

THE DEVIL TO PAY

BY LEWIS FREELAND, IN THE STANDARD.

The king was puzzled, for his treasury was empty, and he knew not how to fill it. While he pondered this mighty question of state, the devil came to him, not in a dream, but in sober earnest. And the devil, as is his habit, went at once to business.

"You are in trouble, sir," said he to the king; "shall I help you out of it?"

"No, thank you," replied the king, "you charge too much for your help. I do not forget that my father is still working out a debt to you which was beyond all proportion to your service."

"Yes," said the devil, "I did charge the old man about all the traffic would bear; but I have tried to be considerate, and although he is still working out the debt, let me assure you that his position is the most comfortable, in winter, in all my dominions. But that is beside the question. Your treasury is empty, and I can fill it. I will make no conditions. You may command me freely. What say you?"

"And has the devil turned saint?" the king inquired.

"Not by a long shot. I shall get my pay; though not from you, from your subjects."

"My subjects be —"

"Stop!" interrupted the devil, "that sentiment is not original with you. It is the motto of my kingdom, and I won't permit it to be appropriated with impunity. Come, what do you say; shall I tell you how to fill your treasury?"

"Yes," the king whispered.

"Then, listen. All your subjects have plenty, have they not?"

"They have. There is not a poor man in my kingdom except myself."

"How do they get it?"

"They work for it."

"Why do you allow them to work?"

"It is the command of God."

"Silence!" the devil screamed, his face purple with rage and his tail lashing the floor of the palace till the air was laden with sparks.

"Well, then," gasped the frightened king, "they would starve if I stopped them, and what good would that do me?"

"It would do you no good if they starved," the devil answered, as he gathered his tail under his left arm and opened the window to let out the stifling fumes. "But it would do you some good to charge them for working, wouldn't it? They would pay rather than starve, eh?"

"Good idea!" exclaimed the king.

"I thought so," said the devil. "Now, suppose you issue a proclamation that no one may work without a royal charter."

"Yes," the king interrupted, impatiently.

"And then suppose you sell charters to one man to work in a certain territory and to another man to work in another territory, and so on."

"Yes."

"And suppose you allow the owners of these charters to farm out the privileges under them."

"Yes."

"And suppose you issue no charters at all for some of the best territory; don't you see that you will get a lot of ready money from the sale of charters and have a permanent income from the territory reserved, and be favored with a wealthy leisure class, in whose society you may enjoy yourself?"

"Capital," exclaimed the king, and before the word was out of his mouth the devil had vanished.

The king lost no time. Having issued his proclamation forbidding his beloved subjects to weary themselves with work, he sent for his attorney-general, and ordered that functionary, on the basis of a contingent fee, to draft a form of charter. It read in substance like this: Be it known that his pious

and gracious majesty, Impecunious X, having from love of his faithful subjects forbidden them to work without his command, does now, by these presents, confer upon his well-beloved Bylighte, lord of Towmaytokahn Hill, his heirs and assigns forever, full power and authority to permit the good people of all that territory known as Quad, and bounded, etc., etc., to work or not to work, as to him may seem best, and on such terms as to him may seem just. Signed, sealed, etc., etc., etc.

The proclamation caused an uproar among the people, for the seeding season was just opening, but when Lord Bylighte appeared with his charter in Quad, quiet was restored and terms were made. "I will give so much a year to be allowed to work," said one, and "I will give so much," said another. And in this way it went, until Lord Bylighte had arranged with all the people in his territory. And while Lord Bylighte was adjusting things in Quad, Lord This and Lord That and Lord Tother were doing the same in Quam and Quim and Qurl. And so it was that the king's treasury was full from the sale of charters, and the lords, instead of working as they used to do, lived on what the people paid them for the privilege of being allowed to work, while the attorney-general's contingent fee was big enough to make a shyster respectable. And between them, the king, the lords and the attorney-general, enjoyed their leisure amazingly.

But as the king's subjects increased, a great many could not buy the right to work, and had to hire themselves to those who could, and many of these could not find men to hire them, and many more found it easier to follow the example of the kings and the lords and live on plunder than either to buy the right to work or to hire themselves out. And it came to pass that there were paupers in the kingdom, which was something novel, since the king had theretofore been the only pauper; and there were criminals there, which was also novel, for when nobody had to pay to be allowed to work, and everybody got rich by working, no one ever thought of being a criminal.

And so things went on for many and many a year. The king was lazy and happy, for he had nothing to do and plenty to eat. The lords were lazy and happy for the same reason. The people, though, were far from being lazy and happy; the beggars were lazy, but they went hungry; the criminals were neither lazy nor happy, and the people who worked had no time to be lazy, and after paying the lords for the right to work had little left on which to be happy.

In the course of time the king died and the lords died, but the charters lived, and the new kings and new lords profited by them.

At last the people got so restless and made such grim threats that the lords were frightened, and when a rebellion was imminent the lords were on the point of burning up their charters. But this did not meet the views of the devil, and he put it into the heads of the people who were paying for the right to work to buy the right of their lords for a lump sum. Of course the lords were glad to compromise in this way, and it came about that each man who worked in a certain place bought the right of his lord to work there forever, him and his children after him, and to sell the right to others. It took a good many years to complete this change but when it was done the devil rubbed his hands and switched his tail gently, now this way and now that, saying: "Surely the devil will be to pay!"

And so it was.

Some of the purchasers from the lords found that where they had the right to work they could only make a little with great effort; and thus it happened that the first, and those who bought of them grew rich, and the others remained poor. And those that grew rich did just what the lords had

done before them; they sold permission to work to the poor who had no charters, and this proved so profitable that they were able themselves to obey the old proclamation against working, and yet to live in great comfort. Like the lords from whom they bought, they were lazy and happy.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE FEAST OF NATIONS.

Cobden believed that international peace is a branch of political economy, and that war is a hindrance to commerce, consuming without producing, expensive, wasteful, and unnecessary. He opposed it also on higher grounds. To him universal peace was not only a political doctrine, but also a moral sentiment and a religious rule. As a member of the Episcopal Church he often partook of holy communion; but he thought that the holiest communion was the Feast of Nations, where the whole brotherhood of man sit in equal rank at the table of the Lord. And the table of the Lord is this round earth, where there is neither head nor foot; no highest place nor lowest place; and woe to the man who devours the share of his brother and drives him from the table.—Gen. Trumbull in American Journal of Politics.

ORGANIZED REVOLT AGAINST GOD.

Think of the barbaric savagery of a system which permits a single generation to appropriate to itself the whole planet upon which it lives, in fraud of all who are to come after them. Is it any wonder that we hear of conflicts between capital and labor—of conflicts between those who have appropriated the earth and those who have been excluded from its occupancy and its blessings? . . . The child who is born while we are penning these thoughts, comes into this world clothed with all the natural rights which Adam possessed when he was the sole inhabitant of the earth. Liberty to occupy the soil in his own right, to till it unmolested as soon as he has strength to do so, and to live upon the fruits of his toil without paying tribute to any other creature, are among the most sacred and essential of these rights; and any state of society which deprives men of these natural and inalienable safeguards, is an organized rebellion against the providence of God, a conspiracy against human life, and a menace to the peace of the community.—General James B. Weaver.

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