

ward. We may even be driven to compel them; for those who fully understand how heavy are the responsibilities of government and how exhausting its labor are the least likely to shoulder them voluntarily. As Plato said, the ideal candidate is the reluctant one. When we discover such a test you will still have your electoral choice between several Mrs Somebodys, which will make them all respect you; but you will not be taken in by Mrs Noodle and Co. because they will not be eligible for election. Meanwhile, Heaven help us! we must do the best we can.

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AND now a last word as to your own spiritual centre. All through this book we have been thinking of the public, and of our two selves as members of the public. This is our duty as citizens; but it may drive us mad if we begin to think of public evils as millionfold evils. They are nothing of the kind. What you yourself can suffer is the utmost that can be suffered on earth. If you starve to death you experience all the starvation that ever has been or ever can be. If ten thousand other women starve to death with you, their suffering is not increased by a single pang: their share in your fate does not make you ten thousand times as hungry, nor prolong your suffering ten thousand times. Therefore do not be oppressed by "the frightful sum of human suffering": there is no sum: two lean women are not twice as lean as one nor two fat women twice as fat as one. Poverty and pain are not cumulative: you must not let your spirit be crushed by the fancy that it is. If you can stand the suffering of one person you can fortify yourself with the reflection that the suffering of a million is no worse: nobody has more than one stomach to fill nor one frame to be stretched on the rack. Do not let your mind be disabled by excessive sympathy. What the true Socialist revolts against is not the suffering that is not cumulative, but the waste that is. A thousand healthy, happy, honorable women are not each a thousand times as healthy, happy, or honorable as one; but they can co-operate to increase the health, happiness, and honor possible for each of them. At present nobody can

be healthy, happy, or honorable: our standards are so low that when we call ourselves so we mean only that we are not sick nor crying nor lying nor stealing (legally or illegally) oftener than we must agree to put up with under our Capitalist Constitution.

We have to confess it: Capitalist mankind in the lump is detestable. Class hatred is not a mere matter of envy on the part of the poor and contempt and dread on the part of the rich. Both rich and poor are really hateful in themselves. For my part I hate the poor and look forward eagerly to their extermination. I pity the rich a little, but am equally bent on their extermination. The working classes, the business classes, the professional classes, the propertied classes, the ruling classes, are each more odious than the other: they have no right to live: I should despair if I did not know that they will all die presently, and that there is no need on earth why they should be replaced by people like themselves. I do not want any human child to be brought up as I was brought up, nor as any child I have known was brought up. Do you?

And yet I am not in the least a misanthrope. I am a person of normal affections, as you probably are; but for that very reason I hate to be surrounded, not by people whose interests are the same as my own, whom I cannot injure without injuring myself, and who cannot injure me without injuring themselves, but by people whose interest it is to get as much out of me as they possibly can, and give me as little for it as possible (if anything). If I were poor, my relatives, now that I am old, would have to support me to keep me out of the workhouse, which means that they would have a strong interest in my death. As I am rich enough to leave some property, my children, if I had any, would be looking forward impatiently to my funeral and the reading of my will. The whole propertied class is waiting for dead men's shoes all the time. If I become ill and send for a doctor I know that if he does not prolong my illness to the utmost, and send me to expensive nursing homes to submit to still more expensive operations, he will be taking bread out of his children's mouths. My lawyer is bound by all his affections to encourage me in litigation, and to make it as protracted and costly as he can. Even my clergyman, partly State supported as he is, dare not if I belong to the Church of England rebuke me for oppressing the poor any more than he

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dare champion me against the oppression of the rich if I were poor. The teacher in the school where my neighbors' children have their morals formed would find herself in the gutter if she taught any child that to live on what is called an independent income without working is to live the life of a thief without the risks and enterprise that make the pirate and the burglar seem heroic to boys. My tradesmen's business is to overcharge me as much as they can without running too great a risk of being undersold by trade rivals. My landlord's business is to screw out of me the uttermost extractable farthing of my earnings for his permission to occupy a place on earth. Were I unmarried I should be pursued by hordes of women so desperately in need of a husband's income and position that their utmost efforts to marry me would be no evidence of their having the smallest personal regard for me. I cannot afford the friendship of people much richer than myself: those much poorer cannot afford mine. Between those who do the daily work of my house, and are therefore necessary partners in my work, and me there is a gulf of class which is nothing but a gulf of unequal distribution of wealth. Life is made lonely and difficult for me in a hundred unnecessary ways; and so few people are clever and tactful and sensible and self-controlled enough to pick their way through the world without giving or taking offence that the first quality of capitalistic mankind is quarrelsomeness. Our streets are fuller of feuds than the Highlands or the Arabian desert. The social friction set up by inequality of income is intense: society is like a machine designed to work smoothly with the oil of equality, into the bearings of which some malignant demon keeps pouring the sand of inequality. If it were not for the big pools of equality that exist at different levels, the machine would not work at all. As it is, the seizings-up, the smashings, the stoppages, the explosions, never cease. They vary in magnitude from a railway worker crushed in the shunting-yard to a world war in which millions of men with the strongest natural reasons for saving each others' lives destroy them instead in the cruellest manner, and from a squabble over a penny in a one-room tenement to a lawsuit lasting twenty years and reducing all the parties to it to destitution. And to outface this miserable condition we bleat once a year about peace on

earth and good-will to men: that is, among persons to whom we have distributed incomes ranging from a starvation dole to several thousands a day, piously exhorting the recipients to love one-another. Have you any patience with it? I have none.

Now you may, for all I know, be a sharp, cynical sort of person; or you may be a nice, mushy, amiable, goodnatured one. If the latter you will tell me that people are not governed so much by money considerations as I make out: that your doctor hates to see you ill and does his best to cure you; that your solicitor keeps you out of litigation when you lose your temper and want to rush into it; that your clergyman calls himself a Christian Socialist and leads all the popular agitations against the oppression of the rich by the poor; that your children were heartbroken when their father died and that you never had a cross word with him about his property or yours; that your servants have been with you for forty years and have brought you up from your childhood more devotedly and affectionately than your own parents, and have remained part of the family when your children flew away from the nest to new nests of their own; that your tradesmen have never cheated you, and have helped you over hard times by giving you long and forbearing credit: in short, that in spite of all I may say, this Capitalist world is full of kindness and love and good-fellowship and genuine religion. Dr Johnson, who described his life as one of wretchedness; Anatole France, who said he had never known a moment's happiness; Dean Swift, who saw in himself and his fellowmen Yahoos far inferior to horses; and Shakespear, to whom a man in authority was an angry ape, are known to have been admired, loved, petted, entertained, even idolized, throughout lives of honorable and congenial activity such as fall to the lot of hardly one man in a billion; yet the obscure billions manage to get on without unbearable discontent. William Morris, whose abhorrence of Capitalism was far deeper than that of persons of only ordinary mental capacity and sensibility, said, when he was told that he was mortally ill, "Well, I cannot complain: I have had a good time".

To all this consolation I have been able in this book to add that Capitalism, though it richly deserves the very worst that Karl Marx or even John Ruskin said of it and a good deal more that

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they never thought of, was yet, in its origin, thoroughly well intentioned. It was indeed much better intentioned than early Christianity, which treated this world as a place of punishment for original sin, of which the end was fortunately at hand. Turgot and Adam Smith were beyond all comparison more sincere guides to earthly prosperity than St Paul. If they could have foreseen the history of the practical application of their principles in the nineteenth century in England they would have recoiled in horror, just as Karl Marx would have recoiled if he had been fore-shewn what happened in Russia from 1917 to 1921 through the action of able and devoted men who made his writings their Bible. Good people are the very devil sometimes, because, when their good-will hits on a wrong way, they go much further along it and are much more ruthless than bad people; but there is always hope in the fact that they mean well, and that their bad deeds are their mistakes and not their successes; whereas the evils done by bad people are not mistakes but triumphs of wickedness. And since all moral triumphs, like mechanical triumphs, are reached by trial and error, we can despair of Democracy and despair of Capitalism without despairing of human nature: indeed if we did not despair of them as we know them we should prove ourselves so worthless that there would be nothing left for the world but to wait for the creation of a new race of beings capable of succeeding where we have failed.

Nevertheless I must warn my amiable optimist and meliorist readers not only that all the virtues that comfort them are operating in spite of Capitalism and not as part of it, but that they are baffled by it in ways that are hidden from people who have not examined the situation with a good deal of technical knowledge and some subtlety. Take your honest and kindly doctor, and your guardian angel solicitor. I quite admit that there are plenty of them: the doctor who is a mercenary scoundrel and the lawyer who is a mischievous and heartless rascal is as exceptional as any other sort of criminal: I myself have never chanced to come across one, and most likely you have not either. But I have come across honest doctors whose treatment has been fatal, and honest lawyers whose advice has been disastrous. So have you, perhaps.

You know the very true saying that where there is a will there

is a way. Unfortunately the good will does not necessarily find the right way. There are always dozens of ways, bad, good, and indifferent. You must know some bad women who are doing the right thing from bad motives side by side with good women who are doing the wrong thing from the best motives in the world. For instance, the number of children, especially first children, who are guarded and swaddled and drugged and doctored to death by the solicitude of their ignorantly affectionate mothers, must be greater than that of the children who die of maternal dislike and neglect. When silly people (writers, I regret to say, some of them) tell you that a loving heart is enough, remind them that fools are more dangerous than rogues, and that women with loving hearts are often pitiable fools. The finding of the right way is not sentimental work: it is scientific work, requiring observation, reasoning, and intellectual conscientiousness.

It is on this point of intellectual conscientiousness that we all break down under pecuniary temptation. We cannot help it, because we are so constituted that we always believe finally what we wish to believe. The moment we want to believe something, we suddenly see all the arguments for it, and become blind to the arguments against it. The moment we want to disbelieve anything we have previously believed, we suddenly discover not only that there is a mass of evidence against it, but that this evidence was staring us in the face all the time. If you read the account of the creation of the world in the book of Genesis with the eye of faith you will not perceive a single contradiction in it. If you read it with the eye of hostile critical science you will see that it consists of two successive accounts, so different that they cannot both be true. In modern books you will be equally baffled by your bias. If you love animals and have a horror of injustice and cruelty, you will read the books of wonderful discoveries and cures made by vivisectors with a sickened detestation of their callous cruelty, and with amazement that anyone could be taken in by such bad reasoning about lies which have been reduced to absurdity by force of flat fact every few years, only to be replaced by a fresh crop. If, however, you have only a dread of disease for yourself or your family, and feel that in comparison to relief from this terror the sufferings of a few dogs and guinea-pigs are not worth

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bothering about, you will find in the same books such authentic and convincing miracles, such marvellous cures for all diseases, such gospels of hope, monuments of learning, and infallible revelations of the deepest truths of Science, that your indignation at the derisive scepticism of the humanitarians may develop into an enmity (heartily reciprocated) that may end in persecutions and wars of science like the persecutions and wars of religion that followed the Reformation, and were not new then.

But, you will ask, what have Socialism and Capitalism to do with the fact that belief is mostly bias. It is very simple. If by inequality of income you give your doctors, your lawyers, your clergymen, your landlords, or your rulers an overwhelming economic interest in any sort of belief or practice, they will immediately begin to see all the evidence in favor of that sort of belief and practice, and become blind to all the evidence against it. Every doctrine that will enrich doctors, lawyers, landlords, clergymen, and rulers will be embraced by them eagerly and hopefully; and every doctrine that threatens to impoverish them will be mercilessly criticized and rejected. There will inevitably spring up a body of biassed teaching and practice in medicine, law, religion, and government that will become established and standardized as scientifically, legally, religiously, constitutionally, and morally sound, taught as such to all young persons entering these professions, stamping those who dare dissent as outcast quacks, heretics, sedition mongers, and traitors. Your doctor may be the honestest, kindest doctor on earth; your solicitor may be a second father or mother to you; your clergyman may be a saint; your member of Parliament another Moses or Solon. They may be heroically willing to put your health, your prosperity, your salvation, and your protection from injustice before their interest in getting a few extra pounds out of you; but how far will that help you if the theory and practice of their profession, imposed on them as a condition of being allowed to pursue it, has been corrupted at the root by pecuniary interest? They can proceed only as the hospitals and medical schools teach them and order them to proceed, as the courts proceed, as the Church proceeds, as Parliament proceeds: that is their orthodoxy; and if the desire to make money and obtain privileges has been operating all the

time in building up that orthodoxy, their best intentions and endeavors may result in leaving you with your health ruined, your pocket empty, your soul damned, and your liberties abrogated by your best friends in the name of science, law, religion, and the British constitution. Ostensibly you are served and protected by learned professions and political authorities whose duty it is to save life, minimize suffering, keep the public health as tested by vital statistics at the highest attainable pitch, instruct you as to your legal obligations and see that your legal rights are not infringed, give you spiritual help and disinterested guidance when your conscience is troubled, and make and administer, without regard to persons or classes, the laws that protect you and regulate your life. But the moment you have direct personal occasion for these services you discover that they are all controlled by Trade Unions in disguise, and that the high personal honor and kindness of their individual members is subject to the morality of Trade Unionism, so that their loyalty to their union, which is essentially a defensive conspiracy against the public, comes first, and their loyalty to you as patient, client, employer, parishioner, customer or citizen, next. The only way in which you can set their natural virtues free from this omnipresent trade union and governing class corruption and tyranny is to secure for them all equal incomes which none of them can increase without increasing the income of everybody else to exactly the same amount; so that the more efficiently and economically they do their work the lighter their labor will be and the higher their credit.

Under such conditions you would find human nature good enough for all your reasonable purposes; and when you took up such books as Gulliver's Travels or Candide which under Capitalism are unanswerable indictments of mankind as the wickedest of all known species, you would see in them only terribly vivid clinical lectures on extinct moral diseases which were formerly produced by inequality as smallpox and typhus were produced by dirt. Such books are never written until mankind is horribly corrupted, not by original sin but by inequality of income.

Then the coveted distinction of lady and gentleman, instead of being the detestable parasitic pretension it is at present, meaning persons who never condescend to do anything for themselves

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that they can possibly put on others without rendering them equivalent service, and who actually make their religion centre on the infamy of loading the guilt and punishment of all their sins on an innocent victim (what real lady would do so base a thing?), will at last take on a simple and noble meaning, and be brought within the reach of every able-bodied person. For then the base woman will be she who takes from her country more than she gives to it; the common person will be she who does no more than replace what she takes; and the lady will be she who, generously overearning her income, leaves the nation in her debt and the world a better world than she found it.

By such ladies and their sons can the human race be saved, and not otherwise.

AYOT ST LAWRENCE,
16th March 1927.