

### Who Shall Inherit the Earth?



As a boy in Sunday school, the beatitude, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth," was to me a conundrum, and for many a long year afterwards I felt a good deal like the farm laborer in the south of Scotland who was completely floored by the Old Testament text, "The Lord shall make the hinds to calve." To appreciate his mental attitude, the reader should know that in that part of the world the farm servants are known as hinds. At length, unable to get satisfaction from his own cogitation, he ventured to call on his pastor and explained to him his difficulty, concluding with the remark, "If it were not in the Bible I would not believe it, and even now I cannot conceive how it can be possible." As a boy, as a young man, I believed that some day the meek would inherit the earth, but looking at the conditions that surrounded me, I could not conceive even its remote possibility.

Some years ago in the pursuit of my studies I ran across a very reasonable explanation of this text, which proved itself to be a part of the mysticism of the Old Testament. In reading the Bible we are very apt to forget that after all it treats entirely of the descendants of Abraham, their past, present and future. The Hebrews were, from their position, very largely isolated from the rest of the world, and therefore, like the Egyptians of old, and the Boer of South Africa to-day, they developed a very small conception of the world and its human inhabitants. They believed themselves to be a chosen people of God and the entire affairs of the universe centered round them and were regulated in their interests. Like all other nations, they had seasons of prosperity and seasons of depression. When their material interests were good they believed they were being rewarded for their well doing. When prosperity failed they supposed themselves to be punished by the Lord for their backsliding. Therefore, in the days of their deepest anguish, when both kingdoms—Israel and Judah—were carried into captivity, it looked like the total annihilation of their independence and existence. But their prophets felt that the cloud would overshadow them but temporarily and that once they had repented of their sins the Lord would restore them to favor, and so they prophesied regarding Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, that the Lord had sold them into slavery, but that when they had been sufficiently humbled, become meek in fact, they would be restored to His favor, and have given to them the great destiny which they believed was to be theirs. So we find that the prophets speak of them as having been sold into slavery,

and that some day they would be brought back, that is, redeemed, by a Savior. Christ believed himself to be this redeemer and expressed the whole idea in a very terse sentence. On very few occasions did he specify exactly what he came for, not above half a dozen times in all, and on one of these occasions he said, "I am not come but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," meaning by that, that he was the redeemer of the lost ten tribes. Again he said he had "come to save that which was lost."

In the days of Christ the Jewish philosophers were well posted on all the theories as to the future destiny of both the house of Israel and that of Judah, and the location of the scattered tribes was supposed to be well known, as many of the Epistles are specifically addressed to the people of Israel scattered abroad, in fact, it is a question if any of them were addressed to any other people. Christ himself apparently believed in the popular opinions regarding the scattered tribes of Israel, and I think it is undoubted that he pictured in his mind this race repentant and humble when he uttered the words, "Blessed are the meek" (meek at that time) for they shall (sometime future) inherit the earth," thus pointing to the fulfillment of all the prophecies that were uttered regarding Abraham's descendants from the days of Abraham himself through Jacob, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah and all the other prophets.

Coming to modern times, I think it may safely be said that no one at heart believes that such a utopian condition will ever arise when meek individuals shall inherit and control human affairs on this earth. Mark Twain, in one of his cynical moods, expressed the popular opinion very neatly when he remarked that the Anglo-Saxon race must be meek seeing that they were inheriting the earth at a very large number of square miles every year.

I came across a new idea on this text a few months ago, which set me to thinking. There came into my hands a very charming and interesting little book entitled "The Coming People," by Dole, who therein gives a new exposition of the subject. He begins by asserting that if this beatitude were rendered into modern English the phraseology would now be "Happy are the kind for they shall inherit the earth," and proceeds to prove his case by pointing out how all rapacious animals are rapidly being exterminated and how such kind animals as the sheep, sow, horse, dog and cat are becoming more numerous every year. Then he goes further and insists that the owner who is kind to such members of the brute creation is more apt to be a financial success than is the one who is brutal. The farmer who houses his brutes comfortably, attends to their sanitation, gives them a plentiful supply of good, clean food, will be more apt to make his busi-

ness pay than will the one who is careless about the comforts of his animals and who treats them without mercy. He proceeds further and endeavors to show that the business man must to-day be considerate of his help, otherwise he will prove a financial failure.

This was to me a very beautiful thought. It bore on it a certain stamp of sweet reasonableness which is in accord with much of the ideas of the time, but somehow or other I felt that it was not in accordance with scientific facts, and lately there has come to me that the actual truth of the case might be summed up in this form, "Blessed are the useful for they shall inherit the earth." It is not because of their kindness that we protect domestic animals, but because they are useful to us, and it may not be uninteresting to glance back upon the history of the world and see what part usefulness played in the persistence of certain classes of human society. I say classes advisedly, because frequently when we look at the individuals we wonder what on all the earth some of them are here for, but sociology teaches us that the individual is not of much importance in the development of the human race as he is but a member of a particular group. The group is the real unit and the tendency of each group is to defend its individual members against attack from all other groups.

In the early dawn covered by the period of written history we find two great classes, the slaves and their owners, the exploited and the exploiter. The question naturally arises, in what respect were the slave owners useful. If we look back into the mists of obscurity, or, better still, consider the lower types of savages to-day, we find one lesson must be learned preparatory to human progress, namely, each man must learn how to work continuously. The savage naturally supplies his wants with the least possible exertion. Whenever food is plentiful he gorges himself, and then sleeps off the effects for days at a time. Once hunger returns he will exert himself and fill his empty stomach, again succumbing to indolence. In no other way could he be taught the lesson of persistent endeavor than by the whip, and so there evolved in due course of time the two great classes, the owner and the slave. For many long centuries the former was undoubtedly a very useful member of society, while he whipped into the skins of his bondsmen the tendency to work. As wealth in consequence accumulated, he secured leisure which enabled him to think and develop ideas which are to us to-day a precious heritage. But the increased leisure gradually developed into indolence and evolved a form of parasitism. When he ceased to be an active, superintending, that is, useful, member of society,

the world had no further need of him. His end had come, and he vanished.

But human beings, while they had learned much, had still other lessons coming to them, and so there arose a new order of society, that of the feudal lord and the serf. The former gave more liberty to his dependent than did the slave owner, but still he was essentially a taskmaster compelling continuous endeavor. He superintended the serf in his labors and defended him against attack. He was therefore useful, did good work for civilization until he also, like the slave owner, degenerated into a parasite and vanished in turn.

The captain of industry is the modern development of the slave owner and the feudal lord. He also is an exceedingly useful member of society. He is a magnificent organizer and manager, doing the thinking for the workers who positively decline to do it for themselves. As a useful member of society he must be paid, and has been paid handsomely for his services. To-day he is organizing our methods of production so as to eliminate every form of waste in our factories, and so long as he is fulfilling his mission on earth he is bound to persist and be the controlling force that he is to-day. At no very distant date he will concentrate his efforts on our methods of distribution, which are wasteful in the extreme, for, as a matter of fact, at least 50 to 75 per cent of the price that we pay for goods is chargeable to this department of commerce. Until this tremendous leakage has been eliminated the world stands in need of such organizers and managers, and so long as they are needed they are useful and cannot be discarded.

The laborer has always been useful and so we find him a prominent factor in every phase of organized society from the beginning of history until the present moment. In each succeeding age he bulks larger and more important than in the one before, and as he has been, is now, and always will be useful he will always be on earth.

The work of the organizer will undoubtedly some day be done and he will vanish never to return. He will cease being useful. The destiny of the proletariat is written clear and distinct. He will secure his inheritance sooner or later, but when will largely depend upon himself. The forces of nature are compelling him to travel in a certain direction, but by the exercise of reason he may see his goal and by training his brain he can fit himself for his future destiny and reach it sooner than by blundering on to it. He must learn to be organizer and manager as well as worker. The only way to learn to swim is to go into the water. The royal road to managing is to manage. The working classes must learn to manage their own affairs first, then by combination to manage

their politics, their trade organizations, their methods of distribution. Here is where the co-operative store is of greatest value. While its purpose is to supply commodities at a better price than can be secured from a merchant, its secondary effects upon the members are of far greater importance as it initiates them into the great problems of business management and conduct. Until this lesson has been learned by the laborers they will need to pay very handsome incomes to the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, the Morgans, the Armours and the Pullmans, who will be useful so long as the great masses of humanity are useless in the line that these giants have made their own.

We see then that it has always been true, is true now, and always will be true, that the useful—the useful groups—inheriting the earth, and that nothing can prevent them.

F. Dundas Todd.

### Evolution of Society.\*

**ONE** single fact dominates the whole history of civilization. The different stages of this history—slavery, serfdom, wage system—are marked by a division of mankind into distinct classes; masters and slaves in antiquity; lords and serfs in the Middle Ages; capitalists and wage-workers in our present epoch. The forms, aspects and degrees of this division change from country to country, and from generation to generation, but at the bottom the same fundamental fact remains,—the exploitation of human labor.

A primordial and permanent necessity rests upon mankind, and dominates all manifestations of their existence: the necessity of labor, the necessity of production.

As long as the processes of labor—breeding, cultivation, handicrafts,—are in such a low stage of development as to barely permit the production of that which is absolutely necessary to the existence of each individual worker, there can be no question of the exploitation of the labor of others. The men go frequently into battle; but no one cares for the vanquished, they are killed on the spot. Their flesh furnishes a banquet for the victors. Cannibalism reigns without cant or hypocrisy.

But the productive forces are ever growing, and this growth forms the principal dynamic of history. As soon as man becomes able to produce a surplus beyond his absolute necessities, this surplus is taken by other men. The vanquished foe ceases to become the direct prey of the victor. He becomes instead his slave.

At this moment one class begins to work for another class as a horse is trained to go under the bridle and spur of the rider.

At this moment the great battle began between exploiters and exploited. It is not our purpose to tell the long story of this battle nor to picture its dramatic scenes. We are not here concerned with the heroic deeds, eloquent words, striking attitudes, or rallying cries of the principal religious, political and judicial actors.

Let us remember, however, that as long as possible the struggle was carried on outside the domain of actuality, outside the field of labor, in order to as long as possible keep within the "ideal" world of religion and politics,—the realm of mysticism.

By this ultra-economic transposition the "fact of the crime" did not change, but it remained concealed. The philosophies of

\*The above article forms the introduction to Jules Guesdes' "Class State, Politics and Morals," and constitutes one of the most graphic and clear-cut presentations of many of the fundamentals of Socialist philosophy ever published.