

**ДЖЕК
ЛОНДОН**

REVOLUTION,
AND OTHER
ESSAYS

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Jack London

Revolution, and Other Essays

REVOLUTION

“The present is enough for common souls,
Who, never looking forward, are indeed
Mere clay, wherein the footprints of their age
Are petrified for ever.”

I received a letter the other day. It was from a man in Arizona. It began, “Dear Comrade.” It ended, “Yours for the Revolution.” I replied to the letter, and my letter began, “Dear Comrade.” It ended, “Yours for the Revolution.” In the United States there are 400,000 men, of men and women nearly 1,000,000, who begin their letters “Dear Comrade,” and end them “Yours for the Revolution.” In Germany there are 3,000,000 men who begin their letters “Dear Comrade” and end them “Yours for the Revolution”; in France, 1,000,000 men; in Austria, 800,000 men; in Belgium, 300,000 men; in Italy, 250,000 men; in England, 100,000 men; in Switzerland, 100,000 men; in Denmark, 55,000 men; in Sweden, 50,000 men; in Holland, 40,000 men; in Spain, 30,000 men – comrades all, and revolutionists.

These are numbers which dwarf the grand armies of Napoleon and Xerxes. But they are numbers not of conquest and maintenance of the established order, but of conquest and revolution. They compose, when the roll is called, an army of 7,000,000 men, who, in accordance with the conditions of to-day, are fighting with all their might for the conquest of the wealth of the world and for the complete overthrow of existing society.

There has never been anything like this revolution in the history of the world. There is nothing analogous between it and the American Revolution or the French Revolution. It is unique, colossal. Other revolutions compare with it as asteroids compare with the sun. It is alone of its kind, the first world-revolution in a world whose history is replete with revolutions. And not only this, for it is the first organized movement of men to become a world movement, limited only by the limits of the planet.

This revolution is unlike all other revolutions in many respects. It is not sporadic. It is not a flame of popular discontent, arising in a day and dying down in a day. It is older than the present generation. It has a history and traditions, and a martyr-roll only less extensive possibly than the martyr-roll of Christianity. It has also a literature a myriad times more imposing, scientific, and scholarly than the literature of any previous revolution.

They call themselves “comrades,” these men, comrades in the socialist revolution. Nor is the word empty and meaningless, coined of mere lip service. It knits men together as brothers, as men should be knit together who stand shoulder to shoulder under the red banner of revolt. This red banner, by the way, symbolizes the brotherhood of man, and does not symbolize the incendiarism that instantly connects itself with the red banner in the affrighted bourgeois mind. The comradeship of the revolutionists is alive and warm. It passes over geographical lines, transcends race prejudice, and has even proved itself mightier than the Fourth of July, spread-eagle Americanism of our forefathers. The French socialist working-men and the German socialist working-men forget Alsace and Lorraine, and, when war threatens, pass resolutions declaring that as working-men and comrades they have no quarrel with each other. Only the other day, when Japan and Russia sprang at each other’s throats, the revolutionists of Japan addressed the following message to the revolutionists of Russia:

“Dear Comrades – Your government and ours have recently plunged into war to carry out their imperialistic tendencies, but for us socialists there are no boundaries, race, country, or nationality. We are comrades, brothers, and sisters, and have no reason to fight. Your enemies are not the Japanese people, but our militarism and so-called patriotism. Patriotism and militarism are our mutual enemies.”

In January 1905, throughout the United States the socialists held mass-meetings to express their sympathy for their struggling comrades, the revolutionists of Russia, and, more to the point, to furnish the sinews of war by collecting money and cabling it to the Russian leaders. The fact of this call for money, and the ready response, and the very wording of the call, make a striking and practical demonstration of the international solidarity of this world-revolution:

“Whatever may be the immediate results of the present revolt in Russia, the socialist propaganda in that country has received from it an impetus unparalleled in the history of modern class wars. The heroic battle for freedom is being fought almost exclusively by the Russian working-class under the intellectual leadership of Russian socialists, thus once more demonstrating the fact that the class-conscious working-men have become the vanguard of all liberating movements of modern times.”

Here are 7,000,000 comrades in an organized, international, world-wide, revolutionary movement. Here is a tremendous human force. It must be reckoned with. Here is power. And here is romance – romance so colossal that it seems to be beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. These revolutionists are swayed by great passion. They have a keen sense of personal right, much of reverence for humanity, but little reverence, if any at all, for the rule of the dead. They refuse to be ruled by the dead. To the bourgeois mind their unbelief in the dominant conventions of the established order is startling. They laugh to scorn the sweet ideals and dear moralities of bourgeois society. They intend to destroy bourgeois society with most of its sweet ideals and dear moralities, and chiefest among these are those that group themselves under such heads as private ownership of capital, survival of the fittest, and patriotism – even patriotism.

Such an army of revolution, 7,000,000 strong, is a thing to make rulers and ruling classes pause and consider. The cry of this army is, “No quarter! We want all that you possess. We will be content with nothing less than all that you possess. We want in our hands the reins of power and the destiny of mankind. Here are our hands. They are strong hands. We are going to take your governments, your palaces, and all your purpled ease away from you, and in that day you shall work for your bread even as the peasant in the field or the starved and runty clerk in your metropolises. Here are our hands. They are strong hands.”

Well may rulers and ruling classes pause and consider. This is revolution. And, further, these 7,000,000 men are not an army on paper. Their fighting strength in the field is 7,000,000. To-day they cast 7,000,000 votes in the civilized countries of the world.

Yesterday they were not so strong. To-morrow they will be still stronger. And they are fighters. They love peace. They are unafraid of war. They intend nothing less than to destroy existing capitalist society and to take possession of the whole world. If the law of the land permits, they fight for this end peaceably, at the ballot-box. If the law of the land does not permit, and if they have force meted out to them, they resort to force themselves. They meet violence with violence. Their hands are strong and they are unafraid. In Russia, for instance, there is no suffrage. The government executes the revolutionists. The revolutionists kill the officers of the government. The revolutionists meet legal murder with assassination.

Now here arises a particularly significant phase which it would be well for the rulers to consider. Let me make it concrete. I am a revolutionist. Yet I am a fairly sane and normal individual. I speak, and I *think*, of these assassins in Russia as “my comrades.” So do all the comrades in America, and all the 7,000,000 comrades in the world. Of what worth an organized, international, revolutionary movement if our comrades are not backed up the world over! The worth is shown by the fact that

we do back up the assassinations by our comrades in Russia. They are not disciples of Tolstoy, nor are we. We are revolutionists.

Our comrades in Russia have formed what they call "The Fighting Organization." This Fighting Organization accused, tried, found guilty, and condemned to death, one Sipiaguin, Minister of Interior. On April 2 he was shot and killed in the Maryinsky Palace. Two years later the Fighting Organization condemned to death and executed another Minister of Interior, Von Plehve. Having done so, it issued a document, dated July 29, 1904, setting forth the counts of its indictment of Von Plehve and its responsibility for the assassination. Now, and to the point, this document was sent out to the socialists of the world, and by them was published everywhere in the magazines and newspapers. The point is, not that the socialists of the world were unafraid to do it, not that they dared to do it, but that they did it as a matter of routine, giving publication to what may be called an official document of the international revolutionary movement.

These are high lights upon the revolution – granted, but they are also facts. And they are given to the rulers and the ruling classes, not in bravado, not to frighten them, but for them to consider more deeply the spirit and nature of this world-revolution. The time has come for the revolution to demand consideration. It has fastened upon every civilized country in the world. As fast as a country becomes civilized, the revolution fastens upon it. With the introduction of the machine into Japan, socialism was introduced. Socialism marched into the Philippines shoulder to shoulder with the American soldiers. The echoes of the last gun had scarcely died away when socialist locals were forming in Cuba and Porto Rico. Vastly more significant is the fact that of all the countries the revolution has fastened upon, on not one has it relaxed its grip. On the contrary, on every country its grip closes tighter year by year. As an active movement it began obscurely over a generation ago. In 1867, its voting strength in the world was 30,000. By 1871 its vote had increased to 1,000,000. Not till 1884 did it pass the half-million point. By 1889 it had passed the million point, it had then gained momentum. In 1892 the socialist vote of the world was 1,798,391; in 1893, 2,585,898; in 1895, 3,033,718; in 1898, 4,515,591; in 1902, 5,253,054; in 1903, 6,285,374; and in the year of our Lord 1905 it passed the seven-million mark.

Nor has this flame of revolution left the United States untouched. In 1888 there were only 2,068 socialist votes. In 1902 there were 127,713 socialist votes. And in 1904 435,040 socialist votes were cast. What fanned this flame? Not hard times. The first four years of the twentieth century were considered prosperous years, yet in that time more than 300,000 men added themselves to the ranks of the revolutionists, flinging their defiance in the teeth of bourgeois society and taking their stand under the blood-red banner. In the state of the writer, California, one man in twelve is an avowed and registered revolutionist.

One thing must be clearly understood. This is no spontaneous and vague uprising of a large mass of discontented and miserable people – a blind and instinctive recoil from hurt. On the contrary, the propaganda is intellectual; the movement is based upon economic necessity and is in line with social evolution; while the miserable people have not yet revolted. The revolutionist is no starved and diseased slave in the shambles at the bottom of the social pit, but is, in the main, a hearty, well-fed working-man, who sees the shambles waiting for him and his children and recoils from the descent. The very miserable people are too helpless to help themselves. But they are being helped, and the day is not far distant when their numbers will go to swell the ranks of the revolutionists.

Another thing must be clearly understood. In spite of the fact that middle-class men and professional men are interested in the movement, it is nevertheless a distinctly working-class revolt. The world over, it is a working-class revolt. The workers of the world, as a class, are fighting the capitalists of the world, as a class. The so-called great middle class is a growing anomaly in the social struggle. It is a perishing class (wily statisticians to the contrary), and its historic mission of buffer between the capitalist and working-classes has just about been fulfilled. Little remains for it but to

wail as it passes into oblivion, as it has already begun to wail in accents Populistic and Jeffersonian-Democratic. The fight is on. The revolution is here now, and it is the world's workers that are in revolt.

Naturally the question arises: Why is this so? No mere whim of the spirit can give rise to a world-revolution. Whim does not conduce to unanimity. There must be a deep-seated cause to make 7,000,000 men of the one mind, to make them cast off allegiance to the bourgeois gods and lose faith in so fine a thing as patriotism. There are many counts of the indictment which the revolutionists bring against the capitalist class, but for present use only one need be stated, and it is a count to which capital has never replied and can never reply.

The capitalist class has managed society, and its management has failed. And not only has it failed in its management, but it has failed deplorably, ignobly, horribly. The capitalist class had an opportunity such as was vouchsafed no previous ruling class in the history of the world. It broke away from the rule of the old feudal aristocracy and made modern society. It mastered matter, organized the machinery of life, and made possible a wonderful era for mankind, wherein no creature should cry aloud because it had not enough to eat, and wherein for every child there would be opportunity for education, for intellectual and spiritual uplift. Matter being mastered, and the machinery of life organized, all this was possible. Here was the chance, God-given, and the capitalist class failed. It was blind and greedy. It prattled sweet ideals and dear moralities, rubbed its eyes not once, nor ceased one whit in its greediness, and smashed down in a failure as tremendous only as was the opportunity it had ignored.

But all this is like so much cobwebs to the bourgeois mind. As it was blind in the past, it is blind now and cannot see nor understand. Well, then, let the indictment be stated more definitely, in terms sharp and unmistakable. In the first place, consider the caveman. He was a very simple creature. His head slanted back like an orang-outang's, and he had but little more intelligence. He lived in a hostile environment, the prey of all manner of fierce life. He had no inventions nor artifices. His natural efficiency for food-getting was, say, 1. He did not even till the soil. With his natural efficiency of 1, he fought off his carnivorous enemies and got himself food and shelter. He must have done all this, else he would not have multiplied and spread over the earth and sent his progeny down, generation by generation, to become even you and me.

The caveman, with his natural efficiency of 1, got enough to eat most of the time, and no caveman went hungry all the time. Also, he lived a healthy, open-air life, loafed and rested himself, and found plenty of time in which to exercise his imagination and invent gods. That is to say, he did not have to work all his waking moments in order to get enough to eat. The child of the caveman (and this is true of the children of all savage peoples) had a childhood, and by that is meant a happy childhood of play and development.

And now, how fares modern man? Consider the United States, the most prosperous and most enlightened country of the world. In the United States there are 10,000,000 people living in poverty. By poverty is meant that condition in life in which, through lack of food and adequate shelter, the mere standard of working efficiency cannot be maintained. In the United States there are 10,000,000 people who have not enough to eat. In the United States, because they have not enough to eat, there are 10,000,000 people who cannot keep the ordinary 1 measure of strength in their bodies. This means that these 10,000,000 people are perishing, are dying, body and soul, slowly, because they have not enough to eat. All over this broad, prosperous, enlightened land, are men, women, and children who are living miserably. In all the great cities, where they are segregated in slum ghettos by hundreds of thousands and by millions, their misery becomes beastliness. No caveman ever starved as chronically as they starve, ever slept as vilely as they sleep, ever festered with rotteness and disease as they fester, nor ever toiled as hard and for as long hours as they toil.

In Chicago there is a woman who toiled sixty hours per week. She was a garment worker. She sewed buttons on clothes. Among the Italian garment workers of Chicago, the average weekly wage of the dressmakers is 90 cents, but they work every week in the year. The average weekly wage of

the pants finishers is \$1.31, and the average number of weeks employed in the year is 27.85. The average yearly earnings of the dressmakers is \$37; of the pants finishers, \$42.41. Such wages means no childhood for the children, beastliness of living, and starvation for all.

Unlike the caveman, modern man cannot get food and shelter whenever he feels like working for it. Modern man has first to find the work, and in this he is often unsuccessful. Then misery becomes acute. This acute misery is chronicled daily in the newspapers. Let several of the countless instances be cited.

In New York City lived a woman, Mary Mead. She had three children: Mary, one year old; Johanna, two years old; Alice, four years old. Her husband could find no work. They starved. They were evicted from their shelter at 160 Steuben Street. Mary Mead strangled her baby, Mary, one year old; strangled Alice, four years old; failed to strangle Johanna, two years old, and then herself took poison. Said the father to the police: "Constant poverty had driven my wife insane. We lived at No. 160 Steuben Street until a week ago, when we were dispossessed. I could get no work. I could not even make enough to put food into our mouths. The babies grew ill and weak. My wife cried nearly all the time."

"So overwhelmed is the Department of Charities with tens of thousands of applications from men out of work that it finds itself unable to cope with the situation." —*New York Commercial*, January 11, 1905.

In a daily paper, because he cannot get work in order to get something to eat, modern man advertises as follows:

"Young man, good education, unable to obtain employment, will sell to physician and bacteriologist for experimental purposes all right and title to his body. Address for price, box 3466, *Examiner*."

"Frank A. Mallin went to the central police station Wednesday night and asked to be locked up on a charge of vagrancy. He said he had been conducting an unsuccessful search for work for so long that he was sure he must be a vagrant. In any event, he was so hungry he must be fed. Police Judge Graham sentenced him to ninety days' imprisonment." —*San Francisco Examiner*.

In a room at the Soto House, 32 Fourth Street, San Francisco, was found the body of W. G. Robbins. He had turned on the gas. Also was found his diary, from which the following extracts are made

"*March 3.* — No chance of getting anything here. What will I do?"

"*March 7.* — Cannot find anything yet.

"*March 8.* — Am living on doughnuts at five cents a day.

"*March 9.* — My last quarter gone for room rent.

"*March 10.* — God help me. Have only five cents left. Can get nothing to do. What next? Starvation or — ? I have spent my last nickel to-night. What shall I do? Shall it be steal, beg, or die? I have never stolen, begged, or starved in all my fifty years of life, but now I am on the brink — death seems the only refuge.

"*March 11.* — Sick all day — burning fever this afternoon. Had nothing to eat to-day or since yesterday noon. My head, my head. Good-bye, all."

How fares the child of modern man in this most prosperous of lands? In the city of New York 50,000 children go hungry to school every morning. From the same city on January 12, a press despatch was sent out over the country of a case reported by Dr. A. E. Daniel, of the New York Infirmary for Women and Children. The case was that of a babe, eighteen months old, who earned by its labour fifty cents per week in a tenement sweat-shop.

“On a pile of rags in a room bare of furniture and freezing cold, Mrs. Mary Gallin, dead from starvation, with an emaciated baby four months old crying at her breast, was found this morning at 513 Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, by Policeman McConnon of the Flushing Avenue Station. Huddled together for warmth in another part of the room were the father, James Gallin, and three children ranging from two to eight years of age. The children gazed at the policeman much as ravenous animals might have done. They were famished, and there was not a vestige of food in their comfortless home.” —*New York Journal*, January 2, 1902.

In the United States 80,000 children are toiling out their lives in the textile mills alone. In the South they work twelve-hour shifts. They never see the day. Those on the night shift are asleep when the sun pours its life and warmth over the world, while those on the day shift are at the machines before dawn and return to their miserable dens, called “homes,” after dark. Many receive no more than ten cents a day. There are babies who work for five and six cents a day. Those who work on the night shift are often kept awake by having cold water dashed in their faces. There are children six years of age who have already to their credit eleven months’ work on the night shift. When they become sick, and are unable to rise from their beds to go to work, there are men employed to go on horseback from house to house, and cajole and bully them into arising and going to work. Ten per cent of them contract active consumption. All are puny wrecks, distorted, stunted, mind and body. Elbert Hubbard says of the child-labourers of the Southern cotton-mills:

“I thought to lift one of the little toilers to ascertain his weight. Straightaway through his thirty-five pounds of skin and bones there ran a tremor of fear, and he struggled forward to tie a broken thread. I attracted his attention by a touch, and offered him a silver dime. He looked at me dumbly from a face that might have belonged to a man of sixty, so furrowed, tightly drawn, and full of pain it was. He did not reach for the money – he did not know what it was. There were dozens of such children in this particular mill. A physician who was with me said that they would all be dead probably in two years, and their places filled by others – there were plenty more. Pneumonia carries off most of them. Their systems are ripe for disease, and when it comes there is no rebound – no response. Medicine simply does not act – nature is whipped, beaten, discouraged, and the child sinks into a stupor and dies.”

So fares modern man and the child of modern man in the United States, most prosperous and enlightened of all countries on earth. It must be remembered that the instances given are instances only, but they can be multiplied myriads of times. It must also be remembered that what is true of the United States is true of all the civilized world. Such misery was not true of the caveman. Then what has happened? Has the hostile environment of the caveman grown more hostile for his descendants? Has the caveman’s natural efficiency of 1 for food-getting and shelter-getting diminished in modern man to one-half or one-quarter?

On the contrary, the hostile environment of the caveman has been destroyed. For modern man it no longer exists. All carnivorous enemies, the daily menace of the younger world, have been killed off. Many of the species of prey have become extinct. Here and there, in secluded portions of the world, still linger a few of man’s fiercer enemies. But they are far from being a menace to mankind. Modern man, when he wants recreation and change, goes to the secluded portions of the world for a hunt. Also, in idle moments, he wails regretfully at the passing of the “big game,” which he knows in the not distant future will disappear from the earth.

Nor since the day of the caveman has man’s efficiency for food-getting and shelter-getting diminished. It has increased a thousandfold. Since the day of the caveman, matter has been mastered. The secrets of matter have been discovered. Its laws have been formulated. Wonderful artifices have been made, and marvellous inventions, all tending to increase tremendously man’s natural efficiency

of in every food-getting, shelter-getting exertion, in farming, mining, manufacturing, transportation, and communication.

From the caveman to the hand-workers of three generations ago, the increase in efficiency for food- and shelter-getting has been very great. But in this day, by machinery, the efficiency of the hand-worker of three generations ago has in turn been increased many times. Formerly it required 200 hours of human labour to place 100 tons of ore on a railroad car. To-day, aided by machinery, but two hours of human labour is required to do the same task. The United States Bureau of Labour is responsible for the following table, showing the comparatively recent increase in man's food- and shelter-getting efficiency:

	Machine Hours	Hand Hours
Barley (100 bushels)	9	211
Corn (50 bushels shelled, stalks, husks and blades cut into fodder)	34	228
Oats (160 bushels)	28	265
Wheat (50 bushels)	7	160
Loading ore (loading 100 tons iron ore on cars)	2	200
Unloading coal (transferring 200 tons from canal-boats to bins 400 feet distant)	20	240
Pitchforks (50 pitchforks, 12-inch tines)	12	200
Plough (one landside plough, oak beams and handles)	3	118

According to the same authority, under the best conditions for organization in farming, labour can produce 20 bushels of wheat for 66 cents, or 1 bushel for 3½ cents. This was done on a bonanza farm of 10,000 acres in California, and was the average cost of the whole product of the farm. Mr. Carroll D. Wright says that to-day 4,500,000 men, aided by machinery, turn out a product that would require the labour of 40,000,000 men if produced by hand. Professor Herzog, of Austria, says that 5,000,000 people with the machinery of to-day, employed at socially useful labour, would be able to supply a population of 20,000,000 people with all the necessaries and small luxuries of life by working 1½ hours per day.

This being so, matter being mastered, man's efficiency for food- and shelter-getting being increased a thousandfold over the efficiency of the caveman, then why is it that millions of modern men live more miserably than lived the caveman? This is the question the revolutionist asks, and he asks it of the managing class, the capitalist class. The capitalist class does not answer it. The capitalist class cannot answer it.

If modern man's food- and shelter-getting efficiency is a thousandfold greater than that of the caveman, why, then, are there 10,000,000 people in the United States to-day who are not properly sheltered and properly fed? If the child of the caveman did not have to work, why, then, to-day, in the United States, are 80,000 children working out their lives in the textile factories alone? If the child of the caveman did not have to work, why, then, to-day, in the United States, are there 1,752,187 child-labourers?

It is a true count in the indictment. The capitalist class has mismanaged, is to-day mismanaging. In New York City 50,000 children go hungry to school, and in New York City there are 1,320 millionaires. The point, however, is not that the mass of mankind is miserable because of the wealth the capitalist class has taken to itself. Far from it. The point really is that the mass of mankind is miserable, not for want of the wealth taken by the capitalist class, *but for want of the wealth that was never created*. This wealth was never created because the capitalist class managed too wastefully and irrationally. The capitalist class, blind and greedy, grasping madly, has not only not made the best of its management, but made the worst of it. It is a management prodigiously wasteful. This point cannot be emphasized too strongly.

In face of the facts that modern man lives more wretchedly than the caveman, and that modern man's food- and shelter-getting efficiency is a thousandfold greater than the caveman's, no other solution is possible than that the management is prodigiously wasteful.

With the natural resources of the world, the machinery already invented, a rational organization of production and distribution, and an equally rational elimination of waste, the able-bodied workers would not have to labour more than two or three hours per day to feed everybody, clothe everybody, house everybody, educate everybody, and give a fair measure of little luxuries to everybody. There would be no more material want and wretchedness, no more children toiling out their lives, no more men and women and babes living like beasts and dying like beasts. Not only would matter be mastered, but the machine would be mastered. In such a day incentive would be finer and nobler than the incentive of to-day, which is the incentive of the stomach. No man, woman, or child, would be impelled to action by an empty stomach. On the contrary, they would be impelled to action as a child in a spelling match is impelled to action, as boys and girls at games, as scientists formulating law, as inventors applying law, as artists and sculptors painting canvases and shaping clay, as poets and statesmen serving humanity by singing and by statecraft. The spiritual, intellectual, and artistic uplift consequent upon such a condition of society would be tremendous. All the human world would surge upward in a mighty wave.

This was the opportunity vouchsafed the capitalist class. Less blindness on its part, less greediness, and a rational management, were all that was necessary. A wonderful era was possible for the human race. But the capitalist class failed. It made a shambles of civilization. Nor can the capitalist class plead not guilty. It knew of the opportunity. Its wise men told of the opportunity, its scholars and its scientists told it of the opportunity. All that they said is there to-day in the books, just so much damning evidence against it. It would not listen. It was too greedy. It rose up (as it rises up to-day), shamelessly, in our legislative halls, and declared that profits were impossible without the toil of children and babes. It lulled its conscience to sleep with prattle of sweet ideals and dear moralities, and allowed the suffering and misery of mankind to continue and to increase, in short, the capitalist class failed to take advantage of the opportunity.

But the opportunity is still here. The capitalist class has been tried and found wanting. Remains the working-class to see what it can do with the opportunity. "But the working-class is incapable," says the capitalist class. "What do you know about it?" the working-class replies. "Because you have failed is no reason that we shall fail. Furthermore, we are going to have a try at it, anyway. Seven millions of us say so. And what have you to say to that?"

And what can the capitalist class say? Grant the incapacity of the working-class. Grant that the indictment and the argument of the revolutionists are all wrong. The 7,000,000 revolutionists remain. Their existence is a fact. Their belief in their capacity, and in their indictment and their argument, is a fact. Their constant growth is a fact. Their intention to destroy present-day society is a fact, as is also their intention to take possession of the world with all its wealth and machinery and governments. Moreover, it is a fact that the working-class is vastly larger than the capitalist class.

The revolution is a revolution of the working-class. How can the capitalist class, in the minority, stem this tide of revolution? What has it to offer? What does it offer? Employers' associations, injunctions, civil suits for plundering of the treasuries of the labour-unions, clamour and combination for the open shop, bitter and shameless opposition to the eight-hour day, strong efforts to defeat all reform, child-labour bills, graft in every municipal council, strong lobbies and bribery in every legislature for the purchase of capitalist legislation, bayonets, machine-guns, policemen's clubs, professional strike-breakers and armed Pinkertons – these are the things the capitalist class is dumping in front of the tide of revolution, as though, forsooth, to hold it back.

The capitalist class is as blind to-day to the menace of the revolution as it was blind in the past to its own God-given opportunity. It cannot see how precarious is its position, cannot comprehend

the power and the portent of the revolution. It goes on its placid way, prattling sweet ideals and dear moralities, and scrambling sordidly for material benefits.

No overthrown ruler or class in the past ever considered the revolution that overthrew it, and so with the capitalist class of to-day. Instead of compromising, instead of lengthening its lease of life by conciliation and by removal of some of the harsher oppressions of the working-class, it antagonizes the working-class, drives the working-class into revolution. Every broken strike in recent years, every legally plundered trades-union treasury, every closed shop made into an open shop, has driven the members of the working-class directly hurt over to socialism by hundreds and thousands. Show a working-man that his union fails, and he becomes a revolutionist. Break a strike with an injunction or bankrupt a union with a civil suit, and the working-men hurt thereby listen to the siren song of the socialist and are lost for ever to the *political capitalist* parties.

Antagonism never lulled revolution, and antagonism is about all the capitalist class offers. It is true, it offers some few antiquated notions which were very efficacious in the past, but which are no longer efficacious. Fourth-of-July liberty in terms of the Declaration of Independence and of the French Encyclopædists is scarcely apposite to-day. It does not appeal to the working-man who has had his head broken by a policeman's club, his union treasury bankrupted by a court decision, or his job taken away from him by a labour-saving invention. Nor does the Constitution of the United States appear so glorious and constitutional to the working-man who has experienced a bull-pen or been unconstitutionally deported from Colorado. Nor are this particular working-man's hurt feelings soothed by reading in the newspapers that both the bull-pen and the deportation were pre-eminently just, legal, and constitutional. "To hell, then, with the Constitution!" says he, and another revolutionist has been made – by the capitalist class.

In short, so blind is the capitalist class that it does nothing to lengthen its lease of life, while it does everything to shorten it. The capitalist class offers nothing that is clean, noble, and alive. The revolutionists offer everything that is clean, noble, and alive. They offer service, unselfishness, sacrifice, martyrdom – the things that sting awake the imagination of the people, touching their hearts with the fervour that arises out of the impulse toward good and which is essentially religious in its nature.

But the revolutionists blow hot and blow cold. They offer facts and statistics, economics and scientific arguments. If the working-man be merely selfish, the revolutionists show him, mathematically demonstrate to him, that his condition will be bettered by the revolution. If the working-man be the higher type, moved by impulses toward right conduct, if he have soul and spirit, the revolutionists offer him the things of the soul and the spirit, the tremendous things that cannot be measured by dollars and cents, nor be held down by dollars and cents. The revolutionist cries out upon wrong and injustice, and preaches righteousness. And, most potent of all, he sings the eternal song of human freedom – a song of all lands and all tongues and all time.

Few members of the capitalist class see the revolution. Most of them are too ignorant, and many are too afraid to see it. It is the same old story of every perishing ruling class in the world's history. Fat with power and possession, drunken with success, and made soft by surfeit and by cessation of struggle, they are like the drones clustered about the honey vats when the worker-bees spring upon them to end their rotund existence.

President Roosevelt vaguely sees the revolution, is frightened by it, and recoils from seeing it. As he says: "Above all, we need to remember that any kind of class animosity in the political world is, if possible, even more wicked, even more destructive to national welfare, than sectional, race, or religious animosity."

Class animosity in the political world, President Roosevelt maintains, is wicked. But class animosity in the political world is the preachment of the revolutionists. "Let the class wars in the industrial world continue," they say, "but extend the class war to the political world." As their leader,

Eugene V. Debs says: “So far as this struggle is concerned, there is no good capitalist and no bad working-man. Every capitalist is your enemy and every working-man is your friend.”

Here is class animosity in the political world with a vengeance. And here is revolution. In 1888 there were only 2,000 revolutionists of this type in the United States; in 1900 there were 127,000 revolutionists; in 1904, 435,000 revolutionists. Wickedness of the President Roosevelt definition evidently flourishes and increases in the United States. Quite so, for it is the revolution that flourishes and increases.

Here and there a member of the capitalist class catches a clear glimpse of the revolution, and raises a warning cry. But his class does not heed. President Eliot of Harvard raised such a cry:

“I am forced to believe there is a present danger of socialism never before so imminent in America in so dangerous a form, because never before imminent in so well organized a form. The danger lies in the obtaining control of the trades-unions by the socialists.” And the capitalist employers, instead of giving heed to the warnings, are perfecting their strike-breaking organization and combining more strongly than ever for a general assault upon that dearest of all things to the trades-unions – the closed shop. In so far as this assault succeeds, by just that much will the capitalist class shorten its lease of life. It is the old, old story, over again and over again. The drunken drones still cluster greedily about the honey vats.

Possibly one of the most amusing spectacles of to-day is the attitude of the American press toward the revolution. It is also a pathetic spectacle. It compels the onlooker to be aware of a distinct loss of pride in his species. Dogmatic utterance from the mouth of ignorance may make gods laugh, but it should make men weep. And the American editors (in the general instance) are so impressive about it! The old “divide-up,” “men-are-not-born-free-and-equal,” propositions are enunciated gravely and sagely, as things white-hot and new from the forge of human wisdom. Their feeble vapourings show no more than a schoolboy’s comprehension of the nature of the revolution. Parasites themselves on the capitalist class, serving the capitalist class by moulding public opinion, they, too, cluster drunkenly about the honey vats.

Of course, this is true only of the large majority of American editors. To say that it is true of all of them would be to cast too great obloquy upon the human race. Also, it would be untrue, for here and there an occasional editor does see clearly – and in his case, ruled by stomach-incentive, is usually afraid to say what he thinks about it. So far as the science and the sociology of the revolution are concerned, the average editor is a generation or so behind the facts. He is intellectually slothful, accepts no facts until they are accepted by the majority, and prides himself upon his conservatism. He is an instinctive optimist, prone to believe that what ought to be, is. The revolutionist gave this up long ago, and believes not that what ought to be, is, but what is, is, and that it may not be what it ought to be at all.

Now and then, rubbing his eyes, vigorously, an editor catches a sudden glimpse of the revolution and breaks out in naïve volubility, as, for instance, the one who wrote the following in the *Chicago Chronicle*: “American socialists are revolutionists. They know that they are revolutionists. It is high time that other people should appreciate the fact.” A white-hot, brand-new discovery, and he proceeded to shout it out from the housetops that we, forsooth, were revolutionists. Why, it is just what we have been doing all these years – shouting it out from the housetops that we are revolutionists, and stop us who can.

The time should be past for the mental attitude: “Revolution is atrocious. Sir, there is no revolution.” Likewise should the time be past for that other familiar attitude: “Socialism is slavery. Sir, it will never be.” It is no longer a question of dialectics, theories, and dreams. There is no question about it. The revolution is a fact. It is here now. Seven million revolutionists, organized, working day and night, are preaching the revolution – that passionate gospel, the Brotherhood of Man. Not only is it a cold-blooded economic propaganda, but it is in essence a religious propaganda with a fervour in it of Paul and Christ. The capitalist class has been indicted. It has failed in its management and

its management is to be taken away from it. Seven million men of the working-class say that they are going to get the rest of the working-class to join with them and take the management away. The revolution is here, now. Stop it who can.

Sacramento River.
March 1905.

THE SOMNAMBULISTS

“’Tis only fools speak evil of the clay —
The very stars are made of clay like mine.”

The mightiest and absurdest sleep-walker on the planet! Chained in the circle of his own imaginings, man is only too keen to forget his origin and to shame that flesh of his that bleeds like all flesh and that is good to eat. Civilization (which is part of the circle of his imaginings) has spread a veneer over the surface of the soft-shelled animal known as man. It is a very thin veneer; but so wonderfully is man constituted that he squirms on his bit of achievement and believes he is garbed in armour-plate.

Yet man to-day is the same man that drank from his enemy’s skull in the dark German forests, that sacked cities, and stole his women from neighbouring clans like any howling aborigine. The flesh-and-blood body of man has not changed in the last several thousand years. Nor has his mind changed. There is no faculty of the mind of man to-day that did not exist in the minds of the men of long ago. Man has to-day no concept that is too wide and deep and abstract for the mind of Plato or Aristotle to grasp. Give to Plato or Aristotle the same fund of knowledge that man to-day has access to, and Plato and Aristotle would reason as profoundly as the man of to-day and would achieve very similar conclusions.

It is the same old animal man, smeared over, it is true, with a veneer, thin and magical, that makes him dream drunken dreams of self-exaltation and to sneer at the flesh and the blood of him beneath the smear. The raw animal crouching within him is like the earthquake monster pent in the crust of the earth. As he persuades himself against the latter till it arouses and shakes down a city, so does he persuade himself against the former until it shakes him out of his dreaming and he stands undisguised, a brute like any other brute.

Starve him, let him miss six meals, and see gape through the veneer the hungry maw of the animal beneath. Get between him and the female of his kind upon whom his mating instinct is bent, and see his eyes blaze like an angry cat’s, hear in his throat the scream of wild stallions, and watch his fists clench like an orang-outang’s. Maybe he will even beat his chest. Touch his silly vanity, which he exalts into high-sounding pride – call him a liar, and behold the red animal in him that makes a hand clutching that is quick like the tensing of a tiger’s claw, or an eagle’s talon, incarnate with desire to rip and tear.

It is not necessary to call him a liar to touch his vanity. Tell a plains Indian that he has failed to steal horses from the neighbouring tribe, or tell a man living in bourgeois society that he has failed to pay his bills at the neighbouring grocer’s, and the results are the same. Each, plains Indian and bourgeois, is smeared with a slightly different veneer, that is all. It requires a slightly different stick to scrape it off. The raw animals beneath are identical.

But intrude not violently upon man, leave him alone in his somnambulism, and he kicks out from under his feet the ladder of life up which he has climbed, constitutes himself the centre of the universe, dreams sordidly about his own particular god, and maunders metaphysically about his own blessed immortality.

True, he lives in a real world, breathes real air, eats real food, and sleeps under real blankets, in order to keep real cold away. And there’s the rub. He has to effect adjustments with the real world and at the same time maintain the sublimity of his dream. The result of this admixture of the real and the unreal is confusion thrice confounded. The man that walks the real world in his sleep becomes such a tangled mass of contradictions, paradoxes, and lies that he has to lie to himself in order to stay asleep.

In passing, it may be noted that some men are remarkably constituted in this matter of self-deception. They excel at deceiving themselves. They believe, and they help others to believe. It

becomes their function in society, and some of them are paid large salaries for helping their fellow-men to believe, for instance, that they are not as other animals; for helping the king to believe, and his parasites and drudges as well, that he is God's own manager over so many square miles of earth-crust; for helping the merchant and banking classes to believe that society rests on their shoulders, and that civilization would go to smash if they got out from under and ceased from their exploitations and petty pilferings.

Prize-fighting is terrible. This is the dictum of the man who walks in his sleep. He prates about it, and writes to the papers about it, and worries the legislators about it. There is nothing of the brute about *him*. He is a sublimated soul that treads the heights and breathes refined ether – in self-comparison with the prize-fighter. The man who walks in his sleep ignores the flesh and all its wonderful play of muscle, joint, and nerve. He feels that there is something godlike in the mysterious deeps of his being, denies his relationship with the brute, and proceeds to go forth into the world and express by deeds that something godlike within him.

He sits at a desk and chases dollars through the weeks and months and years of his life. To him the life godlike resolves into a problem something like this: *Since the great mass of men toil at producing wealth, how best can he get between the great mass of men and the wealth they produce, and get a slice for himself?* With tremendous exercise of craft, deceit, and guile, he devotes his life godlike to this purpose. As he succeeds, his somnambulism grows profound. He bribes legislatures, buys judges, “controls” primaries, and then goes and hires other men to tell him that it is all glorious and right. And the funniest thing about it is that this arch-deceiver believes all that they tell him. He reads only the newspapers and magazines that tell him what he wants to be told, listens only to the biologists who tell him that he is the finest product of the struggle for existence, and herds only with his own kind, where, like the monkey-folk, they teeter up and down and tell one another how great they are.

In the course of his life godlike he ignores the flesh – until he gets to table. He raises his hands in horror at the thought of the brutish prize-fighter, and then sits down and gorges himself on roast beef, rare and red, running blood under every sawing thrust of the implement called a knife. He has a piece of cloth which he calls a napkin, with which he wipes from his lips, and from the hair on his lips, the greasy juices of the meat.

He is fastidiously nauseated at the thought of two prize-fighters bruising each other with their fists; and at the same time, because it will cost him some money, he will refuse to protect the machines in his factory, though he is aware that the lack of such protection every year mangles, batters, and destroys out of all humanness thousands of working-men, women, and children. He will chatter about things refined and spiritual and godlike like himself, and he and the men who herd with him will calmly adulterate the commodities they put upon the market and which annually kill tens of thousands of babies and young children.

He will recoil at the suggestion of the horrid spectacle of two men confronting each other with gloved hands in the roped arena, and at the same time he will clamour for larger armies and larger navies, for more destructive war machines, which, with a single discharge, will disrupt and rip to pieces more human beings than have died in the whole history of prize-fighting. He will bribe a city council for a franchise or a state legislature for a commercial privilege; but he has never been known, in all his sleep-walking history, to bribe any legislative body in order to achieve any moral end, such as, for instance, abolition of prize-fighting, child-labour laws, pure food bills, or old age pensions.

“Ah, but we do not stand for the commercial life,” object the refined, scholarly, and professional men. They are also sleep-walkers. They do not stand for the commercial life, but neither do they stand against it with all their strength. They submit to it, to the brutality and carnage of it. They develop classical economists who announce that the only possible way for men and women to get food and shelter is by the existing method. They produce university professors, men who claim the *rôle* of teachers, and who at the same time claim that the austere ideal of learning is passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence. They serve the men who lead the commercial life, give to their sons

somnambulistic educations, preach that sleep-walking is the only way to walk, and that the persons who walk otherwise are atavisms or anarchists. They paint pictures for the commercial men, write books for them, sing songs for them, act plays for them, and dose them with various drugs when their bodies have grown gross or dyspeptic from overeating and lack of exercise.

Then there are the good, kind somnambulists who don't prize-fight, who don't play the commercial game, who don't teach and preach somnambulism, who don't do anything except live on the dividends that are coined out of the wan, white fluid that runs in the veins of little children, out of mothers' tears, the blood of strong men, and the groans and sighs of the old. The receiver is as bad as the thief – ay, and the thief is finer than the receiver; he at least has the courage to run the risk. But the good, kind people who don't do anything won't believe this, and the assertion will make them angry – for a moment. They possess several magic phrases, which are like the incantations of a voodoo doctor driving devils away. The phrases that the good, kind people repeat to themselves and to one another sound like “abstinence,” “temperance,” “thrift,” “virtue.” Sometimes they say them backward, when they sound like “prodigality,” “drunkenness,” “wastefulness,” and “immorality.” They do not really know the meaning of these phrases, but they think they do, and that is all that is necessary for somnambulists. The calm repetition of such phrases invariably drives away the waking devils and lulls to slumber.

Our statesmen sell themselves and their country for gold. Our municipal servants and state legislators commit countless treasons. The world of graft! The world of betrayal! The world of somnambulism, whose exalted and sensitive citizens are outraged by the knockouts of the prize-ring, and who annually not merely knock out, but kill, thousands of babies and children by means of child labour and adulterated food. Far better to have the front of one's face pushed in by the fist of an honest prize-fighter than to have the lining of one's stomach corroded by the embalmed beef of a dishonest manufacturer.

In a prize-fight men are classed. A lightweight fights with a light-weight; he never fights with a heavy-weight, and foul blows are not allowed. Yet in the world of the somnambulists, where soar the sublimated spirits, there are no classes, and foul blows are continually struck and never disallowed. Only they are not called foul blows. The world of claw and fang and fist and club has passed away – so say the somnambulists. A rebate is not an elongated claw. A Wall Street raid is not a fang slash. Dummy boards of directors and fake accountings are not foul blows of the fist under the belt. A present of coal stock by a mine operator to a railroad official is not a claw rip to the bowels of a rival mine operator. The hundred million dollars with which a combination beats down to his knees a man with a million dollars is not a club. The man who walks in his sleep says it is not a club. So say all of his kind with which he herds. They gather together and solemnly and gloatingly make and repeat certain noises that sound like “discretion,” “acumen,” “initiative,” “enterprise.” These noises are especially gratifying when they are made backward. They mean the same things, but they sound different. And in either case, forward or backward, the spirit of the dream is not disturbed.

When a man strikes a foul blow in the prize-ring the fight is immediately stopped, he is declared the loser, and he is hissed by the audience as he leaves the ring. But when a man who walks in his sleep strikes a foul blow he is immediately declared the victor and awarded the prize; and amid acclamations he forthwith turns his prize into a seat in the United States Senate, into a grotesque palace on Fifth Avenue, and into endowed churches, universities and libraries, to say nothing of subsidized newspapers, to proclaim his greatness.

The red animal in the somnambulist will out. He decries the carnal combat of the prize-ring, and compels the red animal to spiritual combat. The poisoned lie, the nasty, gossiping tongue, the brutality of the unkind epigram, the business and social nastiness and treachery of to-day – these are the thrusts and scratches of the red animal when the somnambulist is in charge. They are not the upper cuts and short arm jabs and jolts and slugging blows of the spirit. They are the foul blows of the spirit that have never been disbarred, as the foul blows of the prize-ring have been disbarred. (Would

it not be preferable for a man to strike one full on the mouth with his fist than for him to tell a lie about one, or malign those that are nearest and dearest?)

For these are the crimes of the spirit, and, alas! they are so much more frequent than blows on the mouth. And whosoever exalts the spirit over the flesh, by his own creed avers that a crime of the spirit is vastly more terrible than a crime of the flesh. Thus stand the somnambulists convicted by their own creed – only they are not real men, alive and awake, and they proceed to mutter magic phrases that dispel all doubt as to their undiminished and eternal gloriousness.

It is well enough to let the ape and tiger die, but it is hardly fair to kill off the natural and courageous apes and tigers and allow the spawn of cowardly apes and tigers to live. The prize-fighting apes and tigers will die all in good time in the course of natural evolution, but they will not die so long as the cowardly, somnambulist apes and tigers club and scratch and slash. This is not a brief for the prize-fighter. It is a blow of the fist between the eyes of the somnambulists, teetering up and down, muttering magic phrases, and thanking God that they are not as other animals.

Glen Ellen, California.

June 1900.

THE DIGNITY OF DOLLARS

Man is a blind, helpless creature. He looks back with pride upon his goodly heritage of the ages, and yet obeys unwittingly every mandate of that heritage; for it is incarnate with him, and in it are embedded the deepest roots of his soul. Strive as he will, he cannot escape it – unless he be a genius, one of those rare creations to whom alone is granted the privilege of doing entirely new and original things in entirely new and original ways. But the common clay-born man, possessing only talents, may do only what has been done before him. At the best, if he work hard, and cherish himself exceedingly, he may duplicate any or all previous performances of his kind; he may even do some of them better; but there he stops, the composite hand of his whole ancestry bearing heavily upon him.

And again, in the matter of his ideas, which have been thrust upon him, and which he has been busily garnering from the great world ever since the day when his eyes first focussed and he drew, startled, against the warm breast of his mother – the tyranny of these he cannot shake off. Servants of his will, they at the same time master him. They may not coerce genius, but they dictate and sway every action of the clay-born. If he hesitate on the verge of a new departure, they whip him back into the well-greased groove; if he pause, bewildered, at sight of some unexplored domain, they rise like ubiquitous finger-posts and direct him by the village path to the communal meadow. And he permits these things, and continues to permit them, for he cannot help them, and he is a slave. Out of his ideas he may weave cunning theories, beautiful ideals; but he is working with ropes of sand. At the slightest stress, the last least bit of cohesion flits away, and each idea flies apart from its fellows, while all clamour that he do this thing, or think this thing, in the ancient and time-honoured way. He is only a clay-born; so he bends his neck. He knows further that the clay-born are a pitiful, pitiless majority, and that he may do nothing which they do not do.

It is only in some way such as this that we may understand and explain the dignity which attaches itself to dollars. In the watches of the night, we may assure ourselves that there is no such dignity; but jostling with our fellows in the white light of day, we find that it does exist, and that we ourselves measure ourselves by the dollars we happen to possess. They give us confidence and carriage and dignity – ay, a personal dignity which goes down deeper than the garments with which we hide our nakedness. The world, when it knows nothing else of him, measures a man by his clothes; but the man himself, if he be neither a genius nor a philosopher, but merely a clay-born, measures himself by his pocket-book. He cannot help it, and can no more fling it from him than can the bashful young man his self-consciousness when crossing a ballroom floor.

I remember once absenting myself from civilization for weary months. When I returned, it was to a strange city in another country. The people were but slightly removed from my own breed, and they spoke the same tongue, barring a certain barbarous accent which I learned was far older than the one imbibed by me with my mother's milk. A fur cap, soiled and singed by many camp-fires, half sheltered the shaggy tendrils of my uncut hair. My foot-gear was of walrus hide, cunningly blended with seal gut. The remainder of my dress was as primal and uncouth. I was a sight to give merriment to gods and men. Olympus must have roared at my coming. The world, knowing me not, could judge me by my clothes alone. But I refused to be so judged. My spiritual backbone stiffened, and I held my head high, looking all men in the eyes. And I did these things, not that I was an egotist, not that I was impervious to the critical glances of my fellows, but because of a certain hogskin belt, plethoric and sweat-bewrinkled, which buckled next the skin above the hips. Oh, it's absurd, I grant, but had that belt not been so circumstanced, and so situated, I should have shrunk away into side streets and back alleys, walking humbly and avoiding all gregarious humans except those who were likewise abroad without belts. Why? I do not know, save that in such way did my fathers before me.

Viewed in the light of sober reason, the whole thing was preposterous. But I walked down the gang-plank with the mien of a hero, of a barbarian who knew himself to be greater than the

civilization he invaded. I was possessed of the arrogance of a Roman governor. At last I knew what it was to be born to the purple, and I took my seat in the hotel carriage as though it were my chariot about to proceed with me to the imperial palace. People discreetly dropped their eyes before my proud gaze, and into their hearts I know I forced the query, What manner of man can this mortal be? I was superior to convention, and the very garb which otherwise would have damned me tended toward my elevation. And all this was due, not to my royal lineage, nor to the deeds I had done and the champions I had overthrown, but to a certain hogskin belt buckled next the skin. The sweat of months was upon it, toil had defaced it, and it was not a creation such as would appeal to the æsthetic mind; but it was plethoric. There was the arcanum; each yellow grain conduced to my exaltation, and the sum of these grains was the sum of my mightiness. Had they been less, just so would have been my stature; more, and I should have reached the sky.

And this was my royal progress through that most loyal city. I purchased a host of things from the tradespeople, and bought me such pleasures and diversions as befitted one who had long been denied. I scattered my gold lavishly, nor did I chaffer over prices in mart or exchange. And, because of these things I did, I demanded homage. Nor was it refused. I moved through wind-swept groves of limber backs; across sunny glades, lighted by the beaming rays from a thousand obsequious eyes; and when I tired of this, basked on the greensward of popular approval. Money was very good, I thought, and for the time was content. But there rushed upon me the words of Erasmus, “When I get some money I shall buy me some Greek books, and afterwards some clothes,” and a great shame wrapped me around. But, luckily for my soul’s welfare, I reflected and was saved. By the clearer vision vouchsafed me, I beheld Erasmus, fire-flashing, heaven-born, while I – I was merely a clay-born, a son of earth. For a giddy moment I had forgotten this, and tottered. And I rolled over on my greensward, caught a glimpse of a regiment of undulating backs, and thanked my particular gods that such moods of madness were passing brief.

But on another day, receiving with kingly condescension the service of my good subjects’ backs, I remembered the words of another man, long since laid away, who was by birth a nobleman, by nature a philosopher and a gentleman, and who by circumstance yielded up his head upon the block. “That a man of lead,” he once remarked, “who has no more sense than a log of wood, and is as bad as he is foolish, should have many wise and good men to serve him, only because he has a great heap of that metal; and that if, by some accident or trick of law (which sometimes produces as great changes as chance itself), all this wealth should pass from the master to the meanest varlet of his whole family, he himself would very soon become one of his servants, as if he were a thing that belonged to his wealth, and so was bound to follow its fortune.”

And when I had remembered this much, I unwisely failed to pause and reflect. So I gathered my belongings together, cinched my hogskin belt tight about me, and went away to my own country. It was a very foolish thing to do. I am sure it was. But when I had recovered my reason, I fell upon my particular gods and berated them mightily, and as penance for their watchlessness placed them away amongst dust and cobwebs. Oh no, not for long. They are again enshrined, as bright and polished as of yore, and my destiny is once more in their keeping.

It is given that travail and vicissitude mark time to man’s footsteps as he stumbles onward toward the grave; and it is well. Without the bitter one may not know the sweet. The other day – nay, it was but yesterday – I fell before the rhythm of fortune. The inexorable pendulum had swung the counter direction, and there was upon me an urgent need. The hogskin belt was flat as famine, nor did it longer gird my loins. From my window I could descry, at no great distance, a very ordinary mortal of a man, working industriously among his cabbages. I thought: Here am I, capable of teaching him much concerning the field wherein he labours – the nitrogenic – why of the fertilizer, the alchemy of the sun, the microscopic cell-structure of the plant, the cryptic chemistry of root and runner – but thereat he straightened his work-wearied back and rested. His eyes wandered over what he had produced in the sweat of his brow, then on to mine. And as he stood there drearily, he became

reproach incarnate. “Unstable as water,” he said (I am sure he did) – “unstable as water, thou shalt not excel. Man, where are *your* cabbages?”

I shrank back. Then I waxed rebellious. I refused to answer the question. He had no right to ask it, and his presence was an affront upon the landscape. And a dignity entered into me, and my neck was stiffened, my head poised. I gathered together certain certificates of goods and chattels, pointed my heel towards him and his cabbages, and journeyed toward. I was yet a man. There was naught in those certificates to be ashamed of. But alack-a-day! While my heels thrust the cabbage-man beyond the horizon, my toes were drawing me, faltering, like a timid old beggar, into a roaring spate of humanity – men, women, and children without end. They had no concern with me, nor I with them. I knew it; I felt it. Like She, after her fire-bath in the womb of the world, I dwindled in my own sight. My feet were uncertain and heavy, and my soul became as a meal sack, limp with emptiness and tied in the middle. People looked upon me scornfully, pitifully, reproachfully. (I can swear they did.) In every eye I read the question, Man, where are your cabbages?

So I avoided their looks, shrinking close to the kerbstone and by furtive glances directing my progress. At last I came hard by the place, and peering stealthily to the right and left that none who knew might behold me, I entered hurriedly, in the manner of one committing an abomination. ‘Fore God! I had done no evil, nor had I wronged any man, nor did I contemplate evil; yet was I aware of evil. Why? I do not know, save that there goes much dignity with dollars, and being devoid of the one I was destitute of the other. The person I sought practised a profession as ancient as the oracles but far more lucrative. It is mentioned in Exodus; so it must have been created soon after the foundations of the world; and despite the thunder of ecclesiastics and the mailed hand of kings and conquerors, it has endured even to this day. Nor is it unfair to presume that the accounts of this most remarkable business will not be closed until the Trumps of Doom are sounded and all things brought to final balance.

Wherefore it was in fear and trembling, and with great modesty of spirit, that I entered the Presence. To confess that I was shocked were to do my feelings an injustice. Perhaps the blame may be shouldered upon Shylock, Fagin, and their ilk; but I had conceived an entirely different type of individual. This man – why, he was clean to look at, his eyes were blue, with the tired look of scholarly lucubrations, and his skin had the normal pallor of sedentary existence. He was reading a book, sober and leather-bound, while on his finely moulded, intellectual head reposed a black skull-cap. For all the world his look and attitude were those of a college professor. My heart gave a great leap. Here was hope! But no; he fixed me with a cold and glittering eye, searching with the chill of space till my financial status stood before him shivering and ashamed. I communed with myself: By his brow he is a thinker, but his intellect has been prostituted to a mercenary exaction of toll from misery. His nerve centres of judgment and will have not been employed in solving the problems of life, but in maintaining his own solvency by the insolvency of others. He trades upon sorrow and draws a livelihood from misfortune. He transmutes tears into treasure, and from nakedness and hunger garbs himself in clean linen and develops the round of his belly. He is a bloodsucker and a vampire. He lays unholy hands on heaven and hell at cent. per cent., and his very existence is a sacrilege and a blasphemy. And yet here am I, wilting before him, an arrant coward, with no respect for him and less for myself. Why should this shame be? Let me rouse in my strength and smite him, and, by so doing, wipe clean one offensive page.

But no. As I said, he fixed me with a cold and glittering eye, and in it was the aristocrat’s undisguised contempt for the *canaille*. Behind him was the solid phalanx of a bourgeois society. Law and order upheld him, while I titubated, cabbageless, on the ragged edge. Moreover, he was possessed of a formula whereby to extract juice from a flattened lemon, and he would do business with me.

I told him my desires humbly, in quavering syllables. In return, he craved my antecedents and residence, pried into my private life, insolently demanded how many children had I and did I live in wedlock, and asked divers other unseemly and degrading questions. Ay, I was treated like a thief

convicted before the act, till I produced my certificates of goods and chattels aforementioned. Never had they appeared so insignificant and paltry as then, when he sniffed over them with the air of one disdainfully doing a disagreeable task. It is said, “Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury”; but he evidently was not my brother, for he demanded seventy per cent. I put my signature to certain indentures, received my pottage, and fled from his presence.

Faugh! I was glad to be quit of it. How good the outside air was! I only prayed that neither my best friend nor my worst enemy should ever become aware of what had just transpired. Ere I had gone a block I noticed that the sun had brightened perceptibly, the street become less sordid, the gutter mud less filthy. In people’s eyes the cabbage question no longer brooded. And there was a spring to my body, an elasticity of step as I covered the pavement. Within me coursed an unwonted sap, and I felt as though I were about to burst out into leaves and buds and green things. My brain was clear and refreshed. There was a new strength to my arm. My nerves were tingling and I was a-pulse with the times. All men were my brothers. Save one – yes, save one. I would go back and wreck the establishment. I would disrupt that leather-bound volume, violate that black skullcap, burn the accounts. But before fancy could father the act, I recollected myself and all which had passed. Nor did I marvel at my new-horn might, at my ancient dignity which had returned. There was a tinkling chink as I ran the yellow pieces through my fingers, and with the golden music rippling round me I caught a deeper insight into the mystery of things.

Oakland, California.
February 1900.

GOLIAH

In 1924 – to be precise, on the morning of January 3 – the city of San Francisco awoke to read in one of its daily papers a curious letter, which had been received by Walter Bassett and which had evidently been written by some crank. Walter Bassett was the greatest captain of industry west of the Rockies, and was one of the small group that controlled the nation in everything but name. As such, he was the recipient of lucubrations from countless cranks; but this particular lucubration was so different from the average ruck of similar letters that, instead of putting it into the waste-basket, he had turned it over to a reporter. It was signed “Goliah,” and the superscription gave his address as “Palgrave Island.” The letter was as follows:

“Mr. Walter Bassett,

“Dear Sir:

“I am inviting you, with nine of your fellow-captains of industry, to visit me here on my island for the purpose of considering plans for the reconstruction of society upon a more rational basis. Up to the present, social evolution has been a blind and aimless, blundering thing. The time has come for a change. Man has risen from the vitalized slime of the primeval sea to the mastery of matter; but he has not yet mastered society. Man is to-day as much the slave to his collective stupidity, as a hundred thousand generations ago he was a slave to matter.

“There are two theoretical methods whereby man may become the master of society, and make of society an intelligent and efficacious device for the pursuit and capture of happiness and laughter. The first theory advances the proposition that no government can be wiser or better than the people that compose that government; that reform and development must spring from the individual; that in so far as the individuals become wiser and better, by that much will their government become wiser and better; in short, that the majority of individuals must become wiser and better, before their government becomes wiser and better. The mob, the political convention, the abysmal brutality and stupid ignorance of all concourses of people, give the lie to this theory. In a mob the collective intelligence and mercy is that of the least intelligent and most brutal members that compose the mob. On the other hand, a thousand passengers will surrender themselves to the wisdom and discretion of the captain, when their ship is in a storm on the sea. In such matter, he is the wisest and most experienced among them.

“The second theory advances the proposition that the majority of the people are not pioneers, that they are weighted down by the inertia of the established; that the government that is representative of them represents only their feebleness, and futility, and brutishness; that this blind thing called government is not the serf of their wills, but that they are the serfs of it; in short, speaking always of the great mass, that they do not make government, but that government makes them, and that government is and has been a stupid and awful monster, misbegotten of the glimmerings of intelligence that come from the inertia-crushed mass.

“Personally, I incline to the second theory. Also, I am impatient. For a hundred thousand generations, from the first social groups of our savage forbears, government has remained a monster. To-day, the inertia-crushed mass has less laughter in it than ever before. In spite of man’s mastery of matter, human suffering and misery and degradation mar the fair world.

“Wherefore I have decided to step in and become captain of this world-ship for a while. I have the intelligence and the wide vision of the skilled expert. Also, I have the power. I shall be obeyed. The men of all the world shall perform my bidding and make governments so that they shall become laughter-producers. These modelled governments I have in mind shall not make the people happy, wise, and noble by decree; but they shall give opportunity for the people to become happy, wise, and noble.

“I have spoken. I have invited you, and nine of your fellow-captains, to confer with me. On March third the yacht *Energon* will sail from San Francisco. You are requested to be on board the night before. This is serious. The affairs of the world must be handled for a time by a strong hand. Mine is that strong hand. If you fail to obey my summons, you will die. Candidly, I do not expect that you will obey. But your death for failure to obey will cause obedience on the part of those I subsequently summon. You will have served a purpose. And please remember that I have no unscientific sentimentality about the value of human life. I carry always in the background of my consciousness the innumerable billions of lives that are to laugh and be happy in future æons on the earth.

“Yours for the reconstruction of society,
“*Goliah.*”

The publication of this letter did not cause even local amusement. Men might have smiled to themselves as they read it, but it was so palpably the handiwork of a crank that it did not merit discussion. Interest did not arouse till next morning. An Associated Press despatch to the Eastern states, followed by interviews by eager-nosed reporters, had brought out the names of the other nine captains of industry who had received similar letters, but who had not thought the matter of sufficient importance to be made public. But the interest aroused was mild, and it would have died out quickly had not Gabberton cartooned a chronic presidential aspirant as “Goliah.” Then came the song that was sung hilariously from sea to sea, with the refrain, “Goliah will catch you if you don’t watch out.”

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