

MEN ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL.

The interest of the people in the social crisis is evinced by numerous letters from thoughtful and intelligent correspondents, who offer solutions of industrial problems and remedies for the misery and poverty which are the heritage of so large a portion of the human race.

The single tax, the abolition of rents, the reduction of profits, the prohibition of interest, free trade, free silver, sumptuary laws, socialism, communism, and anarchy all have their advocates, whose sincerity entitles their theories to respectful consideration.

Like a despondent patient, long ill, who has lost confidence in the faculty and their prescriptions, the wretched and unfortunate are patronizing political apothecaries with their patent medicines and consulting fetiche doctors and voodooes with their cabalistic divinations.

Much of the prevalent discontent no doubt springs from a perverted constitution of the nature of human liberty and the meaning of human equality.

The glittering generalities of Thomas Jefferson, that all men are created equal, and that the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are inalienable, have been the texts for many injurious instructions. They are rhetorical flourishes, meaningless to the gentleman on the scaffold and in Sing Sing who pursues the fleeing phantom of happiness with the jimmy of the burglar and the dagger of the assassin.

Men are not created equal physically, morally, or intellectually, nor in aptitude, opportunity, nor condition.

It is perhaps accurate to say that of the fifteen hundred million inhabitants of the earth no two are created equal. Nature is incapable of uniformity, and detests equality as much as she abhors a vacuum. One is made to honor, another to dishonor, as one star differeth from another star in glory.

History is a series of repetitions. Those who have failed in life blame everybody but themselves. The complaint against fate is as old as Adam. It will end only with the epitaph of humanity. The distinctions between men were established by act of God, and they cannot be abolished by act of Congress.

Were all these panaceas enacted into statutes, all barriers thrown down, all obstacles removed, all burdens lifted, and the whole constituency lined up for a fresh start, the result would be the same.

Were all wealth of the country equally distributed, there would be about \$1,200 *per capita*. Could the assets of the Nation be divided *pro rata*, share and share alike, the first day of January, 1900, by the close of the century the soul of the philanthropist would be shocked by the same spectacle of inequality existing now. Some would be in the cab, some on the foot-board, some in private cars, and others walking the ties in search of a dry culvert for the night, and in six months more the reformer of the wrongs of society would demand in the name of justice another division.

It seems trite and superfluous to affirm that the equality of man can mean nothing more than the equality of rights before just laws and equality of opportunity in the race of

life. Every man has the absolute right to the use of his faculties and opportunities to the utmost to better his condition and increase his fortune so long as he does not interfere with the free exercise of the same rights by everybody else.

It should be apparent also upon the most superficial reflection that political liberty by maintaining equality of rights must inevitably result in greater inequality of condition than any other system. All fetters are cast off. Everything goes. Life is a grand free-for-all. There is no pedigree, nor caste, nor prerogative. The sway-backed mule has the same rights on the track as Ormonde and Iroquois, the monarchs of the turf. The petted canary and the screaming jay have equal rights in the atmosphere with the condor soaring above the inaccessible peak of Chimborazo or the frigate bird that sleeps at midnight with pinions outspread upon the tempest, a thousand leagues from shore.

In the exercise of his powers and the enjoyment of freedom can laws assign any frontier beyond which a man may not pass? In the kingdom of knowledge can any bound be set to learning and wisdom? Can society say to Edison or Tesla, "You shall explore the mysteries of Nature no further, lest you infringe the equality of man"?

Can we say what reward they shall receive for the inestimable benefits they have conferred upon the world?

Can legislators, or conventions, or tribunals assess the wages that Melba shall receive for her songs, or Kipling for his stories, or Choate for his argument, or Bryan for his eloquence, or Irving for his impersonations?

The world is eager for excellence. It pays for what it wants. There has been no time when the man or woman who can do

anything better than anybody else was so sure of instant recognition and ample emolument as now. It is the essential corollary to liberty that courage, energy, sagacity, and dexterity should succeed and that brains should win the victories and secure the prizes of life. Reason rebels at the thought of the establishment of arbitrary restrictions upon the activity of our powers and the full enjoyment of their acquisitions.

The time will never come when the race will not be to the swift and the battle to the strong. Indolence will never have the same wage as thrift nor ignorance the same reward as wisdom.

Ambition will never lose its incentive nor genius its supremacy. Poverty and debt will never be abolished by edict, nor will those who have failed in life, having had equal opportunity, take charge of the affairs of those who have succeeded. The dreams of Jack Cade and his kindred reformers will never be realized.

The popular notion now seems to be that there is just so much wealth in the world; that life is a struggle to see who shall grab the most, and that the man who acquires a fortune has obtained by crime what belongs to someone else.

No mistake could be greater. The acquisition of a million by invention; by ministering to new wants; by novel applications in science to the needs of daily life; by enterprise and skill in mining, agriculture, and manufactures, is practically the creation of wealth—the development of value that but for the exertions of its possessors would have had no existence.

The prosperous do not complain. The strong can take care of themselves. It is the feeble who must be lifted up and supported, and to them the State owes its obligations. It must protect the weak from oppression, the poor from extortion,

the humble from injustices. It must secure universal diffusion of civil and political rights, with vigorous guarantees for the security of life, liberty, and property. It must provide education for the ignorant, refuge for the defective, asylum for the helpless, and give every man an equal chance to "get there" if he can. If he gets left, his name is "Dennis."

Pompey buys a brush, whitewashes a fence, and earns fifty cents.

Millet, with the same outlay, paints "The Angelus," which sells for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

So long as Pompey has the right to paint "The Angelus" and Millet the right to whitewash the fence, neither has just ground for complaint. They have equal opportunity and must be content.

But if a number of gentlemen combine and buy up all the brushes, and the lime, and the pigments, so that Pompey cannot whitewash nor Millet paint without their consent, both may justly claim that they have been deprived of their birth-right and are subject to degrading bondage and servitude.

It seems inequitable that Patti should receive fifteen hundred dollars for a song, while the seamstress earns fifteen cents for a day's work making shirts in a sweat-shop. But if every woman had the voice of the *prima donna*, and only one woman in the world could make shirts, the situation would be reversed. The condition of the shirt-maker cannot be ameliorated by changing political institutions, or methods of taxation, or by nationalizing manufactures. If wages are to be increased, the number of seamstresses must be diminished or people must wear more shirts.

The argument of Henry George for the abolition of private ownership of land is that value is given to land by the landless.

The same is true of everything else. The value of all property comes from those who want it and do not have it. The value of shirts is given to them by the shirtless; the value of diamonds, by the diamondless; the value of railroads, by those who want to travel.

The future will be richer than the past. Vast as has been the progress of the race, there are greater triumphs to be won by those that have eyes to see and ears to hear.

The medicine for the ills of society must be found, therefore, in individual cultivation and development, and the ultimate appeal must be to conscience and intelligence to protect liberty from the folly of its friends and the fury of its foes.