

A Reply To a Pessimist

Emancipation by Men,---Not Money.

By Upton Sinclair.

I have read with interest the article by Mr. Maurice Low, of the Morning Post, in the January Forum. He points out the terrific crisis to which civilization has come, and declares his faith that the salvation of the world depends upon the arising of new leaders, men of fervor, zeal and sincerity, who are not bent on self-advancement, on coining notoriety into cash, but are willing to face sufferings and undergo sacrifices to save humanity. His article is deeply felt, and I am going to reply to it frankly. I am going to tell him of my conviction—that there are in the world to-day, in every land, hundreds and thousands of men and women of the sort he calls for, and that it is his class training and environment which make it impossible for him to recognize them. I will tell him of a movement, numbering millions of adherents throughout the world, which has been made body and soul out of the heroic sacrifices of exactly such men as he has sought in vain.

What sort of sacrifice will he have? The other day I heard the story of a young man of one of the oldest and wealthiest Boston families, who left his home and went to work in a steel mill, to help the workers to freedom—and died of the sights of horror and despair which he saw. If you ask for poor heroes, not rich ones, then I will tell of a youth who took part in the Lawrence strike, saw his wife and baby die of starvation, then threw himself into a struggle for free speech on behalf of the Colorado strikers, and had his face beaten in by a policeman's fist.

Who Said "Yellow."

I ask again, What sort of sacrifice—of heroism? Willingness to face ridicule? I know a man who is heir to millions, who devotes his life to organizing the tramps, and although he is a man of real ability, the nearest approach to Christ I ever saw on earth, is never mentioned in the newspapers without mockery. I know a labor leader, steadfast, true, devoted, able, now under life sentence for a murder he had no more to do with than Mr. Low—and yet unperturbed and busy at his work. I know another, who has lived the life of a Spartan or a saint, a giant of a man, shaping laws to set free the slaves of the sea. I know a young lawyer, a devoted Socialist, who the other day told the woman he loved that he was too poor to marry; yet he refused a fee of five hundred dollars for something which would have done only the faintest discoverable harm to the public interest. I know a young clergyman who has just given up a prosperous Boston church to earn a precarious living as a Radical lecturer. I could go on like this for twenty pages, to prove what I say—that there is a mighty surge of humanity under way, made out of innumerable heroisms of men and women; and Mr. Low, and men of the class for which he writes, sit by and have no idea of it all!

Mr. Low speaks of those who coin their notoriety, sell the moving picture rights of their propaganda, exchange their faith for high power limousines, etc. That a few may have done these things I do not deny; though I think that mostly this is a legend set abroad by capitalist interests. What he fails to realize is that the persons who do sell out are the ones who have money behind them, and so they get publicity, while those who resist temptation remain comparatively obscure, and are seldom observed by Mr. Low and his world.

I am going to do a peculiar thing. I

am going to tell you the facts about one man out of the many thousands who have stood by the faith: that one being the man I happen to know about beyond question—myself.

Truth, for Truth's Sake.

I am thirty-eight years old, and have supported myself since I was fifteen, always with my pen. Since the age of twenty I have written exclusively in the cause of human welfare, nearly all my writing being part of the class war. I was able to say to a newspaper man the other day that in those eighteen years I have never written a line I did not believe. I have written many lines which were below my best from the literary point of view, for I have been ill part of the time, and poor most of the time; but I have stood by my faith. I have won much notoriety, and possibly a little fame; also I have made a good deal of money. I made \$30,000 out of one book, and proceeded at once to invest it in a Socialist colony, so organized I had no possibility of making profit out of it; it burned down and I lost nearly everything, and started again. The next time I was on my feet I launched, here in California, a Socialist dramatic enterprise, again without possibility of profit; and when I had got out of debt from that I went in a third time, trying to get justice, or a tiny modicum of it, for the slaves of the Colorado coal mines.

Now I will be egotistical enough to assert, as a fact beyond question, that if I had worked for eighteen years with the same energy, zeal, and persistence at making money that I have worked at producing a score of Socialist books and hundreds of Socialist propaganda articles I would have been a very rich man to-day. At the age of seventeen one of my prosperous relatives offered me a handsome salary to take charge of the opening of a branch of a bonding business in Paris. At the age of twenty-six I refused a salary of ten thousand a year as advertising manager of one of our biggest magazines, and another contract, starting at the same figure, to write editorials. I refused to permit the use of my name in connection with a "model" meat packing plant, in which I was to have \$200,000 worth of stock at the start. A little later I refused my name to a proposed book which was to turn my protest against "white slavery" into cleverly veiled pornography—for which I was to get \$30,000 on signing the contract. It is a fact that I have refused not one but a dozen offers for the production of plays of mine, provided that I would "leave out the Socialism."

Subordination of Profit.

Before my literary success I lived in New York on four dollars and a half a week, and later I supported a wife and child on thirty dollars a month. Since my success I have taken a living out of my work; but the taking has generally been behind the living—that is to say, I have spent more on "causes" than I had at the time. I have never owned an automobile—not even a Ford. I once owned a saddle horse as a matter of health; but at present I ride a bicycle, for which I paid \$10, second-hand. At the moment of writing my worldly goods consist of about \$10 in the bank, a few clothes which are five or ten years old, a couple of hundred dollars' worth of furniture which was purchased second-hand, and a few hundred books. Yet, whenever I come out and raise a cry for the wage slaves of my country, I never fail to read about myself as an agitator for profit.

I am giving the money facts in this letter, the reason being that Mr. Low's

article is a money article, his challenge a money challenge. He wants to know why reformers do not make sacrifices, why preachers of social righteousness insist upon retaining the comforts and safeties of wealth; and the only way to answer such a challenge is with details, sordid and humiliating as they may be.

Mr. Low laments that men no longer have their faith tried by martyrdom. Dear man! what in God's name, what does he mean by that remark? Has he never even heard about capitalist jails? Has he never read Berkman's "Prison Memoirs"? Has he never heard of Pat Quinlan, Arturo Giovannitti, Fred Merriek, Ben Legere Carlo Tresca, John Lawson, Helen Schloss, Gurley Flynn? Does he know nothing of the torture instruments of poverty—the rack of hunger, the thumb screws of neglect, the stocks of ridicule, the dungeons of disease? There are whole armies of people facing these things for the sake of their vision of social justice. There are thousands in America, thousands in every civilized country. He asks for a "superman." They seldom call themselves by any such high-sounding name; they simply do their hard duty, as plain, ordinary, humble men and women have done it through the ages—people like Jesus, and Paul, and Galileo, and Luther, and Huss, and Milton, and Lincoln, and Wendell Phillips, and Gene Debs, and John Lawson, and Andrew Furuseth, and Margaret Sanger, and Pat Quinlan, and Karl Liebknecht, and Sheehy Skeffington.

Heroes in Poverty.

Let us return to the particular bug we are studying—our specimen of the agitator auriferens, popularly described as "parlor Socialist." Not merely have I never made any money out of my propaganda, but I have sacrificed for the sake of practically all my standing and influence as a man of letters, a much-respected caste in the present-day world. When George Brandes, Europe's greatest literary critic, came to this country three years ago he stated to a group of reporters that there were three American novelists he found worth reading: Frank Norris, Jack London and Upton Sinclair. With the exception of one single newspaper, every paper in the country which reported that interview said that there were two American novelists whom George Brandes found worth reading—Frank Norris and Jack London. Brandes himself mentioned this circumstance to me, and asked if I could explain the puzzling phenomenon. It is a fact that New York City's leading newspaper has a rule that articles written by me are not admitted to its columns. I was told this personally by two different editors to whom such orders were given. Reporter friends of mine have described to me the prices which goes on of editing accounts of me which appear in other New York papers, so as to take out of them everything which might reflect credit on me. As to the Associated Press, I do not know what rule it may have about the matter, but its practice is that my name does not get upon its wires unless I am arrested, or divorced my wife, or do something else considered disgraceful. As to magazines, the respectable ones send back my articles in dignified silence; the sensational ones write me friendly letters and explain that if I would only "leave out the propaganda," etc.

And do you think I am unique in such experiences? Not in the least. There are hundreds like me; not all of them so notorious, not all of them so desperately willing to throw away every consideration of bourgeois respectability for a chance to strike a blow at the exploiters of the world's toil; but all of them making sacrifices—money sacrifices—for the cause of justice now here. There is a little magazine in New York which exists because a certain young college professor was willing to throw up his job and go out and beg

among his friends. This magazine has never paid a dollar for a contribution, yet it has the brainiest staff of writers of any magazine in America. Go meet some of the boys on the "Masses," and ask them to tell you what they know about sacrifices made and humiliations endured by men and women who wish to write what they believe!

Here is a call to you, Mr. Low. It is a call which comes to all your fellow-countrymen, Englishmen, and will come louder yet when the war is over. If you want to find saints and martyrs for this new time do not sit up on your hilltop of leisure class good taste, but come down and look for them where they are—in the grime and smoke of the revolutionary movement.—English Clarion, March 30, 1917.

TO LABOUR.

Shall you complain who feed the world?
Who clothe the world?
Who house the world?
Shall you complain who are the world
Of what the world may do?
As from this hour
You use your power
The world must follow you.

The world's life hangs on your right hand,
Your strong right hand,
Your skilled right hand;
You hold the whole world in your hand—

See to it what you do!
Or dark or light,
Or wrong or right,
The world is made by you.
Then rise as you ne'er rose before,
Nor hoped before,
Nor dared before,
And show as ne'er was shown before.
The power that lies in you!
Stand all as one
Till right is done!
Believe and dare and do!
—Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

URGE BRITAIN TO SEEK PEACE.

Independent Labor Party Advises Government to Open Negotiations.

Leeds, Eng., April 11.—The Independent Labor Party, a small pacifist wing of the Labor Party, yesterday passed resolutions declaring for the summoning of a full meeting of representatives of the Labor and Socialist organizations to be held at the same time and place of any peace conference. The resolution also calls upon the allies to open negotiations for a just and honorable peace.

A CAREFUL DRIVER.

Car Owner—So you've come for the position of Chauffeur? I want a man who doesn't take any chances.
Chauffeur—Well, sir, I always require references and salary in advance.

THAT WAVE.

"They say there's a great wave of prosperity sweeping over the country."
"Guess that's right! I know it takes all I can earn to keep from being swamped."

Here enter not attorneys, barraters,
Nor bridle-champion-law practitioners;
Clerks, commissaries, scribes, nor pharisees,
Wilful disturbers of the people's ease,
Judges, destroyers, with an unjust breath,
That, like dogs, worry honest men to death.
—Francois Rabelais.

The Forward is becoming more interesting. During the past week a prominent editor of a radical paper has sent in his sub. We are also in receipt of one from the "Chief Press Censor." We may convert them. Premier Borden is next in line.