

himself might get the full benefit of the serf's labor. The reason serfdom displaced chattel slavery was that it was a more economical and less troublesome method of exploiting the workers. The point best worth remembering about the feudal system is that the serf worked a part of his time for himself and the rest of his time for his lord, much as the worker today works a part of his working day producing his own wages and the rest of the time producing profit for his employer.

The Passing of Feudalism.

It had taken several thousands of years of chattel slavery to prepare the way for serfdom. And it took several centuries of feudalism to prepare the way for a new form of society, capitalism, the kernel of which already existed in the feudal society. While the agricultural districts were under the sway of the nobility, the towns and cities of the middle ages were to a certain extent free from their domination. Here were congregated the merchants, artisans and handicraftsmen, whose interests were at all times more or less antagonistic to those of the land-barons who naturally sought to place restrictions on the manufacture and marketing of the city products. This antagonism was accentuated by the discovery of America and of the South-west Passage to the Orient, and the consequent expansion of trade.

As the wealth and power of the townsmen increased, that of the nobility decreased. The invention of gun powder sealed the fate of the mail clad knights and their chivalry. The noble became a mere parasite upon society. Feudalism ran its course as other forms of society had done. It was dying when the invention of the steam engine gave it its death-blow.

That invention threw wide the doors of opportunity to society's new masters, the townsmen or bourgeoisie. Heretofore the production of articles of commerce had been carried on by hand. The town worker was a craftsman who learnt his trade by a long apprenticeship, who when he became a journeyman, worked by the side of his master, and who had reasonable hopes of becoming himself a master. The tools of production were yet so primitive as to be within the purchasing power of the thrifty workman. Land alone was the sacred property of the ruling class.

The coming of the steam driven engine changed all this. The hand tool grew step by step into the gigantic set of machines we know today. Ownership in the tools of production became more and more of an impossibility for the worker. The master workman left the bench for the office, the foreman took his place. The factory called for more labor, cheaper labor. The capitalist turned profit-hungry eyes on the brawn of the agricultural districts. Serfdom stood in the way so serfdom was abolished. The serf was freed from his bondage to the land that he might take on a heavier yoke, that of the factory. The factory needed not brains but "hands." The hands of the country yokel, of his wife and of his children would serve equally as well as those of the skilled craftsman. No apprenticeship was needed, no training. Only hands with hungry