

high enough ambition? Tell me, why should not the best that art, and science, and literature, and music, and poetry, and the drama can do be placed at the disposal of the humblest workers? Why should not the factory girl be an educated lady? Why should the collier not be a cultured gentleman?

The answer is "Capitalism!" The exigencies of capitalism grind these people down, rob them of rest, of energy, of health, of food, of time—so that they have neither heart nor mind nor opportunity to become aught but drudges. Talk about "splendid ambitions and aspirations!" Such things now are for the fortunate few; but we want them for the many.

Beware of mistaking "what is understood as Socialism" for the genuine article. Genuine Socialism would make the collier into a gentleman. "What is understood as Socialism" could only make the gentleman into a collier. There is a difference.

CHAPTER XX.

INDUSTRY.

Nearly every problem of State policy and economy, as at present understood, and practised, consists in some device for persuading you labourers to go and dig up dinner for us reflective and æsthetic persons, who like to sit still, and think, or admire. So that when we get to the bottom of the matter, we find the inhabitants of this earth broadly divided into two great masses;—the peasant paymasters—spade in hand, original and imperial producers of turnips; and, waiting on them all round, a crowd of polite persons, modestly expectant of turnips, for some—too often theoretical—service.—*Ruskin.*

When Socialists complain of the misery of the poor they are often told by Pressmen, Parsons, and Politicians, that all the sufferings of the poor are due to their own vices and folly. Thus, a short time ago, the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, in reviewing a little book of mine, went out of its way to offer me a lesson in political economy, and announced that the misery of the masses was due "to sin, hereditary and acquired."

The *Examiner* implied, of course, that the misery of the people was due to their own sin.

This is the very reverse of the truth. The misery of the people is due to the sins, negligences, and ignorances of

those who rob them of their earnings, and grow rich upon their moral ruin and physical destruction. Is it true that poverty is the result of idleness, of improvidence, and of vice?

If it were, then we should always find that the idle, the vicious, and the improvident were poor; and that the industrious, the thrifty, and the temperate were well off. But it is a fact that many idle, vicious, and improvident people are rich, and it is a fact that the poorest people in the world are the most industrious, and sober, and thrifty.

Now, I want to convince you of two things. Firstly, that the vices of the poor are due to their surroundings, instead of the surroundings being due to the vices; and, secondly, that universal industry, and thrift, and temperance amongst the poor would tend to make them *poorer* than they now are.

The sins laid to the charge of the poor are three:—

1. Idleness.
2. Improvidence.
3. Drunkenness.

The first charge is a false libel. So far from the poor being criminally idle, they are criminally industrious.

The second charge is a misnomer. The improvidence of the poor is so clearly due to ignorance that it should be called by that name.

The third charge, that of drunkenness, has a greater foundation of truth, although I believe from my personal observation, which has been extensive, that the poor are much more temperate than many of their critics would have us believe.

First of all, let us consider this word industry. You often hear industry praised as a virtue. I think the thing is not a virtue in itself. The virtue lies in the motive and method of its use. There is no virtue in a plough. It is an instrument for good or evil according as it is used for preparing the field for a crop, or for tearing up the garden of an enemy. So with industry. We read of those whose hands are cunning to devise an evil thing, and whose feet are swift to do iniquity. We should not praise a burglar for his industry though he might rob a dozen villas in a week. If mere *doing* is to get us praise, what laudable

and industrious men were Alexander and Buonaparte! They were always working, but the seed they sowed was evil.

Industry is only expedient and valuable for the nation when it produces good fruits. It is only laudable in the individual when inspired by noble motives. You must not suppose that the nations which do the most work are the greatest nations. You must not fall into the error of the economist, and suppose that the people who "produce most" are the greatest or the worthiest people. Before praising a nation for its productiveness and industry, we should inquire if the things they produce are noble or worthless things, and if the labour of their hands is the labour of slaves or of freemen—of artists or of Philistines.

It does not follow that the man who works the hardest is the most industrious man, nor that he deserves much credit for what he does. He may be constrained to work by force of fate. It may be with him a case of work or starve. He may be working for selfish ends only—for greed, or avarice, or ambition, or vanity—as many of us are. Then if the work of his hands or wits be good work it is expedient, but it is not noble in him. He deserves as little admiration, earns as little reward, and is inspired by motives no higher than those which actuate the money-lender, or the gambler, or the time-serving politician.

The kind of industry worthy of praise is the kind which is useful in its ends and unselfish in its objects. If, in a colony, there were a scarcity of corn, if a few men owned the land and the rest had to till it for their food; if the landlords gave only a pound of meal for a day's service, and set the day's service at fourteen hours, the servants would have to work hard. They would have to work like beasts of burden; or starve, or fight. If they toiled and suffered would you call their slavery industry? Would you praise and honour them as noble and diligent men? I should say they are cowards and fools to endure this. I should say their lives are laborious, but not industrious, and that their efforts are no more worthy in them or creditable to them than those of the tram-horse who fags in the shafts all day—for dread of the whip-thong in his driver's hand. But *that* is the commonest form of industry in England to-day, and *that*

is the kind of industry the peer and pressman, the bishop and the capitalist, have in their minds when they extol the dignity of labour and the virtue of industry, and when they impress upon the minds of the working-class audiences the glory of "honest toil."

Suppose the case changed with our Colony. The land is in the hands of the people, but its yield is meagre and bread is scarce. The working day is fixed at ten hours, that being the time essential to the production of the smallest yield capable of supporting life. Would you call the man who worked his ten hours faithfully day after day—and no more—an industrious man? Would you say he was a man to praise and admire? I should say no. This man does his duty and no more; and it is not a virtue for a man to do his duty, for it would be a sin if he did not do his duty. This man bears the same relation to an industrious man that an honest man bears to a generous one. The honest man pays what is due. That is all his duty—as he understands it—demands. If he did less he would be a rogue. But the generous man not only pays what is claimed—he gives what is wanted.

Again, suppose one man to be left to support himself. Though he worked twenty hours a day to get food or luxuries for himself, you would not call that laudable. Because the motive is purely a selfish one, and all the labour is for his own gratification. But this is a form of industry much belauded by our pastors and masters. This lonely selfish glutton is a man made of the stuff of which very many British *heroes* have been made. He is painfully like the men held up to us as *examples* to copy and as idols to worship. He is the kind of man who "gets on."

Return again to our Colony. The land is the people's. The fixed working hours are ten a day; but the fields are not enough tilled and the harvests are still poor. Now suppose some man seeing this goes out and works five hours extra daily for the common good, *he* is an industrious man. He is made of the stuff of which real heroes are spun. Or suppose he sees that pick and spade and muscle and bone are overmatched in the struggle to win bread from the obstinate soil, and seeing this gives all his thought and time, sacrifices all his pleasures and desires, to the one task of designing

and constructing a plough or other engine to relieve and feed the weary and famished people—well, I say, that is an industrious man; that is a noble man. His work is “honest toil;” he is a hero.

Or suppose another case—the case of a man who loves work for its own sake. Here is an artist, say, or a musician. He loves art or music. He labours at his chosen art with all the power he has, with all the thought, and love, and courage, and patience of his nature. With a devotion that no rebuff can shake, with an affection that no triumph can weaken, he stands at his easel or sits at his piano content laboriously and obscurely to create beautiful things for their own sake. Then, I say, that man is an industrious man. He is a man most valuable to his fellow-creatures, but he is not so exalted a hero as the man described just now. There is a great difference between work and toil, between task work and work of choice; and this difference—palpable as it is to a man like me, who has tried both forms of labour—is too often lost sight of by moralists who make it their business to preach to the masses.

Between the navy wheeling interminable barrows of clay over endless miles of planks at a fixed pittance, and the struggling author or painter living on dry bread and dreams in a garret there is this immense difference, that whereas the navy’s work is a dull, monotonous, uninteresting task, with no motive but that of winning an animal subsistence, no exercise except for the physical powers, and no hope beyond a doubtful promotion to the post of ganger, the work of the painter or the writer, howsoever poor and obscure he be, is a labour of love; a labour that is in itself a pleasure, a recreation, and an education. A work that employs and trains the highest faculties; that inspires the heart and brain with the brightest hopes; that holds out to the poorest and most insignificant of its drudges at least a chance, a little promise, however remote, of the highest honours and the most magnificent rewards.

It is all very well for the business man, the parson, the author, the engineer, the member of Parliament, to abuse the workman as idle, thriftless, and drunken; but let us do the workman justice. Let us remember that his work is neither exciting, pleasing, ennobling, nor remunerative.

Often I have heard professional men say, "Talk about the working classes! what do they know of work? They never work as hard as I do. They have not the worry and strain that mental work involves. I am a manufacturer—a doctor—a lawyer—my work is never done." All this is true. The doctor's work or the author's work is never done. But remember that he loves it so much that he would not wish it ever done. He is so wrapped up in it, so wedded to it, that if it were done, if he were obliged to take off the harness and to go to grass in the prime of life, he would actually break his heart.

It is very nice for professional men to boast of their industry and love of work. They are doing the work of their choice. But take them away from the theatre or the desk, the pulpit, or the quarter-deck, and set them to carrying bricks up a ladder, stitching slop clothing, or scribbling out invoices, and see how they will enjoy that, and how industrious they will be.

It is easy to tell a workman to be industrious and contented in that walk of life to which Providence has called him. But it would be neither easy nor pleasant to take his place and show him how it should be done; and I tell you frankly I believe that if Providence called a Prime Minister or a Bishop to dig coals or puddle iron, Providence would have to use a long trumpet or the gentlemen would not hear.

Ask any man of taste and sense which he would prefer—a pitcher with a stencil pattern printed on it, a bad copy multiplied a thousand times of some original design, or the same pitcher moulded in a form peculiar to itself, and ornamented with the original design itself hand-painted, and not repeated on any other piece of pottery extant. He will tell you he prefers the original work.

Now, ask any man of taste and sense whether he would rather tend a machine which should turn out pitchers by the thousand all of one form and colour, or himself turn and mould the clay upon the wheel and under his own hand. Ask any man who knows men and life and understands human nature and human work, whether a number of men or women would rather stamp the same design ten thousand times upon a piece of plaster, or set to work with gouge

and chisel and carve out leaves and flowers to their own fancy and design.

In proportion as you can make men's work artistic will it become pleasant and elevating and productive of contentment. In proportion as the work becomes more pleasing, more interesting and more noble will the people grow to love it; and the more the people come to love their work, the more industrious and contented will they be. That is one of the practical values of art.

But, again, there is a negative as well as a positive value in art. If a man's work is irksome, brutish, cheerless, and without hope or interest, the man grows jaded and dissatisfied. Getting no hope, no variety, no joy nor excitement out of the labour of his hands and brain, he seeks for change and relaxation elsewhere. He *must* have change and rest and pleasure. The duller and harder his task, the more his thirst for excitement and for ease. Just think of these facts. Remember that by making a man a drudge, you make him contract a debt to nature; and nature will be paid. If you will or must have drudges, you must and shall provide them an antidote to the bane, or they must and will provide the antidote themselves. You see that, do you not? Well, there are the drudges drudging all around you. Have you provided them abundance of pure and innocent recreation for their leisure and refreshment? You have not. But you grant a great many public-house licenses I notice. You set them an example on the Stock Exchange and in the counting-house and on the racecourse which they *may* follow. And the result——?
