven of love and the abode of joy, deprived of all the sweet influences that fill childhood with rapture, and which the memory treasures in after years like a vanished dream, these children of the poor are at their very birth fated to struggle and perish among "Les Miserables," the world's disinherited millions who, robbed of their birthright, are despised for their infirmities and scourged as wretches to dishonored graves.

From the wretched habitations of the poor the children early seek escape instead of clinging fondly to their birthplace like fledglings to the parental nest. Under the cruel lash of poverty they are driven out into the world in their childhood. There is no time for health-giving and body-building recreation and no means for education, for culture, for mental training and moral enlightenment. They are but the children of the poor, fit only for menial service, which awaits them at the cradle and drags them in its relentless fetters to their graves.

What words can fitly describe the life tragedy of the children of the poor? Born to poverty, they walk in the darkness of ignorance, and it is strange that some go astray? Is it not a miracle that all do not become vicious and depraved?

Society's doors are all closed against them. They are but outcasts when they are "respectable." What a melancholy paradox! Those who rob the poor despise them. The pampered parasites hold in loathing and horror the deflowered victims whose ruddy life-drops glisten in their gaudy plumage.

These children of the poor find their way in increasing numbers to the haunts of vice and shame. The darkness of the hovel and the sweat-shop is relieved by the red light of the slums. The children of the poor are food for misery and crime. The vile groggery for the boys and the house of horror for the girls. So do millions of the children of the poor pass through this "Vale of Tears."

And so it will ever be while capitalism is suffered to rob the children of the poor of their inheritance. Deplore it as you may, these are the conditions as they are, and only a new social system can change them. Child labor laws, factory inspection laws and other remedial legislation may ameliorate in some degree the wrongs suffered by the children of the poor, but all such palliatives are powerless to end them. As long as labor is merchandise and production is carried on for profit, child labor will have preference and the children of the poor will be ground into lux-

uries for the children of the rich. Socialism offers absolutely the only means for rescuing the children of the poor, and slowly but surely society is being pushed, by the underlying forces that move it, into the acceptance of its philosophy. The abolition of poverty is Socialism's insistent demand, and this demand proclaims the end of private property in the means of life.

The earth spreads out before us, rich in its resources beyond the power of the imagination. The inventive genius of man has captured the lightning, snatched the thunderbolts from the hand of Jove, and grasped all the forces of nature and converted them into titanic toilers for the children of men. The earth and its riotous abundance, and man with his miraculous productive power, scout the idea that poverty is to forever scourge the human race. The past, in the density of its ignorance, and the night of its superstition, may be excused. But the living present with all its myriad available agencies for producing food, clothing, shelter, and for the education of the children and the diffusion of light and intelligence among the masses, can make no such plea.

There is absolutely no excuse for the widespread poverty that now scourges mankind. It is an affront to human intelligence and an impeachement of civilization. Child labor is not only unnecessary in this age, but a crime against both the children and society. Every child ought to have, and in the triumph of Socialism will have, time enough for physical growth, for the joy of healthy childhood, for education, and for everything else required in a truly enlightened age for the scientific rearing of the children, the progenitors of succeeding generations.

It is for this very reason that the poor and the children of the poor are turning toward Socialism in increasing numbers all over the world. It is their movement, born of their travail and consecrated to their emancipation. Millions of them are already marching beneath its international banner and swelling with joyous strains the anthem of their coming deliverance. To them Socialism is as a beacon lighting the shipwrecked mariner to his destined port. It is their sunshine and shower, their meat and drink, their life and hope. It sheds a radiance in their dingy hovels and eases the ache in their numb and weary flesh.

The disinherited of every race and clime are here at home. They are in truth the people and to them of right belongs the earth.

Socialism is their gospel of economic freedom and social salvation. In the name of its commanding genius they unite in greater and greater numbers, thousands, tens of thousands, millions of them, keeping step to the same proletarian heart-beat of the international revolution, animated by the same social spirit, held steadfast by the same social conscience, their radiant faces turned forever toward the sunrise.

These are the children of the poor who have made the earth rich and are now moving toward their eternal inheritance.

The love of comrades is in their hearts, the passion for freedom in their souls, and the light of victory in their eyes. The trials that beset their struggle but fit them for their higher life that lies beyond and holds out to them its eager, outstretched hands. They move steadily as gravitation in one direction—toward the light, the fulfillment of their historic destiny. The storms may beat upon them and the lightning smite them to the earth, but they will rise again undismayed, pressing on and on, with all the patience of fate and all the persistence of truth and justice.

No disappointment, however bitter, no defeat, however crushing, can dampen the ardor of their spirit, or quench the fire of their enthusiasm. All the forces of evil must yield to their unconquerable will. All the governments and all the armed forces of the world must recede and finally disappear before the march of these silent battalions—these intrepid soldiers of international peace, who bear not the arms of sanguinary conflict, but who, armored in the righteousness of their cause, proclaim to all the children of the poor the glad tidings of the coming Kingdom of Peace and Plenty all over the Earth.

Wm. McDougall, employed as night clerk at the King Edward Hotel, Kenora, Ont., absconded with \$25, was caught and sentenced to two years in the penitentiary at Stony Mountain. Our best citizens get away with hundreds of thousands of dollars of the wealth produced by the working-class. They do not abscond, but are looked up to and regarded as desirable residents. Come to think of it, are not our laws pretty queer?

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A Child and the Church of the Wealthy

By Sarah Kingsbury.

It was not the holy Sabbath day, and the doors of the church of the wealthy were closed and securely barred. A little child lay sleeping on the threshold. It was a dirty, neglected creature, and the summer sun poured its merciless rays upon its bare head. It wore a single garment, and this, as the child tossed in its restless sleep, had gathered about its arms, and the child lay with its naked body exposed to the dust and intense heat.

A woman came to the church and saw the sleeping child. She approached with soft step, and reverently covered its nude form with its ragged garment and gently moved it into the shadow of one of the pillars. The child slept more peacefully, and the church's sleep had not been disturbed.

The woman's soul was bowed in worship before the child, and the place seemed permeated with a new, strange holiness. Involuntarily she knelt over the child, and a half-articulate cry of adoration burst from her lips. This ragged, neglected child was holy to her, holy as was the Christ-child to the magi who came to worship him. And she poured upon it all her woman's gifts of love and pity and tender reverence, the frankness and myrrh of her mother's heart. This outcast was as the Christ-child to her—the symbol of all the children of the earth, a holy child by right of birth, a possible son of God.

There arose in her the memory of the cruel slaughter of the children throughout the whole Christian land, and she knelt down beside the child, holding bitter converse with herself.

"To-morrow the church doors will be open wide, for it is another Sabbath, and little children of the wealthy will troop through, happy in their gay summer dress. This child will not be of their number. He has no part in a child's rightful heritage of gentle care and love and pretty raiment. He is the son of a toiler, and the children of his class are bound by unbreakable fetters to the loom to weave bright colored garments for these dainty boys and girls of the wealthy."

"In thousands of churches countless children will gather to learn of the Christ-child to-morrow. To-day thousands of children are toiling in the mills, toiling until their bodies and brains are worn and numb. There is no play for them, no pretty clothing, no training for mind and heart. They toil that the children of the wealthy may have food and fine clothing and much pleasure, that their parents may have beautiful houses and automobiles and huge bank accounts."

The working children do not understand the legends of the Christ-child. They know that the factory whistle blows at seven and that if a minute late there will be less pay in the meagre envelope on Saturday night. They do not know the notes of birds. The robin, the thrush do not sing for them. The shrill voice of the whistle startles them from weary sleep in the early morning hour, and all day the maddening whirr of the machine buzzes in their ears.

No, little child of the wealthy, the sound of the machine is not like the lazy drone of bees as they poised above the garden flowers on a sultry summer afternoon. The factory child has no idle holiday time. The flowers and the birds and the long holiday are for you, and for the child toilers there is nothing but tired, worn bodies and stunted minds, miserable food, and cheap, ugly clothing. They live in wretched, poky houses, for that is the world's way of paying those who feed and clothe its inhabitants.

"The church consists of the owners of the factories, and stores, and mills. The men and women and children who toil do not draw near the temple, for between the toilers and the worshippers there is a great gulf fixed, and the toilers cannot cross, and the worshippers do not so much as reach out a hand to aid them."

"Because you are yet a child, little one, you are not a parasite. You will not understand why the school, the playground, the summer holiday are so necessary for you, while the factory or mill, with its long day, is the place for the children of the poor. Should they tell you, as they tell each other, that these things are the 'will of the Lord,' you would not understand. You will wonder, too, why they never pray for these little wage-slaves. Your clergyman prays for the heathen. He prays for the teachers, the deacons, and almost everything in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, but you do not hear him pray that child slavery may cease. They have pictured the sorrows of the little Chinese girl and of the child widows of India so graphically that you have wept in pity, and have been very thankful that you lived in a Christian land. They do not tell you of the horrible lives of the working children in this same Christian land—the children who help to furnish you with clothing and all the other things that make life pleasant for you."

"No, they do not tell you these things. And some day, if you learn of them before you have become a parasite, you will grow bitter, and think that the teachers and pastors whom you loved and revered were only hypocrites. But they are not that exactly. The men who have enslaved the little children in mill and factory have enslaved your teacher and pastor, too, only theirs is unconscious slavery—not an unpleasant but a deadly form of slavery."

"The mill and factory owners are those whom the church of the wealthy delights to honor. It is they who hold the chief places. They serve the bread and wine at the Holy Supper in memory of Him whose kingdom has for its symbol the little child. The symbol of the industrial

kingdom is the little child also. Perhaps it is by reason of this analogy that the church so loves to honor the leaders of industry."

"Much gold comes to them from the labor of children. Some—a very little, passes into the hands of your pastors and teachers, and they, as well as the great industrial masters, are affected by the taint. For this gold colored the souls of little children is a deadly thing, and poisons all who touch it. They are all suffering from metallic poisoning, the kind that brings mental blindness and paralysis of the social conscience, and finally ends in hopeless phariseism."

"Little children, who will gather in the church of the wealthy to-morrow, would that there were some god somewhere in the great universe who would save you from this deadly phariseism. Would that there were some mighty god in the vast heavens who would rain down his wrath upon those who 'grind beneath their heels' the beautiful faces of little children in the industrial arena."

The woman aroused herself from her bitter reverie. The child still slept, and the church lay in its hopeless coma.

"Sleep on, little one," she said, softly. "Not today nor tomorrow, but on some near day they who worship here will capture you and chain you to the loom, and a tenth of all the gold that is coined from your soft flesh will be poured into the coffers of the church, and for this the masters of the church will bless them.—The Labor Leader."

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Of the key of success you have often been told:
From pulpit and forum, and press;
But before you attempt, it's a secret to hold.

Just ask yourself, "What is success?"
Is it piling up wealth with inordinate haste?
Until you're a millionaire or so?

Blinding your eyes to others in need,
Who, direct of poverty know?
Stealing from labor the wealth it produces?

To be classed as a smart business man;
Searing your conscience with puny excuses.
In support of King Capital's plan?

Is success to be found in achieving great fame,
In special life work or career?
Will it answer the question of "What's in a name?"

The shade of the shroud and the bier;
Evanescence is fame, like a bubble 'twill burst.

And bright dreams for the future are scattered;
Till we look upon life like a thing that is cursed.
Ideals are so ruthlessly shattered.

Is knowledge success? Let those who desire,
Go drink at it's fountain of life;
It is lifting humanity out of the mire
Of oppression and tyranny rife.

For knowledge is power; a sceptre to wield,
If only 'tis used aright;
But oft do we find it will readily yield
To the greed of greed and might.

"Then what is success?" I asked a saint.
"It's a secret should be unfurled."
"Success," he replied, without any cant,
"Is the greatest thing in the world."

"The greatest thing in the world," he said,
"Over all things tower'ing above;
There is no secret, my thoughts be read."
"For this great thing is Love."

—C. P. Calliford, Beachville, Ont.

In the Court of Sessions, Montreal, on October 24th, two men were sentenced to the penitentiary. Edward Good and William Weir, employed as special constables by the Canadian Pacific Railway at Place Viger station, were condemned to St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary for three years and two years respectively.

They had stolen goods amounting to their care. Mrs. Good and Mrs. Weir with their little children hanging to their skirts were present when their sentences were pronounced and both women went into hysterics. The children commenced to scream and cry. Judge Choquet, who pronounced the sentences, gave the men a tongue lashing. He said burglars of this kind were not wanted in Montreal. The women are left without support. The children are left fatherless for years. The parting was a pitiable sight. The cost of living has gone up in Montreal. These men felt the pressure. They yielded. Their employer, the C. P. R., is the richest corporation in the world. It is cutting a melon in stock issue and giving \$60,000,000 to its owners. It skins \$500 a year profits out of every slave it employs.

It steals millions of dollars a year in profits. Its directors and millionaire shareholder thieves live in palaces. Two little thieves steal from it a small fraction of what it steals from its employees, a lickspittle judge sends the little thieves to jail, breaks up families and leaves weak women to face the capitalist wolves of Montreal without protectors. Judge Choquet does his dirty work because a dirty system compels him to do it. He is not to blame. But why force our judges to do such low down work? Why not change the system? Why not abolish the big thieves and give workers the full social value of their labor-created wealth? Then there will not be the pressure upon workers to steal. Then the necessity for breaking up homes and for penitentiaries will cease. The humanitarian cries out in holy anger against our present system and unites with other revolutionaries to sweep accursed capitalism into oblivion.

Truro, N.S., has its first taste of what the police are for. The citizens have thought the police were for the protection of people. They have found the police are to protect the interests of the capitalist class. The workers of the Eastern Hat and Cap Company went on strike. On Sunday, October 13th, the strikers who were holding a meeting in the Truro park were interfered with by the police and the meeting broken up. Two pickets were arrested and thrust into jail. Perhaps the workers of Truro will now wake up and find that their interests are not the interests of their masters, and that policemen are the agents of the master class. A policeman's billy on the head of a striking worker lets a lot of Socialist light into the said head.

The working class are slaves under the present system.

There is not a capitalist in Canada who is not a legalized thief.

What the workers should have is freedom, not hand-me-down reforms.

The capitalists do not want the workers to go into politics on their own account. That is all the more reason why the workers should go into politics.

The great crime of the twentieth century is that human labor power should be sold on the market like meal or iron or coal or other lifeless unfeeling things.

Laurier and Borden are two paid agitators of your masters. They agitate your minds for the sole purpose of keeping you from thinking for yourself.

The high cost of living is lowering the standard of living of the Canadian slaves. If the slaves can be kept worrying over the high or low cost of living, instead of thinking about their own liberty, the masters will be the better pleased.

The capitalist class are great admirers of the Salvation Army. This Army, under the guise of religion, runs the greatest of scab agencies. It is shipping into Canada tens of thousands of jobless slaves to hunt a master with the other jobless slaves of Canada.

Reformers are springing up who tell us that the remedy for the problems of today is to get men back on the land. The men on the land are being hoisted off the land by the mortgage shark or by the giant machine. The remedy suggested is about as intelligent as the usual remedies of the reformers.

The American press despatches declare Schrank who shot Roosevelt is a Socialist. As a matter of fact, Schrank is a Roman Catholic, Democratic saloon keeper of New York. Here is another would-be assassin graduated from the ranks of the supporters of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. We can now expect another big blast against Socialism from Archbishop Ireland or Bruchesi of Montreal.

"If you want to get into the capitalist papers as a great man, just resign from some Socialist position and give your biography to the plutocrats." Ben S. Henry is proving the truth of this dictum. He resigned from being business manager of the Citizen, the Schenectady, N.Y., Socialist paper, and issued a statement to the press. His conduct and words have been given wide publicity. Even the Watchman, of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, gave nearly a column space to the remarks of this gentleman.

In Canada, where Socialism is weak, the cost of living has grown tremendously. In Germany, where the organized Socialist movement is strong, the cost of living has grown tremendously. In both countries the capitalist class are in control. Socialists can do very little to raise the condition of the workers so long as the capitalist class make the laws and own the industry. The remedy for the high cost of living is for the working class to capture the supreme political power and abolish rent, interest and profit. Then there will be no more high cost of living, for the producers will get the full social value of the wealth they create.

The first year of cityhood of Berlin, Ont., was celebrated recently. The population has increased in one year from 15,338 to 16,917. The Assessment Department has drawn the attention of the council to the fact that there is danger of overcrowding unless immediate steps are taken to provide more homes for workmen. It is doubtful whether such homes will be provided. There is more profit in crowding workers together. The masters will talk and plan and let the workers live in slums. This is the universal experience. Homes will not be provided for the workers until the workers seize the political power and legislate for themselves.

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We are told of the prosperous farmers of the west. Statistics belie this prosperity. The Winnipeg Free Press of October 17th declares: "There has been a very substantial increase in the amount of money loaned on mortgage security in Alberta during 1911." In 1910 the life insurance, fire insurance, accident, guarantee insurance, trust and loan companies, had \$24,711,594 loaned on mortgage security in Alberta. In 1911 these companies had \$33,518,667 loaned on such security. This is an increase of over 33 per cent in one year. The Free Press continues, "Towns and cities in Alberta are increasing very rapidly. From each there comes a keen demand for money. But the more popular demand comes from the farmers. Most of the companies prefer farm mortgages and discourage applications from the cities." The western farmer is having a hard time of it. Despite the wonderful prosperity he is obliged to add greatly to his indebtedness. Where will he be when the hard times come? Our prosperity is not for the farmers (save the biggest ones who hire many wage slaves and are on a capitalist basis) nor for the workers. It is prosperity for the capitalist class alone. The farmers and workers have allowed the exploiters to write the laws. Consequently the laws as written are against the producing class. The Socialists would have the laws written in the interests of the producers.

"Toronto interests in Dominion Steel are indulging in pleasant dreams about the visit of Lord Milner to the Sydney plant with Mr. Plummer," is a statement which appears in the financial columns of a capitalist daily. Lord Milner is interested in ship building and Plummer is general manager of the Steel Company's plant. At the Guelph Labor Congress it was stated that the condition of the Nova Scotia Steel Workers was such as to call for immediate attention. If the Milner deal goes through, the condition of the men who do the work will not be improved. The Toronto capitalists and other parasites who do no useful work will have bigger revenues. Surely this proves that our present system of industry places an idle parasite class upon the backs of the working class. Those Toronto gentlemen do nothing to produce the steel made in Cape Breton. They merely rob the makers of the steel. If more steel is made, the non-producers benefit. Socialism will do away with such a nonsensical system.

Many a small merchant does not want Socialism now. But the "middlemen" are being put out of business, and the small merchant is losing his job. Forced into the ranks of the wage slaves; he will then desire to overthrow the system which exploits him. The wise little merchant will do all he can to bring about Socialism, as it is his only hope against the big trusts.

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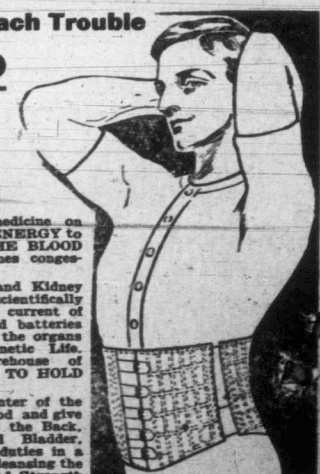
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