

## CHAPTER III.

### THE WORLD'S TRIBUTE TO MONOPOLY.

Can any country have too much land, capital or labor? The papers sometimes speak of a man being "land poor," but by that expression the information intended to be conveyed is that the man has control of a larger acreage than he can pay taxes on. He has loaded himself with unproductive land that he will not work himself nor allow anyone else to, except at a price that is practically prohibitory. Were his figures within the judgment of others, the land would be immediately sold. But this expression is never applied to a country. The bigger the area the bigger the nation, or at least the greater the possibility of having a large population. No, there cannot be too much land; there can only be too much greed in grabbing land for the purpose of exploiting the public. Those ruined by land speculation do not deserve the sympathy of the public. They have simply failed in their desire to get something for nothing.

Can any country have too much capital? What is capital? Labor produces wealth and that part of wealth used in aiding labor to produce more wealth is capital. As there cannot be too many useful tools, enabling the average human being to produce more wealth with a certain amount of human exertion, so there cannot be too much of this wealth utilized for the production of more wealth. Without capital the laborer could doubtless exist, but he would not be much above the brute. It would take all his time, thoughts and exertion to produce food, clothing and shelter. Without capital he must depend on his brain to so direct his muscles as to offset by cunning the

superior speed and strength and the timidity of the animal world. Man would be little above the brute did he not have the benefit of capital.

Can any country have too much labor? The thing is an impossibility, where natural conditions prevail. It is only apparently so when there is not free access to land, or where society has safeguarded capital with privileges at the expense of land and labor. No country has ever yet been overpopulated. Even in China, with its hundreds of millions of swarming human beings, there are great expanses uncultivated, or not put to their most productive uses, and there are vast resources that have never been touched. China is not as thickly populated as some of the eastern states. Both Rhode Island and Massachusetts have more people to the square mile than China. With land monopolized and capital privileged, there would be poverty and want were there in the United States but one person to the square mile, instead of something over twenty, as there is today.

The fear that population may out-run subsistence has long been proved false. During the very periods when people were starving, all kind of food products were being exported from the country afflicted. It has always been so in India; it was so in Ireland; it is true everywhere. At no time in the world's history has there been an insufficient quantity of food to keep alive those who required it. In every large city today people are starving to death. And yet food is plentiful. The conditions prevailing raise artificial barriers to the satisfying of the wants of the starving, be they never so anxious and ready to work for what they need. And charity is powerless to relieve the wants of the really deserving. These hide themselves in the densest populated districts and are lost in the mass. The lazy and shiftless thrust themselves forward and whine themselves into the possession of the subsistence they do not deserve.

There is a natural check to population other than

starvation. It is working all the time. Its effect is seen in some of the European countries, and even in the cities of the United States. The gratification of man's desires is the object of living. In proportion as knowledge prevails the pleasures and the sources of pleasures to the human being are increased. No longer do animal desires predominate. His finer nature is awakened, and mind and body pursue a hundred avenues of enjoyment, cutting off much of the vitality that under more degrading conditions would all be directed to the gratification of mere animal desires. The result is apparent. Without any effort to restrict by artificial means the size of families, the families do not grow. Instead of having a dozen or more children the perfectly healthy woman may rear only three or four—even less. And though these few have a much better chance of living than did the children in the large families of a century or so ago, yet the increase of population is not so rapid as formerly.

Much of the statistical wealth of the world is fictitious. It is not wealth at all. The greater part of the supposed wealth of the Rockefellers is of this character. It is not real wealth, for it is not the product of labor applied to land, which is the only real wealth there is. The incomes of the Rockefellers depend almost entirely on privilege. Society has conferred the legal right to monopolize certain natural resources. In this particular instance it is oil and mineral lands. Repeal these privileges and the incomes of the Rockefellers would shrink to the capital actually in use added to the ability behind it in competition with the abilities of others. Instead of being the possessors of millions, they would have little if any more than the modest visible results of their own labor.

It is this confounding of wealth and privilege—monopoly—that makes much of the economic discussions unavailing. There is an instinctive feeling in the breast of every human being that what a man has earned should be his to do with as he pleases. And so,

when the masses see men rolling in wealth, obtained under all the legal forms of law, they may at times envy them, but holding the opinion that the millionaires "earned" it, they are credited with the right to it. But once it is shown that much of this supposed wealth does not exist, and that these vast incomes are only the result of man-made laws giving a few the privilege to tax others, without any confiscation of actual wealth in the hands of the monopolists, the people will legally and peaceably decide to rescind the privileges.

The great source of unearned wealth, next to the monopoly of natural resources, is the monopoly of transportation. The giving of franchises to do this thing and other things that the public collectively should do for itself is at the bottom of most of the official corruption of the great cities. Street car monopolies, lighting monopolies, water monopolies—these make boodlers of aldermen and thieves of what should be the most high minded part of the community. Between the buyer and the seller of these municipal privileges there is little to choose, but what there is, is on the side of the seller. Detroit, as well as every other large city, has had its dose of boodling aldermen and scheming promoters, and must pay the penalty. But it does seem as if by this time the public had been sufficiently educated to put a stop to any more efforts in this direction to become rich without work. When Detroit needs another telephone exchange, it will be wisdom to build it at municipal expense. It will make another mistake if it gives another gas franchise.

In great measure the abolition of monopoly will be the abolition of poverty. There not being too much of land, labor or capital, it stands to reason that there is only too much of that which hinders the free exercise of labor on land in the production of wealth to be used as capital. Let it be proclaimed from every housetop that liberty and not restriction is the true gateway to individual and national prosperity.