

gives their class superiority. On the other hand, the class that suffers by these evils is, on that account, the ignorant and uninfluential class, the class that, from its own consciousness of inferiority, is prone to accept the teachings and imbibe the prejudices of the one above it; while the men of superior ability that arise within it and elbow their way to the front are constantly received into the ranks of the superior class and interested in its service, for this is the class that has rewards to give. Thus it is that social injustice so long endures and is so difficult to make head against.

Thus it was that in our Southern States while slavery prevailed, the influence, not only of the slaveholders themselves, but of churches and colleges, the professions and the press, condemned so effectually any questioning of slavery, that men who never owned and never expected to own a slave were ready to persecute and ostracize any one who breathed a word against property in flesh and blood—ready, even, when the time came, to go themselves and be shot in defence of the "peculiar institution."

Thus it was that even slaves believed abolitionists the worst of human kind, and were ready to join in the sport of tarring and feathering one. And so, an institution in which only a comparatively small class were interested, and which was in reality so unprofitable, even to them, that now that slavery has been abolished, it would be hard to find an ex-slaveholder who would restore it if he could, not only dominated public opinion where it existed, but exerted such influence at the North, where it did not exist, that "abolitionist" was for a long time suggestive of "atheist," "communist" and "incendiary."

The effect of the introduction of steam and labor-saving machinery upon the industries of Great Britain was such a development of manufactures as to do away with all semblance of benefit to the manufacturing classes from import duties, to raise up a capitalistic power capable of challenging the dominance of the "landed interest," and by concentrating workmen in towns to make of them a more important political factor. The abolition of protection in Great Britain was carried, against the opposition of the agricultural landholders, by a combination of two elements, capital and labor, neither of which would, of itself, have been capable of winning the victory. But, of the two, that which was represented by the Manchester manufacturers possessed much more effective and independent strength than that whose spirit breathed in the Anti-Corn Law rhymes. Capital furnished the leadership, the organizing ability and the financial means for agitation, and when it was satisfied, the further progress of the free-trade movement had to wait for the growth of a power which, as an independent factor, is only now beginning to make its entrance into British politics. Any advance toward the abolition of revenue duties would not only have added the strength of the holders of municipal and mining land to that of the holders of agricultural land, but would also have arrayed in opposition the very class most efficient in the free-trade movement. For, save where their apparent interests come into clear and strong opposition, as they did in Great Britain upon the question of protective duties, capitalists as a class share the feelings that animate landholders as a class. Even in England, where the division between the three economic orders—landholders, capitalists and laborers—is clearer than anywhere else, the distinction between landholders and capitalists is more theoretical than real. That is to say, the landholder is generally a capitalist as well, and the capitalist is generally in actuality or expectation to some extent a landholder, or by the agency of leases and mortgages is interested in the profits of landholding. Public debts and the investments based thereon constitute, moreover, a further powerful agency in disseminating through the whole "House of Have" a bitter antipathy to any thing that might bring the origin of property into discussion.

In the United States the same principles have operated, though owing to differences in industrial development the combinations have been different. Here the interest that could not be "protected" has been the agricultural, and the active and powerful manufacturing interest has been on the side of protective duties. And though the "landed interest" here has not been so well entrenched politically as in Great Britain, yet not only has land ownership been more widely diffused, but our rapid growth has interested a larger proportion of the present population in anticipating, by speculation based on increasing land values, the power of levying tribute on those yet to come. Thus private property in land has been in reality even stronger here than in Great Britain, while it has been to those interested in it that the opponents of protection have principally appealed. Under such circumstances there has been here even less disposition than in Great Britain to carry the free-trade

principle to its legitimate conclusions, and free trade has been presented to the American people in the emasculated shape of a "revenue reform" too timid to ask for even "British free trade."

CHAPTER XXVII.

FREE TRADE AND SOCIALISM.

Throughout the civilized world, and pre-eminently in Great Britain and the United States, a power is now arising which is capable of carrying the principles of free trade to their logical conclusion. But there are difficulties in the way of concentrating this power on such a purpose.

It requires reflection to see that manifold effects result from a single cause, and that the remedy for a multitude of evils may lie in one simple reform. As in the infancy of medicine, men were disposed to think each distinct symptom called for a distinct remedy, so when thought begins to turn to social subjects there is a disposition to seek a special cure for every ill, or else (another form of the same shortsightedness) to imagine the only adequate remedy to be something which pre-supposes the absence of those ills; as, for instance, that all men should be good, as he were for vice and crime; or that all men should be provided for by the State, as the cure for poverty.

There is now sufficient social discontent and a sufficient desire for social reform to accomplish great things if concentrated on one line. But attention is distracted and effort divided by schemes of reform which though they may be good in themselves are, with reference to the great end to be attained, either inadequate or super adequate.

Here is a traveler who, beset by robbers, has been left bound, blindfolded, and gagged. Shall we stand in a knot about him and discuss whether to put a piece of court-plaster on his cheek or a new patch on his coat, or shall we dispute with each other as to what road he ought to take and whether a bicycle, a tricycle, a horse and wagon, or a railway, would best help him on? Should we not rather postpone such discussion until we have cut the man's bonds? Then he can see for himself, speak for himself, and help himself. Though with a scratched cheek and a torn coat, he may get on his feet, and if he cannot find a conveyance to suit him, he will at least be free to walk.

Very much like such a discussion is a good deal of that now going on over "the social problem"—a discussion in which all sorts of inadequate and impossible schemes are advocated to the neglect of the simple plan of removing restrictions and giving Labor the use of its own powers.

This is the first thing to do. And, if not of itself sufficient to cure all social ills and bring about the highest social state, it will at least remove the primary cause of widespread poverty, give to all the opportunity to use their labor and secure the earnings that are its due, stimulate all improvement, and make all other reforms easier.

It must be remembered that reforms and improvements in themselves good may be utterly inefficient to work any general improvement until some more fundamental reform is carried out. It must be remembered that there is in every work a certain order which must be observed to accomplish anything. To a habitable house a roof is as important as walls; and we express in a word the end to which a house is built when we speak of putting a roof over our heads. But we cannot build a house from roof down; we must build from foundation up.

To recur to our simile of the laborer habitually preyed upon by a series of robbers. It is surely wiser in him to fight them one by one, than altogether. And the robber that takes all he has left is the one against whom his efforts should first be directed. For no matter how he may drive off the other robbers, that will not avail him except as it may make it easier to get rid of the robber that takes all that is left. But by withstanding this robber he will secure immediate relief, and, being able to get home more of his earnings than before, will be able to so nourish and strengthen himself that he can better contend with robbers—can, perhaps buy a gun or hire a lawyer, according to the method of fighting in fashion in his country.