CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL UNREST

I

WHAT we call rather loosely the social question has its invariable origin in some form or degree of popular discontent. It is the purpose of this chapter to analyze the nature of our own social unrest; to mark some of its more undeniable tendencies; to ask if it is growing, or, if not growing, is it taking on any threatening peculiarity to justify alarm? Can it be maintained that ours is an unrest different in any essential from the ferment which for centuries has stirred the heart and the imagination of humanity? In the current literature on social and industrial questions nothing, even by economists of repute, is more commonly asserted.

The interpretation of the unrest (does it bode good or ill?) varies with the mood of the writer. To one it augurs the approach of swift-footed evils; to another each industrial struggle foretells the birth of a more robust society. Whatever the interpretation, it is in the interest of clearness to get first some light upon the inquiry: Is the unrest now deeper than that which has marked the aspiration of most Western races? There is much to make us believe that primitive peoples everywhere are fairly content. However

hard and pinched their condition, it does not become a source of chronic agitation for social progress. Neither do we associate discontent with oriental life and tradition. Religion and custom unite to soothe these dreaming millions into acquiescence. One country offers just now an exception. In Japan the spell is broken. For her making or unmaking, the current we call civilization has borne her from her moorings. Her religion is now to imitate the West. She is impatient for railroads, for the stock exchange, for mills, for electric plants, for markets, and alas! for naval and military furnishings to further and protect the new ventures. All this gets our praise. We say: "Japan is at last waking from a sleep. It is 'enterprise,' the beginning of great things." At the very start observers are telling us the price these people are to pay for their huckstering in the world market. The very daintiest of her gifts are being despoiled: the capacity to work and live with a quiet spirit; a grace and gentleness of manner that make our civilized behavior rude and awkward in comparison; and most grievous of all, the quick decay of her exquisite art. The undisturbed leisure for loving and perfect workmanship is already so blighted that the very hope of preserving it is in peril. Some far-off compensation for these losses will doubtless come, meantime the message from Japan is that she presents an easy object lesson of a people passing rapidly from the relative content of the East to the hustling self-assertion of the West. We shall henceforth inevitably associate Japan with the discontent of progress.

All progress thus carries with it its own disquietude. Where the highest pace is set, there discontent with actual achievement appears to be keenest. No age, for instance, has ever poured out such wealth of energy upon education as our own; none has ever tried so hard, or paid so lavishly, to carry to the whole people every form of intellectual opportunity, yet never in history was critical discontent with education so captious and all-pervasive as at present. A well-known English educator reading a mass of recent books and articles by the more prominent of our teachers, and attending several important educational meetings, has just said, "One would think by the vehemence of the criticism that education in the United States was in the last stages of deterioration."

Even if unrest has grown, it need not of course imply discouragement. A period or a people wholly free from the hungers which break into expressions of discontent would be characterized as lacking the first elements of vigorous and hardy life. Dates like that of the English reform movement of 1832 recall times of unusual agitation, nevertheless no one would deny to these brave days the inspiration of immense social development. The more general outbreak of 1848 brought with it deeper turmoil still, yet many of the most hopeful changes which we associate with race improvement date from this revolutionary epoch. Modern history is crowded with upheavals; the Peasants' Revolt of the fourteenth century; the economic disturbances in England in the sixteenth century; and again, what is known as the Industrial Revolution, that began in the latter part of the eighteenth century and extended far into the nineteenth. Our

own present uneasiness, thrown upon this intenser background, appears tame and colorless. Compared with the Reformation, our spirit of protest is fitful and uncertain, while if comparison is made between our own generation and the generation that closed the eighteenth century in Europe, with its volcanic shocks of revolution, we are stolid and well-behaved. In current discussion upon religious, educational, and political topics, no phrase is more certain to be used than this, " Yes, but we are living in an age of transition," implying that the peculiar instability of things at the present moment is exceptional. So far as the phrase has any significance, it can mean only that certain events, upon which the eye is fixed, are moving with quickened step. Yet who could select a decade since the landing at Jamestown that was not a "time of transition"?

The claim is still insistent that our agitations are exceptional and full of perils. It is therefore wiser to challenge the facts; to see if possible what truth the claim contains. Far-off periods will be avoided. They offer too many pitfalls for misleading analogies. There is even danger in appeals to other countries, because too many differences of race and circumstance are introduced.

We turn therefore to our own home records, selecting for comparison events and years enough to make a basis for calculation. Discontent continuous in intensity is found at no time and among no people. From the earliest of our permanent settlements its fevers are chronic, alternating with periods of conscious rest and well-being. Before the middle of the

seventeenth century social life in America was too new and too unstable to offer safe illustrations. A better beginning may be made with the Virginia colony after its destiny is so far fixed that there is no thought of abandoning this country. To the extent that it can be done with fairness, those special causes of unrest that have much in common with our own troubles will be chosen.

What signs are at hand to-day of more extreme uneasiness than those observable in the South during a large part of Berkeley's reign, from 1661, including the outbreak known as Bacon's Rebellion? The cause of the poor against the rich had great part in that picturesque hero's plucky fight. Theft and extortion by those in power were notorious. Those in high places became rapidly rich, and the people were cruelly overtaxed. There had been a period of business depression more distressing than any known in our time. There was political and business corruption that no Tammany brave would now dream of venturing. Heady attacks on property were the order of the day, and one charge against Bacon's followers was that they were a "lawless rabble poisoned by communistic notions." [1]

The years preceding the Rebellion were such as are commonly called "hard times." People felt poor and saw fortunes made by corrupt officials; the fault was with the Navigation Act and with the debauched civil service of Charles II. and Berkeley. Besides these troubles which were common to all, the poorer people felt oppressed by taxation in regard to which they seemed to get no service in return.

[1] "Old Virginia and her Neighbors," p. 104.

The worst of present-day monopolies are mild when compared to those through which the English merchants robbed the Virginians. To the economic troubles must be added religious and educational complaints. To their demands for schools and greater freedom in the pulpit, Berkeley replied: "The ministers should pray oftener and preach less. But, I thank God, there are no free schools nor printing; and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience and heresy and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both." Berkeley's own private monopoly with the Indians was one of the causes that led to the "rebellion." The monopoly of his successor, Culpeper, bore still more heavily on the people. The falsifying of elections by the sheriffs against a free white people was as flagrant as that of our own day in Southern states against the negroes.

If we turn to the North, in 1686, when Sir Edmund Andros came as governor to New England, the atmosphere is charged with the same distempers. The rights of property were so invaded, according to Increase Mather, that no man could call anything his own. Danforth wrote, "Our condition is little inferior to absolute slavery." When the people pleaded for habeas corpus and the simple rights of Magna Charta, Andros asked with a gibe, "Do you believe Joe and Tom may tell the king what money he may have?" His secretary complains that little money is to be got out of the country, because it has been squeezed dry by those who preceded Sir Edmund. With Dudley censor of the press, the general court

abolished, the assembling of a town meeting made an act of sedition, it is certain that to those then living, the times seemed big with dangers.

The generation following this period brings us well into the eighteenth century. A time of prosperity culminates about 1740. Bancroft speaks of it as "marked by the unrivalled prosperity of the colonies." It would be unfair to select illustrations of special unrest during the disturbance of the colonies by the French and English wars that immediately follow. Before these confusions had passed, the turmoil of the struggle for independence had already begun. The war spaces are too exceptional to offer fair instances of comparative unrest. The Revolution of 1776 will therefore be omitted.

Of the ten years that precede the Revolution and the ten that follow the peace of 1783 one may speak with confidence. It is doubtful if in recent times we have felt any such measure of anxiety.

McMaster writes: "The year 1786 in all the states was one of unusual distress. The crops had indeed been good. In many places the yield had been great. Yet the farmers murmured, and not without cause, that their wheat and their corn were of no more use to them than so many bushels of stones, that produce rotted on their hands. That while their barns were overflowing, their pockets were empty. That when they wanted clothes for their families, they were compelled to run from village to village to find a cobbler who would take wheat for shoes, and a trader who would give everlasting in exchange for pumpkins. Money became scarcer and scarcer every week. In the great towns the lack of it was severely felt. But

in the country places it was with difficulty that a few pistareens and coppers could be scraped together toward paying the state's quota of the interest on the national debt.

"A few summed up their troubles in a general way, and declared the times were hard. Others protested that the times were well enough, but the people were grown extravagant and luxurious. For this, it was said, the merchants were to blame. There were too many merchants. There were too many attorneys. Money was scarce. Money was plenty. Trade was languishing. Agriculture was fallen into decay. Manufactures should be encouraged. Paper should be put out.

"One shrewd observer complained that his countrymen had fallen away sadly from those simple tastes which were the life-blood of republics. It was distressing to see a thrifty farmer shaking his head and muttering that taxes were ruining him at the very moment his three daughters, who would have been much better employed at the spinning-wheel, were being taught to caper by a French dancing master. It was pitiable to see a great lazy, lounging, lubberly fellow sitting days and nights in a tippling house, working perhaps two days in a week, receiving double the wages he really earned, spending the rest of his time in riot and debauch, and, when the tax-collector came round, complaining of the hardness of the times and the want of a circulating medium. Go into any coffee-house of an evening, and you were sure to overhear some fellow exclaiming, "Such times! no money to be had! taxes high! no business doing! we shall all be broken men."[1]

[1] "History of the United States," Vol. II., p. 180.

Another form of discontent, that which appears in times of recognized prosperity, asserts itself early in Jefferson's administration at the opening of the century, with an enduring venom and vindictiveness that is difficult in these days to understand. In the last letter that Hamilton ever wrote, are words that tell what it was that filled the respectability of the time with a kind of panic — "our real disease, which is democracy."

The analogy of this period with our own has many startling points of likeness if the analogy is not overpressed. Professor Henry Adams says that men with cool heads like Rufus King and Hamilton, men like Judge Tracy, Cabot, Pickering, Ames, and Griswold, were tormented with a sense of coming crisis which "overhung these wise and virtuous men like the gloom of death." "Scores of clergymen in the pulpit, numberless politicians in Congress, had made no other use of their leisure than to point out, step by step, every succeeding stage of the coming decline. The catastrophe was no longer far away, it was actually about them, they touched and felt it at every moment of their lives. Society held together merely because it knew not what else to do."[1]

At present the fear has frequent expression that a victory of the democratic party would be followed by attacks upon the higher courts. A century ago this anxiety was far keener than it now is. The democratic attack upon the courts in Jefferson's day as "creatures of the aristocrats," as "corrupt" and "irresponsible to the people," surpasses in unqualified virulence anything that Mr. Debs has ever ut-

[1] "History of the United States," Vol. VII., p. 68.

tered. Judge Chase of the Supreme Bench looked upon these animosities against the judiciary as the most threatening event in our history. Property, he thought, would soon be without defence, and personal liberty pass away before the reign of the mob. In Baltimore, in 1803, he said:—

"The independence of the national judiciary is now shaken to its foundations. Our republican Constitution will sink into a mobocracy—the worst of all possible governments. . . . The modern doctrines of our late reformers, that all men, in a state of society, are entitled to enjoy equal liberty and equal rights, have brought this mischief upon us; and I fear it will rapidly progress until peace and order, freedom and property, shall be destroyed." [1]

In the eyes of Josiah Quincy, the strongest representative in Congress from Massachusetts, "Jefferson was a transparent fraud, his followers were dupes or ruffians, and the nation was hastening to a fatal crisis." [2]

When he arrived in Washington, Mr. Quincy tells us that his abhorrence of Jefferson was such that he would not even accept the invitation that came to him to dine at the White House. "I regarded him as a snake in the grass, the more dangerous for the oily, wily language with which he lubricated his victims and applied his venom." [3]

It is difficult to point out a single menace to our political or industrial life that has not been an object of dismay and pessimistic solicitude throughout our

[1] Adams, "History of the United States," Vol. II., p. 149.
[2] Vol. IV., p. 422.
[3] "Life of Josiah Quincy," by Edmund Quincy, p. 88.

earlier history. It is, for instance, widely believed at present that the rage for speculation, stimulated by the growth of trusts, carries with it dangers that are new and peculiar in their gravity. There is much truth in this, but the dangers of speculation are not new. The volume of business has now reached such magnitude, it has become so concentrated, and its manipulations on the market are so advertised, that the game is visible to every eye. In the earlier times there was no such record, but speculation in its most questionable sense appears to have seized about every chance that offered in those days.

Large portions of charitable, religious, and educational funds were formerly raised by gambling in lotteries. Is it likely that an age which gave such sanction to this "race hunger" should be less apt than we of the present to display the gambling instinct in new business ventures? We know what a field for this gaming impulse our railroad building has offered; but it may be seen just as vividly a century ago in the making of common toll-roads. After the success of the "turnpike" between Lancaster and Philadelphia, there was an outbreak of reckless speculation in roads and canals precisely similar to the wild work in railroad enterprises after our war of 1861. The industrial betting field was much narrower and stakes were smaller, but the people were as eager for unearned gains then as now. The Revolution of 1776 was followed by all the gambling which new ventures at that time afforded. Lotteries to build roads and bridges were common. The general government was appealed to on every hand to help out these local schemes.

Chartered companies to deal in the stocks of turnpike corporations were started early in the century by hundreds. Even Vermont had twenty-six and New Hampshire twenty in 1810. A year later New York had one hundred and eighty. The crying need of that time was cheaper transportation. To haul a single ton of freight from Pittsburg to Philadelphia cost $125. What, at its best, was the spirit of enterprise, and at its worst the instinct of the gamester, went into these various schemes. There was as much gambling as there was opportunity to gamble, and ruin followed its reckless indulgence then, as it follows it now.

In 1896, when Mr. Bryan was presidential candidate, the majority of our "strong and safe men" were everywhere telling us what calamities would troop in upon us if he were elected. The hungry mob that would follow at his heels were sure to work ruin in every business interest in the country.

A century ago when Jefferson became president the entire conclave of scholars, as well as the whole business world of New England, was horrified at the prospect of political control by the common people. At a New York dinner, Hamilton's words were, "Your people, sir, your people is a great beast." The most brilliant spokesman of New England respectability, Fisher Ames, said in 1803 that the country had become "too big for union, too sordid for patriotism, too democratic for liberty." The gloom had deepened in 1808, when he could say: —

"Our days are made heavy with the pressure of anxiety, and our nights restless with visions of horror. We listen to the clank of chains, and overhear

the whispers of assassins. We mark the barbarous dissonance of mingled rage and triumph in the yell of an infuriated mob; we see the dismal glare of their burnings, and scent the loathsome steam of human victims offered in sacrifice." Few knew New England as President Dwight of Yale College knew it. Yet he could write, "We have a country governed by blockheads and knaves; . . . can the imagination paint anything more dreadful on this side hell?"[1] Every federal newspaper in 1803 had this passage, which Professor Adams says was "one example among a thousand—neither more extravagant nor more treasonable than the rest":—

"A democracy is scarcely tolerable at any period of national history. Its omens are always sinister, and its powers are unpropitious. It is on its trial here, and the issue will be civil war, desolation, and anarchy. No wise man but discerns its imperfections, no good man but shudders at its miseries, no honest man but proclaims its fraud, and no brave man but draws his sword against its force. The institution of a scheme of policy so radically contemptible and vicious is a memorable example of what the villany of some men can devise, the folly of others receive, and both establish in spite of reason, reflection, and sensation."[2]

Even the saintly Channing, already preaching the new hope for humanity, and breaking with religious tradition, as Jefferson had broken with political tradition, showed an alarm as if chaos were at hand. In the Fast Day sermon of 1810, he says: "We live

[1] Channing, "United States of America," p. 166.
[2] "History of the United States," Vol. I., p. 85.

in times which have no parallel in past ages; in times when the human character has almost assumed a new form; in times of peculiar calamity, of thick darkness, and almost of despair. . . . The danger is so vast, so awful, and so obvious, that the blindness, the indifference, which prevail, argue infatuation, and give room for apprehension that nothing can rouse us to those efforts by which alone the danger can be averted."

If the opinion of twenty of the wealthiest and best-known of the citizens of New England had been asked at any time during the two administrations of Jefferson, and probably of Madison as well, it is safe to say that eighteen of them would have thought the country going to the dogs.

We should not lend a serious ear to any contemporary who gave expression to such hysterical forebodings as these. Whatever the peril that lurks in the trust, in plutocracy, in imperialism, we refuse to go to the length of sheer consternation that these dignified ancestors honestly felt.

One real difference between the misgivings of that day and those of our own concerns religion. The fears to-day are business fears. In 1800 they were also religious. The only heresy that is now dreaded is economic. Religious heresy is no longer an offence. No one objects even to political heresy further than it implies an attack on some cherished form of property. In 1800, the anathema lay against the supposed infidel and the Jacobin democrat. To-day it lies against the socialist, the aim of whose politics is radically to change the present forms of property ownership.

After the good times of 1815, the unrest again changes its form. Extreme distress and consequent bitterness are at hand, which we cannot match in this generation.

The obdurate delusion that money can be printed off "to meet the wants of the people" played havoc then as it does still among us. The general fury rose against the banks and against the "rich who padded themselves about with luxury." The misery extended "from New York and Pennsylvania westward to the Mississippi and southward to Tennessee." In Philadelphia, where 9672 men had been employed in certain industries in 1816, 7500 had been discharged in 1819. This city was not exceptional. From a country town 27 properties in land were sold at one time by the sheriff. "All over the North the people were meeting, complaining, organizing, and petitioning Congress and their state legislatures." "The larger part of the people, even with the utmost economy, could hardly obtain the very necessaries of life; debts were unpaid, creditors dissatisfied, and the jails full of honest but unfortunate persons whose wives and children thereby became a burden on the township." After describing the evils in Kentucky, McMaster adds, "In the newly made state of Missouri the condition was, if possible, worse." In New York and Philadelphia there was a series of public meetings to devise means to cope with the dangers. The fourth volume of McMaster devotes an entire chapter to the "Pauperism and Crime" that followed this period. "Never," he says, "in the history of our country had the sufferings of the dependent and unfortunate classes been so forcibly and

persistently brought to the attention of the public, for never before had so many worthy citizens been reduced to want.

"Hundreds were glad to work for 37 and even 25 cents a day in winter, who in spring and summer could earn 62½ or perhaps 87½ cents by toiling fourteen hours. On the canals and turnpikes $15 a month and found in summer and one-third that sum in winter were considered good pay. In truth, it was not uncommon during the winter for men to work for their board. Nothing but perfect health, steady work, sobriety, the strictest economy, and the help of his wife could enable a married man to live on such wages. But the earnings of women were lower yet. Many trades and occupations now open to them, either had no existence or were then confined to men. They might bind shoes, sew rags, fold and stitch books, become spoolers, or make coarse shirts and duck pantaloons at 8 or 10 cents apiece. Shirt-making was eagerly sought after, because the garments could be made in the lodgings of the seamstress, who was commonly the mother of a little family and often a widow. Yet the most expert could not finish more than nine shirts a week, for which she would receive 72 or 90 cents. Fifty cents seems to have been the average.

"To the desperate poverty produced by such wages many evils were attributed. Intemperance was encouraged, children were sent into the streets to beg and pilfer, and young girls were driven to lives of shame to an extent which, but for the report of the Magdalene Society in New York and the action of the people elsewhere, would be incredible."

Among the twelve demands made before 1830, the

following have great prominence: "the right to the soil," "down with monopolies," "no imprisonment for debt," the "abolition of chattel slavery and wage slavery."

The working hours per day in one Connecticut mill were fifteen, and this was no exception. One in Paterson, New Jersey, required women and children to be at work at half-past four in the morning. What would Lowell weavers say to-day if they were forced by their employers to attend church on penalty of dismissal, and be taxed, moreover, to support religion?

Once more let the comparison be made between the present and a time still within living memory, roughly, from 1830 to 1838. The fault-finding with existing institutions was wide and bitter. At that time, moreover, what we call "the labor question" had come to very distinct consciousness. Discontent among workingmen led to the formation of a political party in New York as early as 1829. In their resolutions, Henry George was anticipated in the opening paragraph, "The appropriation of the soil of the state to private and exclusive possession was eminently and barbarously unjust." In Art. 3, "the hereditary transmission of wealth" is considered as one of the causes of the prevailing poverty and distress. Or, in their own words, "a prime source of all our calamities." They insist that all the evils of the feudal system were upon them. The movement was vigorous enough to establish newspapers in at least four states. In 1832 a convention was held in Boston, represented by delegates from six different states. The "evils of monopoly" was a

topic of discussion, and among the lectures organized by the trade unions a few years later, "Corporations" is on the list of their subjects. The contemporary records are so full and explicit that one who has been taught that labor troubles have arisen, for the most part, since the Civil War, has utterly to shift his perspective. There were many and bitter strikes. There was a labor party, a reform party, and an anti-monopolist party. There were indictments for conspiracy against trade unions. Two thousand men were "in line for agitation" in Boston in 1834. The "scab" was then a terror to the trade union and received, not infrequently, very brutal treatment. In the same year, in Massachusetts, nearly three thousand women were on strike. The still earlier agitation for ten hours was accompanied not only by strikes, but by such lawlessness as to bring out the militia. Perhaps the most distinguished French economist of his time, Chevalier, just then upon a visit to the United States, expresses great surprise at these events.

If we turn from the general to the more special grounds of dissatisfaction, it is difficult to select any present symbol of irritation that cannot be mated in the past. In Washington before a private committee of the Senate I listened to a plea of trade-union representatives that the "injunction" be prevented. The chief spokesman said it was "new in our history" and "had come with the recent domination of great corporations." Yet the literature which workingmen have themselves brought out shows how long they have been harried by the courts in time of strikes. The common English law, a century ago, held rigidly

against "dangerous labor combinations" and "labor conspiracies," nor was there the slightest hesitation in its enforcement. This was, of course, not the "injunction" as we know it, but the conspiracy laws were no less vexatious to organized labor.

The Philadelphia "cordwainers" were trained in the tactics of the strike. They had raised their wages until, in 1805, they were thought to be ruinous to the employer. The strike in that year brought them before the courts, where they received severe sentence for conspiracy. The boycott was common in these early conflicts. The New York shoemakers compelled the journeyman coming to the city to join their union. If he refused and took work in another shop, a strike was ordered against that shop. If an employer had an apprentice not belonging to the union (a scab), the union would forthwith order a strike. An outbreak with every symptom of the "sympathetic strike" in 1809 brought the union up for conspiracy.

To-day, if the employer fail, the laborer has a lien upon the property to make his wages secure. The struggle early in the century to obtain this right was ridiculed as an attack upon social order. The laborer might be paid (not weekly as now) but at utterly unknown intervals, six weeks or three months, and even then the sort of money he received was so often subject to discount, as to constitute a very bitter injustice.

One's first impulse is to question the gravity of these offences against labor, but every accessible record shows how real they were. This view will be strengthened if we look in more detail at a single grievance. It was not confined to labor, but such

multitudes of workingmen felt its cruelties that we find it very prominent in labor programmes. It was imprisonment for debt.

No one reports these facts more carefully than Charles Loring Brace.[1] He says, "As late as 1829, it was estimated that there were as many as 3000 of these unfortunate persons confined in prisons of Massachusetts; 10,000 in New York; 7000 in Pennsylvania; 3000 in Maryland; and a like proportion in other states. In the Philadelphia prisons of that year there were imprisoned for debts of less than $1, 32 persons; and in thirty prisons of the state, 595 persons were imprisoned for debts of between $1 and $5. Many of these were honest debtors, who had been unable to pay, solely through misfortune. The proportion of debtors to other prisoners was as 5 to 1."

The Report of the Boston Prison Discipline Society, page 388, says: "We have known of a respectable mechanic imprisoned for a debt of five dollars, contracted by his family at a grocer's while he was very ill; he was sent to jail, and he was not only without a shilling, but his family was without bread, because he was not able to work." The keeper of the debtors' department of the Philadelphia prison reported, in 1828, 1085 debtors imprisoned; their debt amounting to $25,409, their expense to the community, $362,076; the amount of the debt recovered in jail was $295. In 1831 the *Gazette* of that city reported forty debtors imprisoned for debt amounting to $23.40. One man was confined thirty days for a debt of 72 cents; another, two days for 2 cents; another, thirty-two days for 2 cents; seven were con-

[1] "First Century of the Republic," p. 458.

fined 172 days for $2.84, and the only debt recovered was one of 25 cents.

This is the period of which McMaster writes, "Never in the history of our country had the sufferings of the dependent and unfortunate classes been so forcibly and persistently brought to the attention of the public, for never before had so many worthy citizens been reduced to want."[1] Thus it is evident that so far as *reasons for discontent* are concerned, labor in the good old times suffered many an ill that we should not for a moment tolerate.

The reader, impatient of this dull rehearsal, has already asked what good turn can be served by lingering among these old-time ailments. These glimpses of evil and disturbed days among our ancestors do not lighten a single burden under which the present suffers. No report of ancient ills can lessen our own aches.

Historical retrospect does for us, nevertheless, one inestimable service. It helps us to see the facts of social growth and order in some due relation and perspective. To keep this perspective is the hardest test to which the student has to submit. Even a little history may give sounder judgments upon the large whole of our industrial and social existence. To forget or to ignore this past, to concentrate violent attention upon the disturbance of to-day, is not to see things socially at all. I have heard wittier and less labored definitions of a crank, but never a

[1] Among the best sources of trustworthy information are the files of the *United States Gazette* during this period. In the Congressional Library at Washington may be seen under glass several examples of "posters" showing the political efforts of the workingmen.

truer one than this, "A man who sees one fact so vividly that he is blind to all the other facts which alone can explain the one he sees." Even criticism has its responsibilities. It should select its object with some degree of discrimination and deal with it in its relation to other facts of which it may be a part. The frenzy of miscellaneous abuse is perhaps the cardinal vice of a whole mass of emotional utterance and literature upon the social question. There is no healing for these distempers of excessive statement like that which historic experience affords.

II

In endeavoring to compare the spirit and grounds of complaint in different eras, we are met by one difficulty that should not pass unnoticed. The common people in earlier times had no easy way to popularize their sense of injustice. A Roman strike was followed by hanging six thousand strikers between Rome and Capua. The fact was chronicled as we should chronicle an unusual frost, but the plebeian multitude had no means to stir the whole public opinion in its favor; to get its wrongs talked about, much less acted upon. The avenues for the voicing of discontent have multiplied with popular education to a degree so extraordinary that we may now easily be deceived both as to its nature and extent. In a commercial age (if all have been taught to read) the thing that pays spreads. The scale on which social fault-finding and restlessness could be made to pay good dividends was not dreamed of by our ancestors. This art is perfected in the modern press. It has been said, "Blessed are the people

whose records are dull." Yes, but such records are not commercially profitable. Peace and contentment have no dramatic quality. It pays to sound the tragic, the morbid, the alarming note, because interest and curiosity are stirred.

No sign is better than the cry of the newsboy upon the street. He does not call out, "Most excellent health through all the community!" "Not a divorce for the entire month!" "No accident or scandal since the last edition!" This would be good news, but he knows his customer. He knows that everyday happiness, the common welfare, and the dulness of good behavior do not sell his papers. The press has also learned its lesson. It has learned that our fault-findings and our agitations may be turned to a money profit. "If I can find fault enough and state it in the right phrases, no papers are left on my hands," is a saying reported from one of the most successful American journalists. The French press has come to be, in this respect, as mischievous as our own worst journals. Some of the most popular of the Paris sheets have brought this art of exploiting social dangers and dissatisfactions to the point of last refinement. An editorial writer in London, well known in this country, told me that the paying element in first-rate alarmist writing had at last come to be understood in England. "The young fellow's fortune is made," he said, "who learns the trick of phrasing criticism against the present social order." If the people of any past century had possessed our machinery for telling and spreading their fears, their gossip, their corruptions, their tragedies, they would appear to us like a people of

whom we had never heard. This new facility for the utterance of our complaints becomes also a cause of the evil. To insist loudly and incessantly that things are ill, is to help make them so, although there is some hope that the sheer din of the caviller may tend at last to beget insensibility and indifference, as excessive advertising may sometime defeat itself by its dreary universality. We shall learn after a while that there is no relation between the excellence of forty different kinds of shoes or soap and the hideous disfigurement of pleasant landscapes.

Francis Walker was wont to make much of the encouraging influences upon the mind of the laborer of open and hopeful chances of work. As long as it could be said, "I can go either to a factory or take up a homestead from the government at a nominal price," the mere alternative gave a sense of freedom and independence, as well as a tendency to strengthen wages. Now that the public domain has been disposed of, this special avenue of possible chances is shut. For the first time in our history, the population turns back upon itself. Who would dare to stand before an audience of workingmen and give them to-day Horace Greeley's advice, "Go West"? It would be met with shouts of derision. This change has already become a very vital part of our labor problems. It has made large sections of the less skilled among the workingmen honestly feel that it is no longer possible for them to get beyond utter dependence upon the employer. Until very recent times all were encouraged to believe that they could become independent as employer or as capitalist. This had so substantial a basis of truth, that it gave rise to

a kind of religion in which the saving practical virtue was thrift, and the ideal, a fat bank account with its heaven of "independence." Barring skill and unusual enterprise, the feeling has deepened and widened among workingmen that these fine hopes have so sadly dwindled that they exist as mere lottery chances. One may put this to accurate test in many of our industries. In my own city the conductors and motormen upon the trolley cars are carefully selected and well paid, but the question put to more than forty of them, "Is there any chance in your position of getting on very much?" elicits usually only good-natured surprise that such a question can be asked. There is rather the dogged feeling that it must be made the best of. One said to me, "I am thankful to get this; if I dropped out, a hundred men would jump at my chance before supper. All I hope for is to keep this job twelve years at most, at the end of which I shall have what I am getting to-day, two dollars and a quarter." I asked him if he were married. "Yes, and I have three children, but I have no business to have them. With city rents and market prices about Boston, I can just keep even. The best luck I expect is to stick here till I am forty, then they will want a younger man. I left my country town because farming only keeps you alive. Down here I just keep alive, too, but it ain't a graveyard, as it is up there in the hills." Some millions of men in the United States are at the present moment in the situation of that motorman, so far as expectations are concerned. For commonplace and average abilities, in mill and factory, the cheering promise of getting free from an "existence wage" scarcely ex-

ists. For special gifts, the prizes never were so high as now. For ordinary capacity in the common industries the old hopes are lessened.

A clear and conservative statement of this evil is given by President Hadley: "Certain it is that the prospect of becoming capitalists does not act as so powerful a motive on the laborers of to-day as it did on those of a generation ago. The opportunities to save are as great or greater; but the amount which has to be saved before a man can hope to become his own employer has increased enormously. When a man who had accumulated a thousand dollars could set up in business for himself, the prospect of independence appealed to him most powerfully; when he can do nothing but lend it to some richer man, the incentives and ambitions connected with saving are far weaker — too weak, in many cases, to lead the men to save at all, except through the medium of a friendly society or trades union. We thus have a separation of the community into more and more rigidly defined groups, different in industrial condition, distinct in ideals, and oftentimes antagonistic in their ambitions and sympathies. This separation of laborers and capitalists into distinct classes involves serious dangers to society as a whole." [1]

Not wholly different from this is another source of unrest. It has long been known that well-paid labor is quicker to take offence than labor of a lower grade. That men with higher wages should be the first to strike, has vexed many an employer and filled many polite persons with astonished disgust. It is nevertheless what the race, in its most progressive stages, has

[1] "Economics," p. 371.

always done. Higher earnings, ampler knowledge and freedom, go with new ambitions and a keener sensitiveness about all hindrances to progress. Every improvement, every step in the enjoyment of new comforts which leisure and better pay afford, constitutes a reason for new efforts. A higher standard of living once gained, becomes of itself a sentiment so responsive, that any act or event which seems to threaten that standard arouses instant alarm and hostility. The force of this is not seen unless we realize the rapidity with which new wants, in our age and country, are formed. The higher standard of comfort, — food, clothing, housing, leisure, — once established, becomes a necessity so imperious, that men will put forth their whole strength to maintain it. A shrewd builder of workingmen's houses in a Massachusetts shoe town says, "I don't dare to put up a house now without a bathroom, so many of the shoe hands have got a taste of it, that all demand it."

We know personally, or by observation among the well-to-do citizens, that any serious lowering of income — as, for example, from $5000 to $3000 — is looked upon as a disaster. Do people of ampler income lack imagination that they fail to see the bearings of this fact upon the threatened income of the wage earners? A study has been made of an Eastern town in which more than four thousand American workmen receive a wage that does not average $1.85. What must it mean for a family of five persons to have this sum cut even 25 cents a day? The worst — as it is the commonest cut of all — is the large average of days in the year when there is no work, and pay stops altogether. The simplest

addition of cost for the invariable necessities — food, rent, clothing — makes clear how narrow a margin is left. I choose the employees in this town because they rank distinctly above unskilled labor, and have won a standard of life from which every loss is dreaded, because the expenditure of respectability in their group is endangered.

Every little sign of respectability which the higher wage makes possible — the parlor organ, the cheap lace curtains, the beribboned furniture, the gaudily framed family crayon — soon becomes the basis of a sentiment as powerful as it is salutary. Do we imagine that their symbols of respectability mean less to them than to the fops of the fashionable quarter? I have known a man grow gray with trouble in five years because his income shrank just enough to force him to move into a less distinguished part of the town. He still had every possible comfort, but could not have the private school, the doctor, the dentist of the élite in his former neighborhood. Workingmen, and more especially their wives, who have once gained the income of modest comfort, have something to lose, upon which great price is set, and therefore organize, strike, and struggle, often in most regrettable ways, to maintain that standard. The fear of losing their standard acts upon them precisely as it does on their "betters." Lowest paid labor revolts less frequently, not only because it is duller and more helpless, but because the sentiment which gathers and strengthens about the newly won luxuries is still too feeble. It is the sense of insecurity, lest these symbols of getting on in the world may at any time be lost, that is at present, as it is long likely to re-

main, one of the deepest and most justifiable sources of discontent. Nothing is so habitually ignored, in attempts to understand industrial struggles, as the force and prevalence of this sentiment.

It is a little tedious to refer to general education as a cause of discontent, but its consequences are so momentous that its omission would be unwise. Popular education and the spread of democratic ideas evidently introduce influences calculated in their very nature to stimulate the feelings out of which unrest grows. It would puzzle one to conceive a more fertile breeding-place of unsatisfied desires than that which present educational facilities offer. It is the essence of education to arouse mental activity, with the sure result that thousand-fold new wants, cravings, and ambitions are quickened into life. The number and importunity of these wants have apparently no limit, while upon their satisfaction there is a constant check. The basis of this education has been a rising material prosperity to the same end of awakening still further wants. A retired Cape Cod captain once gave me a list of things — food, clothing, furniture, reading matter, etc. — which entered into the usual family consumption in his community sixty years ago. These were compared with the articles in present use in the neighborhood. The difference in kind and variety of things enjoyed in the two periods were, as they were brought together, far more striking than either of us had believed. After reflecting upon the contrast, the old man said: "Yes, that's the trouble. My father wanted fifteen things. He didn't get 'em all. He got about ten, and worried considerable because he didn't get the other five. Now, I want forty

things, and I get thirty, but I worry more about the ten I can't get than the old man used to about the five he couldn't get." Could any pedantry of language or of statistics tell more truth or better truth than this? The sixty years had brought great changes in the standard of life, but the old relation between wants and their satisfaction remained. Though in the coming sixty years the affluence of wealth multiply our material prosperity an hundredfold, is it to be expected that the margin of unquenched desires will be narrower? Will the ratio of cravings which we cannot appease be essentially diminished? To what race experience could one point to justify this expectation? Unless we assume the hope of an education profoundly modified, an education the supreme purpose of which shall not only be to sharpen the edge of intellectual cunning, but, at least, in equal degree, to strengthen the moral and social sympathies, we seem likely to the end of time to be whipped on by a multitude of wants that will overtop every means to gratify them.[1]

There is no end to the number and variety of illustrations to show the unrest that goes hand in hand with education and material prosperity. None is more familiar than the higher education of woman that has been organized on so generous a scale during the last generation. We do not doubt the large advantage it brings to her and to the race. It has,

[1] I have heard a learned Catholic say that it was one of the superiorities of his religion over Protestantism that the ratios of insanity and suicide are so much lower in Catholic communities. He traced these ugly phenomena chiefly "to the discontent which follows a restless and successful materialism."

however, helped create a restlessness which newly awakened faculty and enlarged opportunity inevitably bring with them. There is already a literature of the subject. For a dozen years English and American Reviews have reflected these perturbations in scores of articles: "The Revolt of the Daughters," "The Passing of the Household Drudge," "The Unquiet Sex," "The Cry of the Mothers," with variations innumerable. During this time we note two influences working together: industrial development and the higher education, both of which act to enlarge woman's opportunity. It is claimed that twenty-five years have widened woman's avenues for earning an independent livelihood from some hundreds to as many thousands. Industrial and intellectual opportunity alike have worked greatly for her economic independence. We have, in a word, in so brief a period, a ratio of progress of which previous history has no hint. The feverish agitations of the "woman question" have, however, been a very part of this general uplifting, but the thousand new chances to earn a livelihood, the thousand girls' schools and scores of colleges, have only intensified the claims which woman raises for a larger life. The "woman question," with all its restlessness, is a natural fruit of the new occasions.

Again, we think of the Germans as the most thoroughly educated people. Especially since the period dominated by the fateful personality of Bismarck, Germany stands out preëminent for what is generally connoted by the word "progress." There is the high tide of race vitality, as indicated by the enormous annual surplus population. The rise in her material

standard of living has been rapid and widespread. Her commerce, stimulated by the most efficient commercial training the world has seen, frightens every European rival by the vigor of its growth. Yet with the flush of great victory still warm upon her, this nation, if we may believe many of her most eminent writers, was never more lacking in contentment, never more ill at ease than now: Von Oettingen speculating gloomily upon the significance of increasing suicide, rising highest at the very points where education has done its completest work; Von Treitschke, before his death, telling his class in history, that he looked with growing alarm upon the signs of discontent among the masses; Paulsen taking the strange phenomenon for granted, as if not open to dispute, and trying to account with much scholarly ingenuity for the causes of the malady.[1]

Just before his retirement the chancellor, Prince Hohenlohe, used these words before the Royal Academy of Science: "I have grown old in the belief of the constant progress of humanity. But within recent years my confidence has been badly shaken. The indispensable battle of life has of late assumed so fierce and coarse a form that we are reminded of the wild and fantastic tales of animal life in the antediluvian ages. Instead of progress, retro-

[1] Many acute references to these pessimistic humors of the time may be found in Professor Paulsen's volume "Die Ethik." It is a book which is likely to have a higher value to later generations because it mirrors with singular vividness the average educated thought of the time upon a great variety of culture subjects. See, for example, the passage, page 116, ending with the words, dass Steigerung der Kultur nicht nur die Glückseligkeit nicht steigere, sondern vielmehr Schmerz und Enttaüschung vermehre.

gression, rather, seems to mark the beginning of the twentieth century."

Both illustrations indicate that the sense of ills is not confined to the industrial field — to the friction between capital and labor. In every phase of life where the "strife for things desired" goes on, the same restless antagonisms, the same dissonance of opinion appear. They appear among the different schools of literature, in politics, in art, and in science. In the very sphere of the harmonies, music, the angry assertion of discordant judgments (as among Wagnerites and their opponents) will easily match the worst polemics of social and industrial disputes. If we except religion, these are narrower fields than those in which the industrial struggle goes on. Yet the factions in art, in literature, in science, in religion, include those to whom civilization and culture have brought their best gifts. We should have expected the amenities to prevail in these spheres, but experience shows them to be rent by the same uneasy spirit which animates human activity as a whole. It is thus a point gained for clearer discussion to see that it is all the unrest of human life, and not that of some partial phase of it. Of religion, too, another word should be added.[1]

[1] In that most thoughtful book, "The Theology of Civilization," Introduction, vi, Charles F. Dole says: "There is seething unrest; there is doubt of the sanctions of religion; there is a sense of coming change; there is suspicion that premises and foundations, once unquestioned, are now perhaps undermined; there is challenging of existing institutions — social, economical, ecclesiastical. Are the present institutions such as the world will continue to find use for? There is dread mingled with hope. What possible revolutions may not impend, setting the old order aside?"

One cannot omit from the causes of unrest the slow decay of authority in religion. Even if what is deepest in the religious spirit is, as many hold, unabated in its strength, the element of religious authority has lost much of its power over men. If this loss is seen as a part of other influences which accompany it, few will doubt that for certain temperaments, especially in the Protestant world, this loss has brought its own deep disquietude. This is not aside from the social question. Its literature is filled with angry or sorrowful complaints that religion, as actually embodied in the church, has been systematically, even if unconsciously, used to quiet the masses and reconcile them to their lot. One of the most honest and intelligent labor men I have ever known, told me that as long as he really believed what he understood his pastor to preach, he was fairly content. "The sermon," he said, "always appeared to me to reconcile things I couldn't understand. Mysterious religious authority was always given which I accepted. When I talked to the minister about definite cases of suffering in a hard strike, where he and I both believed the men were not to blame, he still insisted that somehow it was all right, and somewhere in the future it would be set straight. Now, my experience has taken that belief out of me, or, at any rate, the kind of authority he gives for it, I cannot any longer accept. Nor do I believe the Jesus he talks so much about would have accepted it or acted on it either. The successful classes, even if they didn't know it, or mean it, have used religion and heaven to keep the peace and to put off a lot of troublesome duties. When I found this out, I threw it all over."

That individual experience, without one shade of heightened color, stands for the position of a great multitude of the more intelligent workingmen in every country. It is clear what this must mean. The dissatisfactions that were felt, while religious authority still held some sway over them, were silenced, or spent in vague wonder on other worldly speculations. If injustice was felt, there was no thought of blaming God. "Now," as my friend added, "when the ghosts are out of the way, we put the blame where it belongs — upon present human society and upon those who control it." These feelings, however poor a reason they can give for themselves, are far more embarrassing when they are vented upon the actual social régime; when turned from the other world straight upon this. The decays of faith are, of course, in no way confined to a class, nor does the illustration just given point to the most serious fact, which I conceive to be this: the old authorities are being abandoned at the very moment when material successes and sensuous gratifications multiply at a rate compared to which our ethical advancement seems moving at the snail's pace.

It is not only the nature of education to create more aspirations than can be realized; it is also the nature of all political agitation. That men are "politically equal" may remain long a harmless proposition; but when it has done its work, when it has become so thoroughly accepted as to form a common assumption of thought and discussion, new and disturbing questions are sure to be asked. It was once quite an amazing absurdity that man should ask for religious equality, yet this has been attained.

It was thought by the wisest of men, less than two centuries ago, just as preposterous that men should make claims to political equality, yet this, at least theoretically, has been won. Is it probable that the questioning will end here?

Will a race, spurred on by an ever ampler and more insistent cultivation of its faculties, halt, in its inquiries about equality, on the confines of religion or of politics?

With the plain fact of *economic inequality* of very extreme character staring us in the face, the question is being raised here, too. It has grown clear that when a certain stage of discipline and civilization has been reached, religious and political inequalities are felt to be socially mischievous. Nothing will hinder the raising of the next query: Is the present industrial inequality worthy of more respect than the other inequalities? Philosophers have speculated about this from early times. It is a different matter when the masses learn to raise the question. The analogy here, it must be admitted, is risky. A wholly different order of questions is raised on the industrial field. The reasons for our material inequalities are at so many points different from the inequalities of the religious or political field that the comparison may easily mislead us. These are, however, distinctions for which the general judgment may have scant regard. It is so easy to prove that anything like a literal economic equality is fatuous, or, at least, that we stand in no practical relation to such a result, that it may seem safely beyond range of sober discussion. Careful observation shows, however, that it is not a literal industrial equality that is meant by those who

have opened and popularized this speculation. A growing number of writers, and among them economists of the first rank, do not hesitate to put the aim toward far greater economic equality on a par with the two other equalities. Nor is the aim confined any longer to books.

A distinguished Australian judge, the late Sir William Windeyer, said while in this country: "We have not learned to manage our social legislation without most regrettable blunders. Our state railways have got into politics, there has been jobbery, and the application of the best inventions has been kept back by selfish interests. We have lived gluttonously on borrowed money, and piled up large city debts. All this is true, but it is not all the truth. It all came so fast that it ran away with us. We are beginning to face the situation, and shall eventually learn our lesson. Meantime, in spite of our blundering, nothing would induce the Australian people to turn back. We have accepted the democratic principle, and shall learn in good time to apply it industrially to our monopolies, as we have learned to apply it generally to politics."

Much of this legislation shows openly and directly that it aims to make the massing of great private fortunes increasingly difficult. One of the foremost of New Zealand legislators, Hon. W. P. Reeves, states the purpose with great boldness, "It is the unconcealed object of our social legislation to make democracy consistent and possible — to create conditions out of which such threatening extremes of wealth-ownership cannot grow." These attempts may fail. Capital may take wings, and the daring of individual

enterprise may be dulled to the general loss; but a multitude of people are so incredulous about this that legislators will be compelled to far wider experimenting in the same general direction.

Thus, in the world of comparative politics, this clearly conceived ideal of giving labor a new chance, of using the powers of government expressly to this end, has been openly accepted. It is conspicuously under trial. Its story occupies increasing space in the laborer's thought. Though failure follow in its track, the heart of this great purpose is a noble one: to use the full strength of public authority to raise the standard of comfort, of leisure, and of culture among those classes that have known far too little of either. As this endeavor becomes known, it raises hopes for the future and discontent with actual limitations. Every ideal passion among the laboring sections now centres about this aspiration to raise this life standard and to preserve it against all adversaries.

Thus far the actual proofs that popular government can perform these prodigies in well-doing are meagre enough, but the effort will be made, and it will come through the avenues of politics.

It is thus the sum of these causes of unrest, reaching new intensity in each succeeding period of business depression, and assuming a more consciously political character, that distinguishes the restlessness of our age.

It is here that we reach such important difference as there is between our unrest and that of the past. The forces of discontent can now show themselves in politics. Even if our dissatisfactions are no greater than in other days; even if they are fewer, they have

found a more effective medium of expression. It is not only discontent plus education; not only discontent plus the press to voice it; it is discontent plus the vote. The spirit of revolt can now make record of itself in political activity. It can be turned to account by every demagogue. It can create legislation and direct the machinery of government. The word "socialism" stands for the new defiance. It embodies the unrest and the disapproval of commercial society as it now exists.