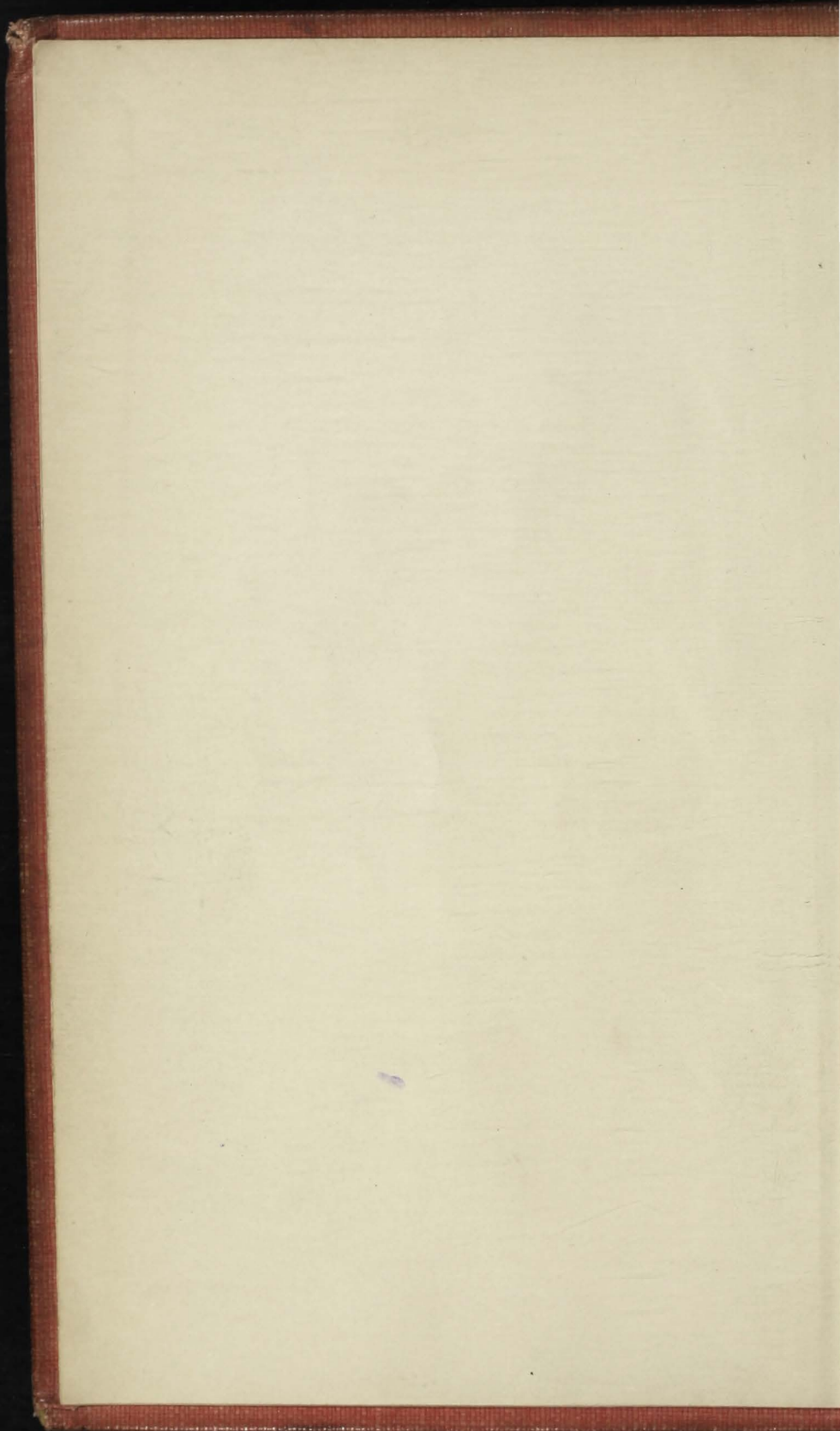


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THE POINT OF HONOUR:

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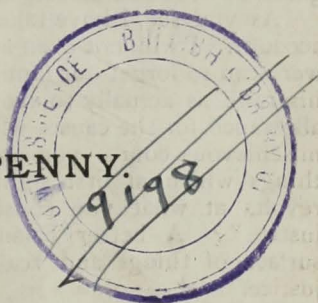
ON ARISTOCRACY AND SOCIALISM.

By RUTH CAVENDISH BENTINCK.

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THE POINT OF HONOUR.

DEAR CHRISTOPHER,—

My attachment for you personally was, as you know, very great. It is therefore a dreadful shock to me to be forced to recognize a rebel and a traitor in one who was a relation and a friend; but to me it seems demoralizing to remain on good terms with bad people—a man's character being shown by the company he keeps—so I find it impossible to associate with a person of your stamp, just as it would be impossible for me to keep up a friendship with a forger or any other immoral person. Forgive my plain speaking, but I am a plain man and about to speak out my mind for the last time.

I have tried to make every allowance for you. You have always been endowed with an unfortunate disposition, intolerant of anything savoring of restraint, impatient of procrastination, and contemptuous of prudence—which I even recollect your calling a “ditch-begotten virtue,” an expression which of itself betrays you as an intolerant crank.

The Dangers of Too Much Knowledge.

Owing to various deplorable circumstances, and also in a large measure to your own reckless and headstrong disposition, you have, I admit, been brought into contact with many facts which are not generally realized; and these you have only looked at through your own perverted spectacles, which incline you to attribute all those things, which you ignorantly and arrogantly assume to be unmitigated evils, to the defects of our present social system.

As you see, I have taken all the extenuating circumstances into account. I will not even ask how it is that one brought up as you were can so forget our family traditions and the ideals pertaining to his rank as actually to avow himself a Socialist. I have made full allowance for the causes which may have induced you to adopt the mischievous course you are now pursuing. I own you have seen things which at first sight may arouse indignation. Your spirit revolts at what you consider to be “injustice”; but *is* it “injustice”? A better balanced mind would penetrate below the surface of things and realize its own inability to define abstract justice.

Sentimentalism in Foreign Policy.

For instance, when justice is meted out to some person or persons in Spain or Russia, Egypt or India, you and people of your kidney are apt to jump to the conclusion that it is an “injustice” because the sentence does not happen to meet with your approval.

Socialism.

This frequently leads you into making seditious utterances provocative of endless ramifications of disorder; and yet you know perfectly well that it is not possible for a government office to vouchsafe a reason for its actions, therefore the justification for them does not get published, and many are led astray by misguided and shortsighted sentimentalists who refuse to see any but one side of these questions. You do not consider that the men on the spot have spent their lives in studying the best means of dealing with the native population, etc., and are therefore better able to say what is considered "justice" in those regions than people who have never been in the country, and cannot expect to grasp the full significance of its problems in the same way as the officials, or even as well as those who go to such places in search of sport.

The Uses of Aristocracy.

With regard to our own country, how could it get on without the aristocratic class? Look at the work, often hard, generally tiresome, and always unpaid, which they do on county and district councils, school boards, magistrates' bench, etc., to say nothing of various charities.

Of course there are black sheep in every flock, and I do not deny that the "smart set" gives occasion for anything that Socialists may say of them; but, after all, they are not many in number, and are mostly aliens or risen from the middle classes, therefore the present argument does not apply to them. I own that many things in England are far from being perfect; but this is the case in every civilized country, and it would benefit no one were I to go and live in some mean and monotonous street amongst the myriads of beings who are degraded beyond redemption in our filthy cities. Most people in our class will do more good by keeping an oasis, where culture and beauty, art and literature, may find a home and not be overwhelmed by the ocean of brutal ignorance and coarse hideosity surrounding us.

That is my ideal and the work my artistic perception prompts me to carry on. There will always be squalor and ugliness enough for you to wallow in, because as fast as you sweep it up in one place it will reappear in another, so long as every individual unit does not "do his duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call him"; or, in other words, till everyone tidies up his own pigsty before attempting to clean up the farmyard—and if all the pigs did that there would be far less dirt in the world.

The Responsibilities of the Classes.

I have a strong belief that the thing nearest one's hand is one's first duty; that we have inherited certain work and responsibilities; and that if we neglect those and plunge into work of our own choosing, we are not doing what God intended, and end in doing more harm than good. As it is, I think most people of our class are honestly endeavoring to tidy up their own corner of the world before trying to tidy other people's. This is the duty which I hope

and believe I should endeavor to fulfil were I the meanest mole-catcher on the estate instead of its owner, and I only wish you could say as much instead of spending your time in making discontented and disloyal citizens; for this is a sorry occupation any fool is capable of, though it takes a wise man and a truly religious one to make people happy and contented, each in his sphere.

Do you remember our early days and all the "secondary gods," as you were pleased to call them—old Hannah, the stud-groom, the keeper, etc.? They gave you a very good example, for were they not all absolutely contented in their several positions? Would that you had assimilated some of their strong common sense! But your rebellious and predatory instincts were apparent even as a child. I have not forgotten your nocturnal expeditions to the lower gardens nor the fruit you kept hidden in the moat. I know your people pretend to be amused by the words "robbery and confiscation," but the aim of the equal distribution of wealth, though in itself ideal, is an object which can only be attained by appealing to man's predatory instincts, and the proposal to despoil one set of people for the benefit of another can only be called "confiscation," and, as such, can hardly fail to produce demoralization.

Socialism Demands a Higher Morality.

I do not, of course, share the ignorance of those who confound feeble and isolated instances of Communism with Socialism, and I am well aware that Socialism has never been tried by a nation. This in itself proves nothing, though the probability is that the experiment would have been undertaken long ago had there been any reasonable expectation of success; but the success of Socialism presupposes an improvement and elevation in human nature which we are not justified in anticipating: it assumes the complete eradication of all selfish instincts, the surrender of all natural affection, and the grinding down of all degrees of intelligence to a common level. The realization of Socialism suggests a barrack-like monotonous existence in which one set of people will be perpetually watching another to see that no unfair advantage is being taken, a life in which there will be little or no scope for originality or independence, and in which there will be nothing to look forward to, as the incentive to progress will be absent.

And even then the inequality and "injustice" will remain. To take only one instance. I am less physically attractive than X., although perhaps equally deserving. Why should X. enjoy the privilege of ensnaring the affection of some desirable female, whilst I am spurned?

In the interests of common justice I demand that X.'s classic features and model proportions should be planed down or distended to my own level. X.'s attractive exterior is in no sense due to his own exertions; it represents an unearned increment to which he clearly has no right, and it is only fair that he should be called upon to sacrifice it on behalf of the community of which I am one. This argument applies with even greater force to the opposite sex.

No. If you got your Socialistic State to-morrow and everybody equal and enjoying the same advantages, in six months' time those with brains and intelligence would come to the front and those without them would sink, for the former would take advantage of the latter. The whole idea is so Utopian, so idealistic, so totally unpractical! What man who has had to deal with men and their administration on a big scale has ever been a Socialist? Poets, dreamers, ranters, people with an exuberance of philanthropy and no practical knowledge, people who are dissatisfied with their conditions, those who have sunk to the lowest depths and have nothing to lose—there is your Socialist raw material and I wish you joy of it!

Fatalism.

Believe me, the huge fabric of modern civilization is working out its own evolution, and to try to increase the speed of the machine by pouring cans of liquid into it which it is totally unprepared to assimilate, will only result in a shudder of the machine, a spitting out of the liquid, and procedure by evolution as before.

In the vast network of most complicated inter-relations which builds up the civilized world, can you honestly believe that it is possible to straighten out the tangle and have everything nice and smooth, and everyone doing exactly as they should for each other's benefit? The modern industrial world is, alas! so constituted that the conditions you deplore must ever be with us in some form or other, and nothing that you or I can do is capable of altering what may, for all practical purposes, be looked upon as one of nature's laws.

There are other countries besides our own, and the adoption by one nation of a purely Utopian idea would dislocate the whole machine to its own injury; other nations would take advantage of the madness, and the crazy people who had accepted this form of social conditions would be crushed out of existence, for its Socialism would be an *unnatural* state, and therefore doomed to extinction.

Our Nation of Shopkeepers.

Great Britain is a kind of vast shop, which either handles and distributes the goods of foreigners, or supplies other countries with its products. The vast majority of the population is employed in distributing or producing these goods, and the sale of the goods is dependent upon their being of the same, or better, value than those which are produced elsewhere. Eliminate competition between British producers, and the value of the goods will diminish and their price increase. What, in that case, would become of the millions of men and women whose labor produces the goods in question?

The British Isles, already overpopulated, are incapable of sustaining the forty-four millions who now inhabit them unless the product of their labor can be exported, and it is impossible to believe that a nation which forbade private profit could compete successfully with rivals who adhered to the system of competition.

It is futile to talk of Socialism as a cure for all ills as long as the world is what it is. You cannot make people subservient to an idea and go against their natural inclinations and interests for the *sake* of an idea.

Classes a Law of Nature.

Look at nature; and if you can find a successful state of Socialism among animals or plants, I will take all this back. But until you do, I shall continue to assert that Socialism is not only a waste of your time, but a wicked waste, inasmuch as you are now spending your life in rousing a turbulent and dangerous spirit which, when once called forth, you may find it is beyond your power to allay; and you may yet live to regret your reckless wickedness in appealing to men's baser passions and setting class against class. But I will not enlarge on this theme; I have already written enough to show you how deeply I regret that we have indeed arrived at the parting of our ways, and that in future we must be as strangers to one another.

PONTEFRACT.

DEAR P.—

So our divergent opinions have strained your friendship to the breaking point; but mine is still intact, although you call me a philanthropic, idealistic dreamer and a wicked thief appealing to men's baser passions, all in one breath.

Do you remember that legend about the first Norman robber recorded in our line? How he, being about to engage in battle, rode down the lines, reviewing his forces and giving orders? He commanded one of his officers to begin the attack by storming a certain position. This wretched fellow, glancing at the site indicated, replied that it could not be done. Our ancestor lifted his brows. "What, then, do you suggest?" "I cannot say," replied the captain, helplessly. Whereupon, without further waste of time or talk, it is related that our amiable forefather, "raising his battle-axe, clove his head in twain," remarking that "it contained neither courage nor ideas, but only a mouth to eat," and so rode slowly on down the lines, the matter being of no great importance.

"Toujours l'Audace."

Now that callous old savage was right. If we have neither courage nor ideas, and placidly proclaim our inability to attack and deal with the difficult questions of the day—riding the while decked out in burnished armor, exacting respect from those we imagine ourselves born to lead, and expecting to have our greedy mouths filled with the choicest food the army commissariat has to offer—well, then we deserve to have our handsome, but inefficient, heads "cloven in twain," that's all. And yet this is the position you take up when you say "we cannot alter present conditions." Is not the present chaotic industrial system of man's own making? If so, it is capable of amelioration, alteration, and eventual reconstruction by

man: it is no more a law of nature than that we should wear trousers or tall hats. But it is a natural law that certain people should feel impelled to persuade their fellow men that humanity is capable of attaining something incomparably higher and better than that which it has already reached. But for these restless individuals we should all still be happily engaged in scratching up roots and trapping birds for our meagre sustenance, coloring our bodies with clay as our only artistic effort, lining our fœtid caves with dead bracken as our only luxury, and killing one another as our only pastime.

Nowadays these pioneers are styled "agitators" because they disturb the brain calcifying prejudices which so agreeably numb our intellects, and they, deeming themselves the unworthy little tools God is pleased to work with, consider it is their duty to ensure that the world does *not* remain what it is. They believe mankind is improving steadily, and, at times, even rapidly. So surely as I am like a god compared to palæolithic man—hairy, bull-necked, long-armed, flat-headed—so surely will the man of one hundred and fifty thousand years hence be as a god compared to me.

Our Intolerable Civilization.

Already you are yearning for an improved environment. The thousands of "mean and monotonous streets," with their myriads of stunted and misshapen beings, breathing dirt-laden air and thinking with dirt-laden minds, disgust you. Then why tolerate them? Your artistic and fastidious nature prompts you to flee from all that is abominable and shut yourself up on your own estate, surrounded only by people or objects whose companionship and contemplation strike no jarring note; but this does not prove you superior to the struggling millions, toiling in crowded towns under conditions which do not admit of their developing any sense of beauty. I can only admit your claim to excellence when I find your artistic perceptions strong enough to goad you into fighting ugliness outside your walls as well as in, and not acquiescing in its prevalence in your country any more than you would in your individual home.

The Ideals of Aristocracy.

You reproach me with forgetting the ideals of our class, but it is precisely these traditions and ideals that have made me a Socialist. The only reason that every intelligent member of our family is not one is due to the fact that most of the others were sent to school young or had these ideals destroyed otherwise.

All things carry within them the seeds of their own dissolution, and aristocracy is no exception to this rule. I maintain that no one, saturated as we were in the spirit of a once proud race, could fail to grow up into an uncompromising Socialist the moment he applied his tenets to modern conditions—unless some powerful influence counteracted his early training.

Let me remind you of the two dominant ideas which were set before us from the beginning.

The Governing Class.

Idea No. 1 was that we were unquestionably superior beings. The world was full of inferior beings placed there on purpose to do our bidding and minister to our wants. These inferior beings were good creatures in their way, so long as they did as they were told, behaved respectfully, and were content "in that state of life" in which God "had been pleased" to place them. Any inclination on their part to leave this "state of life" was little short of blasphemy. Any leisure they might have must be spent, not as they chose, but as the superior beings thought best for them, any claim they might make to appreciate art of any sort instantly became a jest. You may still find traces of this lingering in *Punch*: Mary Ann going to a Wagner concert after cooking the mutton, or a blacksmith in a picture gallery, both still serve as side-splitting jokes (though one wonders if any prehistoric beast can still be found to emit simian cachinnations over them). In short, life for these inferior beings was to be a life of hard work, and they ought to enjoy it—but as for enjoying life itself . . . ! That was reserved for the superior beings.

Fight for the Weak.

Idea No. 2 was that we must always fight for the weak against the strong, against the oppressor for the oppressed, for the forlorn hope, in the losing cause, and this against all odds and at the cost of any personal sacrifice. If you were one of three hundred on a sinking ship, yours the right to be the two hundred and ninety-ninth person to leave that ship—the proud and enviable position of being the three hundredth belonging to the captain. If adrift in a boat, your honor required that you should do your share of the rowing and do without your share of the food. If lost in the desert with only one tepid water-bottle between three people, it was for you to see to it that the water was only drunk by two and that neither of these two should answer to your name—and so forth.

All children are by nature generous and heroic; they respond readily to such teaching, probably only because it appeals to their artistic and dramatic instincts; but, whatever the cause, they undoubtedly respond. Not that they become little angels revelling in self-denial. We were selfish little brutes and fought like demons; all the same, you remember, we formed a high ideal of what the imaginary person would do or say under any given circumstances, and we made up stories and planned adventures in which this splendid individual did all manner of brave and impossibly quixotic things.

How Children see it.

Now you will take note that once these two ideas are thoroughly assimilated, once you have imbued a child with the conviction that it is his privilege to fight for the rights of the down-trodden, and you at the same time place a down-trodden people of his own race under his nose, whose rights he feels he ought to do battle for, then you have already—so far as ethics are concerned—your Socialist to hand!

You have only to add a few elementary principles of political economy and you have your practical Socialist up-to-date. The thing is inevitable. Inevitable, too, the fierce resentment I experienced on discovering that the aristocracy were not attempting to live up to their own ideals, dead within them, and out of whose detritus the fungus of pocket-politics now sprouts instead. Inevitable, too, my exultation on finding the old ideals enshrined in the hearts of the people as they prepared to follow the fiery pillar to the promised land.

It is well to remember the "secondary gods." They were about as contented as governors of provinces usually are—and we owe them much—especially the great man who kept the cinnamon turkeys and always held his hat in his hand, even when ropes of rain were coming down, so great was his respect for all superior beings, even when they were very small indeed; and the coachman who, when out riding, never forgot his "place," but kept so far behind us as to render ordinary intercourse impossible—a pompous proceeding which so enraged us that you recollect we crossed and recrossed the ford after rain, knowing his horse had a fancy for lying down in water and always hoping we might drown him—a pious wish which was once nearly fulfilled, the horse rolling over his leg in a strong current, causing us much terror and hard work in extricating him—still speechless and respectful—from the river bed. Yet this man's abject servility furnished us with our first chance of seeing English people who were not personal retainers. Do you remember the wild gallops to distant villages? the sweets and nuts flung over playground walls to amuse children who surely thought us mad? the poacher? the pastrycook? the gipsies? and all the wonderful people outside the park walls? . . . and now you have shut yourself up and out of England again, and tell me that "justice" is an attribute I am unable to estimate correctly!

Here we both see the same fact under different aspects. Surely if each man's individual conscience does not revolt at what he personally thinks unjust, there would be no justice at all! The unjust would have it all their own way, whilst the righteous ones sat in a subdued row, twiddling powerless thumbs and softly murmuring, "What we see appears to *us* cruel and unjust, but let us not oppose it till we are quite certain that we are capable of arriving at a correct definition of abstract justice." So one might sit gazing contentedly at the Crucifixion. Thus in point of fact many *did* sit. Yet I do not seem to notice that later generations have specially revered those "well-balanced minds" for the part they played on that occasion.

Roughly speaking, injustice is strength taking advantage of its power to crush weakness. Injustice implies a lack of imagination. "Justice" should be impartial, but no human being has sufficient imagination to place himself in the position of another so entirely as to be absolutely impartial. For that reason, "justice" *untampered* by mercy—which is merely the result of imagination—is invariably injustice: a truth which the great Duke of Wellington perceived in

that moment when he asserted that "military law" was no law at all.

The Men on the Spot who Know.

You hold that the omniscience of the "man on the spot" should be taken for granted, and that no action of his should be criticized. In 1567 you would have maintained that the Duke of Alva was right in his treatment of the Netherlands because he had a great knowledge of the world, and that therefore his "bloody council" was assuredly the best means of dealing with and governing people. You would have maintained that the views of the one hundred thousand artizans who emigrated to England were not worth listening to, and that the "strength of mind" Alva showed in sending Counts Egmont and Horn to the block was beyond praise. Yet, in spite of his methods of "dealing with problems on the spot," his fleet was eventually destroyed, and he was only too thankful to leave a country where he boasted of having executed no less than eighteen thousand men.

In our own days the "Congo atrocities" were perpetrated by Christians who had "studied the problems on the spot." It is the carping spirit inherent in a few people which acts as a necessary restraint on those who might otherwise get drunk on overmuch authority. Their vanity makes them susceptible to public opinion, and they weigh their actions a little more when they know these are liable to be criticized by somewhat exacting compatriots. Lord Acton said, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." I only object to this wielding of absolute power.

You accuse the "misguided sentimentalists" of never seeing any but one side of the question. This is indeed true. No matter what paper you take up, you are sure to see "necessary measures of repression" commended, exhortations to a greater display of "firmness," etc.; and all this from panic-stricken, pale-faced persons, wielding pens to order at their dreary desks, and who, never having been on the spot, are no more fit—according to your own theories—to form public opinion than those "sentimental cranks," who have, at any rate, the courage of their theories, and who may frequently be found to have formed the same because they have roamed the world in many an unbeaten track.

Patriotism no Monopoly.

I dwell upon this at some length because it is a pose of our "class" to speak as though they had a monopoly of patriotism. If any reform is proposed at home they scream, "Think of its effect in India!" or "Do not indulge in parish politics, but remember the susceptibilities of the Fiji Islanders and Basutos!" Well and good; but let an Englishman raise his voice in protest against some arbitrary measure or unfair sentence passed in any of our distant dependencies, let him hint that our country's honor is at stake, and the aristocratic imperialists fling themselves on him at once. He is a "traitor," he "ought to be shot," and so forth.

If your imperialist carried his "man on the spot" theory to its logical conclusion, he would believe that only men who have lived with and amongst those they legislate for are capable of knowing what it is they require. In this case the interests of miners would be handed over to those who had themselves worked in mines, and the concerns of cotton spinners to those who had spun cotton. But no; the leisured class fancy themselves born with a sort of marvellous intuition that takes the place of knowledge, and expect everyone to acquiesce in their decrees, when these should in "justice" only apply to the one and a quarter million people in this country whose interests the deer park dwellers may fairly be said to understand.

Aristocrats as Administrators.

You ask me to look at the work done by the upper classes on county councils, as magistrates, etc. It is precisely because I *have* looked that I accuse. They are mostly so unwilling to attack the more serious problems of our time that they even display an occasional activity in opposing those who would. Hence a fitful interest in local matters, usually in order to prevent any progressive measures being enforced, and to guard what they conceive to be their own interests. One hears rich men derided for not giving larger sums to the party funds. On enquiring why a man who appears to take no interest in politics should spend his money thus, the reply is, "Well, it's a very good form of investment." This sentence sets one thinking.

Of course, many rich people and numerous captains of industry do excellent work; but I doubt your finding these exceptions invariably belong to the ancient nobility, who, taking it all round, resist most strenuously any attempts on the part of the working man to manage his own affairs. Now I agree that every pig should attend to his own sty, but I see certain pigs attempting to compel other pigs, less fortunately situated, to restrict their energies to attending to the upkeep of the selfish ones' styes, and prevent them from bestowing any attention on their own! I note, in passing, that to my simile of an armed knight proudly asserting his right to lead the attack on apparently invulnerable enemies, you retort with an appropriate comparison concerning swine.

Is Sport Culture?

You suggest that those who feel unequal to the task of fighting our twentieth century dragons are keeping "culture, beauty and art" alive in some restful oasis. Let us be candid. Do the leisured class fulfil this function? You and I have been associated since our childhood with people who did little, when they had money, except spend it on idle ostentation. Their lives were supported in luxury by a host of parasites ministering to their self-importance, and you are well aware that the character and general upbringing of this class tends to produce a highly conventional, ill-informed and narrow-minded type. Our sons are hardly brought up to this duty of "sheltering culture" or encouraging science in the expensive schools

we send them to. The more intelligent may tell you the difference between Lybia and Lydia, or afford some immaterial detail concerning the Hittites, but their ignorance as to the history, laws, literature or geography of the Empire they are taught to boast of is phenomenal. Other contemptible nations may have a history, or even laws. These are beneath our notice. Political economy would be classed as "rot." No; games are of paramount importance to the "governing class," therefore what the oasis really shelters is "sport." Mill said, "Science takes cognizance of a phenomenon, and endeavors to ascertain its law; art proposes to itself an end, and looks out for means to effect it." Which of these two processes is going on at the present time in any of the "oases" known to you and me? Even the cultivated oasisite is not clamorous in his demands that others may share in, or be given opportunities for learning to appreciate, those things which are, after all, the only ones that make life worth the living. Surely he may be compared to a man who is being rowed by others in a heavy sea, whilst he sits warmly clad on the dry seat, nibbling *pâté de foie gras* sandwiches, sipping champagne, and occasionally throwing the dripping oarsmen a weevilly dog-biscuit in order that their strength may be kept up sufficiently to go on rowing him! Would you be surprised if some day they heaved him overboard? No; you would do it yourself. We are not so unlike after all, and perhaps our quarrel—if quarrel it be—lies far back in those fruit-stealing days when, having committed every possible crime, you repaired to the billiard-room and practised skilful strokes, whilst I, no less steeped in sin, vanished in the library behind fat tomes on anthropology, whose musty and alluring smell is in my nostrils even now, and whose precepts I never forgot. Your very letter proves a transition in human nature. Here you are, an avowed opponent of my every thought and deed, actually endeavoring to "make allowances" for me! Time was when the only allowance you would have made would have been one of distance as you aimed a sharp stone at my head, or of quantity as you poured some death-dealing drops in my drink. In these days you find yourself weighing extenuating circumstances in my favor. It is but a short time ago that we burnt heretics and witches at the stake, and starved people to death, and, in some countries, reserved that worst torture of all, the "Iron Maiden," for the worst criminals of all, namely, those who desired to improve their country's condition. Some might still wish to see those methods made use of now, but public opinion—which is after all only private opinion in the aggregate—has changed, and, with it, our customs. Even I recollect men denouncing trade unions and declaring that the sooner English workmen imitated the Chinese and learnt to live on a handful of rice the better for them and for the country! What fool would say this now? And this process of amelioration which manifests itself in ever greater tendency towards concerted action and combination would not seem to you a "despoiling of one set of people for the benefit of another" if you studied the writings of modern economists more carefully.

The Failure of Individualism.

The prejudice against Socialism is due to the prevailing habit of looking at all the existing evils caused by an obstinate individualism and then saying: "That is what Socialism will be, only ten times more so!" At present a cut-throat competition forces selfishness upon us, insecurity and grinding poverty destroy natural affections, and want and destitution reduce millions of intelligences to one common level of devitalized incapacity. The passions—not the reasoning powers—survive. Mournful, barrack-like institutions *are* here now testifying to the failure of a system which denies men security in their own country, and assumes the only incentive to be money—forgetting appetite, not to mention vanity. It is an insult to all the finest minds of any and every epoch to suggest that the alteration of a vicious system would eradicate the wish to excel from our nature. Only we hope to do so in future without materially injuring others. Socialists desire that "those with brains and intelligence" should "come to the front," but they also claim that those less gifted should enjoy security, respect, and leisure as citizens performing necessary labor for the welfare of a grateful community.

You confound natural with fictitious inequalities when dealing with the "unearned increment" of X.'s physical attraction. We want to enhance natural advantages by giving all equal opportunities of developing mentally and physically to the utmost. Look at our women! See how these fictitious and cruel disabilities now prevent girls—intended by nature to grow into beautiful women—from becoming real "women" at all—battered, twisted caricatures, with drawn faces and cunning or heavy eyes. The same applies to men. May God forgive you your insolent allusion to "physical inequalities" which conjures up such visions that, for the moment, I cannot. Socialism being a comparatively new faith, it is remarkable how many of those holding it have already been found in positions where they had to deal with men on a large scale. Dozens of names suggest themselves to me had I the space, but I must confine myself to reminding you that the father of English Socialism, Robert Owen, managed a cotton mill at nineteen, and was part owner of the New Lanark Mills when twenty-eight.

Concerning "Utopia," I am tempted to tell you how I once accompanied a motherly primrose dame of high degree when opening a crèche in a foul industrial town. She made a short speech, in which she said a crèche was a temporary measure to palliate temporary evils, but that she hoped for a day when mothers would be enabled to feed and look after their own infants. Every subsequent speaker (they were all millowners!) alluded to Lady T.'s "Utopian ideas," with sarcastic smiles. Driving home, the dear woman protested, wearily, "I've had nine children and attended to each one, and I do assure you that nursing an infant is *not* the occupation I should select in paradise. Men have such odd ideas concerning Utopia."

Socialism and Competition.

But let us turn from her to our old friend Chambers's Biographical Dictionary. Here we see that "Marx's aim is *not* to propound Utopian schemes, nor even to offer programmes of social reform, but to elucidate an historical process which is inevitable"; and in this you concur, for you admit that the huge fabric of modern civilization is working out its own evolution, only you are annoyed when it betrays a tendency to evolve without consulting you. History shows that it is the backward nations, slow to adopt new ideas and unwilling to evolve, who get into an "unnatural state"; and that the more advanced ones, having adopted new methods, are obliged by force of circumstances to crush the laggard peoples out of existence. Moreover, if Socialism is impossible, why oppose it so fiercely? As to Socialism eliminating competition between British producers, *would* the value of British goods diminish and the price increase? Gigantic combinations are now, in the interests of private profit, gradually achieving the elimination of competition; and when you find that these amalgamations cause the price of goods to increase, you will also find that your only remedy lies in Socialism. Goods manufactured on a large scale might show better value than those turned out by numerous struggling competitors, with antiquated plant and cheap labor, on a small one. John Bright said that adulteration was a form of competition. Indeed, the dictionary recognizes it as such: "Adulteration. The act of debasing a pure or genuine article for pecuniary profit by adding to it an inferior or spurious article, or by taking one of its constituents away."

When you speak of England as "a kind of vast shop handling and distributing goods," and appeal to my better nature by asking "what would become of the millions of men and women whose labor produces the goods in question" if competition were eliminated? my heart remains as the nether millstone, and for obvious reasons. *What becomes of them now?*

A Little Lower than the Angels.

Nature shows it is useless to fling all manner of seed at random on a rough bit of ground with some ill-considered remark about "the survival of the fittest" as one lies down to watch the result. Nor, should you desire to plant an oak for future generations, will it avail you to stick an acorn in the crevice of some wall and tell it that if it is really an acorn it will become an oak anywhere. So it may: a little dwarfish caricature of what might have been one of the most magnificent growths in creation. Yet these incredibly silly things are what we do with the young of our own kind.

You want me to take the example of animals. You have already done so, selecting pigs. I refuse to compare mankind to the rest of the brute creation: till you can show me animals that cook their food, wear clothing that is not an integral part of their bodies but made for them by other animals of their own kind, or sacrifice their

lives deliberately, not only for the sake of their own young, but for strangers, or even merely an idea. Even "those who have sunk to the lowest depths" are capable of dying for another. True, it is difficult for their atrophied brains to grasp an idea. Even if they could, their devitalized natures and anæmic bodies would be incapable of working for it. This explains why *no Socialist has or ever will* come from the slums. All our recruits hail from the artizan or professional classes, men who have known responsibility and had practical experience. The "submerged tenth," oddly enough, share your views concerning our faith. They cannot see that ideas *do* rule the world; that men *are* subservient to them, and *will* "go against their natural inclinations and interests" for the sake of the "vision splendid" God has vouchsafed them.

Come out of your hole into England once more. Cast away the prejudices which blind you, and you will find a nation of aristocrats forming up swiftly, silently, shoulder to shoulder, in the cold grey dawn, preparing to stem back the great hosts of materialism which have gathered in such force on every side. I entreat you, fight with and not against us, for a long, fierce conflict it will be, during which many will fall; but they shall reckon their lives well lost, dying, as they will, with the ideal ever before them and the sun rising in the East.

Yours,

CHRISTOPHER.

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