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The social problem: the people who are poor

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The Social Problem. By

D. A. Hayes.

Subject: "The People Who are Poor."

D. A. H.

The People Who are Poor.

1.

In the *Odyssey* we read how Ulysses, being driven by a storm across an unknown sea, was drifted by night into the sheltered bay of Laocaea. The morning sun disclosed to him a land of plenty, blessed by Nature with such stores of wheat and barley, of fruit and wine as the unstrained vineyard and untilled field were ever known to bear. The wearied mariner and his band walked delighted in this seeming Paradise and rested in supposed security.

But when they traced the course of the little stream from which the life and beauty of that landscape were derived, they found its fountain-head in a gloomy cavern whose forbidding fount, as Homer tells us, seemed the entrance-way to Hell. Within that horrid den there were only mist, weather and the night. But before many hours had passed away human gore was spattered on the stones and Death had entered this fit abode.

--- It was the home of the Cyclops: Polyphemus, the Cyclops, the lawless shepherd of enormous stature---

with a single eye blazing in his forehead like a solitary star in the clouds of night; when untroubled, the peaceful tender of his flocks on the mountain-side, but when enraged, the awful cannibal who took his victims limb from limb until with carnage he was satiated; the terror of all that Cyclopean land, unmanagable by Ulysses, king of men, until deprived of sight! A gigantic infidel whose passions had no curb and knew no bounds; who scoffed at Jove and slaughtered men!

These characters have their counterparts in the World-Epic of today. The people who are poor have discovered in themselves a majesty of power which has led them sometimes to despise the very gods and has made them a terror in the land. (When once it comes, far worse than the frenzy of the Cyclops of old is the madness of the people who are poor; and the Ulysses of today, the Statesmen of the nations, have learned that at their bitter cost.

To follow out the figure rather closely we may say that the ship of every state, storm-driven across the centuries, has drifted by night into

what seemed to the weary mariners to be safe anchorage. (When the expected day appeared, when the nation has struggled thro the morning of its existence and has finally fought its way into recognized position and power, the people have rejoiced in the fullness of prosperity and of light and have proclaimed a new-born Paradise.

But, unfortunately, into every Paradise there opens one entrance-way to Hell.

(When the sources of the national life and strength, the fountain-head of its majesty and might, were searched after, they were well found to come from a place of mist-wreaths and of night, from the homes of the people who were poor. The foundations of society must always rest upon those masses who are trodden into the dust; and they, too poor to purchase books, too poor to educate themselves, are blessed with but half the light that wiser mortals have and, when massed in a common interest, their army is a Cyclops with one eye.

How to control this monster or at least how to escape all dangers that might arise from his

terrible strength, is the question that has perplexed the statesmen of all ages and the question that confronts every government today. It has become the leading question in modern politics and when it has been disposed of rightfully the millennium will be close at hand.

The answer of the statesmen of the past is that answer of Ulysses repeated again and again: The only remedy — put out the eye; make the Cyclops blind, and keep him blind. That answer gave riches and learning to the few and darkness of mind and of soul to the many. That answer brought upon the world the fearful curse of caste. It made the patrician family and the plebeian multitude, the feudal prince with his scores of retainers, the Southern planter and his hundred slaves, the Russian lord with his millions serfs. It caused the sacking of Rome, the peditions of the Middle Ages, the civil war of America; it causes the volcanic unrest of the European and American nations of today.

It was when all the light and all the learning of the three continents were centered in the

single city of Rome, that the barbarians of the North came thronging thro the mountain-passes of the Alps and flooded all that fruitful land of Italy and though repulsed again and again by the legions of the effete monarchy they at last succeeded in sackng the city and overthrowing the "Mistress of the World."

It was when the kings of France had forgotten the awful sufferings of the peasantry and remembered only the needs of the exhausted treasury that a Cyclop clothed in fire with blazing, famine-stricken eye and super-human strength swept court and king from Paris and from France and instituted a Reign of Terror in their stead.

It was when this curse of caste in America was making of the negro a physical brute and of his master a moral one that the battle-fields of a civil war were dyed with the blood of our best sons.

And now, while the wretched condition of the tenantry of Ireland finds no relief from the palace of the land-holder, those giants of Fenianism and

Communism are gathering strength and are like blind Samsons refusing to grind longer at the mill; yea, are threatening now to either pull the governmental fabric down upon the heads of all or to place a barrier between themselves and England broader and deeper than the seas.

For the people who are poor have power, and they have compelled every Western nation, established on the groundwork distinction of caste, to wipe out that disgrace in a baptism of fire and of blood. Poverty with darkness brings despair; and despair scales the walls of Heaven, the only way of escape left to the down-trodden and oppressed. And when God leads the people who are poor, though in the wilderness-country they may seem unorganized and void of power, as soon as the land shall flow with milk and honey He will make them powerful to the overthrowing of the mighty in the land.

Such work has always been accomplished by the hard-handed sons of toil. The work of the world has been done by the strength of their arms. They made History; and until this century, History

Scarcely deigned to give to them a passing notice.

Did wonderful Teachers, Conquerors, Buddha, Mahomet, and Christ unexpectedly arise and lead the people forward as kings and emperors could not: All the prophets of the ages have come from the people who were poor; or for their sakes have become the poorest of the poor. (Were newly discovered continents settled as in a day: The pioneers were always poor. (Were mighty empires builded in many lands: They were reared by those who toiled for their daily bread. (Were those empires overthrown at a single stroke: Then the poor had a hand in their fall. Did kings lead the armies of the past: In the rank and file the poor were the ones who fought: and the wholesale bloodshed of History has been caused by their blind obedience or blinder madness in "letting slip the dogs of War," whose leash they held in their own right hands.

(When in the pillage of the victorious army or in the fury of the civil mob the torch has flashed from house to house through the streets of Alex-

andria, Rome, Paris, and London, the poor have held high carnivals, for that torch seemed to be the poor man's friend. The light of learning and the might that money gives were in the hands of the favored few but he had all the elements of brute strength with him still; and before that strength when once aroused, as before the majesty of an ocean storm, all money, all learning even have proved of no avail.

At Jerusalem there was a temple of silver and gold; while the Arab in the desert begged money to buy himself bread. At Alexandria was a library with the books of the world which the poor could burn but could not read. At Rome stood the Coliseum of gigantic dimensions where barbarians were slaughtered by beasts, wilder than men. At Paris a Bastille, Tyranny's throne, where the poor man was prisoned and never heard of again. To each of those cities the day of reckoning came; and the poor cast up the final accounts. "The wine-cup of God's fury" was poured out on their heads and they became "a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse."

Ah! that answer of the statesmen of the past was a fatal answer; as "ages of blunder and bloodshed bear terrible witness". Thank God, the statesmen of today answer differently. All the theories of present government on this subject may be stated thus: This monster will no longer be a Cyclops, if we give him two eyes. In other words; Every man must have his proper share of light.

In Russia the poor have but begun to show their strength; and the Czar trembles in the midst of his trusted guards. Do the authorities say as hitherto, (We must degrade and enslave? No! fathered by Oppression and mothered by Ignorance, the monster Nihilism was the one legitimate offspring. The answer now is; Educate and Christianize. And if Liberty and Light do not strangle Nihilism before it grows to man's estate, Russia will once again reap the whirlwind as her reward; but she will surely sow Liberty and Light broadcast over the land before another harvest time. Tolstoi has prophesied it; and he hopes to live to see his prophecy fulfilled.

In Ireland serpents are again being found. Those deadliest reptiles, Ignorance and Infidelity, crawl and hiss through hamlet and town. Entwined round every hearth-stone, instilling their poison into the popular hearts, till the government at London begins to see the need of a new evangel to free the land from a pest that is worse than the fabled serpents of old.

In our own favored land of America the poor are thronging the highways and crowding the cities. From the four quarters of the globe they have come as to an Eldorado, where all may be rich. But Fortune still favors the few and at the close of our first century this great social problem concerning the poor stares our government full in the face. In the West, one hundred thousand Chinamen, in the South, four million blacks, in the cities of the North and the East ten millions of foreign poor beside those native-born are struggling in mental and moral darkness but struggling toward the light. In the wilderness a voice is heard, 'Prepare ye, make the paths straight.'

The States of the South in their appalling illiteracy are crying loud for help. The cities of the East in their alarming increase of vice are groaning now for help. The prairies and cities of the West in their lawless persecutions and murders need some strong arm to help. The Know Nothings, the Ku Klux Klans, the Anti-Booie Clubs never brought the needed help. . . .

Yet San Francisco sand-lots, Chicago Communists, Cincinnati riots, and New York mobs are constantly proving our nation's instant need of help. From other sources that help must surely come.

The poor themselves must help themselves: and they must be helped by others. Labor has organized under recognized leaders, some of whom are able men. The Temperance reform is being pushed by consecrated womanhood in ever-widening and international circles of influence. The press is everywhere open to the poor; and can everywhere be used to their advantage. The Church of Christ must necessarily be the friend of every man; and the poor have always thronged her aisles and looked to

her for help. A world-wide military organization with a Wesleyan General and thousands of officers and tens of thousands of volunteer recruits is now training in active and continuous service for the regeneration and full salvation of the poverty-stricken and hitherto-unreached masses.

At the close of this nineteenth century the Indian jungles, the Western prairie, the city slums are invaded by the Christian philanthropist, missionary, or colporteur, and the teachings of Him who was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor are proclaimed to the lowly of every nation on the face of the earth.

The twentieth century will see the result of this historically new crusade, new in its international magnitude, new in its methods, new in its inevitably marvellous fruitage.

The morning of another day is dawning upon us. Victor Hugo's cry, 'Light for the wretched ones!' is now being heard. The dying Goethe's prayer, 'Licht, mehr Licht!' will be answered soon. Again is the lesson taught that before the end of things the ideal

must and will be made the fact; that God's commands must be obeyed though the Devil says "Impossible", and proves it too.

Even today this command of God comes thundering down through the graveyard of all past history: "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people".

Monarchs hear and trembling begin to obey. The blood of an assassinated Czar and murdered President cries it aloud in their ears. And when the standard shall have been lifted up; when Aristocracy and Conservatism shall have gone through the gates to know for themselves the needs of the world and a highway to learning shall have been cast up even from the depths of society; when the knowledge of Nature, and the knowledge of God, and knowledge of man shall cover the face of the earth "as the waters cover the sea" then will the poor, whom we "shall have always with us, be no longer blinded, gigantic Cyclopes but peaceful,

contented Saint Christophers, bearing the bur-
dens of the world. across the rolling tides of years
until the Son of Man shall come.

Thus endeth the prophecy.

D.A.H.

This Thesis is
Dedicated to (whosoever
will read it.

Requiescat in pace.