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ERRICO MALATESTA
A TALK ABOUT ANARCHIST COMMUNISM BETWEEN TWO WORKERS





Errico Malatesta

A Talk About Anarchist Communism Between Two Workers

Written 1884, in Italian, as Fra Contadini
Source theanarchistlibrary.org

Malatesta wrote this dialogue in 1884 as *Fra Contadini*. The title means Between Peasants, and the original talk is between two farm workers. It has been translated and reprinted ever since.

In this English version, young Jack comes home from the town and talks old William around, one objection at a time. The part headings are added to help you find your place.

The gentlefolks' property
Who will give us work?
Will anybody work?
All at once, or bit by bit?
Laws, republics and votes
Thieves and robbers
Socialist, Communist, Anarchist

Notes

remedy which would cure them, how can he stand inactive, if he has any heart at all? If a man does not know the truth, he cannot be blamed; but the man who knows it and set it on one side is a heartless coward.

WILLIAM You are right. I'm going to think very seriously indeed over what you've said. And when I'm thoroughly convinced in my own mind that it's true, I shall join the party, and do all I can to spread the sacred truth. And if the gentlefolks should call me a scoundrel or a fool, I will tell them to work and suffer as I do, and then they will have a right to speak.

Part 1

The gentlefolks' property

WILLIAM Ah Jack, is that you? I'm glad to meet you. I've been wanting a talk with you for a long time. Oh, Jack! Jack! What have I heard about you! When you lived in the country you were a good lad, quite an example to the young fellows of your age—If your poor father were alive—

JACK William, why are you speaking to me like this? What have I done that you reproach me? And why would my poor father have been dissatisfied with me?

WILLIAM Don't be offended at my words, Jack. I am an old man and I speak for your good. And besides I was such friends with old Andrew, your father, that I am as vexed to see you go astray as though you were my own son, especially when I think of the hopes your father had of you and the sacrifices he made to leave you a good name.

JACK But William, what are you talking about? Am I not an honest working man? I've never done any harm to any one, and excuse me if I say that I've always done as much good as I could; so why should my father have been ashamed of me? I do my best to learn and improve, and my mater and I are trying to hit upon a remedy for the evils which afflict us all; how then have I deserved that you should pitch in it me like this?

WILLIAM Ah, that is just it! I know well enough that you work and help your neighbors. You're a good sort of chap; everybody in the countryside says that of you. But it is none the less true that you have been in prison several times, and people say that you

are watched by the police, and that even to be seen with you is enough to get one into trouble. I'm maybe making things awkward for myself this very moment. But I wish you well, and I will speak to you all the same. Jack, listen to the advice of an old man; believe me you had best leave politics to the gentlemen who have nothing to do, and only trouble yourself about working and doing what is right. That is the way to live peaceably and happily; if you don't you will be lost, body and soul. Listen to me and give up your bad company; for it is that, as everyone knows, that leads poor lads astray.

JACK Believe me, William, my companions are first-rate fellows; the bread they eat is watered with their sweat and sometimes with their tears. Leave the masters to speak ill of them; men who would like to suck the last drop of our blood, and then treat us as black-guards and jail-birds if we try to better ourselves and escape from their tyranny. My companions and I have been in prison, it is true, but it was for a good cause; we shall go again, and perhaps something worse may befall us, but it will be for the good of all, and because we wish to destroy injustice and misery. You who have toiled all your life and suffered like us from hunger—you who perhaps will have to go into a workhouse to die when you can toil no longer—you, at least, ought not to put yourself on the side of the gentlefolks and the government and fall upon those who try to improve the lot of the poor.

WILLIAM My dear boy, I know that the world goes on very badly, but to try to change it is like trying to straighten the legs of a bandy-legged dog. So let us take things as they are, and pray God that at least we may never be in want of a crust of bread. There have always been rich and poor, and we, who are born to labor, ought to work and be contented with what God sends us,

to a consciousness of their rights, and rouse in them the spirit of revolt; to urge them on to make the social revolution, *i.e.*, to destroy all government and to put all existing wealth in common. Any one who accepts this programme and wishes to join others in striving for it, belongs to this party. The party has no head, no authority; it is entirely founded on spontaneous and voluntary agreement amongst those who are fighting for the same cause. Therefore, each individual that belongs to it is completely free to join in intimate companionship with those he prefers, to use such means as he thinks best, and to spread his own particular ideas in his own particular way, so long, of course, as he does not thereby oppose the general programme and tactics of the party.

WILLIAM Then are all who accept Socialistic, Anarchic, Revolutionary principles members of this party?

JACK No. A man may perfectly agree with our programme, but, for one reason or another, may prefer to act alone, or with a few others, without forming connections of effective solidarity and cooperation with the mass of those who accept the programme. This may be suitable for certain individuals, or for certain special purposes, but it cannot be the general method, because isolation is a cause of weakness, and creates antipathy and rivalry where there ought to be fraternity and concord. Still in every way we always consider as friends and comrades the men and women who are striving in any fashion for the idea for which we strive. But again there may be folks convinced of the truth of the idea, but keeping their convictions to themselves, not taking the trouble to spread what they believe is right. One can't say that such folks are not Socialists and Anarchists theoretically, because they think as we do; but their convictions certainly must be very weak, or they themselves very poor spirited. When a man sees the terrible evils that afflict himself and his fellows, and believes he knows a

Men will hardly have become masters of their own destinies before solidarity will grow up amongst them.

WILLIAM That is just is. So you are a Socialist, and amongst Socialists you are specifically a Communist and an Anarchist. But I have heard say too that you are an Internationalist. What does that mean?

JACK Did you ever hear of the International Working Men's Association? About thirty years ago, a great association was formed amongst the workmen of all civilized countries, to take counsel together about the wrongs which the workers of every land alike suffer from the exploitation of property-owners, and to act together so as to bring about a universal social revolution. For, in every country which has reached our stage of civilization, the workers are exploited in much the same way, and the ruling classes are banded together to keep the masses down. Therefore, the common interests of the workers of all lands are far stronger than their national differences, and it is only by acting in common, as their exploiters act in common, that they can throw off the yoke of capitalism. The International Working Men's Association no longer exists. Nevertheless, the great labour movements which agitate the workers have arisen from it. Also the carious Socialist parties in different countries, specifically the International Socialist Anarchist Revolutionary Party, which is now organising to give the death blow to the middle-class society of to-day. The aim of this party is of do everything to spread the principles of Anarchist Socialism; to show how hopeless it is to look to voluntary concessions from property owners or governments, or to gradual constitutional reforms; to awaken the people

otherwise we disturb the public peace and injure our own character.

JACK Our character! Look at these gentlefolks, as you call them. First of all, they take everything from us, and make us toil like beast of burden to earn a crust of bread, whilst they are living luxuriously and idly on the sweat of our brow, and then, if we don't submit cheerfully to see them growing fat at our expense, the say we are a bad, dishonest lot, the policeman comes and drags us to prison and the clergyman sends us to hell. I tell you what, William, the real rascals and bad characters are those who live by oppression, those who have taken possession of everything under the sun and have ground down the workers until they are like a flock of sheep, quietly allowing themselves to be shorn and slaughtered. And you, you have never sucked the life-blood out of your fellow-men, do you take the part of people who do such things, do you turn upon us? Isn't it enough for them to have the Government to back them up? Government is made by the rich for the benefit of the rich and is bound to be on their side, but must the workers, our own brothers turn against us just because we want them to have bread and freedom? Ah! If it weren't that I remember all the long ages of misery and servitude and degraded habits the poor have suffered, I should say that the worst people of all, those who have the least of the dignity of man, are the poor who let themselves be made the tools of the oppressors of humanity. As for us, at least we are risking the bit of bread and shred of liberty we have so that we may bring about a state of things in which all may be happy.

WILLIAM Well, all sounds very fine; but you know, my lad, that without the fear of God no good thing is possible and we must all submit to His will.

JACK Now, William, if we are going to talk reasonable, do let us leave God out of the question, because the name of God is used as a pretext and justification by all those that are trying to deceive and oppress their fellow men. Kings pretend that God has given them the right to reign, and when two kings dispute about the crown of a country, they both pretend to hold their commissions from God. Nevertheless God gives the victory to him who has most soldiers or the best arms. The proprietor, the exploiter, the monopolist, all speak of God. The Catholic priest, the Protestant, the Jewish, the Turkish, all alike call themselves the representative of God, and it is in the name of God that they make war upon one another and try to bring grist each one to his own mill. They all seem to think that God has given everything to them and condemned us all to misery and grinding toil. They are to have Paradise in this world and the next too; but we are to have Hell in this life, and only to have Paradise in the next if here we are obedient slaves. Now if you come and tell me that God has really willed and desired such and arrangements this, I can only say that he is a very wicked one. Lest every one believe as he thinks right, but when we are discussing the state of things in this world, let us stick to what we know something about and see if it isn't possible to get a little happiness in this life for ourselves and our fellowmen; for you know that the parson himself says that all men are God's children and therefore brothers.

WILLIAM 'Pon my word, young man, since you've been to the town and take to reading and writing, you've got a way of speaking that would puzzle a lawyer. But now tell me, is it really true, as they say, that you want to steal all the property of ay one who has got any?

JACK Good! Now at last we've come to the point. No, that is not true, we don't want to steal anything whatsoever. What we do

right to the materials and instruments of labour. Though it is truth that this solution is not completely satisfactory. The individuals put out of the association would be deprived of many social advantages, which an isolated person or group must do without, because they can only be procured by the cooperation of a great number of human beings. But what would you have? These malcontents cannot fairly demand that the wishes of many others should be sacrificed for their sakes. Given solidarity, fraternity, mutual aid, and, where needful, mutual consideration and support, and you may be convinced that civil tyranny or war will not arise. Rest assured rather, that men will hardly have become masters of their own destinies before solidarity will grow up amongst them. For tyranny and civil war work evil to all, and solidarity is the only condition in which our ideals can be realized, and which will bring with it peace, prosperity, and universal freedom. Note too that progress, while it rends always to unite men, tends also to render them more independent and self-sufficing. For example, to-day, to ravel rapidly over land, it is necessary to make use of the railway, the construction and working of which require the collective labour of many persons. Therefore the traveler will still, under Anarchy, be obliged to adapt his arrangements to the ours and regulations which the majority have thought best. If, however, someone invents a locomotive which one man can guide, without danger to himself or others, on any street, then he will not need to adapt himself in this matter to the arrangements of other folks, and every one will be able to travel where and when he pleases. So it is with thousands of other things that are, or that will be in the future. Thus it is clear that the tendency of progress is towards a certain relation between men, which may be defined by the formula *Moral Solidarity and Material Independence*.

Practically, we must do as best we can. If we cannot obtain unanimity, those who agree and are the majority will carry out their idea, within the limits of their own group, and if experience shows they were right, there is no doubt but that they will be imitated. If not, it is a proof that the minority were in the right, and action will be taken accordingly. Thus the principles of equality and justice, upon which society ought to be founded, will not be violated. But remark that the questions upon which people cannot come to an agreement will be small in number and importance, because there will no longer be the division of interests which exists to-day. For each will then be free to choose his country and the association, *i.e.*, the companions with whom he likes to live. Also the matters to be decided will be things every one can understand, belonging rather to practical life and positive science than to the domain of theory with this endless differences of opinion. When the best solution of such and such a problem has been arrived at by experience, the question will be how to persuade folks by practically showing them the thing, not how to crush them under a majority of votes. Would you not laugh if to-day citizens were called upon to vote the season for sowing seed, when it is a matter already settled by experience? And if it were not yet entirely fixed, would you have recourse to a vote to decide it, rather than to experience? All public and private affairs will be treated like this.

WILLIAM But what if some out of mere pigheadedness and self-will should oppose a decision made in the interests of all?

JACK Then, of course, it would be needful to take forcible action. For if it is unjust that the majority should oppress the minority, the contrary would be quite as unjust; and if the minority has a right to rebel, the majority has a right to defend itself. But do not forget that always and everywhere all men have an undeniable

wish is that the People should take the property of the rich and make it common, for the benefit to all. That would not be stealing, the People would simply be taking again what is their own.

WILLIAM What! Do you mean to say that the gentlefolks' property is ours?

JACK Certainly; it is our property; it is everybody's property. Who gave it to the rich people? How have they earned it? What right had they to seize upon it and what right have they to keep it?

WILLIAM But their ancestors have left it to them.

JACK And who gave it to their ancestors? Look here now; the strongest and the luckiest took advantage of their strength or their luck to take possession of everything and so forced the others to work for them; and not satisfied with living in idleness themselves, oppressing and starving the greater part of their contemporaries, they must needs leave their sons and grandsons the fortune they have usurped, thus condemning future generations to be the slaves of their descendants; though now these descendants have become so enfeebled by indolence and the long exercise of power, that they could never do to-day what their forefathers did long ago. Does all this seem to you just?

WILLIAM Well, no; not if they got their wealth by force. But the gentlefolks say that they got their wealth from labour, and it does not seem fair to me to take away from any man what he has worked for.

JACK Always the same old story! People who do not work and never have worked, are for ever speaking in the name of labour! But tell me; Who produced the earth, metals, coal, stone and so forth, by his labour? Or how did these things come to exist? Isn't

it a fact that we all find them when we come into the world, that therefore we all ought to be able to make use of them? What would you say if the rich people thought to take possession of the air for their own use, and only to give us a little, and that the most impure, making us pay them for the use of it with our toil? Now the only difference between the earth and the air is that they have been able to lay hold of and divide the earth, while they could not do this with the air, but believe me that, if the thing were possible, they would deal with the air just as they do with the land.

WILLIAM True; that's right enough. The land and all the things that nobody has made ought to belong to all. But there are things that have not come of themselves.

JACK Certainly, there are things that are made by man's work and the land itself would be worth very little if it were not cleared by the hand of man. But in common fairness these things should belong to those who produce them. By what miracle does it happen that they are in the possession of exactly those people who are doing another and have never done anything?

WILLIAM But the gentlefolks state that their fathers have worked and made savings.

JACK And they ought to say, on the contrary, that their fathers have made others work without paying them, just as is done today. History teaches us that the lot of the worker has continually been wretched and that he who has honestly laboured without taking advantage of his neighbor has never been able to lay by any considerable savings. Generally he has not been able to get enough to keep him from need. Look at what is going on before you eyes. Does not all that the workers produce go into the hands of the masters? A man spends a few pounds on an uncul-

they are understood by politicians, are a difficult art for us, because in good earnest they have nothing to do with the people's real interests. But if their end was to satisfy the actual needs of the population, when they would be more difficult for an M.P. than for us. What can M.P.'s residing in London know of the needs of the country districts? How can these folks, who have mostly wasted their time in trying to learn Greek and Latin, which they don't know after all, understand the interests of the various crafts and industries? Things would go very differently if each busied himself with what he knows about and he needs he has ascertained on his own account. When once the revolution has taken place, we shall have to begin at the bottom, so to speak. Under the influence of the propaganda and the enthusiasm of the time, the various trades in each district, parish, or town, will form associations. And who can understand better than you the interests of your own trade and your own locality. Afterwards, when it is desirable to bring several trades or several districts to a common agreement, delegates from each will carry the wishes of those who have sent them to a special congress, and do their best to reconcile the diverse needs and wishes. But their deliberations will always be submitted to the control and approbation of their principals, so that the interests of the people will not be neglected. Thus gradually the human race will be brought into harmony.

WILLIAM But how shall we manage if in a country or an association there are some who are of a different opinion from the rest? The larger number will be sure to have the upper hand, won't they?

JACK Not by right. For as regards truth and justice, numbers ought to go for nothing. One may be in the right against a hundred, against a hundred thousand, against every body.

needful to commission someone else to carry out our decisions, we will ask him to do so and so, and not otherwise. If there is something which can't be done right off, we will commission capable persons to look into it, study it and let us know what they think had better be done. But, at all events, nothing will be done on our behalf without our will. And thus our delegates will not be individuals to whom we have given the right to command us and impose laws upon us. They will be persons chosen for their capacity, who will have no authority, but simply be charged with the duty of executing what the people have decided upon. For example, some will be charged to organize schools, others to make streets, or look after the exchange of produce, just as to-day a shoe-maker is asked to make a pair of shoes.

WILLIAM Pray explain a little more. How could I, a poor, ignorant old fellow, undertake all the business which is done by M.P.'s and ministers?

JACK And what good do these M.P.'s and ministers do, that you should bemoan yourself for not being able to do the like? They make laws and organize the public might to keep the people down, in the interest of the property-owners. That's all. It is a skill we do not need. True, the ministers and M.P.'s do busy themselves about good and useful things, but only to turn them to the profit of a class and hinder progress by means of useless and vexatious enactments. For instance, these gentry busy themselves about railways; but why should they? Would not the engineers, mechanics, and workmen of all sorts be enough? And would not the locomotives run just the same if ministers, M.P.'s, shareholders, and other parasites disappeared? It is just the same with the post and telegraph office, navigation, education, hospitals, all things carried on by workers of one sort or another, with whom the government only interferes to do harm. Politics, as

tivated bit of marshy ground, puts some men there to work and gives them scarcely enough to live on, whilst he stays quietly in town and does nothing. A few years after, this bit of waste land is a garden, with a hundred times its original value. The sons of the proprietor will inherit this fortune and say they are enjoying the fruits of their father's labour; whilst the sons of the men who really toiled and suffered there will continue to toil and suffer. What do you think of that?

Does not all that the workers produce go into the hands of the masters?

WILLIAM But if, as you say, the world really has always been thus, there is nothing to be done and the employers cannot help it.

JACK Well, I am ready to admit everything in favour of the gentry. Let us suppose that the holders of property are all sons of people who have worked and made savings and he the workers are all sons of idle spendthrifts. This is obviously ridiculous, you understand; but even if things actually were so, would there be any justice at all in the present social organization? If you work and I am a lazy dog, it is right enough I should be punished for my laziness; but this is no reason that my sons, who may be honest working men, should be worked to death and famished to keep your sons in idleness and plenty.

WILLIAM All that is very fine, and I don't say to the contrary, but then the gentlefolks have got the property, and, when all's said and done, we must be grateful to them, because if it weren't for them people could not get a living.

JACK If they have the wealth it is because they have taken it by force and have increased it by pocketing the fruit of other people's labour. But they may chance to lose it the same way as it was gained. Until now men have been fighting with one another; they have been trying to snatch the bread out of one another's mouths, and each has esteemed himself happy if he could subjugate his fellow and use him for a beast of burden. But it is time this state of things was put an end to. We gain nothing by fighting with one another; the only harvest we have reaped is poverty, slavery, crime, prostitution, and now and again, those blood-lettings called wars and revolutions. If instead we could come to a mutual agreement, love and aid each other, we should see no more of these evils; there would no longer be some people with a great deal and others with nothing at all, and we should all be trying to make every one as well off as possible. Of course I know that the rich, who are accustomed to rule and to live without working, will not hear of a change of system. We shall act accordingly. If they come to understand that there ought no longer to be hate and inequality between men, and that all ought to work, so much the better; if, on the contrary, they claim a right to continue to enjoy the fruits of their own and their fathers' violence and robbery, so much the worse for them: they have taken what they possess by force, and by force we shall take it from them. If the poor know how to come to an understanding, they are stronger than the rich.

Part 2

Who will give us work?

JACK Neither money nor anything in its place. Nothing but a register of what is needed and of what is produced, so that production may be kept up the level of need. The only serious difficulty would be if many men refuses to work. But I have already told you the reasons why work, which to-day is a hardship, would then become a pleasure, and, at the same time, a moral obligation from which very few would wish to relieve themselves. Besides, if, in consequence of the bad education we have had, some individuals should refuse to work when the new society begins, they can be left outside the community and given raw material and tools. Then, if they want to eat, they will set to work. But at this moment what we have to realize is that the soil, raw material and instruments of labour, houses and all existing wealth must be put in common. As for the method of organization, the people will do as they please. Practice only will show them the best system. It is easy to foresee that in many places they will establish Collectivism and in many others Communism. When both have been put to the proof, the better will be widely adopted. But mind, the chief thing is that nobody should begin to order the others about or to appropriate the soil or instruments of labour. It will be necessary to b eon the watch, and if this is attempted, to prevent it, even by force of arms. The rest will follow naturally of itself.

WILLIAM That too I understand. But, tell me, what does the word *Anarchism* mean?

JACK *Anarchy* means *without government*. I've told you already that government is good for nothing but to defend the middle-class, and that, where our interests are in question, the best thing we can do is to look after them ourselves. Instead of electing M.P.'s and County Councillors to make and unmake laws for us to obey, we will discuss our affairs ourselves, and when it is

of one the ill of all. Thus envy and hatred are kept afar off and a mutual affection is developed, which never exists in a family where there are divided interests. That is what is called solidarity. We must establish amongst mankind the same relations as exist in a truly united family.

WILLIAM I understand that. But let us return to what we were speaking of. Tell me, are you a Collectivist or a Communist?

JACK As for me, I am a Communist, because if people are going to be friends, I believe they ought not to be friends by halves. Collectivism leaves the germs of rivalry and hatred still in existence. But I go further. Even if each could live on what he produces himself, Collectivism would be inferior to Communism, because it would keep men isolated, and so lessen their strength and their sympathy. Besides, as the shoe-maker can't eat his shoes, nor the blacksmith live on iron, and as the agriculturalist cannot till the soil without the workers who prepare iron, manufacture implements, etc., it will be necessary to organize exchange between the various producers, keeping a reckoning of what each ones. Then it will necessarily happen that the shoe maker, for instance, will try to puff the value of his shoes and get as much money as he can in exchange, whilst the agriculturalist, on his side, will give him as little as possible. How the devil can we manage will all this? Collectivism seems to me to give rise to many difficult problems and be a system likely to lead to confusion. Communism, on the contrary, will not give rise to any difficulties. If all work, and all enjoy of the work of all, it only remains to see what are the things needed to satisfy every body and to arrange that these things shall be produced in plenty.

WILLIAM So under Communism no money would be wanted.

WILLIAM But when there are no more gentlefolks how shall we manage to live? Who will give us work?

JACK What a question! Why you see what happens every day; that it is you who dig, plough, sow, reap, you who thresh the corn, who feed the beasts, who make the butter and cheese, and yet you ask me how we shall live without the gentlefollks? Ask me rather how the gentry would manage to live without us, poor fools of working men in town and country, who slave to clothe and feed them. A moment ago you wanted us to be grateful to the employers because they enable us to live. Don't you understand that it is they who are living on your work and that every bit of bread they eat is taken from your children, every fine present they make their wives means the poverty, hunger, cold, even perhaps the prostitution of yours? What do these gentlefolks produce? Nothing. Therefore what they consume is taken from the workers. Suppose all agricultural labourers disappeared to-morrow; there would be no one to till the ground and every one would be starved. If the shoemakers disappeared, there would be no more shoes; if the masons vanished, there would be no one to build houses, and so forth. If each class of workers failed, one after anther, with each a branch of production would disappear and men have to do without some useful or necessary things. But what harm would it do us to be rid of the gentry! It would be like the disappearance of the locusts.

WILLIAM Yes, it really is we who produce everything; but how could I, for instance, grow corn if I had neither land nor beasts nor seed? I am sure there is nothing for us but to be dependent upon the employers.

JACK Come now, William, do we understand one another or not? I have told you already what we must take from the masters

what is needful to enable us to work and live, land, tools, seed and all. I know very well that as long as the land and instruments of labour belong to the masters, the workers must always be in subjection and will reap naught but slavery and poverty. This is just why the very first thing to do is to take away property from the middle-class; without that the world will never mend.

WILLIAM You are right, you did say so. But all this is so new that I get quite lost. Now explain a bit how you would do. What would be done with this property taken from the rich? It would be divided, I suppose?

JACK No, no, nothing of the sort. If you hear any one say that we want to divide up property and take the place of those who have it now, you may rely upon it that he does not know what he is talking about or is a scoundrel.

WILLIAM Well then, I don't understand in the least.

JACK And yet it is plain enough; we simply wish to put everything in common. We start with the principle that every one ought to work and every one ought to be as well off as possible. A man can't live in this world without work; if he does not work himself he must live upon the labour of others, which is unjust and hurtful. But of course you must understand that hen I say that all must work, I mean all those who can do; cripples, invalids, and old people ought to be supported by society, because human feeling forbids us to let any one suffer; and besides we all grow old, and we are all liable to become crippled or sickly at any time, and so may those who are dear to us. Now if you think it over carefully, you will see that all wealth, that is to say all things which are useful to man, can be divided into two sorts. One, which includes land, machinery and all instruments of labour, iron, wood, stone, the means of transport, etc., etc., is ab-

plied wants of the members of the community. The Communists say: Men must love each other and look on each other as members of one family, if things are to go well with them. Property ought to be common. Work, if it is to be as productive as possible and the aid of machinery employed to the uttermost, must be done by large parties of workers. If we are to make the most of all varieties of soil and atmospheric condition and produce in each locality what that locality can produce best, and it, on the other hand, we are to avoid competition and hared between divers countries, it is needful to establish perfect solidarity between the men of the whole world. Therefore, instead of running the risk of making a confusion in trying to distinguish what you and I each do, let us all work and put everything in common. In this way each will give to society all that his strength permits until enough is produced for every one; and each will take all that he needs, limiting his needs only in those things of which there is not yet plenty for every one.

WILLIAM Not so fast! First of all, what do you mean by *Solidarity*? You say there ought to be solidarity between men and I don't know what you mean.

JACK Look here: in your family, for instance, all that you and your brothers, your wife and your son earn you put in common. You get some food and you eat altogether, and if there is not enough you all pinch yourselves a bit. If one of you is lucky and gains the more than usual, it is a good thing for every one. If, on the contrary, one is out of work or ill, it is a misfortune for you all; for certainly amongst yourselves the one who is not working eats all the same at the common board, and the one who falls ill costs more than any body else. So in your family, instead of trying to take work and bread away from each other, you try to aid each other, because the good of one is the good of all, and the ill

labour, belong to a few individuals, who thus are able to dispose of the lives of all the working class, and find themselves involved in perpetual struggle and competition, not only with the proletariat (those who have nothing), but also amongst themselves, for the possession of property. The Socialists believe that by abolishing private property, i.e., the cause, they will at the same time abolish poverty, the effect. This property can and ought to be abolished; for the organization and distribution of wealth ought to be regulated by the real interests of men, without regard for the so-called :acquired rights," which the middle-class claim for themselves, because their ancestors were stronger, more lucky, or more knavish than other men. So you see the name *Socialist* betokens all those who wish that social wealth should be at the service for all men, and that there should no longer be property-owners and proletarians, rich and poor, employers and employed.

WILLIAM Then you are a Socialist, that's sure. But what do the words *Communist* and *Collectivist* mean?

JACK Both Communists and Collectivists are Socialists, but they have different ideas as to what ought to be done when property shall be put in common. The Collectivists say: Each worker, or rather each association of workers, has a right to raw material and the instruments of labour and each man is master of the produce of his own toil. Whilst he lives he does what he likes with it; when he does anything he has put on one side returns to the association. His children, in their turn, have the means of working and of enjoying the fruit of their labour; to let them inherit anything would be a fist step towards inequality and privilege. As regards instruction, the education of children, the maintenance of the aged and infirm, and public works in general, each association of workers must give what is needed to supply the unsup-

solutely necessary to enable us to work and ought to be put in common for every one to work with. As to the method of working, we shall see about that later. I believe it would be best to work in common, because in that way one produces more with less fatigue, and, in many trades, if each person had to work separately, we should have to give up using machines which greatly simplify and diminish the labour of man. Besides, when human beings have no need to snatch the bread out of one another's mouths, they will not be like cats and dogs, but will take pleasure in being together. Certainly those who choose to work alone will be left to do so, the essential thing is that no one should live without working, thus compelling others to work for him; but of course that would not be likely to happen where each had a right to the material for work and would certainly not choose to make himself the servant of another. The other sort of wealth includes the things which directly serve the needs of man, like food, clothes, houses. I think these ought to be put in common and distributed in such a way that people can get on until the new harvest and until industry has supplied some new produce. As for the things that will be produced after the Revolution, when there will be no lazy employers living on the toil of famishing proletarians, the workers of each country will share them as they choose. If they are willing to work in common and to put everything in common, that will be best; in that case they will try to regulate production in such a way as to satisfy the needs of all, and consumption in such a way as to secure the greatest well-being to every one. If they do not proceed in this way, they must calculate what each produces so that each may take an amount of thing equivalent to what he has produced. This calculation is rather difficult, I think myself it is almost impossible; so the result will probably be that when they see the difficulties of proportionate distribution, they will be more inclined to accept the idea of

putting everything in common. But any way, things of the first necessity, like bread, dwellings, water and suchlike, must be secured to every one, regardless of the amount of work he may do. Whatever organization is adopted, inheritance should exist no longer, for it is not just that one should be born to wealth and another to hunger and toil. Even if we admit that each is absolute master of what he produces and may make savings on his own account, those savings ought to return to the community at his death. Children ought to be brought up and educated at the cost of all and in such a fashion as to procure them the greatest development and best attainable teaching. Without that, there can be neither justice nor equality, the principle of the right of each to the instruments of labour will be violated, for it does not suffice to give men land and machinery if they are not also put in a condition to make the best possible use of them. I do not say anything specially about women, because we think women should be the equals of men and when we speak of "men" we mean human beings without distinction of sex.

WILLIAM There is just one thing: to take the fortune of rich men who have robbed and starved the poor is all very well; but if a man by hard work and saving has put by something to buy a little field, or open a little shop, what right have you to take from him what is really the fruit of his labour?

JACK That is not an over common case in these days when capitalists and governments make a clean sweep of so much of the produce; but any way, I have told you that each person has a right to ray material and the instruments of labour and, for that reason, if a man has a bit of ground which he cultivates with his own hands, he might just as well keep it and he would be given besides all the best tools and manures and everything else he required to make it produce as much as possible. Certainly it

ing about nominating M.P.'s and County Councillors, of making common cause with any middle-class party, if he is a middle-class man, or seems as if he would like to be one, send hum about his business. Amongst those mistaken Socialists there are some who in all good faith wish to do good, and believe they are doing it; but if some one sincerely believing he is doing you good, thrashes you till you're half dead, you will think first of all how to get the stick out of his hands. The most his good intentions will do will be to stop you, when you have got the stick, from breaking his head with it.

Part 7

Socialist, Communist, Anarchist

WILLIAM Right you are! But now there's something else I want to ask you. When you say *Socialists*, what do you mean exactly? I often hear tell of Socialists, and Communists, and Collectivists, and Anarchists, and I know no more than Adam what all those words mean.

JACK Ah, I'm glad you've got on that. There's nothing like clearing up the meaning of words. Well now, Socialists are folks who believe that property is the first cause of all social ills, and that as long as poverty is not destroyed, neither ignorance, nor slavery, nor political inequality, nor prostitution, nor any of the evils which keep the people in such a horrible condition, can be rooted out; to say nothing of the frightful suffering which arises from actual want. Socialists believe that poverty results from the fact that the soil and all raw materials, machinery and all instruments of

Consider, the poor are those who work and make everything. If only one large section of them were to stop working, there would be such a to-do, such a panic, that the revolution would quickly prove to be the only possible way out. Consider too, that soldiers, for the most part are themselves poor men, driven by hunger to sell themselves to hurt and butcher their own brothers. As soon as they have seen and understood the facts, they will sympathise, at first secretly and then openly, with the people. You may be sure the revolution will not be half so difficult as it appears at first. The essential thing is to keep the idea that the revolution is necessary constantly to the fore; to be always prepared for it. If we do this, there's no doubt that somehow or another the chance to act will crop up.

WILLIAM So you say, and I believe you are right. But there are those who say that the revolution would do no good, and that things will slowly ripen of themselves. What do you say to that?

JACK You must know that since Socialism has become as serious matter, and the middle-class have begun to be really afraid of it, they have been trying in every possible way to turn aside the tempest and deceive the people. All sorts, even emperors, are beginning to say they are socialists, and I leave you to guess what such "socialism is worth." Even amongst our own comrades, there have been traitors tempted by attention from the gentlefolks, and the advantages they might gain, to desert the revolutionary cause and set themselves to preach legal means and alliance with political parties, which they say are all more or less socialistic. "We are all socialists not!" as Harcourt said in the House of Commons. Such men treat revolutionaries as fools and worse. Some of them profess still to wish for a revolution, but, meantime they wish a great deal more to be M.P's. When any one tells you that the revolution is not necessary and begins talk-

would be the best plan to put everything in common; but there will be no need to force people to do so because a like interest will urge all to adopt a communist system. Things will go better with common property and work, and very likely there may be more, which it is more convenient to use in common.

WILLIAM Machinery! The machines are what we ought to burn! It is the machines that break our arms and take away our bread. Here, in the country, as sure as a machine comes, we can reckon on our wages going down and some of us losing our work and having to go somewhere else. It must be worse in the towns. If there were no machines the gentlefolks would want our labour more and so we should live a bit better.

JACK You're right, William, to think the machines one cause of poverty and loss of work; but that happens because they belong to the rich. If they belonged to the workers, it would be just the other way; they would be the principle cause of human comfort. For after all, machines only work in our place and faster than we do. Thanks to machinery, man will not be obliged to toil for long hours to satisfy his needs, will not be condemned to painful exertion exceeding his physical strength. This is why, if machinery were applied to all branches of production and belonged to every one, a few hours of light and easy work would suffice for all the needs of consumption and each worker would have time to gain knowledge, to keep up friendly relations, in a word, to live and enjoy life, profiting by all the conquests of science and civilization. Remember, that what we have to do is to take possession of the machines, not destroy them. You may be sure the owners will do just as much to defend their machines against whose who want to destroy as against those who try to take possession of them; therefore, as there will be the same effort to make and the same risk to run in either case, it will be a downright folly to

break rather than take the machines. Would you destroy corn and hoses if they could be shared by all? Surely not! Well, we must do the same with the machines; for if in the hands of employers they are instrumental to our poverty and servitude, in our hands they will become instrumental to wealth and freedom.

Part 3

Will anybody work?

WILLIAM But if things are to go well under such a system, every body must be willing to work.

JACK Of course.

WILLIAM And suppose there are some folks that would like to live without working? Toil is a hardship, even dogs don't like it.

JACK You confuse society as it is to-day with society as it will be after the Revolution. You say that even dogs don't enjoy toil; but could you spend whole days doing nothing?

WILLIAM I? No, because I'm accustomed to work. When I've nothing to do my hands seem to itch to be after something; but there are folks who would stay all day long at the public house playing cards or lounge about with their hands in their pockets.

JACK Now-a-days, but not after the Revolution, and I will tell you why. Now-a-days work is disagreeable, ill-paid and looked down upon. Now-a-days the workingman just fag himself nearly to death or be half starved, and he is treated like a beast of burden. The working man has no hope; he knows that ten to one he will end his days in the workhouse. He can't attend to his family as he

come about. However, there is one thing to be said. A good advance has already been made. A few years ago there were very few who preaches Socialism, and they were treated as fools, madmen, or incendiaries. To-day the idea is understood by many. Then the poor suffered in silence, or revolted when maddened by hunger, without knowing the causes or the remedies of their wrongs, and were massacred, or made to massacre one another. To-day all over the world they come to a common understanding, agitate and revolt with the idea of liberating themselves from their employers and from government. They do not count on anything but their own powers, having at last begun to understand that all the parties, into which their employers are divided, are equally their enemies. Let us, then, be active in spreading our ideas now, when the moment is favorable. Let all of us who understand the question unite more closely. Let us fan the fire which smolders among the masses. Let us profit by all discontent, every agitation, every revolt. Let us strike while the iron is hot, without fear or hesitation. Then it will soon be all up with the middle-class, and the reign of well-being will begin.

WILLIAM Good! But we must take care to count the cost. To take the property of the employers is easily said. But there are the police, the soldiers. Now that I come to think of it, I'm afraid handcuffs, swords and guns are made more to defend the middleclass than anything else.

JACK That's as plain as a pike-staff. But is the middle-class government use arms against us and try to keep us in slavery with their powder and melinite, we must teach them that we too can play at such a game as that with the appliances of modern scientific warfare. The poor are the immense majority, and if they begin to understand and taste the advantages of socialism, there is no power on earth which an force them to remain as they are.

Part 6

Thieves and robbers

WILLIAM Yes, you are right. But what about the wicked? What is to be done with thieves and robbers?

JACK To begin with, when there is no more property and ignorance we shan't be troubled with many of that sort. But even supposing there were some left, is that a reason to have a government and police? Can't we ourselves bring them to reason? Not by ill-treating them, as both innocent and guilty are ill-used to-day, but by putting them in conditions where they can't do any harm, and doing everything in our power to set them on the right road again.

WILLIAM So when we have Socialism, everybody will be happy and contented, and there will be no more wretchedness, hatred, jealously, prostitution, war, or injustice?

JACK I can't tell how far human felicity may go, but I'm sure things will be very much better than now. You see, men will go on trying to better things, and all the progress made then will benefit every one, not only a few.

WILLIAM But when is all this going to happen? I'm an old fellow, and now that I know that the world isn't always going on as it does at present, I shouldn't like to die without having seen one day of justice.

JACK When will it happen? I don't know. It depends upon us. The more we do to open folk's eyes, the sooner the change will

ought to and he has scarcely any enjoyment in his life, while he continually suffers ill-treatment and humiliation. On the other hand, the man who does not work takes his ease in every possible way; he is looked up to and esteemed; all men and all pleasures are at his service. Even amongst working men, those who do least and whose work is the least disagreeable earn most and are thought more of than the others. Is it to be wondered at that folks are disgusted with work and are eager to seize an opportunity to do nothing? But when work is done under conditions fit for human beings, for a reasonable time and according to the laws of health; when the worker knows that he is working for the well-being of his family and of all men; when every one who wishes to be respected must necessarily be a worker and the lazy are as much despised as are spies and procuresses to-day; who will then wish to forego the joy of knowing himself useful and beloved, that he may live in an idleness disastrous alike to his body and his mind? Even now-a-days, everybody, apart some rare exceptions, instinctively loathes the idea of being a spy or a procuress. And yet by these vile callings more can be gained than by digging the ground; there is little or no work and more or less State protection. But as these trades are reckoned abominable, nearly every one prefers poverty to the infamy of following them. There are exceptions, there are weak, degraded creatures who prefer infamy, but this is because their choice lies between infamy and poverty. But who would choose an infamous and contemptible life when by working he could secure comfort and public esteem? Certainly such a man would be mad. And there is no doubt that this public reprobation of idleness would arise and make itself felt, for work is essentially needful to society. Idle folks would not only hard everyone by living on what others produces without contributing their own work to supply the wants of the community, but also break the harmony of the new order

of things and become the elements of a discontented party, who might desire a return to the past. Collective bodies are like individuals; they love and admire what is or what they think or use, and hate and despise what they know or believe to be hurtful. They may be deceived and too often they are; but in the case before us no mistake is possible, for it is clear as daylight that the person who does not work, eats and drinks at the expense of others and is wronging everybody. Why, suppose you join a party of men to do some work all together and share and share alike in the produce; of course you will be considerate to any of your mates who may be weak or unskilled, but as for a mere shirker will he not be led such a life that he will take himself off or else feel inclined to set his shoulder to the wheel? That is just what will happen in the community at large is the laziness of some of its members threatens to become a serious danger. If we could not go ahead because of those who would not work, which to me seems very unlikely, the remedy would, after all, not be far to seek; they would simply be turned out of the community. Then, as they would have a right to nothing but raw material and the instruments of labour, they would be forced to work if they wished to live.

WILLIAM You are beginning to convince me; but tell me, will everybody have to work in the fields?

JACK Why should they? Men do not need only bread and beer and meat. We want houses, and clothes and books and all the things that workers of allsorts of trades produce and no one can by himself supply all his own needs. Even to till the soil, do we not want the help of the blacksmith and the implement maker for our tools, and consequently of the miner who unearths the iron, the mason who builds houses and shops and so forth. It does not follow, therefore, that all must till the ground, only that all must

Social progress is almost always made in opposition to the government or in spite of it.

Errico Malatesta

takes no heed of the people except to check and baffle them. Better, far better, for us to manage our own affairs, by putting ourselves in agreement with the workers of other trades and other parts of the country; and not only with those of England and Europe, but of the whole world; for all men are brethren and have an interest in aiding one another. Don't you think so?

do some useful work. Besides the variety of trades will allow each person to choose what suits hum best, and thus, as far as possible, work will be nothing more than exercise, and an ardently desired enjoyment.

It does not follow, therefore, that all must till the ground, only that all must do some useful work.

WILLIAM Then every one will be free to choose any trade he likes?

JACK Of course. Only we must be careful that some trades are not overstocked, whilst others want hands. As we shall be working for the public interest, we must arrange so that everything really necessary is produced whilst individual preferences are consulted. But you will see that will come right when we have no masters to force us to toil for a crust of bread, without knowing what is the object or use of our work.

WILLIAM You say it will all come right, but I don't see it. I think that no one will do disagreeable work; they will all be lawyers and doctors. Who will work in the fields? Who will risk his life and health in a mine? Who will go down into the black manholes of the sewers or clean our cesspools?

JACK Oh, you may leave out the lawyers. Lawyers and priests are a sort of gangrene in society that the revolution will cure. Let us talk about useful work and not about occupations carried on at the expense of one's neighbours; otherwise we might count the burglar as a worker; he often has plenty of exertion. Now-a-days we prefer one trade to another not because it is more or less in accordance with our tastes and faculties, but because it is easier

to learn, because we earn, or hope to earn, more by it, or because we think we shall run the best chance of employment in that line; it is only in the second place that we consider if such and such work is more disagreeable than another sort. In fine, the choice of a trade is mostly imposed upon us by our birth, by chance and by social prejudice. The work of an agricultural labourer, for instance, would not please even the poorest townsman. And yet there is nothing repulsive in agriculture in itself, and like in the fields is not without its pleasures. Very much the contrary; if you read the poets you will see that they are enthusiastic about country life. But the truth is that the poets who write books have very seldom tilled the soil, whilst the farm labourers are work out with work and half starved, live worse than the beasts and are treated as nobodies, until the poorest wretch in a town would hardly change places with them. How can you expect people to like to be agricultural labourers? Even we who were born in the country, leave it as soon as we can, because whatever we do, we are better off and thought more of elsewhere. But how many of us would wish to leave the country, if we were working there on our own account and could find comfort, freedom and respect in our work? It is just the same in all trades, because as things are now, the harder and the more necessary any work is, the worse it is paid, the more it is despised and the more inhuman are the conditions under which it must be done. Go, for example, into a goldsmith's shop and you will find that, in comparison with the wretched holes we live in, the place is clean, well ventilated and warmed, that the working hours are not very long and that though the men are ill paid, for the employer takes the best part of what they produce, still they are well off compared to other workers; they can amuse themselves in the evening; when they take off their working jackets, they can go where they like, with no fear of being stared or sneered at. But if you go into a cutler's

amiss and must go on another tack. Another thing. The harm the people may do left to themselves will never be one millioneth part of that which is done by the best of governments. If a child is to learn to walk, he must be let walk by himself, and not be afraid of the falls he may have.

WILLIAM Yes, but before a child can be set down to walk he must have some strength in his legs; if he has none, he must stay in his mother's arms.

JACK That's true. But governments are not in the least like mothers. It is not they who improve and build up a nation. As a matter of fact, social progress is almost always made in opposition to the government or in spite of it. The most government does is to put what the masses have begun to need and desire into the form of law, and this it spoils with its spirit of domination and monopoly. The peoples are in different stages of advancement; but in no matter what state of civilization, or even of barbarism, a people may be, they could manage their affairs better without the government which has sprung up amongst them. As far as I can see you fancy that the government is composed of the most intelligent and capable men. Nothing of the sort. Generally speaking governments are directly, or by delegation, composed of those who have the most money. And besides, the exercise of power spoils the finest spirits. Put those who have hitherto been the best of men into the government and see what happens. They no longer understand the needs of the people, they are obliged to busy themselves with the interests created by politics, they are corrupted by the absence of the emulation and criticism of their social equals, and they are diverted from the sphere of action in which they were really competent, to make laws about things they have not even heard of before. Finally, they end by believing themselves a superiour order of beings, and form a caste which

JACK Not a hopeful outlook for the benefits to be expected from universal suffrage, is it? The people will always send middle-class men to parliament, and these will always be contriving how to keep the people as dependent and submissive as possible. Even if we were to have paid members and the poor were to take advantage of this to send working men to represent them, what could they do in so corrupt a medium? The few that have been tried have not cut a very brilliant figure in any country, No! during the next revolution the people must not allow themselves to be hoodwinked as they have so often been by democrats and republicans. Over and over again the people have dropped their arms on being promised a Republic, because they have been taught to believe that it is the best possible form of organization and will work marvels in their condition. Next time they must not rest content with empty words, they must resolutely lay hands upon property.

WILLIAM You are right. We have been deceived so often, it is time we opened our eyes. But still there must always be a government, for if there is no one to give orders, how can things go on?

JACK And why must we be ordered? Why can't we manage our affairs ourselves? He who rules always seeks his own advantage, and, either ignorantly or willfully, betrays the people. Power makes even the best of men giddy with pride. Besides, and this is the principal reason for not wishing to have an chief, men must cease to be led like a flock. They must grow accustomed to think, and learn to recognize their dignity and strength. If the people are to be educated, and accustomed to freedom and the management of their own affairs, they must be left to act for themselves and feel themselves responsible for their conduct. They may often make mistakes and do wrong, but they will see the consequences for themselves, and understand that they have done

workshop, you will see poor fellows knife-grinding there for a miserable wage, in a poisonous atmosphere, which will destroy their lives in a few years, and if, after their work, they take the liberty of going where gentlemen are, they will be lucky if they are not made to feel themselves ridiculous. It will not be surprising if, under such circumstances, a man prefers gold working to cutlery. To say nothing of the workers who use no tool but a pen. Just think; a man who only writes bad newspaper articles earns ten times more than a farm labourer and is thought of much more highly. When journalists, engineers, doctors, artists, professors, are in work and know their business well, they live in comfort; but compositors, bricklayers, shoemakers, all sorts of handworkers, and some poor teachers and other brain-workers too, are half-starved, whilst they are worked to death. I don't mean to imply that the only way of conquering Nature, becoming civilized, gaining greater freedom and well-being; doctors, engineers, chemists, teachers, are as useful in modern society as farm-labourers and other handworkers. I only mean to say that all useful work should be equally appreciated and so arranged that the worker may find equal satisfaction in doing it; and also that intellectually work, being a great pleasure in itself, and giving the man who does it a great superiority over those who remain in ignorance, should be put within the reach of every one and not remain the privilege of a few.

WILLIAM But if, as you yourself say, intellectual work is a great pleasure and gives those who do it an advantage over others who are ignorant, surely every one would want to study; I should as much as any body. And then who is to do the manual work?

JACK Every one; because whilst studying literature and science they should also do physical work; every one should work with

both head and hands. These two sorts of work, so far from interfering with one another, are supplementary; for a healthy man needs to exercise all his organs, his brains as well as his muscles. He whose intelligence is developed and who is accustomed to think does best at manual work, and he who is sound and healthy, as people are who exercise their limbs under healthy conditions, has his mind in a more wide-awake and penetrating state. Besides, as both kinds of work are necessary and as one is pleasanter than the other and has enabled man to attain to the dignity of self-consciousness, it is not just that a part of mankind should be condemned to the stupefying effects of exclusively manual toil, that the privilege of science, which means power, may be left to a few. Therefore, I say again, every body should work at once physically and intellectually.

WILLIAM I can understand that; but there is manual work which is hard and manual work which is easy, some is ugly, some is beautiful. Now who would be a miner, for instance, or a scavenger?

JACK My dear William, if you only knew what inventions and researches are being made every day, you would see that even now, if the organization of work did not depend upon people who are not working themselves and consequently don't trouble about the comfort of the workers, all manual labor could be carried on under conditions which would prevent it from being repulsive, unhealthy and toilsome. Therefore there is no reason why any work should not be done by workers who have chosen it voluntarily. And if this would be possible to-day, just fancy what might happen when, everybody having to work, the studies and efforts of all would be directed towards making work less burdensome and more pleasant. And if after all there wee still some crafts harder than others, it could be arranged to make up for these inequalities by some special advantages. Besides, when men are

WILLIAM Well to be sure! And I always believed that Republic meant equity!

JACK Yes, the republicans say so, and this is how they make it but; "Under a really democratic Republic," say they, "the members of parliament who make the laws are elected by the whole people. Consequently when the people are not contented, they change their M.P.'s for better ones and everything comes right. And as the poor are the great majority, it is practically they who govern." That is what the republicans say, but the reality is something quite different. The very poverty of the poor causes them to be ignorant and superstitious, and they will remain so as long as they are not economically independent and are unconscious of their true interest. You and I who have been lucky enough to earn more than some and to be able to teach ourselves a little, may have intelligence to understand where our interests lie and strength to face the employers' revenge; but the great mass will never be able to do so as long as present conditions last. In a time of Revolution one brave man is worth a score of timid ones and draws along with him numbers who, left to themselves, would never have the energy to revolt. But in front of a ballot-box character and energy go for nothing. Mere numbers are all that tell. And in the present state of things the greatest number will always be for the men who hold their daily bread in their hands and can give or withhold it at their pleasure. Haven't you happened to notice as much? To-day the greater part of the electors are poor, but how often do you see them choosing men of their own class to represent them and defend their interests?

WILLIAM No, most of 'em don't like to run the chance of offending the landlord, the parson, or their employer. If they do, they are as like as not to be turned off and even evicted.

it, wherever there are rich and poor, the poor may make their voices heard for a moment during an outbreak, but the rich will always get hold of the power in the end. This is why we, if we are the stringer for ever so short a time, must at once take property away from the rich, so that they may not have the means of putting things back as they were before.

WILLIAM I understand. We must have a real *Republic*, make all men equal, and then the man who works will eat, and the man who does nothing can go with an empty stomach. Ah me! I'm sorry I'm old. You young folks will see a good time.

JACK Softly, softly, friend! By the word "Republic" you mean the Social Revolution, and for those who understand you that is all very well. But you are expressing yourself badly; for what is commonly understood by a Republic is not at all what you mean. Get it well into your head that republican government is a government like the rest; only instead of a king there is a president and ministers, who really have just the same powers. We see that very plainly across the Channel, and even if the French had the democratic republic promised by their radicals, they wouldn't be any better off. Instead of two Chambers they would have one, the Chamber of Deputies, but wouldn't the people be forced to be soldiers and to work like slaves all the same, in spite of all the fine promises of the gentlemen deputies? Don't you see that as long as there are rich and poor, the rich will have the upper hand? Whether we live under a Republic or a Monarchy, the results which spring from private property will always exist. Whilst economic relations are regulated by competition, property will be concentrated in a few hands, machines will take work from working men and the masses will be reduced to misery. Have any of the Republics that exist seriously bettered the condition of the working classes?

working in common, for the common benefit, we see arising amongst them that same spirit of brotherliness and compliance which belongs to family life in its best aspect; so that each, far from seeking only to save himself trouble, tries rather to take the heaviest work for his own share.

WILLIAM Right enough, if all this happens; but suppose it doesn't?

JACK Well, if in spite of all this, there still remains some needful work which no one will do by choice, then every one of us shall have to take a hand at it, each doing a little, working at it, for example, one day a month, one week a year, or something like that. But set your mind at rest. If a thing is needful for every one, means will certainly be found to do it.

Part 4

All at once, or bit by bit?

WILLIAM Do you know, you are beginning to talk me over! Yet there's one thing I can't rightly see my way to. It's a big job that taking away property from the gentry. I don't know, but—isn't there anything else you could do?

JACK How would you manage? Whilst it remains in the hands of the rich they will be cocks o' the walk and will follow up their own interests without troubling about ours, as they have done since the beginning of time. But why don't you want to take away property from the gentlefolk? Perhaps you fancy that it would be unfair, and a wrong thing to do?

WILLIAM No, no; after what you have told me it seems to me that it would be very right, as in tearing away form them, we are

snatching from them also our won bodies on which they are feeding. And besides we are not taking their fortune for ourselves, but to put it in common to do good to every one, aren't we?

JACK Most assuredly. And if you look close at the matter, you will see that the gentry themselves will also be the gainers. They will have to give up ordering others about, putting on airs and graces, and idling; they will have to set to work, but when work is done with the help of the workers, it will become nothing but a useful, pleasant exercise. Do not the gentry now-a-days go hunting? Do they not ride on horseback, practice gymnastics and take exercise in other ways which prove that muscular exertion is a necessity and a pleasure to healthy, well-fed men? For them then it is merely a question of putting into production the physical energy they now put forth purely as an amusement. And then how much advantage they will reap from the general well-being! Look, for example, at what we see before our eyes. A few gentlefolks are wealthy and can play the lord in their own houses, but for them as for us the streets are hideous and filthy, and the bad air which rises from our hovels and slums makes them ill as well as us; with their private fortunes they can't improve the whole country, a thing which could be done easily if every one set about it. Our poverty is a continual blight upon their lives, acting upon them indirectly in a million ways, without counting their dread of a violent revolution. You see then that we shall be only doing good to the gentlefolk by taking their wealth. Though they certainly don't understand this, and never will, because they like to give orders and they fancy that the poor are fashioned of a different clay from themselves. But what matter? If they will not come to terms with us, so much the worse for them, we shall know how to force them to do so.

foreign produce, the masters are obliged to farm on a large scale and employ hired labourers. If they don't, they are ruined by competition. If the present system goes on, I believe that property will be more and more concentrated in the hands of a few, and the workers reduced to utter wretchedness by machinery and rapid methods of production. We shall have a few big financiers and capitalists masters of the world, a certain number of workmen attending upon the machines, and a number of servants and police to wait on and defend the aforesaid big men. The mass of the people will have to die of hunger or live on charity. The beginnings of such a stat of things may already be seen; small properties are disappearing, the numbers of out-o'-works increases, the gentlefolks, from fear or from pity, busy themselves with soup kitchens and the schemes of General Booth. If the people do not wish to be reduced to beg their bread from rich philanthropists or Local Boards, as they once did at the gates of monasteries, let them lose no time in taking possession of the land and machinery and working on their own account.

Part 5

Laws, republics and votes

WILLIAM But how would it do if Government were to make some good laws to force rich people not to make the poor suffer?

JACK The same old story, William! Isn't the government made up of gentlefolks, and is it likely that they will make laws against themselves? But even supposing the poor could manage to take their turn at governing, would that be a reason for leaving the rich with the means of getting the upper hand again? Rely upon

by the upper classes, but of the scarcity of natural products, which would, say they, be quite insufficient, if they were distributed to all men. This enables the said economists and their disciples to conclude that poverty is an inevitable thing, against which no measures can be taken. Don't believe a word of it. Even as things are organized to-day, the produce of the earth and of industry is enough to enable every man to live in comfort; and if it is not more abundant, that is the employer's fault. They thing of nothing but how much they can gain, and even go so far as to destroy articles or let them go to waste merely to keep up the price. Whilst they pretend there is not enough natural wealth, they are leaving large tracts of country uncultivated and numbers of workmen with nothing to do. But, answer a certain school of economists, even when all ground is brought under cultivation and tilled as intelligently as may be, still the productive power of the earth is limited and the increase of population is not. Therefore there must always some a moment when the production of food stuffs will be stationary, whilst population will go on growing indefinitely and with it famine. The sole remedy, they conclude, for social ills is that the poor should have very few children. I'm not very learned about the law of rent but I'm sure this remedy is no cure for our social evils. You have only to look at countries where there is plenty of land and a scanty population; you will see as much or more poverty as where population is dense. We must change our social organization and bring all the land under cultivation, and then, if the population seems growing too fast, we can consider how to check it. But let us go back to the question of produce-sharing between property-owner and workman. It is a system which used to exist in parts of France in field work. It still exists in Tuscany, but it is gradually disappearing because the landowners find day-labour pay them better. Now-a-days, what with machines, scientific culture and

WILLIAM That is all fair enough; but can't things be done bit by bit, by mutual agreement? Property might be left to those who possess it, but on condition that they would increase wages, and treat us like human beings. Then, gradually, we might lay by something, and we too might buy a bit of land, and, at last, when we were all property owners, we would put everything in common, as you say. There was a chap I heard proposing something of the sort.

JACK Now look here! There is only one way of coming to friendly terms, and that is for the property owners voluntarily to renounce their property. But you know, as well as I do, that it is no good thinking of that. Whilst private property exists, that is whilst the land, instead of belonging to every one, belongs to Peter or Paul, there will always be poverty and things will go from bad to worse. Under private property each is trying all the time to being grist to his own mill. The property owners not only try to give the workers as little as they can, but they are always fighting amongst themselves. Generally speaking each tries to sell his produce for as much as he can, and each buyer, on his side, tries to pay as little as possible. And then what happens? The land owners, manufacturers, and large merchants, who can manufacture and sell wholesale, provide themselves with machinery, take advantage of all favourable states of the market, wait until the right moment to sell or even sell at a loss for a time, end by ruining the small proprietors and dealers, who sink into poverty and are obliged, they and their children, to go and work for a daily wage. Thus (it's a thing we see every day) men who work on their own account alone or with a few journeymen, are driven, after a bitter struggle, to set up shop, and go to seek work in big factories, small land-owners who cannot get enough capital for their farming and cannot even pay their tithes and taxes

have to sell their fields and houses to the large proprietors, and so on. If a kind-hearted employer really wished to better the condition of his work-people, he could only put himself in a position to be ruined by competition.

On the other hand, the workers are goaded by hunger into competing with one another; and as there are more hands to be had than are needed for the work to be done, they are continually snatching the bread out of each other's mouths. Not that there is not plenty of work that needs doing, but that at any particular time there is only a certain amount which it pays the employer to have done. Thanks to this situation, progress itself becomes a misfortune. A machine is invented: immediately a number of men are thrown out of work; they can earn nothing, therefore cannot consume as before, and thus indirectly effect the breadwinning of other workers. In America wide tracts of land are brought under cultivation and much corn produced: the land-owning, of course without enquiring if everybody in the United States has plenty to eat, ship their grain over here that they may get more for it. Here the price of corn is lower, but the poor do not reap the advantage, for the European land-owners, not able to compete with this cheapness, let the soil go out of cultivation, except some of the most productive portions, and thus a number of agricultural labourers lose their employment. When a man has not even a penny in his pocket, cheap bread is no good to him.

WILLIAM Ah; now I understand! I've heard say that they would not let the corn come from abroad, and I thought is a rascally thing to try to keep food out of the country; I believed the gentlefolks and the farmers between them wanted to starve the people. But now I see they had their reasons.

JACK No, no; if the corn did not come it would be very bad from another point of view. Then the landlords and farmers, having no competition to fear from outside, would sell at any price they chose and—

WILLIAM Then what is to be done?

JACK Done? I told you before; everything must be put in common. And then the more produce there is, the better it will be.

WILLIAM But now tell me: how would it be if an arrangement were made with the owners of property: they to contribute the land and capital and we the work; the produce to be shared between us and them? What do you say to that?

JACK First of all I say that if you were willing to go shares, ten to one your master would be willing to do nothing of the sort. You would be obliged to use force to bring him to it. But in that case, why do things by halves? Why content yourself with a system which allows injustice and parasitism to continue and presents the increase of production? And further, what right have certain men who do not work to come and take half of what is produced by the workers? Besides, as I have told you, it is not only that half the produce would go to the employers, but that the sum total of produce would be less than it might be, because where you have private property and isolated labour less is produced that by working in common. It is like when you want to move a rock: a hundred men would not succeed by trying singly, whereas by uniting their efforts two or three can raise it easily. If one man wished to make a pin, I don't know if he could get through it in an hour; whereas ten men working into each other's hands can make thousands of pins a day. Economists, many of whom have let themselves be scandalously biased by class prejudice, have often said that property is not the result of the seizure of property