

And again, my friend:—

Buccaneers, Choctaw Indians, whose supreme aim in fighting is that they may get the scalps, the money—that they may amass scalps and money—out of such comes no chivalry, and never will. Out of such come only gore and wreck, infernal rage and misery, desperation quenched in annihilation. Behold it, I bid thee; behold there, and consider. What is it that you have a hundred thousand pound bills laid up in your strong room; a hundred scalps hung up in your wigwam? I value not them or thee.

And yet again:—

Love of men cannot be bought by cash payment; without love men cannot endure to be together.

The incentive of gain!

CHAPTER XVI.

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF ———?

In Cœur-de-Lion's day, it was not esteemed of absolute necessity to put agreements between *Christians* in writing! Which if it were not now, you know we might save a great deal of money, and discharge some of our workmen round Temple Bar, as well as from Woolwich Dockyards.—*Ruskin.*

The quotation at the end of the last chapter brings us naturally to the subject of competition.

Of all the many senseless and brutal theories which practical men support, the most fatuous and bestial is the theory of competition.

I use the word theory advisedly. You practical men are fond of scoffing at all humane systems of thought or government as mere "theories." It is one of the vainest of your vanities to believe that you have no theories at all.

Why, John, you practical men have as many theories as any Socialist. But the distinctive marks of all your theories are their falsity, their folly, and their utter impracticability.

For instance, your practical man swears by political economy. But it is by the political economy of the older writers. It is the science of the men who were only blundering over the construction of a rude and untried *theory*. The later and wiser political economy you practical men either do not know or will not accept. You

resemble a railway director who should insist upon having his locomotives made to the exact pattern of Stephenson's "Rocket." Your economy isn't up to date, John. You cannot grasp a new idea—you are so practical.

One of the laws of your practical school is the law that "Society flourishes by the antagonism of its individuals."

That is the theory of competition. It means that war is better than peace, that a nation where every man tries to get the better of his neighbour will be happier and wealthier, more prosperous and more enlightened than a nation where every man tries to help his neighbour.

Practical men are not usually blessed with nimble wits. Allow me to offer you new readings of a few old proverbs for use in competitive society.

Union is weakness. There's a nice terse motto for you. It means just what is meant by the imbecile axiom that "Society flourishes by the antagonism of its individuals."

A house divided against itself shall stand. How does that suit your practical mind? It is the same idea—the idea upon which all opposition to Socialism is built up.

It is better to make one enemy than a hundred friends.

The greatest good of the smallest number.

Waste not have not.

Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall give his wealth to princes.

Only a practical, hard-headed people could listen to such propositions without laughing.

You are not good at theories, my practical friend. This competitive theory is rank blockheadism. Allow me to show you. I will test it first by theory, and then we will see how it comes out in practice.

Suppose two men had to get a cart up a hill. Would they get it up sooner if one tried to push it up whilst the other tried to push it down; or if both men tried to pull it up?

Suppose two men had to catch a colt. Which would be the wiser plan, for each man to try to prevent the other from catching it, or for each man to help the other to catch it?

Suppose a captain had to bring a ship from New York to Liverpool. Would he allow half-a-dozen men to fight for

the post of helmsman, or the whole crew to scramble for the job of setting sail?

No, he would set his crew in order, and send each man to his proper post.

When there is a fire-panic in a theatre, how do people lose their lives? Is it not by all scrambling and fighting to get through the narrow doors? And the result of such a scramble. Is it not the blocking of the exit? But you must know very well that if the people kept cool, and went out quickly, and in an orderly way, they would all escape.

John, if a hundred men had a hundred loaves of bread, and if they piled them in a heap and fought for them, so that some got more than they could eat, and some got none, and some were trampled to death in the brutal scuffle, *that* would be competition. Were it not for competition the hundred men would be all fed.

That, John, is the theory of competition. What do you think of it?

And now let us be practical. You have fallen into the stupid error of supposing that competition is better than co-operation, partly because you have never seen anything but competition in practice, and partly because you have not very clear sight, nor very clear brains.

You know that when a railway company, or a salt company, or a coal company, has a monopoly the public gets worse served than when there are several companies in competition with each other.

And you suppose that because competition beats monopoly therefore competition is better than co-operation.

But if you were not rather slow, John, you might have noticed that co-operation and monopoly are not the same things. Co-operation is the mutual helpfulness of all; monopoly is the plundering of the many by the few.

Give one man a monopoly of the coal mines and coals would go up in price; but miners' wages would not.

But there is a great difference between making the collieries the property of one man, and making them the property of the whole people.

Now the Socialists propose to make them the property of the whole people. And they say that if that were done the price of coals would be the natural price. That is to

say, it would be the price of the proper keep of the colliers.

Or, for you'll possibly understand this better, being a practical man, they say that the State could work the coal mines better and more cheaply—with less waste of labour—than could a private firm, or a number of firms in competition.

This is because a great deal of the time and energy of the private firms under competition is spent, not in the production and distributing of coals, but in the effort to undersell and overreach each other.

And fortunately, we have one actual example of this existing in the postal and telegraphic departments of the State. For it is a fact which no one attempts to deny that the post-office manages this branch of the national business a great deal better than it ever was or ever could be managed by a number of small firms in competition with each other.

In an earlier chapter I gave you some idea of the *waste* entailed by competition.

"Elihu," in his excellent penny pamphlet, "Milk and Postage Stamps," deals very fully with this matter. He says:—

Taking soap as an example, it requires a purchaser of this commodity to expend a shilling in obtaining sixpennyworth of it, the additional sixpence being requisite to cover the cost of advertising, travelling, &c. ; it requires him to expend 1s. 1½d. to obtain two pennyworth of pills for the same reason. For a sewing machine he must, if spending £7 on it, part with £4 of this amount on account of unnecessary cost; and so on in the case of all widely-advertised articles. In the price of less advertised commodities there is in like manner included as unnecessary cost a long string of middlemen's profits and expenses. It may be necessary to treat of these later, but for the present suffice it to say that in the price of goods as sold by retail the margin of unnecessary cost ranges from 3d. to 10d. in the shilling, and taking an average of one thing with another it may be safely stated that one-half of the price paid is rendered necessary simply through the foolish and inconvenient manner in which the business is carried on.

And then he goes on to show that whereas the soap manufacturers are all for competition in the sale of the soap, they will have no competition in the making of soap. As thus:—

Outside his works competition appears quite natural, but inside he will have no divided effort. If you were to suggest that he would supply himself better and more cheaply with boxes by having three joiners' shops working independently of each other and under separate managements, he would tell you that you were an ass, John, and would not be far wrong.

Mr. C. Hart, in a twopenny pamphlet, one of the best I have seen, called "Constitutional Socialism," goes into the same question. He says:—

(a) A and B are two builders, living ten miles apart. A gets a job close to B's house, and B a job close to A's house. All the transport of their ladders and planks is useless work, which, together with that of other builders, necessitates the construction of many useless carts. This reasoning applies to most merchants, canvassers, and shopkeepers (not all of them) who cross each other in every town, and from one town and country to another, uselessly. How many useless ships we have to build on this account!

(b) A country requires industrial and agricultural produce, inland and foreign. Instead of consulting the statistics of consumption, and of writing a few letters to ask for the required number of tons, which would be sent to a central depôt for distribution to the shops, we have thousands of merchants and brokers who each order many separate parcels large and small, a small parcel requiring as much correspondence, book-keeping, and drafts as a large one. Now, as we could, under Socialism, order a hundred big parcels at once, and thus issue one big draft instead of a thousand small ones, and do a hundred times less correspondence and book-keeping than these merchants, it follows that nearly all their work is useless, as well as that of their countless dependents, direct and indirect, viz., those who do the useless correspondence and book-keeping, who build the useless offices, who manufacture the useless office furniture and stationery, who construct and drive the useless carts for this furniture and for all these small parcels, who build the useless banks for those small drafts, who do more useless book-keeping there, who carry the useless business letters through the post, who act as useless porters, &c., &c. Socialism does not wish to abolish all these middlemen, but only the useless ones.

Frank Fairman, in his "Socialism made Plain," says:—

The immense extension of the telegraph system since it has been managed by the State, and no longer dependent upon the expectation of immediate profit to capitalists is only an instance of what might be done with regard to telephones, the electric light, railway communication, and many other things; for some of which the public, under the existing system, are called upon to pay, in the shape of interest on capital absolutely wasted in

jobbery, promotion money, Parliamentary conflicts, and what is called insurance against risk of loss, as much as it would have cost to do the entire work themselves.

Nor are this increase of cost and waste of labour the only evils of the competitive system. There is also the enormous amount of *profit* made by the private firms to be considered.

This profit comes out of the pockets of the workers and goes into the pockets of the idlers. And by the idlers it is wasted, as I will show you in a future chapter.

But there is another very serious evil due to competition. Please to read the following extract from Mr. H. M. Hyndman's penny pamphlet, "Socialism and Slavery":—

To take a single but very important instance of the way in which our present system works ruin all round. Industrial crises occur more and more frequently in each successive generation. The increasing powers of machinery, the greater facility of transport and communication, do but serve to make matters worse for the mass of the workers in all countries, insomuch that the uncertainty of employment is greatly increased by these recurring crises, apart from the danger of the workers being driven out on to the streets by the introduction of new labour-saving machines. But these crises arise from the very nature of our capitalist system of production. Thus, when a period of depression comes to an end, orders flow in from home and foreign customers; each manufacturer is anxious to take advantage of the rising tide of prosperity, and produces as much as he can, without any consultation with his fellows or any regard for the future: there is a great demand for labourers in the factories, workshops, shipyards, and mines; prices rise all along the line, speculation is rampant; new machines are introduced to economise labour and increase production. All the work is being done by the most thorough social organisation and for manifestly social purposes; the workers are, as it were, dovetailed into one another by that social and mechanical division of labour, as well as by the increasing scale of factory industry. But they have no control whatever over their products when finished. The exchange is carried on solely for the profit of the employing class, who themselves are compelled to compete against one another at high pressure in order to keep their places. Thus a glut follows, and then a depression of trade, when millions of men are out of work all over the world, though ready to give their useful labour in return for food; and the capitalists are unable to employ them because the glut which they themselves have created prevents production at a profit.

Competition, it thus appears, raises the price of commodities, lowers the rate of wages, and throws vast numbers of men out of work.

Another evil of the competitive system is the milking of new ideas by the capitalist. Under competition a new invention is a "trade secret," and is worked for the benefit of one firm.

Brown gets hold of a new method of cutting screws which enables him to dispense with half the labour. He conceals this from Jones and Robinson and uses it to undersell them. Let us trace the action of such an invention under competition and under Socialism.

Suppose that labour equals 50 per cent. of the cost of making the screws, and that the new process saves half the labour. That gives Brown a profit of 25 per cent. more than Jones and Robinson. Now, Brown first of all discharges half his men, and then lowers the price of his screws 10 per cent. The results of these operations are:—

1. The public get their screws 10 per cent. cheaper.
2. Brown makes 15 per cent. more profit.
3. Jones and Robinson lose their trade.
4. Half of Brown's men are out of employment.
5. If Brown can *ruin* Jones and Robinson and take all their trade, then he will throw half of their men out of employment, and may even raise the price of screws again, and so take all the advantage of the invention.

And very likely Brown has bought this invention from some poor man for a couple of ten pound notes.

Nor does the evil end here. I have it on good authority that in some trades the capitalists have a fund for the purpose of ruining inventors. This is done by a system of law-suits and appeals which make it impossible for a man to work his invention unless he has a great deal of money. This kind of villainy is protected by the libel laws. I will therefore leave you to find out the facts for yourself.

But now consider the result of our new screw-cutting process under Socialism.

A workman invents a new process. He is rewarded by a medal and the naming of the process after its inventor, and the invention becomes the property of the State.

What are the effects? Screws can be made 25 per cent. more cheaply. Who gets the advantage of that?

The people get the advantage of it. You may

1. Reduce the hours of labour in the screw trade by one half, or
2. Send half the screw-cutters to some other work, as farming.

But in either case the people will reap the benefit. For either hours of work will be shorter, or more wealth will be poured into the common store as a consequence of every new invention.

Doubtless some of your political, hard-headed, practical friends will affect to be shocked at the idea that the inventor of our new process gets "no more substantial reward" than a medal and a name. But remember one or two things.

1. The inventor has, already, as much of all substantial things as he requires.
2. That he could not spend money if he got it.
3. That he is under no obligation to think of the future, as he and his wife and children are sure of the care of the State.

Besides, you may remind your practical friends that the heroes of the life-boats, the hospitals, the coal mines, and the battle-field seldom get so much as a medal or a name.

The heroes who defended Rorke's Drift were rewarded by a grant to each man of a pair of eight shilling trousers; the heroes of the glorious charge at Balaclava have many of them died in the workhouse.

One other instance of the bad effects of competition, and I have done with the subject.

On the 17th of June, 1893, the *Clarion* quoted from *The New Nation* the following paragraph:—

"As soon as I get up a good thing, say in chocolate," says a merchant, "some rival will imitate it in quality and sell it at a lower rate. To hold my own I've to cut his price; but as I can't do that and make a profit, I must adulterate the article a little. He knows the dodge, and he will do the same thing. So we go, cutting at each other, until both of our articles are so cheap and poor that nobody will buy them. Then I start the pure goods again under another name, and the whole circus has to be gone over again."

Every man who knows anything of trade knows how general is the knavish practice of adulteration. As a Lancashire man you will need no lecture on the evils of calico-sizing. Now, all adulteration is directly due to

competition. Do you doubt it? Allow me to prove my statement by quoting from a speech by John Bright. John Bright was a great apostle of grad-grindery. He was a champion of competition, an opponent of the Factory Acts and trade unionism; and in the speech to which I allude he intended to excuse adulteration, and he said:—

Adulteration is only another form of competition.

Could anything be clearer? Could any irony, or any argument, or any invective of a Socialist, wound competition so deeply as does this maladroit chance-blow of its champion, John Bright?

I notice, Mr. Smith, that there is a statue of John Bright in the Town Hall Square of Manchester. That statue is well placed. John Bright was the natural hero of the cotton age. In our Merrie England we shall most likely prefer to put up memorials to men like John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

After a momentary silence spake
Some vessel of a more ungainly make;
They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
What! did the hand then of the Potter shake?

Omar Khayyám.

One of the favourite arguments of the Gradgrinds in support of competition is the theory of the Survival of the Fittest.

They say that those who fail, fail because they are not fitted to succeed. They say that those who succeed, succeed because they are "fit." They say it is the law of nature that the weakest shall go to the wall, and to the wall with them—and no quarter.

The slumites live in the slums because they are unfit to live anywhere else. The Duke of Marlborough lived in a palace because the intellectual and moral superiority of such a man naturally forced him into a palace.

Burns was a ploughman; Bunyan was a tinker; Lord Chesterfield was a peer. The composer of the popular waltz, "The Masher's Dream," makes ten thousand a year,