

Title: Your part in poverty

Author: George Lansbury

Release date: December 24, 2025 [eBook #77543]

Language: English

Original publication: New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1910

Credits: David Edwards and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net>  
(This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive)

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK YOUR PART IN POVERTY \*\*\*

---

## YOUR PART IN POVERTY

---

YOUR PART IN  
POVERTY

*By GEORGE LANSBURY*

*FOURTH PRINTING*

New York B. W. HUEBSCH Mcmx

---

iv

*My thanks to Gerald Gould for his valued suggestions and his help in the reading of the proofs.*

*G. L.*

*First published January 20, 1917.*

---

v

**AUTHOR'S NOTE  
TO FOURTH IMPRESSION**

THIS book was written at the time of the Church of England Mission of Repentance and Hope—a fact which “dates” some of the references in the text, but does not necessitate any modification in the argument. In sending out a new edition of it, I would like readers to remember that it was written mainly to help Christian people to understand what a Socialist member of the Church of England means by Socialism, and also to explain why an agitator like myself believes religion must play an important part in the social and industrial redemption of the world. It has been urged against me that I have produced no statistics, evolved no scheme of reconstruction. This is true. Of books of statistics and schemes of reconstruction there are no end; they come pouring out from the printing presses in a steady stream day after day. My faith for the future is built on what I conceive to be a surer foundation, which is what the Churches call a change in heart and mind taking place in each one of us, making us all understand that salvation viis from within, that heaven is here or nowhere, that hell and heaven on earth are of our own making—which in turn means that it is within the power of each of us to help redeem mankind, and that without our effort, our work, the redemption of the world from social and industrial evil will never take place. The war has destroyed much, swept away many illusions, but has left untouched the eternal truth—that those who sow selfishness reap what they sow, that nations who base their power and might and majesty on materialism and force reap also what they sow, in the ultimate ruin which inevitably follows injustice. As the war draws to a close men are discussing what may happen “when the boys come home.” One thing is certain: they will return with a bigger idea of their own worth and the relative worthlessness of mere property as against life and liberty. It will be the duty of Christians to meet them with open arms, to join with them in building our society on a surer foundation than that of “class supremacy”—a foundation of brotherhood and love. Women and men have sacrificed a great deal in the hope of winning the war; it is now viitime to sacrifice everything in one supreme effort to rid the whole world of the spirit of domination, whether of class or race, and establishing the true kingdom of the people, which is the kingdom of God. If this little book succeeds in making ever so few people think, it will have been worth while. If it makes one young man or woman enlist in the great silent army of the people, willing unselfishly to spend and be spent for God and the people, I shall be glad to have written it. Many thanks to all the friends who have helped to make the book known.

George Lansbury.

March, 1918.

PREFACE BY THE BISHOP OF WINCHESTER,	<u>7</u>
INTRODUCTION,	<u>11</u>
I. WORKMEN,	<u>25</u>
II. WOMEN AND CHILDREN,	<u>45</u>
III. BUSINESS,	<u>73</u>
IV. CHURCHES,	<u>88</u>
V. WHAT WE MUST DO,	<u>105</u>

---

7

**THE PREFACE  
BY THE  
BISHOP OF WINCHESTER**

MR. LANSBURY has done me the honour, for as such I feel it, of asking me to put a few words before his book.

Under ordinary circumstances I should possibly have declined, partly because (with the exception of one chapter) I have not read the book, partly because there would be points in any writing or action of Mr. Lansbury's with which I should disagree, perhaps in some cases vehemently.

But the circumstances of to-day and to-morrow as we all know are not ordinary but entirely extraordinary. And, in these matters, one consideration, to my thinking, outweighs all others. It is that of the imperative need that the men and women of organised religion and the men and women of manual labour (thank God the division between them is not mutually exclusive) should understand one another. The degree of their present aloofness and misunderstanding is easily the most sinister fact in our present condition.

On the side of the Church we are in no mood of complacency. The National Mission of Repentance and Hope has been the sign on our part of readiness to take ourselves to task and to acknowledge faults and mistakes.

Therefore when a man with the integrity and enthusiasm of George Lansbury, who belongs to both sorts, to whom the faith and worship of Christendom mean what they do to his fellow-Churchmen and who, as a popular leader, longs with righteous passion in his heart for social changes in the interests of manual labour—when he comes forward to tell us what Labour asks and what, in his judgment on Christian principles Labour ought to have, and why, then I think that every motive should make us of the Church give him not only a fair but a ready, open-hearted, and brotherly hearing. He will probably ask more of some of us than we can give. I myself, for example, who have done the little I could in life to prevent Churchmanship from being bound up with Toryism, should have very likely to maintain that it cannot be bound up with political Socialism. But if we think, as I hope most thoughtful Christian people do, that the changes of the future will and ought to be in the direction of giving more status, security, and influence to those who work with their hands, at the expense of those who have had so much more, we shall want to get closer to such a man as Mr. Lansbury, to understand his position better, and to ask him to consider with us our difficulties about accepting the whole of it.

Strong political differences up to the point which each man's honest convictions allow, but therewith a great unity of ultimate aim, and a genuine desire to find agreement—these, it seems to me, should be the attitude for all of us. Mr. Lansbury generously allows me to introduce his book in what may well seem this half-hearted way; and I am able to ask for it the sympathetic and respectful attention of my fellow-Churchmen and fellow-citizens almost as warmly as if I were more fully agreed than is likely to be the case.<sup>10</sup>

EDW. WINTON.

Farnham, Nov. 20, 1916.

---

11

## INTRODUCTION

THE National Mission organised by the Church of England is an effort to arouse men and women who care for religion to a higher sense of their corporate responsibility for the well-being of the nation. The old idea that a man or woman should accept the teaching and sacrifice of our Lord as a means of escape from the torments of hell, or as an admission to a future heaven beyond the clouds, has proved quite futile as a force for regenerating mankind. We all agree now that this life is a much more serious thing, and that it cannot be dismissed and put out of account by the very comfortable belief that, no matter how wicked a person may have been right up to the last hour of life, if at that moment he accepts the sacrifice of Christ's death all will be well with him throughout eternity. I do not here discuss the theological question, but I do insist that, in the experience of those of us who have lived through the last half of the nineteenth century, the

doctrine of salvation, as taught in almost all the Churches, has been, in its effect 12on life and conduct, a ghastly failure. This failure of Christendom to redeem the world is writ large on the blood-stained battlefields which to-day stretch across Europe, Asia, and Africa. But it is written still deeper on the social life of all those nations who profess to serve God and to believe in the teaching of His blessed Son.

It is this aspect of life I shall write about in this book, because I am convinced it is the one thing that matters in these days when millions of men and women are called upon by their rulers to give up everything that is valuable in life for the purpose of winning the war. A victory over the Germans will be but Dead Sea fruit indeed unless our nation can overcome the preventable poverty and misery, prostitution and destitution, which exist and thrive all around us. We who remain at home, rich and poor, old and young, must enlist in one great army under Christ's banner, accepting His teaching literally and in all its fulness, determined in very deed to fight against the devil and all his works, and by God's good grace to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Never was the need so great as now, never our opportunity so great. People of every class have shown us of what fine sacrifice humanity is capable against what is conceived to be a foreign danger. We must organise this enthusiasm, this selflessness, for a greater and nobler fight. We can do this all the more cheerfully because the warfare in 13which we shall engage is one which will bring life and hope to men and women of every race and every clime. In our march forward we shall leave no hosts of wounded, maimed, or dying; no widows, orphans, or devastated homes; but instead, as we succeed in destroying evil in our own lives, and in calling men and women to repentance and hope, we shall be bringing to others life, and life more abundantly, for they will each be brought to see the sacredness, the beauty and nobility of all life, and made to understand that personal salvation is of little worth unless it is accompanied by the salvation of one's fellow men and women.

We may disagree on methods, we may fall out about theology, but we cannot disagree on the one thing that matters: to believe in a God of Love, to accept Love as the greatest factor in life, and to translate into deeds of every day that belief and that acceptance. "Little children, love one another," is the teaching we must follow if we would be saved. In that spirit I write this book and send it out, mainly as an appeal to men and women of the comfortable classes, in order to put before them some of the difficulties which dog the footsteps of the common people throughout life, and also some ideas for establishing better relationship and a more lasting friendship amongst all the people. Not that I imagine for one moment that either rich or educated people can alone save 14the working classes. I know only too well from my own experience that if mankind is to be saved it must and can only be done by the individual effort of every man and woman to work out his or her own salvation. The rich and educated can only help; they, too, need salvation as much as any section of the community. As Ruskin has well said, the cruellest man living cannot sit at his feast unless blind to the misery and evil which

accompanies his wealth into the world, and as Tolstoy well put it: "The rich will do anything for the poor except get off their backs." Many good people wish to help the poor, want to give them something: I want such people to understand that the one thing needed is that we should recognise life as a unity, and realise how dependent we all are upon each other. When we do this we shall value work of every kind; the dull weary drudgery of the home as much as the learning and research of the student; the work of a sewer-man as highly as the work of a doctor; and we shall see in all labour something to be esteemed and honoured. I know that many people long to be able to take this view. Then let those of us who wish society to be organised in this way take the veil of ignorance or of prejudice or of class-pride from our eyes, let us cast away fear and see life as it is, and, seeing it, understand that each of us is dependent on the others, and that those of us who control most material wealth are in very deed *the most dependent of all*. And let us keep in mind the fact that people who are clever, people who can invent and organise, can do so only by building on the work of others: true social co-operation means that we each give our very best, whether of brain power or manual power, for the service of mankind, and thus by equal service make possible, so far as material things are concerned, equality of life for all.

No one will deny that under present conditions relationships are artificial, and that for all practical purposes England is divided, not into two nations only, as Disraeli said many years ago, but into dozens of separate and distinct classes each warring to supplant the others. When the class-war is spoken of, many people shrug their shoulders and refuse to acknowledge its existence; they bury their heads in the sands of make-believe. But the war of classes is here; it is a literal fact in peace time and in war time; it is the most soul-destroying fact of modern life; and every reader of this book (let him realise it!) is inevitably one of the protagonists.

During the present war there has been a great deal of Press talk about the breakdown of class distinctions; the nation has been represented as showing a united front, and ready to spend and to be spent on behalf of the country. Those acquainted with the facts of everyday life know that this unity 16has been to a very large extent quite superficial. It is true that on the battlefield men of all classes have sacrificed themselves with a heroism and devotion unequalled in the history of the world. But at home luxury and wealth, poverty and misery still abound. High profits and dividends are still being accumulated, and large numbers of people owning shares in shipping companies, munition works, and other industrial concerns have piled up money to an ever-increasing extent. We read of shipping companies whose profits have quadrupled, of coal-owners whose dividends have been trebled, of monopolists who by control of our food supplies and other necessities of life have piled up enormous profits, of Government contractors who are patriotic enough to limit their profits for a few months' work to the sum of £170,000, of owners of land who receive almost a king's ransom as the purchase price of land which the nation needs. Other owners of land keep so selfish a hold on it that they refuse its use to the

poor for cultivation, preferring to hold it idle until an altogether fabulous price is paid for its use. And we also read of men discharged from the Army without pensions, of others with a miserable dole of 4s. 8d. or thereabouts. At the same time we hear of national gifts to great generals of £100,000, of pensions for judges of £3,500 a year, of Cabinet Ministers who retire on pensions of £1,200 a year; and these men have all received 17great salaries. The soldier in the Army is said to cost £250 a year. Out of the Army the same man is expected to keep himself, wife, and family on wages from 16s. to 40s. a week. Not much equality either of service or sacrifice is shown by these facts from life to-day.

There is no comparison in the life conditions which prevail amongst the wives and dependents of soldiers and sailors and those which prevail amongst the commercial and landed classes. The soldier's wife has been plundered and robbed by high prices, and some of the very people who have obtained their money because of these high prices have been good enough to establish Tipperary and other clubs in order to provide some recreation and amenities of life for the soldier's and sailor's folk. All the talk about the unity of the nation comes not so much from actual life as from the desire, which all decent people must share, that the unity of life which is expressed in the words "comradeship of the trenches" may find expression in our own lives at home. This attitude of mind is, however, quite oblivious of the fact that under present industrial and commercial conditions such comradeship is impossible of realisation. The giving of doles, subscription to charity, cannot make up to the workers the robbery and exploitation from which they suffer.

In saying this I do not forget that many well-to-do 18women and men have gone out with the Red Cross, that others are serving in hospitals at home, and some devoting their leisure time to providing joy-rides in motor-cars for the wounded soldiers and sailors, whilst others are working in munition factories, Y.M.C.A. canteens, and so on. Undoubtedly there is a good spirit abroad amongst all classes, but the bedrock fact is that even in war time wealth and poverty remain contrasted throughout the land. Even the women and girls who work in munition factories, if they belong to the comfortable classes, never dream of sharing the same kind of life as the ordinary working-class women, and actually living on the wages they earn. For these well-to-do women the work is but a change; to some it is recreation which may be taken up or dropped at any time when some other rest or recreation is needed. The story that is told of the lady who entertained her co-workers from a munition factory at a dinner party is typical of what I mean. This lady means well, but how can she possibly be a workmate in the full sense unless she is actually living on the same wages as those who work by her side, and who have no other means of support? If she is ill she has only to go home and receive all the care, all the rest and change of air she needs. Different indeed is the life of the working-class girl who has no other income but her earnings, and often lives in one or 19two rooms on a beggarly wage of 12s. to 20s. per week.

Even amongst most of those who earnestly desire better times there appears to be no thought, so far as I understand them, of securing equality of opportunity for all men and all women, no sort of demand that riches and poverty shall be swept away and equal conditions of life and service established. I do not mean "equality" in the sense of everybody having to do the same kind of work, but I do mean that men and women who toil shall receive the full fruits of their toil; that for themselves there shall be secured good food, good clothes, good houses, and for their children the best education it is possible to give; and that nobody who is willing to serve the nation shall be obliged to live, as so many millions live to-day, with no certainty as to whence to-morrow's daily bread will come. There is always the horror of sickness and the dread of physical breakdown, which almost always means semi-starvation for the whole family. The lot of the average working-class family is one of respectable, precarious poverty. Cloak it, gloss it over as we may, we cannot get away from this fact, and all people who want conditions to be changed must first of all understand how people live, and what the conditions of life are which it is desired to change. They must also understand that it is impossible to have the best of two worlds at one and the same time. The rich cannot hope to see the poor living in comfortable surroundings until these conditions are swept away. To improve conditions, a thorough and radical change must take place. Poverty cannot be destroyed unless the causes which produce poverty are destroyed. These causes are so apparent to any thoughtful person that it is always a mystery to me why those who are so anxious for a change do not attack the root causes of poverty, rather than pour out so much money and effort in an attempt to palliate the ruin and disaster which come from evil social conditions.

I propose to divide this book into several parts. I shall write, not as an economist (for that is the last thing I would want to claim to be), certainly not as any sort of philanthropist (because that, too, is rather a weariness of the flesh), but just as an ordinary person who sees a good deal of what is evil in the world, not in others only, but in himself, and who is conscious that to many people money and money's-worth is the alpha and omega of life; as one aware that for those who have children to feed and clothe, and wives to maintain, either on low wages or by an interminable struggle in small businesses, life is one miserably mean, sordid grind against poverty, in a world in which men and women, boys and girls, are but pawns in the struggle of mankind to heap up riches. I write as one who knows that nothing divides friends and relations so easily as love of money; that nothing causes so much hatred and contempt, so much bitterness between families and friends, between good people as well as what are called bad people, as the loss of money. The poor, we must all realise, so far as material wealth is concerned, are always poor. Multitudes live in debt, through no fault of their own, from one year's end to another till they die. The West-End money-lender is well known for his grasping demands of usurious interest, but the poor are also victims of the same kind of men and women of their own class, and in many poor districts big incomes are received from the

business of money-lending. This condition of things comes about mainly because of low wages, times of sickness and periods of unemployment, and often, too, because people long for a fuller life than their ordinary means will allow—that is, they long for recreation and pleasure, good clothes and food, all beyond the reach of their scanty earnings. Even gambling and betting are often due to the fact that by these means men and women hope to secure more of the good things of life.

Yet if I know these things, and understand these aspects of life, I am nevertheless convinced there is much more good-will than evil in the world. But evil is organised, evil is strong, and the good in many gets crushed beneath the heavy load of unnecessary care which accompanies them 22through life. My object in life is to strive by God's help to beat down selfishness and greed and evil-doing in myself; and by every means in my power to seek to remove from other people the weights that hold them down—from the poor the burden of need, from the rich the burden of those riches which make the poverty of the poor. The first step towards this fuller life for the nation is to cast out fear and have faith in our fellow-men. We often deceive each other because we are afraid of the truth.

The truth we have to face is that it is only by basing our life and conduct on the teachings of Christ—to forgive all things, hope all things, endure all things by faith and love for each other—that we can make a clean and wholesome place of our country. This is the object we must set before ourselves if we would have a better England. Governments and organisations may do much if guided and directed by men and women imbued with the spirit of love, but all legislation has so far failed to redeem mankind because there has not been this dynamic force behind it.

All of us who are removed from the poverty line are—unless we have been fighting evil conditions in order to pull others out of the whirlpool of want and destitution—responsible for the material miseries and horrors which the great proportion of the people have perpetually to bear. And there will be very little hope from the National 23Mission, very little to hope from all this religious effort, unless we get right down to the root causes and conditions which produce poverty, prostitution and destitution; unless we realise that humanity, while capable of very fine things, is quite incapable of living a decent, wholesome life while it is obliged to engage in a vicious scramble for daily bread. We have, in some way, to destroy the competitive system which puts us (in the workshop, in the market-place, in the factory) one against the other, which makes us struggle to rise above our fellows in order to secure for ourselves and dependents a decent standard of life and comfort.

The only hope that can come to the world will come when we have substituted co-operation for competition. To effect this we need an entirely new spirit, a spirit which shall be the complete opposite of that which dominates commercial and industrial life and conduct to-day. And it is in

the hope that this book will help in creating this spirit that I am writing it. There is so much good in men and women: there could be so much better. It is only because we are so divided one from another, only because we are so ignorant of each other's lives, that we submit to these un-Christian conditions. When we know, we shall all unite in a supreme and practical effort to destroy the man-made conditions which produce the evils we have so genuinely but vaguely deplored. 24Then we shall, by united efforts, build a new state based on the foundation, not of hatred, not of competition, but of brotherhood, co-operation, and love.

---

### *YOUR PART IN POVERTY*

#### **Chapter I WORKMEN**

A WORKMAN'S working life begins at a very early age. In some places boys start work at thirteen or fourteen years of age, or even earlier, and set out to face the world and all its hardships and dangers with very little training, except such as may be given them by mother and father. Once they have started, there is seldom anything between them and the necessity for sticking at work, except the Poor Law and its wretched institutions, until earth covers them in the grave. On the boy's ability to keep himself in health and strength depends his ability to earn his bread and make a place for himself in the world. Once having attained the age of manhood, the average workman reaches the highest point in material wealth that he will ever reach. I do not believe this factor of life is ever really grasped by most of those who talk and write so glibly about the working classes. The skilled artisan, who has served an apprenticeship in a given trade, knows that he will earn so much an hour. As a rule he will marry on that 26wage, which often amounts to only 30s. or £2 per week, and this will be his standard for the remainder of his working life. As things go, considering the standard set for the working class, this may appear a reasonable and satisfactory condition of life. It is obvious, though, that the coming of each new baby must lower the standard of life, owing to the fact that the family income is fixed. Even that is not quite true, for the income is fixed only while there is work for the man to do. Often there are long periods of unemployment which bring down the average of a man's earnings, and often long periods of sickness when—in the case of a workman—wages stop altogether. This is the great difference between the wage-earner and the salaried person; a clerk or manager generally continues to draw salary if away from business owing to sickness, but an engineer or labourer finds his wages stopped the moment he leaves work, from whatever cause—with the exception of absence due to accident, in which case, under the Workmen's Compensation Act, certain payments are made, though even these are often evaded and the men left penniless.

There are some few employers who treat their workers a little better than this during times of sickness; such are Government departments, municipalities, and a few large employers; but none of them treat the wage-earner on the same terms as the salaried man or woman, and wherever sick pay is granted it is granted for a strictly limited period, and, after the first week or two, is cut down to vanishing point.

It is the same with holidays. To many families holidays mean a shortage of food, because there is less money coming into the home. All that Bank Holidays mean for the working-class mother is more worry, more anxiety, more difficulty in making ends meet. It is this which keeps people who live in small houses and mean streets at home when they should be out in the countryside enjoying the pure fresh air. It always appears to me that those who manage our affairs for us imagine that if workpeople were to enjoy holidays they would never want to go back to work again. I am not at all sure that, even were this the case, it would be so unmixed an evil as some of my friends think. It is sometimes said with a sneer that working people do not know how to use leisure—and working-class children, too; and good people like Mrs. Humphry Ward establish play centres in order to teach the children of the masses how to play. To my mind this is a most unnatural proceeding. Luckily for me I was brought up in a home set in the midst of a great open space on which I could play with my brothers and other children. We were never trained to play, but just played the same old games our fathers had played, till we were old enough to join sports clubs. All children should have the chance of meeting in the open air away from teachers, and be given the opportunity for developing their own powers of initiative.

The man who toils for his bread is taught in the bitter school of experience that he must not expect holidays except as expensive luxuries. Even in Lancashire and Yorkshire, where, because the whole family works for wages, a holiday is possible, an annual week's holiday at Blackpool or the Isle of Man is all that can be looked forward to.

In this matter of holidays, contrast what I have said about the workmen with what happens to the other classes. The clerks and other salaried people are paid full pay for all public holidays, and are given a summer holiday which runs into one, two, or even four weeks at full pay. Of course such people know how to use their leisure; they have plenty of opportunity to learn. Let me repeat that the boy who goes to work in an office grows up accustomed to holidays on full pay, but the boy who goes into the workshop to hard manual labour grows to manhood well drilled in the belief that holidays are not for him unless he is prepared to lose his wages.

The employers, the managers and directors can and do take holiday when they so desire. The well-to-do show us a splendid example of how to get through life with a maximum of rest and holiday-making. The shooting season, the London season, the season on the Riviera, with an occasional trip further afield, make up the common round, the daily task of many of those who are so fortunate as to find themselves able to enjoy incomes derived from rent, profit, and

interest. Even in the midst of a great war we read of Cabinet Ministers enjoying life on the golf course and taking their rest by the sea. Many of the clergy of all denominations take long holidays away from their congregations—not once a year, but perhaps twice and sometimes even three times in one year. Indeed, all the official classes—religious, civil, and military—feel the need for taking holidays at frequent periods throughout the year, and always on full pay. Perhaps judges are the public men who most thoroughly understand and enjoy the blessedness of rest and peace from work. Their salaries vary from £5,000 to £6,500 a year, with the prospect of a comfortable pension of £3,500 a year after a few years' service. They also have their Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun holidays, and then the Long Vacation running into several months; and all the time their salaries run on. I must not be understood as objecting to these holidays. I am a firm believer in holidays, though I get precious few. I call attention to these facts because I want to make rich people understand that their comfortable holidays are paid for by the people who get practically no 30holidays at all, and to point out how unjust it is that those who work the hardest should be denied all means of rest and recreation.

Many people discuss this question as if there were some sort of virtue in work as a means of keeping people in health and contentment. Work is a benefit to mankind only when it is for some given end. We are all acquainted with the words "change of work is rest." This is true, and those of us who fill all our waking time with work of one sort or another know quite well we are able to do so only because our work is of a very varied character; not one of us, if given the choice, would care to change places with the labourer or artisan whose daily life, year after year, is the same piece of dull, uninteresting toil, such as minding an automatic machine or going to the pit to dig coal, and who is able to find freedom and respite only at the cost of loss of wages. No; those of us who were brought up to manual labour and have escaped from it never want to go back under the same old bad conditions. We may dig a garden for recreation; to prove our patriotism in war time we may go to work in a munition factory or other Government works, but never again, if we have our way, will one of us, man or woman, voluntarily choose to become a day labourer with a labourer's wages and conditions of service.

There is another aspect of the workers' life which needs stressing now that the Church has 31organised its National Mission. In every church throughout the world the words "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" are said by the minister, and yet all these ministers know that hundreds of thousands of men and women, boys and girls, are not allowed to rest from their labours. There are multitudes who work every Sunday of the year. For them there is not even one day's rest in seven. This is true in normal times as well as now. We are in the midst of a great war. So destructive of mental and physical force is this denial of one day's rest in seven that the Ministry of Munitions now insists on a six days' week, not for religious reasons, but in order to secure a bigger output, and also because it has been discovered that even machines must have rest. For those who are given the day's rest the day is made as miserable as

possible. In crowded towns the only places left open are the public-houses and a few cinemas. There are parks and open spaces, but girls and boys and young people are not allowed to play the ordinary games. Football, cricket, hockey, netball, quoits, and bowls are all forbidden. (On the rich man's golf course play is allowed, and tennis and cricket may be enjoyed by those who can afford them.) In some country places men are even censured for working in their gardens and allotments on Sundays. What a mad kind of world it is in which all these contradictions in the name of religion exist! If the Church has any message in this respect, it should be to teach people that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Church should bid people meet for common worship, thanking and praising God with hymns and psalms of thanksgiving for the loving-kindness which has made so many things bright and beautiful; and after such a service as would emphasise the true beauty and unity of life we should all settle down to whatever joy or pleasure we are able to secure from sports and games or other means of recreation.

To come back to sickness. A man who is sick may be getting 10s. a week sick pay, and in some cases as much as 18s.; but even so it is always less money than when he is at work. Employers and Friendly Societies argue that it is quite wrong for the workman to get as much money when he is sick as when he is in health, because, they say, unless a man loses by not being at work he is likely to malinger. This argument is one of those stupid, ridiculous theories of life and conduct which in practice work out very badly and very cruelly indeed. For the man who is sick and at home is a great burden on his wife, and every extra penny that is spent on him means less food, less of the necessities of life, for the rest of the family. It means also that a decent man drags himself back to work long before he has any business to do so, and so risks early permanent disablement or the bringing on of some chronic illness from which he never properly recovers.

As a mere matter of expediency men who are sick ought to get not only their normal wages, but something extra, so that they could secure the necessary means of recovery.

In periods of unemployment a workman may also receive out-of-work pay under the National Insurance Act at the rate of 7s. to 10s. per week. This, again, is fixed low, because the authorities are afraid that if, while unemployed, men are able to live decently and properly with their wives and children, they will not be anxious to go to work again. A more short-sighted policy it is impossible to find. The few miserable shillings are only sufficient to starve on, and in large numbers of cases mean demoralisation, because want of food and want of nourishment always make men despondent and despairing, and often rob them of character and morale.

How differently we treat soldiers! These we maintain on full pay in peace time in order to keep them fit for the day when they may be needed. The workman on whom we all depend is left to

starve, or given just enough to exist upon, and then we wonder that he loses heart and dignity and sometimes even honesty, and often becomes quite unemployable.

Contrast all this with the conditions of life enjoyed by the employer and the comfortable 34classes. First of all, there is no going to work at thirteen years of age; no half-timers are found amongst their children; no stoppage of income takes place because of sickness; even in times of bad trade the majority of employers and the majority of people who live on salaries are never obliged to go short of the necessities of life. We never expect Cabinet Ministers, whose wages amount to £5,000 a year, to draw less during the time they are off duty owing to sickness. It is illustrative of the attitude of mind we have towards each other that it was the Cabinet Minister in charge of the National Insurance Bill who, having laid down in Parliament the principle that workmen must not be allowed a decent income when unemployed or sick, was himself away from his duties for many weeks at a time because of illness, during which time he drew his wages at the rate of £5,000 a year as usual. No one appeared to think it necessary even to ask for a doctor's certificate to prove that he was really ill. No one thought of accusing him of malingering. No one imagined for a moment that a Cabinet Minister would stop away from work a minute longer than was necessary. For the workman, it is another story. An altogether different standard is set. He must be driven back to work at the earliest possible moment; and the whip of starvation must be used to send him back, irrespective of his condition of health.

These unequal conditions of service and unfair 35relationships are the result of the outstanding fact that labour is looked upon by society as something to be bought and sold, and is treated like any other piece of machinery which is needed for a certain job.

When a worker becomes old and inefficient he is sacked; when profit can no longer be secured from his labour he is sacked. If a machine will do his work cheaper he is told to find some other job or starve. Money-making is all that counts in the Capitalist system, and unless it contributes to this end the labour of the workers is not required. They have no ownership, no control, either of their own lives or of their industry. They are just items in the machinery of production, and it is this fact which separates them off from every other class and makes them what, in fact, they are—the dependent wage-slaves of the possessing classes.

Since 1870 the nation has given a certain amount of education to all children above five years of age. Meagre as the education is, it has nevertheless been sufficient to make many workmen understand their social and economic subjection, and it is this realisation of their helpless subjection to others which determines so many of them to join the Trade Unionist and Socialist movements. They want to share in the ownership of national industries; they want to control and organise the working of industries. Up to a few years ago the workman only demanded better wages and shorter 36hours, but he has now discovered by actual experience that high

prices and high rents continually swallow up increases in wages. He has been educated by Mr. Lloyd George to understand that private ownership of land means that a landowner can sit down and, by just doing nothing, actually grow in riches because of the power which ownership gives—power which the owner can exercise at an opportune moment in order to squeeze rack rents from those who have created the values which make such rack rents possible. In addition, the workman understands that with the introduction of labour-saving machinery the Capitalist has become able to put a man's own children in competition with the man himself. The automatic machine has made it possible for a man's economic foes to be members of his own household; and, realising this, and understanding also that the opportunities of rising in the social scale grow less and less, men are now organising for a complete change in the present system. Their work in this direction has been very much hampered because of the war, but there are groups of people who are determined to keep together in order that when the war is over they may once more take the field and by united effort establish a co-operative system of production and distribution to replace the present unsound order, based as it is on the subjection of the workers by means of the wages- and profit-making system. We know that until 37this fundamental change is made our labour is in vain.

People talk at large sometimes about the greed and avarice of the working classes—their unwillingness to give service without payment and their exorbitant demands in respect of wages and hours. I have never been able to accept such a point of view at all, for it seems to me all the old bad rules which govern our industrial relationships are inherent in the system. What I mean is that, given a society where men and women are expected to compete and scramble for a living, it is inevitable that cheating and meanness should follow. Besides, what sort of an example do the other classes set the workers? Is not their law of life to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market? And do they not insist that cheapness, not worth, is the governing factor in life?

Just before the war, when the governing classes wished to find some means for pacifying the workers and soothing them to sleep, Liberal capitalists organised delegations to Germany in order to be able to prove what an awful place the Prussianised German Empire was for a workman to live in because of the evils of Protection. It was the same set of capitalists who gave Mr. Lloyd George the position which enabled him to set the mark of servitude on the shoulders of the workers by his German-inspired Insurance Act, and it has been because of that Act and 38the accompanying Labour Exchange Acts that the Government have been able, instead of relying on the workman's loyalty and patriotism to organise and carry through all national work, to arrange national industry during the war on purely German lines by means of highly-paid bureaucrats, without the workers having the least say as to how their work should be done.

On the other side Tory capitalists organised deputations to Germany, and to their own satisfaction proved that life for the working people under Kaiser Wilhelm II. was much more desirable than under King George V. of England.

We can now place our own value on the reports issued by both these deputations and on the one issued by that other delegation organised by the Labour Party. I recall these incidents of 1913-4 not to try and score off anyone, but to show that those of the capitalist class who wish to preserve and perpetuate the wages system are willing to use every means to obtain their ends. It is beyond dispute that Mr. Lloyd George, in passing Acts establishing National Insurance, &c., and the Conservatives, in wishing to establish a system of tariffs, had the same idea in mind: that is, they wished to ease and palliate some of the evil effects of industrial life. None of them wished to abolish the causes which produce strife and want and bitterness.

The class war which I mentioned earlier is a very real thing in the life of the worker, and it shows itself in various ways and under varying conditions. Often we can see the war being waged by means of unemployment, when, because of some collapse in international organisation, trade breaks down, and the first victims are the workers, who by the hundred thousand are flung helpless on to the streets. After the South African War such a condition of things prevailed. In some industries this dislocation was still further accentuated because of the invention of machinery by the use of which production was increased and labour was displaced. The machine is always set against the workman, and often brings starvation and misery into thousands of working-class homes.

Is it not extraordinary that people should suffer because there is power to produce more than we need? Yet unemployment is always the first result of using what is known as labour-saving machinery; and, if we would understand the conflict of interests which exists between the employing and the working class, we must admit that the owner of the machine (supported as he is by all the power of the State) who drives out workmen and refuses to allow them to work is acting in an anti-social manner, even though he is but following law and custom. There is a complete division of interest here, which must be understood by all those who wish to lend a hand in improving conditions, for until this is overcome and machinery is made the servant of all men there will be no peace in the world of industry.

Occasionally there are lock-outs and strikes. A lock-out is a declaration of war by the employers, a strike is a declaration of war by the workmen. In both cases the employers' weapon is starvation. The employers hope to beat the men by refusing to allow them to earn wages, and the workmen strive to beat the employer by stopping profit and dividends. During a lock-out or strike untold suffering and misery are endured by the women and children, and it is this fact which the employers rely upon to assist them in winning their fight, for, although dividends may have stopped, it is very seldom the case that an employer's wife and children starve. In fact,

some employers are able to make a labour dispute pay, because they are able, owing to the shortage produced by the dispute, to make money out of old stocks. It is certain that during the great coal dispute coal-owners, by raising prices and selling off rubbish which was otherwise unsaleable, more than recouped themselves for any shortage of profit the strike may have occasioned.

Look where we may, in times of prosperity or times of bad trade, there is this strife which undermines confidence, destroys religion, and makes us all warriors in a fight where all are losers—for we can all surely echo the words of our Lord: “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” There is no soul in business to-day; it is just one wretched struggle for pelf and place, and the working class are pawns in the game. If it pays to employ them they are given work; if it does not pay, out they have to go, for business is business and business is profit-making. Consequently the worker discovers that as he grows older he is wanted less and less. Before the war the cry was “too old at forty.” That state of things has changed for the time being, but will come back again when what are called peace conditions once more prevail, unless, indeed, the war changes our whole attitude of mind towards one another. How often I have seen the aged worker sacked, with not a halfpenny of allowance, and his son taken on in his stead! I have said there is no soul in business, and it is true. Someone has traced all this down to the limited liability companies, which have “no body to be kicked and no soul to be damned.” No doubt the institution of such companies is to a large extent responsible for modern relationships; but what I want to emphasise is the point made a little way back—that if men are employed for wages, and cannot get employment or earn their bread otherwise, then they are living in subjection to other people. We may endeavour to get round this as we will, but it will remain the outstanding fact of present-day conditions, making of life one long struggle, not only for comparative comfort even, but for mere existence. It is true that classes merge more and more into each other, but new classes are continually being created: more divisions, more ranks, in the perpetual warfare which we make of life. For the multitude this strife and struggle bring sorrow and sadness, the maiming and wounding of body, of soul, of spirit. For us all it produces meanness and sordidness, making us capable of brutal and demoralising conduct which stamps us with the mark not of men but of beasts, turning us into liars and hypocrites, destroying our faith and confidence in each other, and leaving us all beggared and hopeless in the fight upward for a nobler life.

The sort of nonsense which tells us that there is plenty of room at the top is only like a saying attributed to Napoleon I.—that every private soldier carries a marshal’s bâton in his knapsack. That sort of statement treats people as if they were destitute of intelligence. Under present conditions we cannot all be employers or managers or directors—if, indeed, that were a desirable consummation. For the vast majority society as at present arranged allows no other means of living but the kind of struggle I have been trying to describe, and those who wish to

see the world redeemed from sin and vice and crime must start their work by finding out how to organise industry so as to ensure that all useful labour shall be considered honourable and of value. In other words, we must so raise the 43status of the worker in our minds that he will at last begin to realise that his labour and himself are things of real worth and consequence to the whole community. We must unite in preaching discontent, and, in so preaching, emphasise the fact that for the workers there is no chance of social redemption unless they all combine and, by using the power which combination gives, alter the whole basis of our social life. I do not ask that any of us should preach or practise violence. I am more convinced than ever that violence in any shape or form is an evil, that "we cannot cast out devils by devils," that the workers must discover some more excellent way. Their greatest power is the power of standing still and just doing nothing, but they must all stand still together. Those of us who wish to help them must teach them that they must all stand together or else remain as they are, slaves of the classes who own the land and all other means of life. We who would help and stand by the workers can do so in one way only, and that is by using our powers to teach the lesson of solidarity.

Napoleon's motto in all his campaigns was "Divide and Conquer." The capitalist and commercial classes have learnt the same lesson, and by very judicious and, at the same time, very mean methods divide the working classes into various camps—some political, some religious: in some places this result is attained by starting competing Trade Unions. The employing classes 44do not scruple actually to buy the leaders of the Trade Union movement by the gifts of money, place, and power. A regular bureaucracy of ex-Labour leaders are in the employ of the Government as strike settlers, or, as some of us think, as strike breakers. Others are occasionally taken into partnership or are appointed foremen and managers, and so removed out of their class. When the working class is organised and actuated by true comradeship and brotherhood there will be no such "great refusals" or betrayals, but, instead, all men and women will stand as one great body, determined to rise together: and it is the duty of Christians—in fact, it is the duty of all good citizens—to assist in promoting this spirit, in order that the working class may by its own efforts win its own salvation.

---

## **Chapter II**

### **WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

GOING through the London streets during the last two years all of us have seen motor-cars driven by ladies and loaded with wounded soldiers. It is a great sight, which brings home to all of us the fact that the woman who drives the car and the woman who, in many cases, accompanies her as a kind of general servant have, for the time being, banished from their minds all thought of class distinction; they are publicly demonstrating that, so far as the war is

concerned, there is an attempt at unity of aim among the rich and wealthy in an effort to lighten the load of suffering and pain endured by those men who, propertyless and poor, possessing nothing of material wealth, possessing not even a single yard of the land millions of them are fighting and dying for, have proved they possess things of *real* worth—have demonstrated it by deeds of heroic valour on the battlefields of Europe.

The spirit that has impelled rich people to do this sort of thing is good and well worth preserving, but as I have looked at them in their comfortable cars, enjoying the pleasure of service, the thought has always come into my mind: "Why do not these people understand that in days of peace there is just as insistent a call to them for this kind of service?" These soldiers are the same men who till the fields, weave our raiment, dig our coal, and, in fact, provide us with all we need; but when they are doing that no rich women desire to give them joy rides. It makes one ask: Are the favours poured out on the *soldier* or the *man*? There are also tens of thousands of mothers hidden away in the back streets of our great cities who would be benefited by the light and air and cheerful surroundings of a motor drive in the country on a fine summer day—women who have risked no less than the men, have suffered no less, and deserve no less, women who have not killed but have borne. Hundreds of thousands of these women never get a change of scene or a real country holiday away from the grinding poverty of their everyday life. These mothers of England endure the trouble and agony of giving birth to children without that comfort and care of leisure, food, clothing, and surroundings which are at least palliatives for the comfortable classes. They lead lives which are simply one long story of mean, sordid drudgery; their daily life is the common round, the daily task of just living, working, toiling for the bread that perisheth, with very little of joy, and always with a heavy load of care and anxiety. The soldier's wife or mother has the added worry—"Will he come back? And, if he does return, in what condition will he be brought home again?" Into the lives of these women only occasionally comes the delight of a trip in a crowded tramcar with children, or perhaps a 'bus ride. Even on such days the care and worry of the children mar the whole pleasure of the day's holiday. There are no nurses or governesses to relieve these mothers; they must just keep on at the same task, day after day, with no chance of relief. I wonder how many of the women who devote so much time to the soldiers realise the cheerless, drab life endured by these heroic mothers.

Writing these things down may seem a very commonplace kind of start for my chapter, but I start thus because I desire to make good people, whose hearts are touched, and rightly touched, by the spectacle presented to us all of convalescent soldiers and sailors needing fresh air and recreation, understand that in days of peace, as in days of war, multitudes of women need rest and comfort, sympathy and love, just as much as the men we are all desirous of honouring. The women of the industrial centres under present circumstances need friends who will be to them just the same kind of fairy godmothers as many rich women have proved to be

to the wounded men home from the war. Society women must understand that a working-class mother does need the same kind of health-giving recreation as they themselves need, and 48that the denial of this recreation, the thoughtless indifference to the needs of these mothers, which are typical of the attitude of mind that prevails among many sections of society, ought to be swept away, and a true comradeship and fellowship amongst men and women of all classes established. It has needed a war to break down the laws and customs of class with regard to soldiers. The rich and well-to-do take the labourer and artisan as soldiers into their homes, and for a brief period caste and class are abolished. I have never heard that after a big industrial accident on a railway or in a factory or mine anything of the kind has ever been done; but why not? The shareholders or proprietors of industrial concerns ought to feel as much comradeship for the people who earn their bread and luxuries for them as is now felt for the men who fight for Britain. Surely it is as honourable to be wounded or killed working for the health and well-being of a nation as it is to fight for it; and, if so, is it not time we gave as much appreciation to the workers as to the soldiers, and as much to the mothers of Britain as to the sons they bear? Is it only the fighting machine that moves you to compassion, or will it be the human being?

The soldier wounded in the war needs attention, needs all the care that can be bestowed upon him. The mothers need attention just as much. Without them there would be no soldiers—without 49them there could be no nation; and it is here that I think the governing class makes its greatest mistake. Its standard of values is so false that it has needed a great war, a horrible catastrophe of death and destruction, to make us understand how valuable an able-bodied man is. The war has made the worker appear to other classes as quite a new sort of man. Men whom rich people would never meet in private life are now in some ways treated as human beings, to be made much of and granted little attentions. It is not only right, it is the duty, of us all to give all the joy and happiness that is possible to the men who have made so great a sacrifice; but what I am anxious to point out is that if the well-to-do women who are so willing to give their services for the soldiers would but think a little, they would easily understand that it is of just as great importance that their sisters in the slums should receive some of this attention, some of this care. They should strive to bridge the great gulf which separates the condition of life enjoyed by the well-to-do woman from the comfortless condition of life, destitute of all the social amenities so necessary for the well-to-do, which the working-class woman must endure.

No one connected with the upper classes (except that tiny handful of women who forsake their class and live amongst the people in social settlements) can have any idea of the very meagre comforts 50of life that the working women enjoy. And even the women who leave comfortable town and country houses to dwell amongst the poor cannot quite understand, because always their rooms are nicely kept, and furnished at least with the requisites of cleanliness and comfort. It is all so different with the tiny homes of the workers. We have got accustomed to

thinking working people do not need the same conveniences of life as we do for ourselves. You may go through the length and breadth of the land and find that the vast majority of the homes in which working-class women are expected to bring up their children are just tiny congested places where rich people could never exist. I have seen racing stables and the homes of prize cattle nicely tiled, warmed, and ventilated. It is a marvel that the people who own these places do not understand that on their own estates human beings need at least the same amount of breathing space and sanitary arrangements as prize animals. I wish the great land-owners of Britain, the great merchant princes and manufacturers, could, day by day, have placed before their eyes pictures of the mean dwelling-places thought good enough as homes for the miners of Scotland—the notorious Colliers' Rows. These are tenements of one floor, sometimes just two rooms for man, wife, and children, and in these places all the bathing has to take place in the living-rooms, and often the beds are slept in 51the twenty-four hours round because, in order to find accommodation, father and sons work on different shifts of eight hours each. On the hillsides of Wales, made hideous by the grime and filth of commercialism, I have seen whole districts living under conditions which create nothing but disease and death. In great cities in the Potteries, in the Midlands, in parts of London, the same thing applies. I once stood on top of the kitchen and living-rooms of some houses in Scotland, and alongside me were pig-styes—which meant that the pigs lived on top of the homes of human beings: these working-class dwellings were situated outside the palace of one of Scotland's ducal families! I felt miserable and sick as I stood there, because it seemed to me dishonouring to our whole conception of human values. What impressed me most, and what impresses me to-day, is the fact that that Duke was a really good man in his own way; kind, and, in a way, generous. It never struck him that he himself could not live with pigs, and that, therefore, no other human being should be expected to do so; neither did he realise that his lovely palaces were the direct result of the outstanding fact that all these tenants contributed to his income a portion of each day's earnings; that no penny came to them of which he did not exact his share; that it was only of their deprivations, their dirt and half-hunger and disease, that his palace walls 52were built. It is a saddening thought, too, that the poor people themselves so humbly accepted these conditions of life as a direct ordinance from God.

The simple thing always lacking in almost all working-class homes is the bath-room. I lay stress on this because I have experienced both the lack of a bath-room and the joy and convenience of one. Some rich people talk very glibly of the dirt and want of general cleanliness amongst the working class. Such people seem to forget that we all need space for cleanliness; that in tiny poky rooms, especially where there are children, it is quite impossible to preserve anything like healthy conditions. In many villages and in parts of some towns people are obliged to pump and carry every drop of water they use. I wonder how many rich women could endure living, for a single day, packed away in one room with two or three children. I wonder what many of them

would do if they were obliged to live in the same room with a husband and children while giving birth to another child. There are multitudes of people existing under such conditions. I called the other day at a soldier's home. It was one of those one-roomed places. A little child of four years of age, a man and his wife lived in it. Two days after I called another baby came. There was nowhere for the man to live except in this room, so 53the woman who nursed his wife just came in occasionally and went away again. To me the marvel is that people are able to breathe at all in such places. It was not dirty in the ordinary sense, but there was too much breathing in the one place, too much furniture, too much of everything, and as I sat there I felt I wanted to blow the windows out in order to let in more light and air. And now after a week or two of struggle the baby is dead. It has joined the great multitude of children murdered by bad social conditions. Poor mite, it is happier now. For it there is no care or poverty; but we are all poorer, for it is one more of God's good gifts to man slain and driven out because of man's worship of Mammon, because of man's inhumanity to man.

There is no reason except selfishness and indifference why little ones like this should perish. Rents are so high and wages are so low that the workers cannot live in better places. The man I visited is invalided out of the Army, and just exists on the very mean and paltry allowance—just enough to starve on—granted him, partly by the National Insurance Commissioners, and partly by a grateful country which can no longer use him as part of its fighting machine. The man in his day has been a good worker, and would still work if his health were not wrecked by service in the Army. Even when working he would not have been able to secure much more than one 54extra room, and according to the standard of the district this would have been considered comparative comfort.

I do not understand how it is that the clergy and social workers are so quiet on this question. They always seem to me to have good homes for themselves, even if sometimes small; there is always light and air for them; yet many of them teach contentment, and talk of present conditions of life as if they were instituted by God for the benefit of those who belong to that multitude known by many pious people as God's poor.

Contrast the housing and home conditions I have spoken of with the sort of attention the middle or upper class woman receives at times of maternity. Nothing is too good either for her or for the new-born child; night- and day-nurses, skilled medical attendance, everything that can lighten the burden of child-bearing. It is the same all through; and somehow each of us must understand that the poverty-stricken condition in the one case is under present social conditions the necessary accompaniment of the comfortable, luxurious surroundings in the other, and each one of us is directly or indirectly responsible. To me this is so obvious that I can hardly realise that other people do not see it as clearly as I do. Let any woman or man who doubts my statement sit down for a few minutes and by hard thinking try to discover where her

or his money comes from. 55Money can come to any of us in only one of two ways. Either we earn our own bread, or someone else earns it for us; and people with only ordinary intelligence can very soon decide which class they represent. One quite simple test will tell you where incomes come from. When a strike is on or a mill is stopped, no wages are paid; and neither are dividends earned. Both are dependent on *labour*. Only land grows in value when unused, and that only because of pressure of labouring population.

None of us can free ourselves of responsibility. Not one of us lives separate or apart from his fellows. Our daily bread comes to us because of long hours of heavy toil by old and young in many parts of the world. Our luxuries come because of our ability to use the labour power of others to supply us with reservoirs of material wealth, which they themselves never dream of demanding. And so it all goes on, and produces a struggle which as the years pass grows more and more bitter.

A friend of mine in America who takes a great interest in social affairs was once very indignant because a certain big railway company would not pay proper wages to its employees, who had struck work for better conditions. She joined the agitation in support of the strikers. Having occasion to see her lawyer on business she was horrified to find that most of her income came from shares in the very company she was denouncing. 56She was a sleeping partner in the robbery and exploitation she had denounced. She thought things out and decided to spend her life with the workers in an effort to bring about a complete change in the relationships between men and women of all classes.

How many people realise the struggle to live which children of the working classes are called upon to endure? Dr. Saleeby and other writers have done a great work in calling public attention to the wicked waste of child life, most of which is preventable. Mr. Herbert Samuel, in his preface to "Maternity" (letters from working women, collected by the Women's Co-operative Guild), says: "How quickly social evils will yield to treatment is seen in the fact that in ten years the campaign against infant mortality has reduced the death rate among infants under one year of age by nearly one third." How terrible conditions were and how fearful they now are is proved by statisticians, who tell us that we murder by our foul social arrangements 100,000 babies in the first year after birth, and that another 120,000 are killed before birth because we neglect their mothers. In fact, all poor children have but a precarious chance of living. Many of those who manage to survive are defective in one form or another; there are now one million such children, Sir George Newman tells us, attending the elementary day schools. These children are not mentally but physically 57defective, and in the main they are in that condition because of insufficient nourishment and bad conditions of home life, both before and after birth. When milk was 4d. per quart it was difficult enough for the poor to obtain, but the present price of 6d. per quart is a real prohibition. Even when milk is bought it is not always

either clean or pure: this is so well known that Parliament, in June, 1914, passed the "Clean Milk Bill," which would have secured that milk, so far as it was humanly possible, should be free from disease and dirt. This same Parliament, on the outbreak of war a few weeks later, was so callously indifferent to the welfare of mothers and children that it agreed to postpone the operation of this beneficent law till after the war. No madder thing could possibly have been done by a Government composed of lunatics. This and many similar incidents prove that the Government is in the grip of those whose sole thought in life is to get rich, even if little children are murdered in order to satisfy their greed.

During the war we have thought so little of our children that we have tumbled them out to work at the early age of twelve years in ever increasing numbers, solely to enable employers and others to get cheap labour. The Board of Agriculture has published figures which show that 300 boys and girls under twelve years of age, 6,400 58between twelve and thirteen, and 4,300 between thirteen and fourteen have been thus robbed of their education. In this, Great Britain has shown herself less careful of her children than France. In the very early days of the war the French Minister of Education called upon the local education authorities throughout France to take extra care that the children of the soldiers were properly cared for and educated, because, as he said, while their fathers are fighting it would be a disgrace to France if the nation allowed the children to suffer. Wealthy England, on the other hand, has neglected her babies, has allowed profiteers to plunder the mothers, has taken boys and girls from school and thus robbed them of their very birthright. This is only a little worse than what we do in normal times, when throughout Lancashire we allow children to become "half-timers," and, in even our best education districts, a child can go to full work at fourteen years of age, and so little care is taken in the choice of occupation that multitudes of boys and girls, after a few years at work, find themselves in a blind-alley—that is, an occupation which leads nowhere in after life, and which leaves young people on the industrial scrap-heap just when they arrive at years of maturity.

I should like well-to-do mothers to contrast this with the training of their own children. First of all the home life, the nursery and the nurses, 59governesses and assistants to take care of the child and surround it with everything that it needs for its bodily and mental development. No care is too great for the child of a great house. The boy or girl who is lucky enough to be born of wealthy parents is sent to school, then to college, or to some institution where thorough training is given in order that a future in life may be secured. It is not expected that the boy or girl whose parents have money should go to work at fourteen years of age, and it is only sheer necessity which drives the children of the working classes into industrial and commercial life. Eton and Harrow, Rugby and Winchester, Oxford and Cambridge, and the other great schools and Universities of the land, are filled up mainly by those who can afford to pay to go there, and who are kept there because it is considered that education is of primary importance for these children of the well-to-do. It is worthy of note that neither in peace time nor in war time are the

boys who attend the great public schools expected to go to work half-time. This patriotic privilege is reserved for the children of the working classes.

I may be told that there are scholarships and bursaries for the children of the working classes who are clever enough to win them. This is true, but only an infinitesimal fraction of these children can secure them. The great bulk of them must just go through life with only a tiny scrap of education, which to many of us appears to be no education at all. I maintain that the nation has adopted the wrong line in giving scholarships and bursaries, and in establishing continuation schools, for clever children only. I believe clever people get through anyhow, and I never bother myself much about them. In my opinion public money would be much better spent in giving bursaries and scholarships to the children who are not clever, but to whom good food and healthy surroundings would be of real service in enabling them to develop their minds.

Let us then consider the difference in the upbringing of the children of well-to-do parents and the children of a working man, and, when we have done this, let us try and understand that every privilege which can be paid for, and which is the possession of the children of wealthy parents, comes to them only because some other child is robbed of its chance, because the fruits of its parents' labour have been bestowed on the children of other people instead of on their own.

This is the fact which I again ask my readers to grasp and understand. I ask them to realise that, if justice were done, it is the worker's child who should attend school until eighteen or twenty years of age, because it is the working classes who make such education at all possible. But no one wants to rob any child of its chance.<sup>61</sup> It is not a change of places which is desired, but an equal chance for all. Much more might be said, but I think I have said enough to show that there is a very unequal condition of life existing as between the mothers and children of one class and those of another. And this inequality cannot be bridged by charitable doles, cannot be bridged even by sympathy. It will only be bridged when we each understand that the things which are of essential importance for ourselves are also needed by others, that for all of us there is the same need for a full life, full in the sense of containing leisure and opportunity to think, to read, and to recreate. Without these things life is a miserable, sordid make-believe. We must understand that when Someone in wisdom said: "Man does not live by bread alone," He gave expression to an eternal truth. The mass of the people are unable to live in the best sense of the word because they are forced to slave and toil for so meagre a reward and for such long hours that they have neither the time nor the energy for anything more than work and sleep. In saying this I am not unmindful of the fact that many workmen receive relatively high wages, but at the outside these will in normal times seldom exceed £200 a year, whereas the professional and salaried classes consider such an income only a very poor one indeed. Sometimes workmen

spend their money away from their wives and families. 62I think this is mainly due to the hard, exhausting nature of their work, which leaves them without energy for anything but stupid excitement. Anyone who has seen men stripped to the waist working before the blast furnaces on the North-East coast will readily understand what I mean. But always remember that the one place provided for the workman's recreation is the gin palace and public-house, and quite nice people get very big incomes from such places, which often bring ruin to both men and women.

It is undeniable that for the average woman in the working class, home life is represented by small petty pieces of work which few outside the poorer classes understand or appreciate. I have already mentioned baths as being absent; how many people understand that even the homes of the men who make baths are not supplied with this necessary equipment for a decent life? Electric light, although it is getting cheaper, costs the workman, in the very few places where it is installed, more than it costs other classes. But, of course, it is denied to the great bulk of the workers. If you go through the apartments or houses of the working classes you will find that for them most of the amenities of life are absent. I labour this rather because it seems to me that it is just there that the whole difference in our lives comes in. Rich women imagine that working women do not need the things they themselves need, and 63it is this idea which I want to break down and destroy. It is no use telling me that the working women are content; that they do not want anything more. If they are content, and if they have not the spirit to desire better conditions, this fact alone—if it is a fact—is the greatest condemnation of the social conditions of our time. Normal people *ought* to want better conditions, and I ask those women who really desire to help their poorer sisters to preach to the poor the glorious gospel of discontent with dirt and insanitary surroundings; I ask them never to tell them to be satisfied, but always to preach dissatisfaction with bad social conditions. As a matter of fact the well-to-do women ought to preach the gospel of discontent amongst their own class as well. There should be no satisfaction in life for any of us while the comforts we ourselves enjoy are not shared by others. No woman ought to be content to live and go through her life knowing that some sisters of hers have not the means to live decently as she herself would like to live, and yet making no effort to get better conditions of life for those who need them. Each of us is his brother's keeper, and we are in our present plight because we refuse to act and live up to our responsibilities. What is wrong is that throughout the ages poor mothers have been taught to endure hardships and poverty as God-ordained institutions.

In the struggle for civil and political freedom 64rich women must understand that the possession of these privileges will involve an entire revision of our standard of relationships. A vote for a working-class mother will be of value to her only if it makes her understand her place in society as an important human being who helps to give to humanity the means to "carry on." I should like to see a new sort of Mothers' Union formed, consisting of women of all ranks, all classes, and all creeds, who would meet together as equals and together hammer out the

problems of life. I have always felt that this might have been done at the beginning of the war, that officers' wives might have met the wives of privates, and that together they could have tried to discover how better to live. The old Mothers' Meetings are played out. Educated women who want true reform must give up trying to buy the poor happiness by gifts of blankets or bread, and must help the mothers of the nation themselves to demand better conditions, conditions which will bring freedom from worry, not conditions which necessitate a whole crowd of officials to teach people how to live. As a temporary thing, those who have means may have to aid the poor to get some relief from their sordid surroundings by giving help in various forms. We may for some time yet be called upon to endure officials and officialdom as a kind of purgatory, but the schools for mothers—the necessity for which, I consider, is the greatest condemnation of modern methods of living—should not much longer be tolerated as a necessity; every girl should be so trained, have so good a chance of acquiring knowledge, that when she married she would refuse at any time to submit to any condition of life which lowered self-respect. In a word, it is a gospel of desire and want which needs preaching to the mothers of England. Divine discontent! And the women young or old who will embark on that campaign will be doing a great and lasting service to humanity.

Home-making, the rearing and care of children, is work which has been slighted and looked down upon. No wages are paid for it, and people when speaking of house-work talk of it as something menial. Married women with large families have been made to feel the enormity of their offence in following what we are told is the Divine command, "Be fruitful and multiply," until nowadays women are declining motherhood, are refusing to be mere machines for producing unwanted children; and in consequence on all sides we hear direful prophecies of the evil which must befall the nation unless we mend our ways.

The Bishop of London denounces the checks and preventive measures taken by women of all classes, but especially the more comfortable classes, for preventing child-birth. His Lordship touches only the fringe of a great subject. Why does he not denounce great landlords who extract huge ground rents from every district in every great city, or those owners of houses who refuse to let their premises to those who have children, and in many instances stipulate there shall be no children at all? These are economic causes which no amount of mere talking or preaching will put right. The working-class mother bears children, and as each one comes she dreads its coming. I marvel that under present conditions there is not much more prevention; that is, I marvel that women do not tell men that, until proper means for maintaining and rearing children under healthy conditions are organised, they will refuse to bring children into the world. The wife of the business man or Government official is in another category. She refuses motherhood because she dreads sinking lower and lower in the social scale. The rich woman refuses motherhood because it interferes with her pleasures in society. There is no royal road out of this. The population of England will go down unless we are prepared to re-establish

motherhood and womanhood on a loftier plane, unless we are willing to maintain that empire building shall take a second place to home building. The prevalent idea that children are only a nuisance to be tolerated must be superseded by a love and reverence for mother and child as God's greatest gift to mankind. The present system by which 67 people with families are not allowed to live in certain homes and flats, the restrictions which are made in some of the great model dwellings for the poor, controlled sometimes by philanthropists and sometimes by municipalities, must be swept away, and a woman, as her family grows, instead of being driven out, must be given more and more accommodation. In the case of a working-class woman it must always be remembered that her husband's wages are fixed, not according to his family, but according to a particular rate set for his job, and as each new baby comes his wife's struggle to live grows harder and harder: it is she who always is the worst sufferer; it is the mother who is served last at the table and takes what is left. Women who belong to the upper classes get out of motherhood, as I say, because they want a pleasure of another kind; working-class women or middle-class women because of economic reasons.

So far I have been dealing with women in the home. But there are many thousands of women in our land for whom there is no chance of marriage and to whom the joy of motherhood is denied. Some day we shall be wiser in our sex arrangements, because we shall discover that if monogamy is to continue we must find a means of stopping the slaughter of boy babies. It is these which provide the greater part of the toll of death which babies pay for the privilege of being born 68 in Christian, monopolist-ridden Britain. We must, however, think of the present, and, doing so, shall soon discover that there exists not only a class war but something like a sex war also, since in every department of industry and commerce women are being used to bring down wages, to lower conditions, and to give to the possessing classes an abundance of cheap labour. I am not complaining of the fact that women are proving themselves capable of doing men's work; I am calling attention to the fact that women's labour has been used, and in many instances is still being used, and will be even more used after the war, for the sole purpose of bringing down wages. If anyone doubts this the evidence can easily be supplied by the Board of Trade and Ministry of Munitions. Apart from these, let any of my readers who wish to know the facts go into an industrial district and themselves inquire into the wages and conditions of labour prevailing amongst girls and women; they will very soon discover what a very low standard of value is set on female labour.

The cry of "equal pay for equal work" has so far fallen on deaf ears, except in very exceptional cases; and this is true not only of trades and callings followed by the working classes, but in many professions also. The teaching profession gives us one of the best examples of this inequality of remuneration. Women teachers, 69 both head teachers and assistants, are always paid much lower salaries than men. It is this kind of thing which sets the standard of value. It is a fact denied by no one with knowledge that low wages for girls and women result in producing

the "social evil" of our time. Thousands of women live their lives through in penury and want, facing hardship and grinding poverty in a heroic endeavour to preserve personal virtue and honour. Others succumb to the call of the streets, and either make up their scanty wages to a living standard or give up the struggle and sink down and down into the whirlpool of vice which is to be found in all great cities. I am told, by those who profess to know, that some women prefer to live under such conditions. It may be so, but I am not concerned with that problem here. It is the vast army of involuntary victims for whom I ask consideration and compassion. When we read of women working long hours at hard laborious work for paltry pittances of a few shillings a week, we need not wonder that prostitution, the most ancient of trades for women, thrives in our great cities, and that its accompanying evils of venereal disease become like an avenging scourge. It is strange indeed that the splendid men and women who give money and work to rescue women from the streets do not understand that until the causes of prostitution are tackled all their labour and effort is in vain; and the causes are vouched for, in the main, by the police authorities, and by all students of industrial conditions.

In every garrison town, in most of our seaports where the Navy has headquarters, low-paid industries are established for women. It is impossible not to connect the two things. And even in such a matter as this there is a great difference between the poor and the rich—the daughters of the rich seldom endure the torment of the lock hospital. These places are reserved for the children of the workers. It is they who are betrayed when working under conditions which make them easy victims of the lust of the rich, or driven to sell their bodies because society refuses them decent conditions of life and has placed so low a value on woman's life and service.

It all seems to me to start in the home. Woman's work there is not properly valued, and this false standard of values goes right through life. In addition, there is the double standard of morals which prevails, and which allows a man to commit adultery without any penalty, but punishes a woman guilty of the same offence with relentless severity. This question needs thinking out on straight clear lines. If, as some people say, men are so constructed that prostitution of women is a necessity of modern life (which I do not for one moment accept), it logically follows that the society which accepts this must accept all the consequences of such an admission, and we must all cheerfully allow our daughters to minister to the common need of men by becoming members of the great army of fallen women. If it is a necessity for the man, it is a duty for the woman. If it is a duty for the working-class woman, it is a duty for the daughters and wives and sisters of the comfortable classes. I am not now thinking of the isolated sexual lapses of which any man or woman may, under stress of temptation, be guilty, but of the wretched victims of our social order, who like dumb driven cattle earn their bread on the streets of the great cities, and who, some doctors tell us, are necessary in order to safeguard the honour and virtue of our wives and daughters.

Honour bought and virtue maintained at such a cost are not worth preserving. We must all unite in protest against such a doctrine, must insist on conditions of life for men and women which will make the exercise of virtue, if not easy, at any rate practicable and possible; and a condition precedent of all reform is for each of us to accept the principle that each other man's daughter, wife, and sister are as valuable as our own, and that the dishonouring of either our own body or another's is an outrage against God and humanity.

We must also set our faces against all theories of inferiority where women are concerned: we must declare with unceasing insistence that motherhood 72and home-making are great services; above all, that woman's life and work together with man's shall be recognised as of value to the State, and organised in co-operation on lines of equality and service for the good of the whole community.

---

73

### **Chapter III BUSINESS**

IN writing as I have done concerning the lives of the common people, I do not wish to be understood as thinking that the life of the average business man is a very desirable one. I know it is not; the men who conduct large or small businesses often endure all "the torments of the damned" in their anxiety and worry to keep things straight. The more good-hearted they are and the more honest they strive to be, the more difficult and stormy their path through life becomes. There is very little mercy in business, and precious little consideration for other people; and this because men are fearful of to-morrow. We all forget the beautiful saying of Jesus: "Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet I say unto you Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Or that other great saying: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Those who have risen from the ranks of the workers are most fearful. For them life is usually one long determined fight against any chance of falling back into the ranks of labour, and an effort to save their children from ever 74becoming mere wage-earners. Consequently business has become a sort of accentuated class war, or, rather, a fight between warring sections of the same class, each striving to supplant the other. The shop-keepers of almost every class lead the narrowest kind of lives. All their waking hours are spent in an endeavour to find new means by which they can induce people to buy things (often things which the buyers do not really want), and in a great effort, not only to retain their position, but to improve it.

The mania for advertising, the craze for new methods of boosting wares, gives rise to what amounts to wholesale lying by means of specious advertising. I once dined with a well-known

social worker who spent a huge fortune investigating social and industrial conditions. After dinner we discussed at some length the question of commercial morality. I rather hotly contended that all modern business necessitated lying in one form or another until the business became a first-class monopoly, when, because of the power which monopoly gives, it became unnecessary to do more than just fling the goods on the market. The lady of the house was much distressed, and asked her husband if it was true that lying was a necessary part of business. He hesitated, but at last replied that when business was conducted men did not tell all the truth, but that, as all business men knew this, it was not really lying in the ordinary sense. I could not answer except by saying that the fact that we all tolerated such an unreal and deceptive condition of affairs was, in my opinion, the greatest condemnation of our present commercial methods. And so it is, for it stamps us all as deceivers, and makes of business just a battle of wits in which cupidity stands the best chance of success.

There are, no doubt, great businesses which, as I have said, are so big, and have such huge powers as the result of monopoly and vested interest, that they need not resort to these means for accumulating wealth. They succeed, however, by the most merciless use of the powers which monopoly gives. This may, for instance, be a land monopoly, which is the oldest and most anti-social monopoly of all; in fact, every other monopoly has grown out of this power of controlling land; without such power it is very doubtful if monopoly of other things could come into being at all. It is land monopoly which has caused the workers to be housed on swamps and marshes around our great cities. I am told that in the offices of the Local Government Board there are huge maps of all the capital cities of Europe and America, and that these all show how the working classes are housed on the low-lying damp lands or in the least healthy parts of these great cities, where the rent of land is *cheap*. The reason is that those whose business in life 76 is to draw huge sums by the exercise of their power to extract ground rent drive the poor to crowd themselves together on the cheapest land, and this results in over-crowding and so-called over-population. In my own life-time, and within ten minutes' walk of where I live, I have seen huge tracts of marshland (previously filled up with the sweepings and other refuse gathered from the streets of London) converted into rows of streets, now populated by the working classes. Neither the landowner, nor the builder, nor the present owners of these houses, would for one moment dream of living either in one of these houses or even in a special house built on this land. They know only too well what an unhealthy district it is. Yet some of the land-owners and house-owners are good, decent men and women. They build chapels and churches, and on Sundays believe that all men are brothers and that God is the Father of us all. But they do not mind growing rich at the cost of the health and even the life of their poorer brothers and sisters. The sacred right to make money covers many more sins than does the virtue of charity. It is the passive acquiescence of us all in this sacred right of money-making which makes good men and women content to draw incomes from such sources.

Then there is the drink business. Volumes have been written and thousands of sermons 77preached to prove how drunken and dissolute the workers are. Yet brewers and distillers through their agents and managers seek out poor districts where housing conditions are bad, and where industrial conditions keep the people poor, and in these districts erect their gaudy gin palaces, with garish light and colour, tempting the weary and weak to enter and forget their misery, their sorrow and their poverty. Is it a wonder that those who are denied the pleasure and joy of real home life fall easy victims to these allurements? It is indeed no marvel they do so; the marvel is that any resist. Yet few of the bishops or clergy of any denomination dare attack these business men and declare their trade to be an immoral one; and this is because the law has not merely allowed the trade to grow up but has also by legislation made of it a most powerful monopoly. Because of this monopoly good people have invested many, many millions of pounds in a business which sends more people to perdition than almost any other evil of our day. Whenever it is proposed to tackle this evil it is Christians who at once raise the question as to the moral right of the nation to destroy so profitable a business, once it has been established by law—even if such a business ruins the health and character of multitudes of people! There are many working people who believe that this evil is not properly tackled because those whose business it is to teach the nation its 78duty in a social and spiritual sense derive their incomes from this traffic, as many good people in former days opposed the abolition of slavery because of their money investments in slaves.

We shall never settle this drink question till we abolish all private monopoly or private gain in the liquor trade. If there is to be a monopoly of the kind it should be a State monopoly, from which every vestige of profit-making should be taken away. There is little chance of this happening until our whole conception of the right of property is changed. There was a chance at the beginning of the war when an effort was made, but money interests were too strong, and we can all see how in Parliament a small group of determined men can keep back, and do keep back, true reform on this and many other social questions.

But the war has taught us better than anything else could have done what the words “business is business” really mean. Our nation for the past two and a half years has been in the throes of the most terrible struggle in all her varied history. Millions of men have risked health and life itself in what they believed to be the defence of their Motherland. Boys and men from every quarter of the globe have hurried home to give all they have for the service of the land they love. Those of us who hate and detest this and every other kind of war, and who 79refuse to take any part in it, equally with those who support the war, must and do respect and honour all those who give themselves on behalf of the cause they love. None of those who volunteered—and they numbered millions—haggled about pay or reward; they simply gave themselves. Indeed, everywhere people were found who felt impelled to offer service. Only the business men refused to turn aside from the one pervading occupation of their lives—money-making. In

every direction business men took advantage of the nation's difficulties to make more and more money. Shipping companies quadrupled their profits; corndalers and millers, coal merchants and meat dealers—in fact, everybody with anything to sell—scrambled in and joined the gamble to make money out of the war. Shipbuilding firms, armament manufacturers, Government contractors and others, considered the opportunity was one which it would be unbusinesslike and foolish to miss. People who supplied stores were not ashamed in public court to confess to a profit of 40 per cent. Coal and iron corporations in Durham who have managed to acquire huge properties consisting of land and coal are paying dividends of 45 per cent. In short, some business men have had a glorious time since the war began; but their success has resulted in well-nigh starving old-age pensioners to death, and has brought the wives and dependents of soldiers and sailors, in spite of increased allowances, to the point of semi-starvation whilst their husbands, brothers, and sons are fighting to defend a land of which they possess not a yard, and within whose borders are these social enemies, operating their profit-making business to the detriment of the rest of the nation. Again, leaders of religion, almost to a man, are silent (except for the feeblest of feeble protests), whilst Ministers in Parliament spend their time proving that high prices and high profits have no connection with each other, but that both are due, in some mysterious manner, to the Germans and the war in general.

My object in calling attention to these matters is to emphasise the point that there is no soul in business. It is a thing apart, in the carrying on of which people are expected to banish out of their minds all ideas of human kindness. I am not unmindful of the fact that there are, relatively speaking, many good business men and employers; if there were not, the whole system would have smashed up long ago. Men like the Cadburys, Rowntrees, and Levers, with their garden cities, strive to make life more tolerable for the workers by gifts of a little more material comfort, but even these do not concede freedom or true equal partnership; the relationship all the time is that of master and servant. Moreover, in such cases it is the centralised power which enables whatever is of value to be done. The great mass of businesses are carried on by limited companies or corporations, and the beneficiaries of these businesses are shareholders who have not the slightest idea of how their money is obtained, or under what conditions. So wide-spread are business organisations that a company interested in motor-cars and tyres may also be interested in the exploitation of the inhabitants of such places as Putumayo, where, we know, the people were horribly ill-used and murdered in order to secure profits and dividends for Christian people. We also know that many good Christians quite unknowingly participated in the slavery of San Thomé and the Congo.

Then there is the gambling in stocks and shares on the Stock Exchanges of the world—a kind of business where no sort of useful work is ever done! This has always appeared to me to be like gambling with the labour of the people, just as other people gamble on the racing ability of

horses; for no one will contend that passing paper adds value to any mortal thing in the world. The fact that I buy something to-day and, because of market changes, can sell it at double price to-morrow, may stamp me as a clear-headed business man, but cannot possibly prove I have added a single service of the slightest worth to the community. The hordes of men and women engaged in so-called money-making industries which produce 82nothing is simply appalling; and some day we shall see much more clearly than we do now, and shall realise how useless, so far as the community is concerned, all this gambling really is. We should see it more clearly now were it not for the fact that money obscures the issue. We are all apt to think that the possession of money is the all-important thing; but it is undeniable that if all the gold in the world could be destroyed the nations would be no poorer, so long as the land remained to be tilled, and men and women were willing to till it.

It is the business of business people and their apologists to make believe that without money we should all starve. That this is not so is so simple a proposition that people refuse to believe it. Yet no one will deny that if all the gold and diamonds in the world could be gathered together with their owners and placed on an uninhabited island, these valuables would not produce a single atom of food. Men and women will always, I imagine, desire to possess rare and precious stones and minerals for ornaments and personal adornment, but they will not for ever allow the possession of these things to be used as a means for impoverishing and starving one another.

In addition to what I have already said, there is the further fact that so much of our business to-day is unnecessary. In every direction we can see overlapping and competition. Each new invention 83appears to create an increasing number of those who do not produce, and makes more of us mere handlers of other people's labour. In almost every village, certainly in every town, large and small, there are people cutting each other's throats, often in what appears to be a vain endeavour to grow rich and prosperous. Every day of the week multitudes of commercial travellers cover the country striving to sell the same kind of goods in competition with each other. All the great combinations of capital strive to eliminate this kind of waste, and the justification urged in defence of great monopolies is that by combination economy is effected. So it is; but those who benefit from this economy are the owners of the combined concern. They combine in order to make more money, and it is worth while noticing that those who most glibly denounce the workers because they combine are the most ready themselves to enter into a combination if by so doing they may amass more money. The capitalist class is rapidly learning that co-operation amongst themselves is much more profitable than competition. The mass of the people will one day discover that it is better for them to co-operate, and, when they do make the discovery, business, as we understand it to-day, will be cast away into the limbo of forgotten things.

In the meantime let us all strive to realise that for all business men, except the very rich, life is one long weary fight against conditions which tend to kill the good there is in us; that, just as the poverty-stricken conditions of life under which the poor are doomed to exist rob them of all the beauty and joy of living, so the mad scramble to get rich, the struggle to rise in the social scale by means of money and money's worth, robs those engaged in it of everything of real worth, and makes them become just sordid and money-grubbing beings, whose sole idea of value is whether a thing will pay, not in service to the community, but in pounds, shillings, and pence.

There have, it is true, been splendid men and women of the wealthy classes who, seeing the misery and degradation of the people, have set to work to collect facts and figures in order that all the world may know "how the poor live." One such was the Rt. Hon. Charles Booth; Mr. Seebohm Rowntree is another; and their works on life and labour tell their own story, and in a very real way show conditions as they are. But no one has yet thought it worth while to suggest a social investigation into the life and labour of the business and possessing classes. I wish the labour movement would appoint a special commission, consisting of their best men and women, thoroughly to investigate the conditions of life prevailing in Belgravia and Mayfair and tell the world "how the rich live"—whence come their means of life, and what they do to fill up each day, whether with useful or useless work. I am sure we should discover from such an inquiry that the rich people are no more contented or happy than the rest of us, that riches not earned by actual productive labour are Dead Sea fruit, and that life for the rich is one long weary search for happiness which never comes their way for any length of time. We should discover, too, that more and more people are becoming dissatisfied with their lives, that scrambling for "wealth" (which is not *wealth* in any good sense of the word) is a kind of existence which takes the joy out of life.

The reason such a condition of things is tolerated is, I believe, simply that we all fear each other. We are afraid of the consequences of "burning our boats," and we dare not cast ourselves on the mercy of our fellow men and women, for we have no faith either in them or in ourselves, or in our religion which tells us to "Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." We are surrounded by conventions and customs which few of us dare to break, and which fewer still dare publicly to call in question. Until we have faith and hope and confidence in each other, we shall continue our business methods of buying cheap and selling dear, nursing all the time the vain delusion that if once we determine to do right, evil will immediately prosper, instead of understanding that righteousness, whether exercised by an individual or by a nation, is always more powerful than evil.

We men who have been, and still are, in business have to realise that money is not wealth, that a nation may have great banks with huge stores of gold, may have within its ranks men and

women who own great possessions of material things, but may have also multitudes of those who have nowhere to lay their heads. A nation in such a plight is not rich, but very poor, for it has not learnt the simple lesson that the true law of life is to give, and that gold is not God. Going about London, I often notice the manner in which gold is splashed about in order to impress us with its value. Our grand cathedral church has its cross of gold and its towers gilded with the same metal; the new Courts of Justice at the Old Bailey are crowned by a figure of gold, as if the one object of adoration and power in the City of London were gold. Business men must change all this if our nation is to live. Their clever, ingenious brains must be used to amass happiness for all, not gold for themselves and misery for their neighbours. It is a mistake to envy the business man. Stand, as I have done, and see them rolling through the City in their motor-cars, driving in one long line to business every morning, and notice the tense look of anxiety and worry stamped on most of their faces; and, if you are fortunate enough to know them, see, as the days pass, the hard sort of expression which comes over their faces, like a mask, crushing out all the most beautiful expressions of which the human face is capable. And, having done this, ask yourself if, after all, the business man's life is so desirable and the worship of gold so profitable an occupation! No; instead of envying them, we all should look on them with pity, pity because they are doomed to appear as wealthy and yet are amongst the poorest of all God's creatures; because so often their whole lives are one long fight against their fellow-men—a fight which leaves them friendless and lonely in the world of men and women.

---

#### **Chapter IV**

#### **CHURCHES**

RELIGION plays but a small and insignificant part in the life of any commercial nation. I have travelled all round the world, have seen life under the Southern Cross in Australia, in the United States of America, in Canada, and on the Continent of Europe, and what strikes me more than anything else is the complete divorce between organised religion and the people. The people are not, and never have been, actively hostile to religion, but the organisations for the spread of religion have failed, and are still failing, to get any sort of hold on the common people, who do not oppose nor accept religion, but remain completely indifferent. The reason for this is that religion, like everything else in the world to-day, is looked upon by most of us as a matter of business.

All through the latter half of the nineteenth century we were brought up to believe that if we made a bargain with God our past and future sins would be forgiven and our place in Heaven secure. We might be poor or rich—as men count poverty and riches in this life—but a belief in

the sacrifice of our Lord would bring us safely to Paradise at last. As a boy I grew up with the 89most wonderful idea of Heaven. I imagined it a place where in very deed we should see God and Christ and the angels, with the whole company of redeemed sitting on thrones beside the Jasper Sea. My picture of Hell was that of a veritable lake into which were cast all wicked men and women, and little children who disobeyed their parents, told lies, or stole. It was often a nightmare question to me whether, after all, my place might not be the lake of fire, eternal torment and damnation.

Though the Heaven and Hell of my childhood have gone, it is true to say that, whatever else I have lost hold of in this connection, I have lost no shred of faith and hope in the continuance of life after death. I am heir of all the ages, and am also part of the life of the future. Somewhere in that future there is a tiny corner for me which, by the grace of God, I shall fill; but as to a life of indolent ease, it is all banished from my mind. I know that for me all life will be one long struggle upwards. It may be I shall not get, as it were, one yard forward, but that does not matter; what is important is that I should make the effort.

I say all this because in criticising the Churches I do not want to be taken as a critic of religion in its fullest and best sense; for it is an eternal truth, "Man does not live by bread alone." Look where you will, investigate as you may, you will find how true a saying it is. Yet religion plays but a small part in our national or private life. There 90are many thousands of good men and women who toil and work for the "coming of the Kingdom" with a courage and zeal beyond all praise; there are priests who labour incessantly, striving to bring the message of the gospel of peace into the dark and squalid places of our great cities; yet the common people pass by unheeding. Big-hearted men and women, seeing into the great gulf which divides the social life and conditions of the rich and of the poor, create social and religious centres where rich and poor may meet together. Educated young men and women come East to learn all about the poor, to investigate and analyse conditions, and to look, as it were, at the curious life and customs of those who work. Clubs are formed, boys' brigades, companies of boy scouts, girls' clubs, mothers' meetings, fathers' meetings, and so on. At the last-mentioned tobacco is sometimes thrown in, and quite occasionally something called religion is talked about and discussed. Only a minute fraction of the population surrounding any of these settlements attends these meetings or clubs, and fewer people still ever dream of attending the churches or chapels attached to such places.

I think the workers owe an enormous debt to Canon Barnett and his wife for their selfless work in the establishment and organisation of the first of these settlements at Toynbee Hall. They have had many followers in many parts of the country, 91but so far these settlements all fail to do more than touch the outside fringe of the social life of the people, and this because they all appear to accept the present social order as a God-ordained institution, and are quite content

to allow the struggle for bread to remain as the recognised dominant factor in the life of the people.

Many of the young men from Oxford and Cambridge and the Public Schools manage, however, to do very well by themselves, in some cases by means of debating clubs and classes. There they gain knowledge and experience of the Trade Union movement, which knowledge is later on used to secure for them first-class positions as Government or municipal servants. Many of us have watched with interest the careers of these young men, who, having come to East London with what I am sure was a genuine and generous interest in the working class, and with a real desire to improve conditions, have gradually discovered that the one royal road out is a complete social revolution; but (seeing the difficulties, like the rich young man in the parable) have turned back and found their way into Government Departments and into the House of Commons, and even on to the Treasury Bench, where they have been engaged in the business of making the present conditions more tolerable, with no sort of idea of destroying evil conditions by attacking root causes.

92 It is the spirit which is all wrong; and to make this plain I cannot do better than describe an incident which happened at a meeting in Oxford which Lord Hugh Cecil and myself addressed. The meeting was organised for the purpose of enlisting young men as residents for Oxford House, Bethnal Green. There was a fine attendance of healthy, vigorous young men, full of enthusiasm and quite keen to hear us both. Lord Hugh was the first speaker, and based his appeal on the fact that those young men would be the future law-makers and administrators of Britain; he urged that it was their bounden duty to make themselves acquainted with the people whom they would be called upon to govern and whose public affairs they would be called upon to administer. In saying this, he was summarising what is to him the very highest conception of public life and duty, so far as the great landed class to which he belongs is concerned. He believes in a governing class whose duty it is to govern wisely for the good of the nation and to equip itself efficiently for the discharge of its duties. This is the alleged justification for the existence of the landed gentry; and all who know anything of the public life of the Cecils know how well they try to live up to their conception of public duty. But I was not convinced then, and am not convinced now, that governing classes are a necessity; and so, when it came to my turn, I 93 said something like this: "You young men have great opportunities given you to educate yourselves, to acquire knowledge; and it is your bounden duty to give back all and more than you receive to the service of the nation. Your education, your culture, is all given at the expense of the workers, who day and night toil that you and your class may understand something of the joy of living. I want you to come down to Bethnal Green to teach the people all you know, teach them to hate poverty and dirt and unwholesome conditions, and organise them to control and manage their own lives. Above all, teach them that poverty is a

result of man-made conditions, and that mankind, if it will, can as easily create better conditions."

Both our speeches were, as usual, heartily cheered, though for all practical purposes my speech, so far as I know, fell on deaf ears, for I have not yet discovered any rebels amongst the Oxford House residents. I think there is a better spirit growing up amongst all those who go to live in these social settlements, but these social efforts will continue to be worth very little until the whole thing is founded on sounder lines. The workers in great numbers will never respond to their call until those who are responsible for this kind of work go down to root causes, and declare their faith in the principles of co-operation and brotherhood, not those of competition and strife, 94as the right means of obtaining our daily bread. There was a time when many hoped the Nonconformist Churches would fill up the gap left by the established and older churches in the religious life of the people. The coming of Wesley promised great things, but alas! dissenting chapels in large centres fare little better than other religious efforts, and often huge chapels and assembly halls will be found on Sunday half-empty, whilst all around them, living in squalor and want, are myriads of men and women hungering and thirsting for the message which Christians should have to give. Look where we will, we shall find the same conditions prevailing, and these may be practically summed up in the statement that the nation has left God and religion out of account.

Archbishops, bishops, presidents of the Free Church Council, write excellent pastorals calling us all to repentance and hope, and especially at this crisis in our nation's history do we find them intent on calling our attention to our national and personal aims. At the same time, though, most of them refuse to give any sanction, any help, to the young men who, rightly or wrongly, refuse to take up arms. Some Church dignitaries have scorned and ridiculed the conscientious objectors, most of whom, whether we agree with them or not, are undoubtedly standing out for the very highest thing in life; that is, the right to follow the light of one's own conscience. It is men and 95women like these who in all ages have made progress of any kind possible. It is a matter of history that, because of their determination to follow the light of their own consciences, the early Christians were flung to the lions by Nero and other Roman Imperialists. The young men who just now are being flung into prison, and who are enduring the obloquy and ridicule of religious and irreligious men, are the true descendants of the saints and martyrs of whom we sing:

They climbed the steep ascent to heaven

Mid sorrow, care, and pain;

O God, to us may grace be given

To follow in their train.

And yet scarcely a voice is raised in Christendom (outside the Society of Friends) on their behalf; in fact, the defence of the conscience has been left largely to Quakers and Agnostics, whilst official Christianity has declared on behalf of the war, as it always has done on behalf of all war since that fatal day in the history of Christianity when Constantine established the Christian religion as part of the State machinery of Government.

I have brought the war in here because it seems to me important in this chapter to show the attitude of the churches towards "force as a remedy for international wrong," and to compare it with the attitude taken up by those same churches toward the great social class war which curses the whole civilised world. During my life-time there have been innumerable labour disputes, lock-outs, and strikes; but on scarcely any occasion do I remember the leaders of the churches coming out and definitely taking sides. It is true that in the first great London dock strike, nearly twenty years ago, the late Cardinal Manning and Bishop Temple, together with some leading Nonconformists, came out with a demand for a conference and arbitration, and by the influence they exerted were able to secure for the docker the 6d. per hour minimum; but, so far as I recollect, there was no great uprising of Christians on the side of the worker, and this has been true all through the railway, coal, and transport strikes. All I remember of the "Christian" attitude towards these are sermons and articles written by learned Divines telling the workers to moderate their demands, and to give up using such terrible methods as those of the strike. When I appealed to the archbishops and bishops during the Dublin strike, and during other labour disputes, they always declared that the business of the church was not to take sides, but to remain neutral, because it was impossible for the church to know which side was right.

In the case of international war it is different. When Protestant is killing Protestant, and Catholic killing Catholic, the religious leaders of Europe, with the exception of His Holiness the Pope and some leading Quakers, *do* take sides, and each claims that God is on <sup>97</sup>the side of his particular nation in the terrible struggle. It may be that people who are against all war are wrong, but the leaders of Christendom cannot have the best of both worlds. They cannot teach the workers to love their masters, to put their trust in religion as a means for fighting social wrong; they cannot deprecate the use of force and violence by the workers against their masters, and then defend bloodshed and violence when these are undertaken at the bidding of Governments against each other. Besides this, during time of strike, children, women, and men are killed by order of the Executive. Hull, Liverpool, Featherstone, Dublin, Belfast, Llanelly, and Tonypandy, to say nothing of Johannesburg, are all places which labour will remember, while memory remains, as the towns and cities where unarmed people were shot down by order of the Government when striving for freedom.

It may be said in reply to me that religious organisations which oppose the present war have mostly been indifferent to labour's fight for better conditions. I quite agree that this is so, and I want to urge the Society of Friends and other pacifists to remember that social conditions create social and class wars, and working for peace must mean not only international peace but peace at home in our ordinary and everyday life. All Christendom is guilty in so far as it tolerates evil conditions and does little or nothing to try and improve them. The point is that the Church cannot have it both ways. If it is right in taking sides in war, it cannot be right in refusing to take sides in labour conflicts: let it take sides in war by all means if it really feels that compatible with the teaching of Christ, but then let it be logical and take sides in labour conflicts too.

There may be special circumstances about the present war which make it different from all others, but the organised exponents of religion have supported all wars within my memory. A faint voice, here and there, as now, has feebly protested; but in the main the wars of the past sixty years have all been blessed by the followers of the Prince of Peace, and all the strikes, all the efforts of labour to organise itself, have been opposed. The labour struggles have been, if not frowned upon, at least left alone. The churches, when not hostile, have been benevolently neutral towards the employer. A bishop whom I respect very much said the other day that there were some disputes in which it was a sin to be neutral, in which Christians must take sides. He was speaking of the attitude of neutral nations, particularly of America, towards Germany in the present war. When I read the report of this speech I could not help wishing it had been possible to tell him that practically all Christendom had for centuries been either neutral or hostile to the workers in their great struggles for freedom,<sup>98</sup> and that the failure of the churches was entirely due to this one fact. Indeed there has been no great popular movement for social equality which has not been bitterly opposed by the organised churches. The churches profess to believe in and to teach brotherhood, love, and co-operation. The mass of humanity pays little or no heed to their message, because it believes the leaders of the churches do not believe what they say they believe. I spoke recently at a great National Mission meeting in the North of England, where I tried to express the thought that our Lord intended His teaching to be acted upon, to be lived up to, and that we who profess to be Christians must find some means of bringing this about. A clergyman followed me with a witty, clever speech in which he tried to drive home the fact that in his opinion the church could and should lay down great principles, but must never attempt to say how these principles should be put into practice. In the same speech he defended the war as a war of righteousness. This speech distressed me, not because of the support given to war, for I think I do understand the point of view of Christians who support the war; but it seemed to me such an extraordinary theory that the church should be considered worthy to lay down great principles of life and conduct, but should not be considered worthy to tell us how to apply these principles. It is sheer cowardice and fear which make the church,

in its corporate capacity, such a helpless organisation when social questions have to be dealt with. Drunkenness is a terrible scourge, brought about by a variety of conditions, but made possible because some people want to make money out of the trade. Prostitution is a social evil, bringing in its train mental, moral, and physical death; it is aggravated by the double standard of morals as shown in the divorce laws, by sweating and bad housing. All these are things which the church never attacks in anything like a determined manner. Occasionally a bishop or a clergyman, more daring than his colleagues, will speak out against these evils; but in the main the church is silent. The reason is not far to seek. The money for maintaining churches and chapels comes very largely from rich men and women who benefit materially because of bad social conditions. The church I was married in was paid for by money given by a brewer. A few months later it was burned to the ground, having been opened for service less than two years. I stood in the crowd that watched its destruction, and people were saying it was a just retribution on the church for taking money from such a trade for the purpose of church-building.

It is very well known to the clergy how money is made, how fortunes are amassed, and how their own positions are maintained, and it is this which makes them hesitate to take sides. Yet if they <sup>101</sup>would but follow the example of Christ, they would denounce all of us who are whitened sepulchres, destroyers of widows' houses, spoilers of the people. It is courage they lack, and there is no hope for them, no likelihood of their message being accepted, until in the strength of their Master they do take sides on the great moral issues involved in the social class war. It is impossible that the people should believe in the sincerity of those who are only able to see the justice of a great international war, who can see the wickedness of the Germans in sinking unarmed ships and destroying thousands of innocent men and women, but who cannot take sides in the great social war against destitution and prostitution, sweating and all the other evils of our day. Germany may slay her thousands of innocent victims, but the competitive system, the get-rich-quick race for wealth, the "buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest" theories of life, all find expression in a national life which can count its victims by the million. And yet the church dare not take sides! Do you, reader, understand that in a strike the women and children of the workers are starved just as surely as if they were inhabitants of a beleaguered city; that their cries often fall on deaf ears, because, forsooth, the church must not take sides, must not have an opinion of the great moral issue involved in all labour disputes? My contention is that if organised Christianity can take sides on such <sup>102</sup>questions as those involved in a great war it must also be able and willing to understand and take sides on these great questions of life and conduct.

What a travesty of true religion all this clerical cowardice and apathy is! But, alas! how in keeping with the official traditions of that organised religion which refused to help Wilberforce in his struggle to free the slaves—nay, which, in many cases, actively opposed his campaign—and which, in our day, has stood passively by whilst men and women have been thrown into

prison and tortured by forcible feeding and other brutal means of persecution! Facts like these stamp the church and its work with ghastly failure. It would not be right for me not to acknowledge the splendid work which rebels within the churches have done on behalf of God and the people, from the days of the early fathers until now, but the work of men like John Ball has been crushed by the dead weight of the episcopacy. A generation ago Charles Kingsley, Tom Hughes, and others made a great effort to stir the conscience of the church. In our own day, Stewart Headlam, Conrad Noel, Lewis Donaldson, and their fellow-priests of the Church Socialist League have done magnificent work, striving to make men and women realise that serving God and belonging to the society of Christ's people on earth involves something more than the repetition of words and phrases and lip-service. In other 103churches, too, individual men and women have upheld the literal truth of the teaching of Christ, and have pleaded for its practical application to the problems of life—only to find themselves isolated and alone.

Yet they have never really been alone, for to them, as to every true disciple of Christ, the promise of the Master is true: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World." And that is the message and promise for us all. Leaders may fail us, the churches may fail in carrying the gospel message in all its fulness to the hearts of the people, but the message is finding its way home in other ways. The common people through their own efforts are finding their way back to God, and are realising every day what are the things in life that really matter. And all those who love England, who love Humanity, should range themselves alongside the great army of labour, that army of men and women who are marching towards the light, who gain inspiration, courage, and hope from a firm and unswerving faith in the solidarity and brotherhood of all mankind, and who to-day are hungering and thirsting for a fuller life. It is said that on the scaffold Sir Harry Vane declared: "The people of England have long been asleep; when they waken they will be hungry." We might well say the same thing to-day. Our people have again been asleep for a long time, and they are once more waking to find 104themselves hungry. They will not find their food and their satisfaction in the worn-out theories of competition and beggar-my-neighbour commercialism; but, instead, they will discover their greatest incentive to life and effort in the teachings of the great masters of religion. They are discovering that religion is not merely a matter of creed, but a matter of life and conduct also, and that though churches have failed, science and scientific men have failed also. Some day there will be a great revival, when all the religious leaders of the world will come together and proclaim the unity of all life, of all religions that have a message of brotherhood and goodwill. When that day comes we shall learn that we cannot serve God by means of strife, that we cannot establish God's Kingdom on earth by mutual slaughter. We shall, indeed, discover the utter impossibility of serving God and the Devil, and the futility of trying to cast out evil by evil. Chief of all, we shall realise that love and love only is the thing that matters; that perfect love to God and man will enable us to cast out fear, and will give us courage to fight the good fight, will

give us faith and confidence in the ultimate triumph of right over wrong; and this, after all, is the true work of all the churches.

---

105

## Chapter V

### WHAT WE MUST DO

WHAT then must we all do in order that we may take our part in abolishing the evil conditions of life which surround us, and establishing a saner and more honest state of society? There is no royal road or short cut to social salvation. Neither will Governmental machinery and organisation of itself accomplish our purpose. What we must first decide is our own attitude towards life. Do we wish that other men and women should enjoy the same opportunities that we desire for ourselves and those belonging to us, and, if so, are we of opinion that it is our duty to work in order that this may be secured? In the old-fashioned orthodox Christian religion great stress is laid on the necessity of "conviction of sin"; that is to say, on the necessity for men and women to convince themselves of their own wrong-doing. I think that in some ways this is an excellent doctrine, and I should like to see it expressed in regard to social and industrial matters. We must all clear our own minds of cant and be quite honest with ourselves as to the means whereby we secure our daily bread. None of us should be content until we know the why and the wherefore of our incomes, until we have traced them right back to their sources and convinced ourselves of the rightfulness or wrongfulness of our money-getting. No one can manage this for us. We can take advice from people, and can try to get knowledge from others, but once the facts are before us, it must be our own judgment that decides what is right or what is wrong for each individual man and woman. If we are convinced that the means whereby we live come to us in an honest and straightforward manner, and that taking usury and profit-making are true and right methods of living, there is not much more to be said. But if we decide for ourselves that profit-making and usury are evils which enable some of us to live at the expense of others, then our duty is quite plain: that is, to assist by every means in our power in destroying the system which gives to us so great a material advantage over our fellows.

There is a school of people who say that we ought to go on making money because, unless we do, others will make it, and that if we beggar ourselves we do not improve the social position at all. This may be true to some extent, but, all the same, it is also true that if men and women fill up their time simply money-making, no matter what they may call themselves, or what opinions they may hold, they are exactly in the same position as people who support the present order. Therefore, those who are convinced the present methods of 107money-making are wrong are called upon to live in the simplest manner, and to devote every hour of leisure and every penny

of money they can spare to assisting the workers in their task of organising the transformation of the present social order from competition to co-operation. I say this because so many people imagine that they have really done their duty when they have denounced the present order as iniquitous, while others think they have fulfilled their duty when they have distributed large sums of money, either in charity or for similar purposes. It may still be that for many years to come the victims of our cruel social life will need to be tended by those whose ministrations are paid for out of funds provided by the rich; but this, after all, is only palliating evil, and not abolishing it. To-day, those workmen who are thinking are determined to abolish the *causes* of poverty, and wish to establish an entirely new social order. This may be accomplished by a violent and bloody revolution (or, at least, men may attempt this), though I do not believe the use of force will accomplish the social salvation of mankind. It is so true "Force is no remedy" that I cannot help believing that with the spread of education and the growth of religion we shall cease to rely on the mailed fist in both social and national affairs. Men and women belonging to the landed and capitalist classes who really care for their fellows must join hands with the workers, <sup>108</sup>and by united effort establish the kingdom of brotherhood and of co-operation. Those who are convinced that the present order is unchristian and, in fact, unnatural must take their place in the great working-class movement.

This movement does many things that we all feel are hurtful both to itself and to society. That is only because the working class does not, as a class, yet know either its strength or what it wants. In the vast majority of cases working-class discontent is quite unorganised, and is but the expression of a righteous wrath against conditions which often are well-nigh intolerable. All the same, though, it is a good rule to remember that the workers are so often right and so seldom wrong as to make it, on the average, quite the wisest thing to stand by them all the time. Their enemies are never slow to put them down, and, consequently, I would urge every man and woman who wants really to change things to get into the working-class movement. At first people of a different class may be received with suspicion and distrust, but if they are not self-seekers, if they go into the movement asking for nothing, but willing to give all they have to give, whether it is brain power or merely material resources, they will very soon find that a place will be made for them and their help cordially welcomed.

But what the working-class movement less and less will tolerate is patronage from anyone. So <sup>109</sup>many superior young men and women try to join it in order to direct and control it. These usually end by becoming Government bosses in one form or another. The main thing for us all to bear in mind is that, in joining the labour movement or in supporting it, we must be prepared to become just one of the people. This necessity always reminds me of the saying that unless we become as little children we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Such is the attitude of mind which should dominate our relationships with one another; that is to say, we must have the mind of little children in that our words and actions must carry conviction because people

understand that there is nothing more behind them than they are intended to convey. This is true of little children; we know what they mean because of what they say; and it must also be true of men and women who want to be in the labour movement. There have been too many men and women who have used the movement to become what are called leaders and so on, and that is not what middle-class people should go into the movement for. They should join in order to be part of it, all the time keeping steadily in mind the fact that *true* democracy means people thinking and doing things for themselves, and that the *word* democracy does not always guarantee that those who use it are themselves true democrats. Any who join or who are willing <sup>110</sup>to support the labour movement must be prepared for disappointments and disillusionment. The working classes are just like the rest of the people, liable to fits of depression and fits of elation. All the same, the salvation of humanity must come by and through them. The better educated, the more moneyed, can help to stimulate and train them, but this must all be on impersonal lines. The labour movement must stand for the whole of the people; and the present method, by which social settlements, workers' educational societies, labour colleges, no matter who controls them, select out and train just a few of the working class, can only be regarded as quite temporary measures. Meanwhile, even to the men and women who are educated and trained in these establishments, the object of such education and training must always be that they may be better servants of the working classes, not better masters, not even better leaders in the sense of desiring to be something more than the rest of their class. In fact, we have all to take the workers as human beings, and those who have the best kind of brains must be content to give their brains for the service of the others.

No one to-day considers it right that because a man is physically stronger than his neighbours he should be allowed to rob or ill-use them. Physical force used in that way has long been looked upon as something anti-social and evil, but <sup>111</sup>we have not yet reached the point when we can say that brain-power shall not be exercised for personal gain only, and this is just what I think we have to get to. We have to make clever people understand that their brains should be used impersonally, and for the service of the whole community, and to create such a public opinion as will make us all realise that it is just as dishonourable to exploit our neighbours by the use of our brain-power as it would be to exploit them by use of our physical power. Further, those who want to help the labour movement must come into it in the spirit of comradeship, and without expecting to do more than give themselves to its service; and in doing so they must strive to understand how the labour movement proposes to work out its salvation. It is impossible for me to do more than just to indicate a few of the things which labour needs to get done now; none of us expect that by a stroke of the pen or by some sudden action we shall change from a competitive to a co-operative State. And in judging what I propose I would urge my readers to bear in mind that often the most simple things are the most important and the most far-reaching in their effects. People often refuse to take part in simple movements

because these are apparently dull and uninteresting. The business of a Trade Union branch meeting or of any labour organisation is sometimes very uninteresting; but it is in these meetings that the best 112work can be carried through, because in them men and women get to understand one another's point of view, and are also able to think out and organise their plans of campaign. I say this because I think it is so important that we should get out of our minds the idea that mere law-making, or even administration of law, is an effective means of bringing about great changes. It is, as I said a little way back, a change of mind that is so much needed. To explain what I mean I would call attention to the old story to be found in the Old Testament about Naaman the leper. This man, suffering from leprosy, went to a prophet of Israel to find out a cure, and was told, in effect, to go and wash himself, to cleanse his sores. It was a perfectly sane and sensible suggestion, but it was so simple and so obvious that the great Captain of Syria was inclined to feel himself too big and mighty a personage for it. And this often happens in modern life: distrusting the simple and obvious, we rush off with our apparently big ventures, and are disappointed at the end to find they have led nowhere. It is because of this that to-day the workers have decided (at least those of them who are thinking about vital things) that their first aim and object in life should be to educate themselves, not that they may the more easily compete with one another, but that they may use their education and brain power in order to establish a truly co-operative 113system. They are demanding the full control and ownership of their life and work. They desire that the nation shall own land and other means of life, and that these shall be used by the workmen in partnership with the State. In effect, the workers must, if they are to get any kind of control of their lives, join together in great industrial unions or guilds, representative of particular industries, within which guilds a brain-worker and a hand-worker shall organise side by side and, in contract or partnership with the nation, carry on the work of supplying the nation's needs.

I can only give one instance of how I think this would work in practice, and I do so, not because I shall be able to fill in all the details even in one instance, but because I want to express in a rough sort of way what I mean by national ownership and organisation and control by the workers. Those who wish to know more about this cannot do better than read "National Guilds," by A. R. Orage, or "The World of Labour," by G. D. H. Cole; or they might write to the hon. sec. of the National Guilds League, Mrs. Ewer, 17, Acacia Road, N.W. For my purpose I would ask you to consider what would happen if the mines of Britain were owned by the nation. These mines would have to be worked. The proposal is to form a miners' guild, or a guild of coal-workers, including 114all persons engaged in the industry, and these would determine, through delegates or by any other means they might choose, the rates of pay which the community should pay for the getting of coal. But all the workers within this industry would share and share alike in the product. There would be no such thing as salaried persons and wage-earners. The total reward of the labour engaged in the production of coal would belong to

the whole of those who assist in whatever way in that production. They would elect their own organisers and determine their own hours and fix their own holidays, and so on. No one would be allowed to work in this industry who was not a member of the guild, and the whole organisation from beginning to end would be under the control of the guild. It will be at once noticed that equality in the sharing of the wealth produced would abolish once and for all the present practice of giving huge salaries and profits to a few and a mere subsistence wage to the mass of the workers. In addition, the guild being "blackleg"-proof, there would never be any "blacklegs" to undersell or undercut the price of labour.

It is argued against this that the miners would be able to dictate their own terms to the rest of the community, but this difficulty is more apparent than real, because each industry is really dependent on the others, and that fact would prevent the one 115industry from striving to exploit the others. Exploitation, moreover, would not enter in, because, once industry was organised on these lines, there would be more than sufficient for all. We must all realise that the nineteenth century, with its enormous development of machinery and scientific invention, has settled the question of production. We can produce all we desire. It remains for the twentieth century to find an equitable method of distribution. Incidentally, in the case of mines, another question would be settled. Coal-mining is an industry in which the wages of those engaged vary considerably. It is true that a minimum wage of a sort has been fixed for the whole country, but there is great discrepancy in the maximum amounts that miners can earn. Coal-mining is coal-mining wherever it is carried on, but the fact that there are thick seams in some parts of the country and thin seams in others, added to the fact that there are different methods of working, tends to bring about variations of remuneration. Now, in the guild system, when all share alike, methods would be improved, and the natural value of one mine would be matched against the lesser value of another mine, and the workers and the community between them would thus secure all the advantages which the possession of minerals gives to the land.

There is the further fact that in this particular industry, as is well known, many more labour-saving 116devices would be employed and better arrangements for preventing accidents would be adopted if the industry were organised as a social service on co-operative lines. It is the profit- and dividend-making business which prevents these matters from being dealt with. It may be urged that labour-saving machinery introduced into the mines would necessitate people being discharged, but this would not be so. Instead of discharging workpeople the guild would reduce the hours of labour of all the workers in the industry—which is the true use to which machinery should be put. Machinery is only of service to the community when it is used to lessen labour or to give a better supply of the things needed by the nation.

This, then, is what the forward school of Trade Unionists are demanding for all industries. It is, in effect, the abolition of the wages and profit system; and it is this proposal that I earnestly beg those who desire to bring about a complete change in our spiritual and social life to support. I trust no one will allow personal interests to blur his or her mind and conscience. We do wish to get rid of rich monopolists because we also want to get rid of the poor, but no one will suffer. The nation can, if it will, effect this great change in our social relationship without hurting any one. Already we are, as a nation, organising great industries for purposes of war, have destroyed businesses, broken up and ruined homes, wiped out 117in many cases the whole life's savings of men and women. All this in order to win the war against Germany. No sacrifice, we are told, is, or will be, too great. Surely we will all make an effort to destroy social evil, surely we are able to see that co-operative production and distribution is a finer, nobler, and more Christian social order than the present chaotic competitive struggle which robs children of life and well nigh destroys the morale of us all. To change our present methods means injury for none, but a better life for all. There are many other things that we can help forward in the labour movement. There is the whole great question of what we are to do with our land. All through my public life I have felt the sinfulness, the crime against society, which the mere fact of landlordism entails. Men of my age who have seen great areas of London cleared at the public expense, who have seen parks and open spaces created and paid for by the people, and even in this process used for the enrichment of those who own land, cannot but be struck with the fact that so far the great land monopoly has gone untouched. I see no means for dealing effectually with the land question as a whole except by making all those who wish to use land pay, not to private individuals, but to the State, for the use of such land. Some places are more desirable to live in than others, some pieces of land will give a better return than others, and this excess 118value—indeed, all forms of “site values”—should always come into the national exchequer in one form or another.

The only proposal at present for dealing with this problem is the taxation of land values, and that appears to me to be a perfectly legitimate means of raising revenue. Whatever system we are living under, if any of us wish to enjoy something which it is impossible for others to enjoy, we ought to pay either in extra service or in some other way for the privilege. Henry George, when he called attention to the land question thirty years ago, was on perfectly sound ground. We cannot hope for a reformed society if land remains private property and all the value which the pressure of population gives it goes into the pockets of private people. This is another form of profit-making which has to be somehow put right. To travel through the United Kingdom these days and to use one's eyes is to become aware that to a large extent our country is unpopulated. The war is making us understand this and is making us also understand how dependent we are on other nations for our food and other things needed for our subsistence. The progressive workman is asking himself with a very bitter insistence how it is that he and his

should be cooped up, in the great cities (yes, and in the tiny villages too), in little bits of houses with scarcely room to breathe, whilst all around him are hundreds of thousands 119of acres of land practically unused, and great parks, with walls and railings surrounding them, used only for the pleasure and convenience of just a handful of people.

Therefore on this question we should all unite, and push forward the solution of it with all the force of which we are capable.

There are two other questions with which I wish to deal in this chapter. The first is that of political power. I am convinced that the first thing for the workers is to recognise their economic power, and for this reason. All forms of production have changed; individual production is practically nonexistent, and co-operative production is now an absolute necessity; but at present that which is *co-operatively* produced is *privately* owned, and the object of the workers is to substitute co-operation both in production and in distribution, and to establish the right of those who produce to own everything they produce. Therefore, I have put economic questions first, but, to obtain possession of the land and to obtain possession of the railways and other means of life, we shall need political power, and this political power should be in the hands of women as well as men.

I believe that the grant of citizenship to all adults, men and women, from the age of twenty-one, would be one of the most far-reaching reforms possible, and would establish the working class with a status that would enable them to take a 120much more intelligent interest in their affairs than now. The difficulty that we are in with regard to this question is the fact that for so long sex domination has been rampant in the civilised world; but this is slowly being overcome. Some millions of women now have the vote for the election of the President of the American Republic; many thousands of women voted in the Australian Commonwealth on the question of conscription; so the enfranchisement of women to the extent of allowing them a voice in what are called Imperial and international affairs is not a novel proposal, but is actually in operation.

Our country cannot for much longer lag behind. When it is remembered that men and women are equally interested in the organisation of society and industry, there seems no reason for denying women equal status as citizens. On international questions and questions relating to war no argument is needed. It is the women of Europe in every belligerent country who, in their breasts, are bearing the main burden of sorrow and suffering entailed by the frightful slaughter and loss on every battlefield. Those women who, in Belgium, Poland, Serbia, and now Roumania, have seen their homes and their belongings destroyed by the devilish business of blasting a way through any of the parts of Europe cursed by the presence of war, have clearly established the right of women to vote as to whether such things shall 121or shall not be. Besides, if anything else is needed to convince anyone of the justice of women's claims, you have only to remember that, as in international affairs, so in national affairs, women are the

biggest sufferers from our unchristian and devilish form of society. They suffer most from unemployment, sweating, low wages—from all the social evils which afflict our land. Those who seek to redeem humanity and intend to use political machinery must support in every way possible the claim of women to political enfranchisement and citizenship.

The other, the last thing of all, that I wish to mention is the matter of children. Long ere this our children should have been freed from work of any kind. In a civilised nation a child's playtime ought to be its best time. The driving of children to work half-time in mills and factories is acknowledged by all thinking persons as a great social evil. I suppose all my readers will have heard that the Bantam Battalions are mainly recruited from Lancashire, where women work in the factories and children work half-time. There must be some connection between the low standard of physique and conditions of child life. We must abolish the half-time system and tell the capitalists, and those who support the system, that any business which depends on the robbery of our children's birthright is not worth preserving. We must insist that the age for leaving school shall be raised to sixteen, and that from sixteen to eighteen every child shall be trained for such work as he or she appears most fitted for, whether it be hand or brain work. What this will cost we need not stop to consider. The war has demonstrated our ability to raise and spend money for destruction; we must not be put off by any thought as to the money-cost of construction. The one chief thing to do is to insist that children shall not be used as machines for mere money-making, but shall be taken out of the competitive labour market, where so very often they are used to bring down the standard of life and destroy not only their own future but the whole standard of living for their parents.

There is much more to be said on these and kindred subjects, but I have written, I hope, enough to stimulate thought amongst those who desire to help in the work of social reconstruction. In conclusion, may I ask all my readers to keep in mind the one central thing I have tried to insist upon all through this book? It is just this, that we all need a complete change of heart. I do not mean this only in the old religious sense, though I think the expression is quite the soundest that can be used. We have all been so accustomed to think along personal lines, so accustomed to imagine that our own good could not at the same time be our neighbour's good, that we have drifted into the position we are in to-day. When I say that it is a change of heart that we need, I mean an entire change of outlook. We must get it out of our heads that there is not enough wealth for all men, women, and children. We must get rid of the idea that either an individual or a nation can be benefited by using its power to dominate others. The futility of this has been proved beyond dispute; the class war and the great international war both demonstrate the fact. For all this we must not be discouraged. None of us are able to see all the good or all the evil there is in the world. We can see what appears on the surface, but all down the ages men and women have been striving to reach forward to the day when, the world over, we all shall live in peace and harmony with one another. Through all time there have been those

who have dreamed dreams and seen visions, who, because of their visions, have given hope and courage to the common people. We, too, must dream our dreams and see our visions of a nobler order yet to be: we must look beyond to-day and see the future. This humanity, of which we are part, is capable of fine and noble things. The records of history are full of the stories of what men and women have done, and what has been done in the past can certainly be done over again.

Just now we can see around us how much sacrifice people are making, how much they are giving up, in the great effort to destroy the Germans. It is the spirit behind this effort which we want to put into the work of destroying evil in our midst. We need all the enthusiasm, all the sacrifice, all the grit and determination that the men who are fighting in Europe have shown, but we shall have this satisfaction all the time, that the things we are striving to destroy are evil conditions, not human life.

The war on the Continent and the class war at home are horrible, and they are unnatural and inhuman, and the very fact that we are all ashamed of the conditions which cause them, and excuse and seek to palliate them, proves that this is so. Mankind has turned its face from God, says a Hindu writer: and this, of course, is true, just as it is untrue to say that God has turned His face from the world.

I have faith in the common people. There has been plenty of disillusionment in my lifetime, but, in the main, I, like every other man and woman who is working amongst the people, know quite well that, given the chance, the mass of people always respond to the best that is put before them. It is not a bit true that human nature is necessarily ugly or brutal or destitute of idealism. Just before the war multitudes of young men and women were engaged in the labour and suffrage movements. These two movements were working to a large extent hand-in-hand, and the enthusiasm which both called forth came from the young people. Those with whom I came in contact and who formed the "Herald League" were just young rebels fighting for a great impersonal ideal. Few of them had a clear-cut scheme for social salvation, but all of them had a very clear-cut idea of what they wanted to accomplish. It was liberty, fraternity, comradeship which they were setting before themselves. Some of these men you will find on the battle-fields of France, called there by the cry of Belgium; others you will find, equally honourable, in the prisons of our country, flung there because some of the older men who rule us do not understand what the word conscience means. And it is these who will come back when the war is over and form the vanguard of the great army of men and women who are going out in another kind of war—the war against poverty, crime, and sorrow. Comfortable, well-to-do people may stand aloof, may refuse to assist or take part, but the truly religious men and women, those men and women who believe in the unity of life and the one-ness of the great human family, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, will step into the ranks, and

will take their place as soldiers in this great army, and will be content to work and organise and to give all they have to give, in order that the end may be reached. To some this will mean sacrifice of material things, to others it will mean the sacrifice of place, of privilege and power; but to the true man and woman that will not count as of any importance if by their sacrifices the great movement of human solidarity may be helped forward.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK YOUR PART IN POVERTY \*\*\*