

## CHAPTER VII.

## WHO MAKES THE WEALTH, AND WHO GETS IT?

The old original capitalist who has rested from his labours, and whose works do follow him—creative, frugal, and laborious—he looms ever “at the back of the beyond.” It is a beautiful conception, this of the first capitalist, and only shows that poetry, like hope, springs eternal in the human breast—even the economical breast. Like Prester John and the Wandering Jew, he has a weird charm about him that almost makes one love him. But our reverence for an old legend must not blind us to historical fact, to wit, that the real origin of modern capital is to be found in the forcible expropriation of the peasantry from the soil, in oppressive laws to keep down wages, in the plunder and enslavement of the inhabitants of the New World and of Africa, in the merciless overworking of children in factories, &c., &c.—*Belfort Bax*.

As soon as land becomes private property, the landlord demands a share of almost all the produce which the labourer can either raise or collect from it. His rent makes the first deduction from the produce of the labour employed upon land. . . .

As soon as the land of any country has all become private property, the landlords, like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed, and demand a rent, even for its natural produce. . . .—*Adam Smith*.

How contempt of human rights is the essential element in building up the great fortunes whose growth is such a marked feature of our development we have already seen. And just as clearly may we see that from the same cause spring poverty and pauperism. The tramp is the complement of the millionaire.—*Henry George*.

In a rude and violent state of society it continually happens that the person who has capital is not the very person who has saved it, but someone who, being stronger, or belonging to a more powerful community, has possessed himself of it by plunder. And even in a state of things several degrees more advanced, the increase of capital has been in a great measure derived from privations which, though essentially the same with saving, are not generally called by that name, because not voluntary. The actual producers have been slaves, compelled to produce as much as force could extort from them, and to consume as little as self-interest, or the usually very slender humanity of their task-masters would permit.—*Jno. Stuart Mill*.

Now, John, what are the evils of which we complain? Lowness of wages, length of working hours, uncertainty of employment, insecurity of the future, low standards of public health and morality, prevalence of pauperism and crime, and the existence of false ideals of life.

I will give you a few examples of the things I mean. It is estimated that in this country, with its population of thirty-six millions, there are generally about 700,000 men out of work. There are about 800,000 paupers. Of every

thousand persons who die in Merrie England over nine hundred die without leaving any property at all. About eight millions of people exist always on the borders of destitution. About twenty millions are poor. More than half the national income belongs to about ten thousand people. About thirty thousand people own fifty-five sixths of the land and capital of the kingdom, but of thirty-six millions of people only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions get above £3 a week. The average income per head of the working classes is about £17 a year, or less than 1s. a day. There are millions of our people working under conditions and living in homes that are simply disgraceful. The sum of crime, vice, drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, idleness, ignorance, want, disease, and death is appalling.

These are facts. They are facts which stare us in the face in every town, and at all hours of the day and night. They are facts so well known that I need not rake the Blue Books for statistics to confirm them. I wish to use as few figures as possible. I also wish to avoid angry words. Therefore, Mr. Smith, I simply point out these evils and ask you as a practical and honest man whether you don't think they ought to be remedied.

To what are the above evils due? They are due to the unequal distribution of wealth, and to the absence of justice and order from our society.

Consider, first, the distribution of the annual earnings. The following figures are given on the authority of Giffen, Levi, and Mulholland:—

Gross national earnings.....	£1,350,000,000
Amount paid in rent .....	220,000,000
Amount paid in interest. ....	270,000,000
Salaries of middle-classes and profits of employers, &c. ....	360,000,000
Wages of the working classes .....	500,000,000

That is to say, the workers earn 1,350 millions. Of that the Rich take, in rent and interest, 490 millions, and the Rich and Middle-classes, in profits and salaries, take another 360 millions, or a total of 850 millions, leaving for the working classes little more than one-third (500 millions).

Now for the proportions. As I said just now, there are

less than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions who pay income tax on incomes of £150 a year and upwards. Multiply  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions by 3 and you get  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions as the gross number of men, women, and children of the middle and upper classes. Four-and-a-half millions will be just one-eighth of our population. Thus we find that 850 millions go to one-eighth of the population, and 500 millions to the other seven-eighths.

Speaking in round numbers the averages *per head* are as follow:—

Middle and upper classes, per year, £184.

Working classes, per year, £16.

The following diagram will give you an idea of the inequality of this division:—

CLASSES.	INCOME.
* * * * * * *	* * * * * *
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	* * * * *
 MASSES.	 INCOME.
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But this is not the worst. Besides the fact that the upper and middle classes take nearly two-thirds of the wealth which the masses earn, there is the fact that those classes, and probably less than a tenth of those classes, actually own all the land and all the instruments by which wealth can be produced.

Political orators and newspaper editors are very fond of talking to you about "your country." Now, Mr. Smith, it is a hard practical fact that you have not got any country. The British Islands do not belong to the British people; they belong to a few thousands—certainly not half a million—of rich men.

These men not only own the land, they own, also, the rivers and lakes, the mines and minerals, the farms and orchards, the trees and thickets; the cattle and horses, and sheep and pigs, and poultry and game; the mills, factories, churches, houses, shops, railways, trains, ships, machinery,

and, in fact, nearly everything except the bodies and souls of the workers, and, as I will try to show you, they have almost complete power over these.

Yes, not only do the rich own the land, and all the buildings and machinery, but also, and because they own those things, they have reduced the workers to a condition of dependence.

For you know very well that it is true of nearly all our working men that they cannot work when they choose to work, but must first find a rich man—a capitalist—who is willing to employ them.

This is because the capitalists own the land and the tools. What can the ploughman do without the land and the plough; or the collier without the pit and the machinery; or the weaver without the loom and factory?

You know that in these days of machinery there are hardly any men who own the tools of their own trade. And if they did they would be helpless; for they must sell their work in a market where the capitalist competes with them, and where he will undersell them, even if he loses by the sale, and so make it impossible for them to live.

Rent, interest, private ownership, machinery, and competition are all instruments in the hands of the capitalist, and with those instruments he compels the worker to give up nearly all his earnings in return for permission to work.

You are an agricultural labourer. I own a piece of land. You come to me and beg for "work." I "engage" you at 15s. a week, and all you produce is *mine*. You are a slave, for if you quit my employ you must starve; and although I have no whip or chain, I have that which serves as well to compel you to work hard, that is to say, I have power to turn you off the land. So if you are a cotton operative, and I own a cotton mill. You must come to me and ask for work. If I refuse it you must starve. If I offer it you must take it at my price. Oh, yes, you can form a trade union, and strike, refusing to accept my price. In that case I may give you rather more than I offered, because it will pay me better to let you have half the money you earn and be content myself with the other half than to let you remain idle and so make nothing by you at all. But you

know I can always beat you, for I have enough to live upon in idleness, and you have *nothing*.

Well, it is true that the land and all the mines, mills, houses, and machinery—that is to say, the “Land” and “Capital”—of this country are owned by a few rich people. And it is urged in defence of this private ownership of the “means of livelihood” that, in the first place, the rich have a “right” to their possessions; and, in the second place, that the rich use these possessions to the general advantage.

Both these statements are untrue.

First, as to the rich man’s “right” to his wealth. I suppose that you, as a sensible and honest man, will admit this principle: viz., that a man has a “right” to that which he has produced by the unaided exercise of his own faculties; but that he has *not* a right to that which is not produced by his own unaided faculties; nor to the whole of that which has been produced by his faculties aided by the faculties of another man.

If you admit the above principle, then I think I can prove to you that no man has a right to the private ownership of a single square foot of land; and that no man could of his own efforts produce more private property than is commonly possessed by a monkey or a bear.

We will begin with the land; and you will find that the original title to all the land possessed by private owners is the title of conquest or theft.

There are four chief ways in which land may become private property. It may be confiscated by force; it may be filched by fraud; it may be received as a gift; or it may be bought with money.

Of the land held by our rich peers the greater part has been plundered from the church, stolen from the commons, or received in gifts from the Crown. If you will buy a little book called “Our Old Nobility,” price 1s., published by H. Vickers, Strand, London, you will begin to have an idea of the ways in which our “noble” families got possession of their estates. From that book I quote the following lines:—

The Fitzroys are certainly descended from one of the vilest of women: Barbara Palmer, wife of Lord Castlemaine, and mistress of Charles II. . . . One of Charles’ Ministers was Henry

Bennet, Earl of Arlington, whose only daughter was married at the mature age of twelve to young Fitzroy, the son of Barbara Palmer and Charles II. Ample provision was made for the young couple. In 1673 Charles granted to the Earl of Arlington for life, and to Fitzroy and his wife afterwards, a very extensive tract of Crown land, viz., the lordship and manor of Grafton, manor of Hartwell, and lands in Hartwell, Roade, and Hanslope, manors of Alderton, Blisworth, Stoke Bruerne, Green's Norton, Potterspury, Ashton, Paulerspury, part of Charcomb Priory, lands in Grimscott, Houghton Parva, Northampton, Hardingston, and Shuttlechanger, parcel of Sewardsey Priory, the office and fee of the honour of Grafton, and the forests of Salcey and Whittlebury (reserving the timber to the Crown). This extraordinary grant will account for the large estates of the Fitzroys in Northamptonshire and Bucks. The Fitzroys inherit their Suffolk estates from the Earl of Arlington. This patriotic statesman, who formed one of the notorious Cabal Ministry, not content with taking bribes from the King of France, and with the lucrative posts of Secretary of State, Keeper of the Privy Purse, and Postmaster-General, managed to secure for himself a number of valuable grants, as is shown by the State Papers in the Record Office, among which were a moiety of the estates of a former Earl of Lenox, and several manors in the county of Wicklow. He also obtained a lease of Marylebone Park on advantageous terms, and another lease of three-fourths of Great St. John's Wood at an annual rental of £21. 6s. 2d. No wonder that he was able to purchase Euston Hall and the surrounding lands. One of his Suffolk lordships was formerly part of the possessions of St. Edmund's Abbey, though whether acquired by grant or purchase is not clear. Charles II. was not content with giving away Crown lands in the wholesale manner above described; the children of his harlots were further provided for at the public expense. The Duke of Grafton, for instance, had an hereditary pension of £9,000 a year granted from the Excise, and £4,700 a year from the Post Office, which continued to be paid till a comparatively recent date. The former pension was redeemed in 1858 by a payment of £193,777, and the latter in 1856 by a payment of £91,181. There was also a very lucrative sinecure in the family, which the Duke of Grafton surrendered in 1795 for an annuity of £870 a year—an arrangement ratified by the Act 46 Geo. III., cap. 89.

I want you to read that book, and also Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" and "Social Problems," each 1s., published by Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., London.

But leaving the men who have stolen the land, or got it by force, or fraud, let us consider the title of those who have bought the land.

Many people have bought land, and paid for it. Have they a right to it?

No. They have no right to that land, and for these two reasons:

1. They bought it of some one who had no right to sell it.

2. They paid for it with money which they themselves had never earned.

Land, you will observe, is the gift of Nature. It is not made by man. Now, if a man has a right to nothing but that which he has himself made, no man can have a right to the land, for no man made it.

It would be just as reasonable for a few families to claim possession of the sea and the air, and charge their fellow creatures rent for breathing or bathing, as it is for those few families to grab the land and call it theirs. As a matter of fact we *are* charged for breathing, for without a sufficient space of land to breathe on we cannot get good air to breathe.

If a man claimed the sea, or the air, or the light as his, you would laugh at his presumption. Now, I ask you to point out to me any reason for private ownership of land which will not act as well as a reason for private ownership of sea and air.

So we may agree that no man can have any *right* to the land. And if a man can have no right to the land, how can he have a right to sell the land? And if I buy a piece of land from one who has no right to sell it, how can I call that land mine?

Take a case. William the Conqueror stole an estate from Harold (to whom it did not belong) and gave it to a Norman Baron. During the Wars of the Roses said Baron lost it to another Baron, or to the Crown. Later on the estate is confiscated by Charles II. and given to a bastard son of his. The descendants of that bastard son take to gambling and lose the estate to the Jews. The Jews sell it to a wealthy cotton-lord.

But the land is stolen property, and the cotton-lord is a receiver of stolen property.

Suppose a footpad knocked down a traveller and stole his watch. Gave the watch to his sweetheart, who sold it to a Jew, who sold it again to a sailor, and suppose the traveller came forward and claimed his watch. Would the

law let the sailor keep it? No. But if the footpad had been made a peer for stealing it *that* would have made a difference.

You may say, of course, that the law of the land has confirmed the old nobility in the possession of their stolen property. That is quite true. But it is equally true that the law was made by the landowners themselves. In the eighteenth century the big landowners robbed the small landowners in a shameful and wholesale way. Within a space of about eighty years no less than 7,000,000 acres were "enclosed."

And when we suggest that the land of England should be restored to the English people from whom it was stolen, these land-robbers have the impudence to raise the cry of "plunder."

Here, for instance, is an extract from a Tory evening paper, cut out by me some years ago:—

The impudent agitators who suggest the confiscation of the land, are dumb as to the rights and services of the landowner. They ignore the facts that the land is his, and that if he administers the estate he chiefly creates its value.

The land is *not* "his." Man has a right only to what his labour makes. No man "makes" the land.

The nobleman does *not*—in most cases—administer his estate. The estate is managed by farmers, who pay the nobleman a heavy rent for being allowed to do his work.

Therefore the landlord does *not* "create the value" of the estate. The value of an estate *consists* in the industry of those who work upon it. To say that Lord Blankdash has farm lands or town property worth £50,000 a year means that he has the legal power to take that money from the factory hands and farm-workers for the use of that which is as much theirs as his.

I suppose you are aware that no "value" can be got out of an estate without labour. If you doubt this, take a nine-acre field, fence it in, and wait until it grows crops. You know it will *never* grow crops, unless some one ploughs it and sows it.

No: even if you have land and capital you cannot raise a single ear of corn without labour. Take your nine-acre field. Put in a steam plough, a sack of seed, a harrow, and



a bank-book, and wait for crops. You will not get a stalk of corn. A poor labourer with a broken shovel and a piece of thorn bush will raise more wheat in his little patch of back garden than all the capital of England could get out of all the acres of Europe without labour.

But read the following report of a land company, taken from the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1891:—

SWAZILAND GOLD EXPLORATION AND LAND COMPANY.

The annual general meeting of this company was held this afternoon at Winchester House. Mr. E. A. Pontifex, the chairman, presided, and moved the adoption of the report. He said that since the last meeting practically nothing had been done. *They had been waiting for more prosperous times.* They were an exploring and land, not a mining company, with a view to inducing others to form subsidiary companies for working the property. At the present moment the formation of companies was practically a dead letter; and it would be useless to point out to promoters where operations could be carried on, as they would be unable to raise the necessary funds to carry on the works. They had reduced the expenses to the lowest possible limit, the directors having foregone their fees, and the total amount being only £400 a year. *They were awaiting better times, and the advent of railways,* before endeavouring to work the riches they believed were contained in *the 156 square miles of territory which they possessed.* Since their last meeting, the High Court of Swaziland, sitting at Kremersdorp, had confirmed the concession originally made by the late King Umbandine, and it was held to by the King's successors and the Boer Republic and the English Government, which now prevails in Swaziland. Nor was it likely that any further call would be made until the arrival of more enterprising times.

The italics are mine. The company owns 156 square miles of land; and it does not pay them a cent! Why? Because there is no labour on it. The company are waiting for railways. Why? Because railways will carry people out there. Mines, farms, towns, will come into existence. The pick and the plough will go to work, and then—*then* the Swaziland square miles will be *valuable.* In other words, the men who make the wealth in Swaziland will have to pay a lot of it to the English company as rent for the land the company have "acquired."

The case above given is clear enough for the capacity of a child. There is the whole problem made plain. Labour and capital: Labour and land. One hundred and fifty-six

square miles of land, and not a shilling return. Not so much as comes back from the land on which is built an Ancoats slum cottage. But a man *lives* in the cottagé; and he works, and a part of his earnings goes unto the "owner" of the land. Do you see it *now*, Mr. Smith?

Have you ever considered the question of house rent? Suppose you own a cottage in a country village, and I own a cottage of the same size in a busy town, close to a big railway and a number of factories. You know that I shall get more rent for my house than you will get for yours. Why?

Because my house stands on more desirable land. The railway company would buy it. And then it is near to places of work, and workmen will pay more for it, especially as houses are scarce.

But did I make the railway? Did I build the factories? Did I do *anything* to make the wealth of the town, or the "value" of the land? Not I. The workers did that, and so I am paid for what they did. That is to say, I am allowed, by raising my rent, to put a tax upon their industry.

The poor wretches in the East End of London pay from 3s. to 6s. a week for one small room in a weather-worn and dirty house, in a narrow and unhealthy street; and rents in Manchester are high. This is owing to the value of the land. That is to say, the people are forced by stress of circumstances not only to live in the rotten nests of these pestilential rookeries, but have no option but to give the extortionate prices demanded by landlords whose bowels of compassion are dried up, and whose souls are shrunk by the fires of avarice.

Land is "valuable"—that is, tenants will submit to be cheated—in all centres of industry. The skill, the energy, and the orderliness of the workers create an "industrial centre." Speculators buy land near that centre, and as business and work draw people thereto in search of a living, the "speculator" raises his prices and grows rich, and his land and houses are "valuable." This is according to the law. It constitutes a dishonest and an unreasonable tax on labour, but it is lawful. There is in it neither principle nor humanity—but it is the law; and the difficulty of improving the dwellings of the people lies in the fact

that you cannot alter this law without damaging the sacred rights of property.

Do you ever think about these things? Do you know the difference between the land law and the patent laws and copyright?

A nobleman owns an estate. He draws £30,000 in rent from it annually. He and his family before him have drawn that rent for five or six centuries, and the land is still his.

But if John Smith of Oldham invents a new loom and patents it, his patent right expires in fourteen years. For fourteen years he may reap the fruits of his cleverness. At the end of that time anyone may work his patent without charge. It has become public property. This is the law.

Or John Smith of Oldham writes a book. The book is copyright for forty years, or for the life of the author and seven years after. Whilst it is copyright no one can print the book without John's leave, and so John may make money by his cleverness. But at the end of that time the copyright lapses and the book becomes public property. Anyone may print it then.

Now you see the difference between land law and patent law. The landlord's patent *never* runs out. The land *never* becomes public property. The rent is perpetual. And yet the landlord did not make the land; whereas John Smith *did* invent the loom.

Mr. Smith, if you *are* a practical, hard-headed man, I think I may leave you to study the land question for yourself.

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