



VOL. XXXV.

DECEMBER 18th, 1907.

No. 5

Some Reflections on the Capitalistic Organization of Society.

"Man wants but little here below."—Goldsmith.

THE unprecedented fortunes which characterize the opening of this century, insist on claiming the attention of every person interested in social welfare. The conclusion is too often reached that economic laws are at fault, or great fortunes would not exist. The ideal of many is a society of uniform comfort where neither riches nor poverty would be possible.

The present is an era of Mammon worship, no doubt, but a careful consideration reveals the fact, too, that it is also an era of exceptional humanism. During the last few years the amount of private wealth devoted to the betterment of humanity, has been phenomenal. Schools, colleges, universities, libraries, hospitals, art museums—it would take long to exhaust the list of social centres of education and healing—have been heavily endowed by the possessors of great wealth. As the spirit of voluntary benevolence receives the grateful recognition of society, no doubt an emulation will grow up among the rich to be the first to strike the fetters from humanity. It will come about, however, not as the result of coercion, but of a true sense of duty on the part of those who control vast wealth. It is, after all, not fortunes *per se* that need excite apprehension, but the means through which they are accumulated. The great necessity of the times is common honesty. When men in positions of trust know that the public will not applaud their sharp financing as brilliant strategy, but condemn it as plain thievery, they will be restrained in their malpractices through fear of being socially disgraced.

There is a feeling of hatred among the poor against the rich. But no one is poorer, but rather richer, on account of existing wealth, even though it be controlled by private ownership. Every unit in the social body politic is better off for general accumulation. The human stock in trade can never exist for the benefit of one man. It is a common saying that the rich are getting richer, the poor poorer, and the middle class are being crushed out." Actual statistics show that the rich are growing relatively fewer, the middle class larger, and the poor are being crushed out.

The changes in general economic conditions within the last fifty years, which have rendered colossal accumulations increasingly easy, have been many and rapid. In the United States, the period of money inflation during the Civil