

HALLUCINATIONS OF DESPAIR.

The gentleman who said the love of money was the root of all evil either had the epigram habit, and was the unconscious dupe of his own exaggerations, or else he spoke without reflection and from insufficient data.

It was a hasty generalization which omitted from the catalogue of the generic causes of evil the love of power and glory, the hunger for fame, the passion for woman and the grape, the appetite for knowledge that is forbidden.

There was no money in Eden. Adam drew no checks. Eve ran no bills. Evil in plenty exists among those who are not disturbed by the volume or the ratio of their circulating medium. But even were the aphorism of the moralist true, which it is not, it would be no discredit to money. In a successful universe evil is quite as indispensable as good. It keeps the procession going. Without evil progress would cease.

It is the contest between the forces which would destroy, and those that would uphold which keeps the planets in their orbits and hangs the constellations in the firmament.

Without temptation virtue would expire from lack of exercise. Were evil extinct, there would no longer be any pretext for religion, nor any throne for the sovereign of the moral kingdom. Singing psalms, waving palm branches, and taking constitutionals along the golden streets of the

New Jerusalem would become monotonous if hell were abolished. To paraphrase Voltaire, were there no devil, it would be necessary for man to invent one. But this another story.

Perhaps by the love of money the polemic meant the sordid desire of wealth for its own sake, or for the purchase of guilty pleasures or the accomplishment of wicked designs.

But the utmost ingenuity of the glossarian cannot change the fact that among all sources of earthly power the most potent, palpable, and beneficent is that which accompanies the possession of money honestly acquired and honorably employed.

Some care nothing for ambition or renown, but every one must have money—manhood may forget the joys of youth and age sink into an apathy which is indifferent alike to the allurements of pleasure and the intoxication of success, but no one is so young or so old as not to want money. The necessity for cash begins with the germ and ends with the period at the end of the epitaph.

The praises of poverty have been pronounced by the rich. Seneca wrote the eulogy of poverty on a table of gold, but nobody wants to be poor. Some philosopher has said that the way to have what you want is to want what you have; and another, that it is better not to wish for a thing than to have it; but money still remains the universal object of chief desire. The reason is obvious. For the individual, money means education, travel, books, leisure, superiority to the accidents of life, comely apparel, in health the best cook, in sickness the most skillful physician, the happiness of those beloved, the luxury of doing good. For society it means libraries, museums, parks, galleries of art, hospitals, universities,

comfort for the unfortunate, splendor for the rich, everything that distinguishes civilization from barbarism.

The aggregated wealth of the United States is estimated to be about seventy-five hundred million dollars. Divided equally per capita, each person would have in the neighborhood of twelve hundred dollars, and the idea seems to be gaining ground that every man who has more than this is to that degree culpable in that he is feloniously in possession of what morally belongs to someone else.

All questions in our system, except those of theology, are political, and come at last to the ballot box for decision. It is a government of numbers, and the majority have less than twelve hundred dollars apiece. As things are going on now, the time is not far off when the man with a hundred millions may be required to show his title, and if there is any flaw, to make restitution.

Some with much less apparently anticipate the crisis, and are already making contributions to the conscience fund of the nation, announcing that it is discreditable for any man to die rich. The millionaires are on the defensive. They are beginning to apologize. Some are expatriating, which is an involuntary tribute to public opinion. Indifferent to statutes, human or divine, they dread the daily newspaper and the verdict of the people. They belong to that class, engendered by superfluous wealth, among whom education has degenerated into flippant pedantry; religion into shallow mysticism; politics into a vague passion for aristocracy; society into a languid mob of sycophants, the parasites of English pederasts and French grisettes, with the spirit of Uriah Heep and the morals of Robert Macaire.

For whatever hatred and exasperation there are against

wealth in the United States its possessors are directly responsible. They have brought it upon themselves by their senseless greed and folly and rapacity. Great rewards for great services is the law of our race. No genuine American grudges the fortune acquired by industry, courage, enterprise, forethought, and genius in fair competition and honest rivalry, whether it be a million or a hundred million. He does not believe that any limit can be fixed for individual acquisition, nor that the wealth of the rich is the cause of the poverty of the poor, nor in taking from those who have and giving to those who have not. Least of all does he accept those vagaries of the impotent, which would deprive ambition of its incentive and labor of its reward, and instead of lifting all to the level of the highest, would drag all down to the standard of the lowest.

The Osage tribe of Indians, whose fertile reservation lies between Kansas and the Creek country, is the richest community in the world. Their per capita of wealth is more than ten times greater than that of the most opulent civilized nation.

They number about 1,500. They have in the United States Treasury nearly eight million dollars, derived mainly from the sale of superfluous lands, drawing interest at the rate of 7 per cent. They own in addition nearly one million five hundred thousand acres of woodland, farms, and pastures, worth not less than ten dollars an acre.

Each Osage Indian, man, woman, and child, is worth at least fifteen thousand dollars. Every family, upon a division, would possess on an average sixty thousand dollars. It is held and owned in common. All their industries are "nationalized." The Government takes care of their property, superintends their education and religion, provides food and cloth-

ing, protects the weak from the aggressions of the strong, and abolishes as far as it may the injustice of destiny. All have equal rights; none have special privileges. They toil not, neither do they spin. The problems of existence are solved for them. The rate of wages, the hours of labor, the unearned increment, the rapacity of the monopolist, the wrongs of the toiler, the howl of the demagogue do not disturb nor perplex them. They have ample leisure for intellectual cultivation and development, for communion with Nature and for the contemplation of art, for the joys of home, but they remain—Osage Indians.

Socialism and communism are the prescriptions of those who have failed. They are the hallucinations of despair. They have been tried and found wanting. Instead of being novelties, they are the refuse and débris of history. Civilization has been built on their ruins.