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THE
Wonderful Doctrine of Salvation

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WHEN READ PASS ON.

We pride ourselves on our refinement, but we are not nearly reclaimed from barbarism. A hundred years hence our descendants will consider us and our institutions with the same contempt we vouchsafe upon the people of the Middle Ages or upon the refractory Chinese of to-day. This is not a paradox; I am past juggling for an audience.

Despite our self-satisfied humptiousness mankind is still piteously groping after real civilisation, like a tangled mass of larvæ tumbling and crawling out of some dark, slimy cavern toward the light that will give them wings.

Only few men have forged ahead and stand in the full sunshine of Truth. The progress of the mass is slow enough to strike with despair those of us who are past mid-life; for we now must admit to ourselves that we will see but few of the changes we have hoped and worked for.

An undeniable increase in material comfort and equipment must be credited to the Nineteenth Century; but that alone does not constitute civilisation. Better food, fast steamers, telephone and electric lights—all that is only the necessary part of human development. Means to happiness, certainly; but not happiness. Has the telephone diminished the hunger of the hungry?

Our brains are still befogged; our private and public life is still based upon vile, exasperating ignorance. Reason, now proclaimed by a hundred prophets in every country, has everywhere the greatest trouble to penetrate through the thick folds of inane prejudice that enwrap individuals and institutions.

The evils we suffer from, and the evils each of us perpetrates, have no doubt been lessened in a measure; but it seems to me that they have for the most part merely changed their aspects and their names.

There were times—not so many generations ago—when in every country men and women were tortured by inquisitors—religious or not. Now, most countries, we think, have grown beyond that. But are not the newspapers filled with revolting cases of children tortured by their parents, of wives who are long-suffering martyrs, students who find cruel delight in bullying some poor companion? And do you know what frightful things take place—I will not say in Turkey or Siberia—but in the penitentiaries and insane asylums of the most advanced nations?

There were times, to be sure, when political and religious fanaticism fettered all development, sought to extinguish science and burned scientists at the stake. We are certainly past that stage. Yet to-day Tolstoi is excommunicated by Rome. I was before him, and so were Catholics and Protestants, Darwin, Huxley, Renan, and most of the harbingers of to-morrow's truth. Why, I have it direct from eminent American professors that in most of the Universities of the United States they would not dare express their real convictions on religious, political, or economical questions, because their resignations would surely be demanded at once. It is the same thing in England and Germany. And

in France Jean Jaures, one of the geniuses of the age, was recently refused a chair in the College de France to lecture upon Socialism. Your own admirable Henry George, if I remember well, died a pauper after having been jeered at his whole life long; and the lofty German apostle, Liebknecht, was an exile for years, hounded out of Germany, as Victor had been out of France.

Yet with what contempt we regard that historical Council that compelled Galileo to kneel and say that the earth did not move!

But on the other hand, for such devastating forces of retrogradation as Bismarck, Chamberlain, and General Mercier, the world seems at a loss to find adequate honours and adulation; even their most severe judges feel bound to temper their censure with admiring reserve.

It is useless to delude ourselves. You may tinker all you please; there will be no true civilisation until the present social system is radically modified.

Look in this country; honestly examine yours; then search through all others. Injustice and suffering everywhere; hideous cancers gnawing darkly at the very vitals of society. Ah, if an angry revolt does not this very day convulse the world it is because most people go about like horses with blinkers on both sides of the head, capable of seeing nothing but what is immediately under their very nose.

Civilisation, indeed! How ridiculous all this mutual praise and self-congratuation!

Don't you, even now, through the jingling of your Christmas, hear the moans of the wounded on a dozen battlefields? Are not our different tribes, more feverishly than ever, getting ready for other on-

slaughters? Have we yet found a better way to settle our disputes than by wholesale slaughter of men?

Civilised! Not yet! Have you read Tolstoi's books, or mine, or those of a hundred other explorers of modern society? Have not the strikes that constantly take place in your country as elsewhere, taught you anything? Can anyone deny that at this very moment by far the largest fraction of so called humanity is groaning under abuse and obsolete laws; that the whole strength of governments (army, police, and courts) is always ready to back the unrighteousness of a small, privileged class?

Have you not learned that there are every day thousands (not hundreds, thousands) of men and women who die of want, of cold, of disease unattended, and that, too, frequently after these miserables have given twenty, thirty, fifty years of their labour to the making of all that we enjoy?

Can you forget that children (little children as precious as yours) are this moment suffering from famine and absorbing the germs of all vices? Can you forget that in every prison, hospital, factory, tenement there are crimes that cry for vengeance to Heaven?

Ah, the sadness of it all! To think that throughout the length of the century just finished great men have vainly cried these things, have pondered long years over these problems and vainly pointed the remedies. But they were mistrusted, misrepresented, and mocked by childish crowds, proud of their numbers.

To think that even to-day Socialism (the wonderful doctrine of Salvation) scientifically and practically irrefutable as it is, is compelled to gain converts slowly, one by one, condemned without hearing by some people, its advocates driven from every point of vantage (the Church pulpit, the

University hall, the Editorial chair!) Why, to make Socialism go down your progressive American throats Edward Bellamy (he said so himself) was compelled to sugarcoat it with the fixing of "Looking Backward."

These are facts which must bravely be uncovered to the public gaze. But, after all, I am not a pessimist. Deploring the present, I look forward into this pregnant new century with joyful confidence.

Ignorance, the passive yet formidable enemy of our social liberation, the accomplice of all who profit by existing wrongs, is being attacked vigorously.

By what means will the inevitable changes be effected? Will there be a universal and violent upheaval, a period of disorder, followed by the temporary proletarian dictatorship which many social experts consider necessary to forcibly re-incorporate aristocrats and plutocrats into the rank and file? That would be the French Revolution and all its calamities re-enacted on a large stage. Yet the French Revolution, now universally approved of, was provoked by lesser evils than those which now prevail.

Or will an orderly, legal, swift evolution work out our redemption?

My sympathies are altogether for the latter peaceful methods. But nobody can tell.

I believe that in less than ten years, though it were idle to expect the realization of all we want in that time, profound political, economical, and purely social modifications will have bettered the world considerably, brought a greater sum of happiness, made the good things of life more evenly, therefore more equitably divided.

I also believe that we will soon abolish the abnormal privilege of inheriting wealth; it will be abolished on the same principle

that made us Republicans already deny the inheritance of the sceptre. The two things are one.

In fact, it is much more absurd that a young Vanderbilt or Castellane, with a possible commercial value of 25 dollars a week, should inherit millions than it would be permit the sons of M'Kinley and Loubert to rule us because their fathers did.

And inasmuch as with our present mechanical and mental equipment (the accumulation of centuries of common strain, and therefore the common property of all men) humanity can now produce exactly twenty times what it can possibly consume, I firmly believe that the outrageous anomaly of human beings wanting in food, clothes, and shelter will disappear in the Twentieth Century.

The Twentieth Century will also find means to eradicate the corruption that disgraces the public life of all countries and probably reserve capital punishment for political knaves alone, sending other criminals to curative establishments and the care of specialists.

The centuries will see other wonders. What would be the use of saying more?

But it is the duty of all good hearts and honest minds to help towards the accomplishment of these reforms, at least to lend a willing ear to argument, to apply a sincere effort to the study of these questions. And whoever is content to scoff at the new gospel is a fool; whoever treacherously stifles it is a criminal.—*New York Times.*