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SOCIAL CLASSES IN THE REPUBLIC.

BEFORE discussing the best means of promoting social unity, let me say that by "social unity" I mean a state of things in which the members of the various classes of society, no matter in what manner they live, regard one another with kindly feelings, treat one another with courtesy, meet one another on a footing of equality, engage cordially in common enterprises, settle their differences by friendly negotiation, do not think of one another as members of different classes at all, and, more particularly, in which employer and employed look on each other, not as antagonists, but as partners.

Now why does social unity not exist? Because, since the application of machinery to industrial operations, one class, the employed or laboring class, has increased enormously, is massed in cities or towns, has come into possession of a superior degree of intelligence, and has learnt, through the growth of this intelligence and through the spread of cheap literature, to give expression, as never before, to discontent with its lot. This discontent of the workingman with his lot is largely due to the belief — originated or stimulated by a new school of economy, founded by Lassalle and Karl Marx — that, in the distribution of the earth's products and of the products of industry, the laborer has been cheated of his share by the employer or capitalist; that, in other words, when he ought to get all, or most, he only gets some, or very little, and that the employer or capitalist treats him as an inferior. I think this

is as fair a statement of the case as I can make within the limits of a single paper. Let me say, too, that within these limits it would be impossible to treat this matter economically. I am going to look at it, in the main, morally.

In examining the ills of our lot, the first question we have to ask is, Are they remediable? Complaints, unaccompanied with remedies or suggestions of remedy, are, we all acknowledge, among the most useless forms of human activity. Continual discussions of wrongs or afflictions which cannot be removed are generally held to indicate weakness of character. The first thing to do, therefore, in examining the complaints of the working class, is to ask in which category their grievances are, that of things curable or that of things non-curable. This last-named category is, as all observation shows, a very large one: pain, death, sorrow, disappointment of every description, are things which, willy-nilly, we must endure. There is hardly such a thing known as a completely successful life; that is, a life of comfort, in which all the anticipations of youth have been fulfilled during the period of activity. The two most inevitable non-curable evils of all are decay and death. Is the present mode of distributing the earth's products among its inhabitants unfair? If so, is the unfairness in the category of non-curable ills? I endeavored to answer these questions two years ago in another place. I may be allowed to repeat what I then said: —

"There are only three laws of distribution of which I can form any conception. One would be a natural law, like the law of gravitation, which automatically divided among all concerned the results of any given piece of production, as soon as completed, without any care on the part of anybody, and of which nobody could complain, any more than of the earth's attraction. Another would be a law formed by some authority, which everybody would acknowledge as final, and to which all would submit, owing either to the overwhelming force at its command, or to the universal confidence in its justice. The third would be the present law, which I may call the law of general agreement, under which everybody gets the least for which he will labor, and the least for which he will save and invest. There may be others than these, but they are beyond my powers of conception.

"The first of them, I presume, does not need discussion. There never will be any natural distributive force to which we shall all have to submit, as we submit to the law of chemical affinity or proportion. The division of the products of labor and capital will always be the subject of some sort of human arrangement, in which the human will will play a more or less prominent part. So that the second of these laws would have to be the result of some kind of understanding as to who or what the deciding authority should be, to which all would have to submit without murmuring.

"Thus far in the history of mankind it has never been possible to come to such an agreement even on matters touching the feelings much less nearly than one's share of the products of one's labor. No government, spiritual or temporal, has ever existed which had not to keep in subjection a hostile minority by the use of force in some shape.

"The Pope in the Middle Ages came nearer seeming the voice of pure justice than any other power that has ever ap-

peared in the western world. But Christendom was never unanimously willing to let him arrange even its political concerns, and I do not think it ever entered into the head of the most enthusiastic Papist to let the Pope arrange his domestic affairs, so far as to say what his wages or his profits should be. The guilds came near doing this in various trades, but their authority was maintained by the power of expulsion. When the whole of civil society becomes a guild, this power cannot be exercised, because there will be no place for the expelled man to go to. To make him submit there would have to be some sort of compulsion put upon him. In other words, he would have to be enslaved by being compelled to labor against his will for a reward which he deemed inadequate. Except on the assumption, which the smallest knowledge of human nature makes ridiculous, that everybody is sure to be satisfied with what he gets for his work, any law of distribution emanating from a human authority would necessarily result in slavery. In truth, it is impossible to conceive any plan of state socialism which would not involve the slavery of some portion of the population, unless we can picture to ourselves unanimity concerning the things on which men under all previous régimes have been most apt to differ."

So that the only other mode within our reach involves arbitrary distribution by a few men, and the use of force to make the discontented satisfied with their lot, and make the lazy and idle contribute their share, or, in other words, the restoration of slavery. Slavery is, in fact, a mode of distribution concocted by those who have the power to enforce their will.

But supposing this mode did not involve slavery, what then? What would be the practical difficulties in its way? Under the socialistic plan of distribution of work and products by the state,

we must remember that, much as this word "state" is used in socialistic treatises and speeches, the state will always be a group of politicians elected by universal suffrage. To assign to a great community like a city or town, or like a kingdom, the supervision of the work of each individual; to see that he contributes his share of labor, that his occupation is the one best suited to him, that he gets his due earnings, and no more, that the lazy are made to toil, and the weakly are spared and cared for, is a scheme which, emanating from persons who know anything of the difficulty of managing a single factory, or ship, or regiment, or railroad, who know how rare the administrative faculty is, how enormously we are willing to pay for it in business enterprises or in the command of armies, I confess fills me with amazement. In fact, I read about "collectivism" with much the same feeling of gentle entertainment with which I read about the best means of communicating with the planet Mars. All our experience of human nature, all our experience of government, show us that the world has no reservoir of administrative talent which has not been already tapped.

Moreover, there is no reason, in the present state of things, why socialists should not try their experiment on a small scale. All the virtues, all the restraints, all the spirit of self-sacrifice and mutual help which are necessary for its success are within their reach now, and could anywhere be brought into play without the help of the state. Any hundred men can work together, produce together, and divide the products according to any rules which they agree upon. If successful, such associations would multiply, and we should be familiarized with the idea, and be gradually prepared for the transformation of modern society. As a matter of fact, such experiments have several times been tried, and have always failed, except in the case of religious societies with other objects

than production, like monasteries, and they have failed among men devoted to the scheme and full of faith in it.

If I am right in all this, we are shut up to the continuance of the present system of competition with its manifold drawbacks and widespread dissatisfaction. Can nothing be done to make us live together in amity? Much, but I am afraid my remedies will seem old-fashioned and tedious.

I do not rely on any particular legal plan or any political system, but on my faith in human nature, and on my knowledge of the human race since the dawn of civilization. When I compare the modern with the ancient world, I am assured as to the future of man. I am far from denying that legislation and political changes have been the direct means of great good, but every good change in legislation or in government has been preceded or brought about by an increase of intelligence, of reasonableness, or of brotherly kindness on the part of the people at large. The new régime has got into the air before it got into the laws. Why do we not now burn heretics? Why do we not burn witches? Why do we not hang a man for stealing a sheep? Why do we not teach people to be content with their condition, however lowly? Why do we condemn ignorance as a curse? Nearly every step in what we call the growth of civilization has been the result of the springing up in brains of individuals of new views of the nature and ends of human society.

Among the minor complaints of the working classes, besides unfairness of distribution, among the reasons why classes do not mix socially is the difference of manners, dress, habits of life, and culture, between the man who labors with his hands and the man who labors with his head. Some writers, like Mr. Kidd, think this will be overcome by a change in distribution, so great, if I understand the matter rightly, that workmen shall get as much of the good things of this life

as anybody else, — as good schooling, as much university, as much literature and music. It is a little difficult to discuss this branch of the subject without seeming to treat it too lightly. Social inferiority is a common complaint of socialists everywhere against the classes which do not work with their hands. But nobody has as yet pointed out how it is to be overcome any more than how differences in strength of mind or body are to be overcome. One of the dearest liberties of the human race is each man's liberty of choosing his own associates. His choice, too, is not regulated simply by attractions of mind or character, but by manner of living. I associate, except in rare instances, with those who live like myself, who have the same ideas of social enjoyment, who dress and behave in social life much as I and my family do, whose walk and conversation I find interesting and instructive. Workingmen do the same thing. I venture on the assertion that it is very rare indeed for any man or woman to be kept out of any society which would enjoy his or her presence. People do not, as a rule, associate to assert a principle or spread ideas. They associate for purposes of enjoyment; workingmen do so themselves. Congeniality or similarity of manners is what has drawn social lines ever since man began to consort with his fellows. To arrange society on legal lines is beyond human powers. To be told by any human power what company I must keep, is to be a slave, and the restoration of social slavery is not possible. Birds of a feather have flocked together since civilization began, and probably will do so till it perishes.

But in so far as the classes are kept apart by dress or manners or mode of life, what chance is there of their becoming more agreeable company to each other? This, I confess, seems to be one of the most practical branches of what is called "the labor question." I do not think it is wholly difference of culture

which keeps them apart. There are few occupations whose nature prevents those who pursue them from being agreeable company to people who are simply richer. A very large proportion of what are called "the business men" know no more, read no more, and have no more to say than the bricklayer or the plumber; but they are apt to have better tastes and better surroundings, and to pay more attention to dress and personal cleanliness. Other people similarly situated, for these reasons, prefer their company. There is no doubt that in these respects there is room for great improvement in the habits of the working classes, but this improvement must come from themselves. Nobody can impose it on them. It must be the outcome of personal desire or ambition. Any agency which helps to implant this desire or nurse this ambition is a good one. Improvement in dwellings undoubtedly does this; better education does it; increased opportunities for harmless or intellectual amusement and the use of them, do it too; slowly, perhaps, but surely. In this field the more fortunate classes cannot labor without result. I am old enough to remember when the New England mechanic was very good company, was intelligent and shrewd and often well read, and when his plainness of dress and the smallness of his house need not have been any social disadvantage. But last winter I went one day, in New York, into a new house, while the plasterers were at work, and when the men, all skilled laborers, were at dinner in a lower room. I overheard them without their seeing me. Their conversation was profane, indecent and slangy, and trivial. There was not in it the sign of any desire to rise in the scale of intelligence or refinement. It is, too, within everybody's observation that politeness of demeanor, that sure sign that a man has risen in the world or is rising, is not cultivated by the working classes. On the contrary, they seem to eschew it as a sign of subservience. They are often

rude, indifferent, in the country of all countries in which they could best afford to be suave without having their independence suspected. They are inferior in this respect to either the English or the French. What we call "the manners of a gentleman" are not at all uncommon among French and English workingmen. A great many in our cities seem to consider brusqueness of manner and carelessness about dress signs of their freedom, whereas they are simply signs of imperfect civilization. I think the manners and personal appearance of a large part of our working population might be greatly improved; that their lives might be made far more refined and picturesque without any change of occupation; that their houses and other surroundings might be made far better, with more knowledge and effort on the part of themselves and their wives, if less money were spent on drink. In my opinion, there is no reason in the nature of their calling for their not sharing a great deal of the æsthetic and intellectual privileges of the classes who employ them. And I must say frankly that I know of no more mischievous person than the man who, in free America, seeks to spread among them the idea that they are wronged and kept down by somebody; that somebody is to blame because they are not better lodged, better dressed, better educated, and have not easier access to balls, concerts, or dinner-parties. If I were to speak strongly, I should say that the sowing of discontent among masses, among men in a democratic country in our day, without specifying the evil and laying your finger on the culprit, is very distinctively anti-social work. Two years ago I was in one of the university settlements in New York, and was walking through the rooms of the society with one of the members. They were plain and neat and suitable, and he explained to me that the purpose in furnishing and titting them up was to show the workingmen the kind of rooms they ought to have "if jus-

tice were done." To tell this to a workman, without telling him in what the injustice consisted and who worked it if he had not such rooms, was, I held, to be most mischievous.

One of the worst of our delusions is, that the capitalists or employers are a peculiarly favored class; that nature has done something for them which she has not done for the rest of the world. The word "capitalist" is simply another word for the man who saves, and who finds out what the public will buy. This faculty for saving and for finding out what the public wants is a rare faculty. It is so rare, that I believe reliable statistics prove that ninety-five per cent of men in business — that is, of men who employ others — fail. They fail through their incapacity or want of diligence. Only an infinitesimally small number achieve fortune. The others may be called the explorers of the race. We profit by their errors. For one who invents a sewing-machine or a telephone, ten thousand lapse into poverty. Nothing requires a more delicate combination of qualities than the creation and conduct of a great business. The conditions of success are often too minute for observation. The life is full of terrible anxieties, especially in what is called "hard times," when money is difficult to get. The penalty of failure is tremendous, and yet the number of us who are ready to tell the capitalist how to carry on his business, how to pay his men, whom to employ, and on what terms, is very large. If those who can carry on business themselves were only one thousandth part as numerous as those who can tell how it ought to be carried on by others, the happiness of man would be well assured. I do not discuss what is called profit-sharing, because it is one of the things to be sought by the persons concerned, not to be forced on anybody. Its success depends on the voluntary action of employer and employed, hardly at all on the exposition of it by persons who have no practical experience of it.

There are two great facts which lie at the bottom of this labor question, which it behooves all reformers to remember. One is that as far back as our knowledge of the human race goes all that the earth has yielded to our labors has been a very moderate subsistence. In every country and in every quarter of the globe, the mass of the people have been, and are to-day, happy if they have the plainest food and clothing. Millions used to perish of famine, and have perished in our own time: witness the famine at Orissa in India. A very small number have more than a subsistence, and a mere handful are rich. This is true even of America, the most favored country on the globe. From the earth everything must come through labor; she is truly our mother, but she takes no count of our numbers. She does not become more prolific in her yield because many are to partake. She yields hardly anything voluntarily beyond a few tropical fruits.

The other fact is that in multiplying, we take no count of her yield. We multiply without reference to it. Most men marry trusting to luck. A few are more provident. The first of these facts is the law of population. The second is the law of production. The law of population says, in spite of our protests, that population has a tendency to multiply in any given spot beyond the means of subsistence. We have deprived this law of its worst effects, or delayed its operation, by our improvements in the means of transportation; that is, by increased facilities for transporting people and food. But it works still, as we may see by a strike in any large city or centre of industry. Thousands out of employment always apply for the vacant places, which simply means that multiplication has gone beyond subsistence at that point. Every spot in the world in which food *seems* to be abundant would speedily yield the same results. Population crowds to it, and subsistence fails. And the law of production is, that whether we apply

labor to mines or to agriculture, the product does not increase in the same ratio as the labor applied. In other words, we cannot get proportionally more results by employing more men. The more we employ, the less in proportion do the returns become. This is the solemn warning of the earth against making too great demands on her. Our intelligence is given us to heed it. To disregard it is to make the people a "plebs," protected or supported by a paternal government, cared for, from their rising to their going to bed, at the expense of their more industrious and foreseeing fellows. Now, be assured of one thing: a plebs cannot carry on a free government. It supplies food for powder, or materials for a king, a Napoleon or a Cæsar, to try experiments with, but it does not supply intelligent and self-respecting voters.

This may sound disheartening, and it may be asked, Is there, then, nothing for those who would fain work for the temporal salvation of the race, to do but sit still and watch the working of the iron laws which make the history of humanity one long tale of sorrow, wrong, and ruth? The opportunities of this class were never greater than they are to-day. The work of reformers, since the dawn of civilization, has, it is true, been the relief of misery, but also, the work of persuasion, the work of inducing men to live well. All religions — ancient paganism, Buddhism, Mahometanism, Christianity, — have had this object mainly in view. We hear often of the separation between the ancient religions and morality, but I am unable to discover a period in which the gods did not sooner or later make it hot for the man who, according to the ideas of the time, did not behave well. All philosophies — Confucianism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Platonism — have sought to improve the race. The Christian Church, socially considered, is, as Matthew Arnold says, "a society for the promotion of what is commonly called goodness." The function of all these

agencies is to get men to pursue the right. This function has in no way changed. The problems before the preacher and the philosopher now are exactly what they were five thousand years ago. The machinery placed at their disposal has been greatly increased by the printing-press. Persuasion, as an art, the greatest of all human arts, has had its sphere wonderfully enlarged, and in a community like ours persuasion is the work of those who would solve the social problems. It is true we ought to bear our brother's burdens, but it is also true that our brother ought not to let us bear them if he can help it.

Our success in this world depends on character, as we all see every day of our lives. The man who succeeds, succeeds for the most part through character. It is chiefly in character that Mexico differs from the United States, Spain from England. Not only are all our religions and philosophies really meant to build it up, or sustain it, but so, also, are all our social arrangements. In hiring, and contracting, and lending, and crediting, we rely on character. In nearly every transaction of life, it is on character rather than on law that we place our faith. Why we are not governed better is that in politics we pay too little attention to character. Success in life, in its highest sense, — that is, success in getting what we want, or in convincing people that we have deserved it, — is almost always the result of character. And it is not the monopoly of any one class. In every class the virtues succeed as often as anything succeeds in this world. The sober, industrious, faithful, prudent workingman has as good a chance for his faculties as the sober, industrious, faithful, prudent lawyer or capitalist. He may not obtain as much physical comfort, but he obtains more than the great mass of the community everywhere.

Now the Socialist movement, in fact all socialist movements, all movements to make governments provide for the peo-

ple, either by constant employment or by free silver, to make the government support the people instead of making the people support the government, are attempts to do away with the need of character, to enable the world to get on without it. Their real object is to put all on a level, not alone the bright and the stupid, but the industrious and the lazy, the drunkard and the sober man, the truthful and the mendacious, the faithful and the deceitful. They seek to destroy all those social arrangements which make character valuable, and are really the spur through which nature raises and keeps us above the brutes. They seek to prevent the honest and loyal man from profiting by his loyalty and honesty, the diligent man from profiting by his diligence, the skillful man from profiting by his skill. They seek to prevent loss through bad conduct, and to prevent promotion or employment through good conduct. They seek to make the idle and indolent as sure of the future as the industrious and energetic. Of course I do not believe this state of things will ever come about, for it is slavery, and I know from the history of the world that it will not submit to a restoration of slavery. But these expectations will remain in the air, and draw away a large amount of attention from the work of the world, if they are negotiated or compromised with, if social unity is not sought on very different lines. We have seen in the history of the silver movement what comes of meeting error half way; of saying, either to the cunning agitator or to his dupe, that he is half right, that there is a good deal in what he says, that his principle is sound, but that he is too hasty or too inopportune, that somebody unknown has treated him shamefully.

If I might presume to address myself more particularly to the ministers of the Church, who are the great persuaders of the community, the only class of men among us, in fact, who make a profession of persuasion, I would say that neither

the problem they have to deal with nor the nature of their work has changed. The problem is one of the oldest in the history of humanity, the discontent of the poor, which is really discontent with the provision the earth makes for her children. I admit that a great deal may be done to mitigate this discontent. I assert that an immense deal has been done, that the condition of the masses has been immensely improved, and is being improved, but through that very old process, the improvement of the individual man. Men are more sober, more humane than they used to be, have more

knowledge, have a better understanding of the things which make for happiness, than they used to have. Among these things, the greatest is liberty, the free use by every man of his faculties, the free choice of his labor and his methods. To this, and not to law, we undoubtedly shall owe all the great triumphs of civilization that we have still to make. Discontent we cannot cure. It is part of the lot of men. Combined with great human virtues, it has done wonders for the race; but linked with social hatred, with love of dreams and delusions, it can work, and has worked, great mischief.

E. L. Godkin.

CLASSICAL STUDIES IN AMERICA.

MORE than once have I been tempted to write a history of Greek literature from the point of view of various characters mentioned in the records of the past; and one long chapter I intended to dedicate to a hoary old sinner who figures in Isæus, and who came to a disreputable end in his ninety-seventh year. "Euctemon," I said to myself, "was a mature man at the time of the Sicilian expedition. He had heard the funeral oration of Pericles; he had passed through the horrors of the plague. He had shouted over the capture of the Spartans on the island of Sphacteria; he was yet to welcome the return of Alcibiades and to witness the fall of Athens. He may have heard his elders talk of the Agamemnon of Æschylus before it became an old play, and Pindar had not fallen asleep in Argos when Euctemon woke to the light of an Athenian sky. He may have furnished a chorus for Sophocles or Euripides, have heard a reading of Herodotus, and have voted for the recall of Thucydides; he may have known Xenophon and Aristyllus, otherwise called Plato, and sat on the

jury that condemned Socrates, and his judgment may have been warped by the Clouds of Aristophanes." Now although I do not set myself up to be a rival of Euctemon, although I am by no means the senior of American philologists, either in length of days or in term of service, my personal recollections go so far back that I might write a history of classical philology in America that should bear a due proportion to Euctemon's history of Attic literature; for my first year of professional study fell exactly in the middle of the century, and I have been engaged in academic work for exactly forty years. The middle of the century is a convenient point of reference, and the period of forty years suggests a good many things to one familiar with Holy Writ; among others, the wandering in the wilderness. In these forty years, unlike the people of Israel, the classical philologist has often had occasion to discard the old clothes of his theories and the old shoes of his practice, but if life be whole and hope be strong, let "back and side go bare, go bare," and if the shoes