

**LABOUR'S
WRONGS AND
LABOUR'S REMEDY**

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Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy by J. F. Bray

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J. F. BRAY

**LABOUR'S
WRONGS AND
LABOUR'S REMEDY**

LABOUR'S WRONGS

AND LABOUR'S REMEDY;

OR,

THE AGE OF MIGHT

AND THE AGE OF RIGHT.

BY J. F. BRAY.

"We are a numerous people, and we want strength! We have an excellent soil, and we are destitute of provision! We are active and laborious, and we live in indigence! We pay enormous tributes, and we are told that they are not sufficient! We are at peace without, and our persons and property are not safe within! What, then, is the secret enemy that devours us?"—*Ruins of Empires.*

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PREFACE.

Whenever any crisis in the affairs of men is about to take place, there is ever to be found a number of people ready to preach up things as they are. These champions fight stoutly and cunningly against the innovation of existing institutions and modes of acting; and they endeavour to reason the sensible and alarm the timid into remaining quiet, and enduring meekly whatever evils they may be afflicted with. Belonging to one class, and having in view a common object, these alarmists attempt to convince the people that everything is almost as well as it can be—that few evils are endured by them which are not necessary consequences of existence—that their governmental burthens may be alleviated by gradual and imperceptible reforms—that the present gradations of society, which cause so much discontentment among the poor and the oppressed, have always existed, and therefore ever must exist—and that any attempts of the productive classes to better themselves by interfering with this “natural arrangement of society,” will be attended with the most disastrous results to themselves.

Notwithstanding the sage advice and the gloomy forebodings of these friends of the people, the latter are perpetually endeavouring to the utmost of their power, by means of political and trades’ unions, to alter the present state of things, and keep to themselves that vast amount of wealth which is annually taken from them by existing usages. But, conscious of having justice on their side, the productive classes have hitherto regarded the end more

than the means ; and the first has been unattainable only because the latter were inadequate. The equality of social and political rights which the masses have so long contended for, is consonant with reason and justice, or it is not. If it be not, then should their ignorance and injustice be exposed by those whose rights and privileges the people are trespassing upon by their assumption of equality. But if such equality of rights be in accordance with the immutable principles of truth and justice, then are the people bound to contend for it wholly and immediately ; and to cease praying, piecemeal, for that which ought to be conceded to them unhesitatingly, and at once.

The diversity of opinion which exists on political matters, and the anomalies seen in connection with a merely political equality, call for more evidence than has yet been given of the peculiar efficacy of any particular governmental remedy to accomplish the end desired. To acquire such evidence by reasoning from first principles, and by a rigid comparison of theory with fact, should be the first great object of the productive classes, and the prelude to all demands for change. Had they not been thus deficient in the knowledge of principles, they would not now have had to mourn over the fate of the many powerful political and trades' combinations which have been wrecked in the vain endeavours to obtain redress for their wrongs. Unless men discover and remove causes, they can never escape from consequences. Whatever may be the conclusions arrived at by such an examination, in regard to the excellence of particular governmental reforms, or the fitness or unfitness of the present social system, the inquiry cannot but serve the cause of truth. Ignorance itself, in its blind gropings for the unknown and undefined, often accidentally stumbles upon truths which years of laborious and systematic application have failed to bring to light.

From their present condition and future prospects, there is no class of the community which political or social changes can concern more nearly than they do the productive classes; and none are more imperatively called upon to search for the truth, and look into the future. Hanging, as the economists say they are, "on the skirts of existence,"—living, as so many thousands of them do, from hand to mouth—the producers are at the mercy, and bear almost the entire brunt, of every storm which interferes with or disturbs the existing arrangements of society, political or commercial. No unfavourable circumstance acts upon one class, which does not instantly re-act with double force upon the productive class—no loss is suffered by any portion of the community, which the latter class have not eventually to make good. Thus situated—thus placed, by their position, at the mercy of men and classes who can have no fellow-feeling with them—it behoves the producers to determine whether their present condition may not be improved, and to discover what are the particular means whereby such improvement may be effected. The experience of every year and every day teaches them, that, however circumscribed may be their knowledge of the causes which have led to the existing state of things, they cannot know less than those who have hitherto professed to govern and direct them. The time for blind submission to established authorities and usages is passing away; for no important event transpires which does not proclaim the utter inability of rulers in general to conceive of, and their complete incapacity to cope with or direct, the great truths and principles which are every day coming into view.

If the productive classes would be successful in their search for a remedy, they must proceed in the path of discovery unfettered by those notions which are so sedulously instilled into them, respecting their own inferiority

and the eternity of existing usages. As men, and apart from their present position as a poor governed class, oppressed by a rich governing class, the producers have nothing to do with the alleged sacredness of established institutions: they have merely to determine whether it be not possible to change *that social whole which keeps them poor*, as well as that governmental part which oppresses them because they are poor. The requisite knowledge can be obtained only by going at once to first principles. In the words of one who has made many efforts to uphold the present system, we are now in "the very condition, if the people could but see it, for the exercise of faith in principles. With a dark and shifting near future, and a bright and fixed ultimate destiny, what is the true, the only wisdom? Not to pry into the fogs or thickets round about, or to stand still for fear of what may next occur in the path; but to look from Eden gate behind to heaven gate before, and press on to the certain future. In his political as in his moral life, man should, in the depth of his ignorance and the fallibility of his judgment, **THROW HIMSELF, IN THE FULL SENSE OF SECURITY, UPON PRINCIPLES;** and then he is safe from being depressed by opposition, or scared by uncertainty, or deprived by responsibility."

INTRODUCTION.

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

If it were ever possible to predict what shall be, from a consideration of what has been—if ever the signs of the times gave warning of great troubles or changes—there is that in the present which tells us, in a manner not to be misunderstood, that the hour for the final conflict between Right and Might cannot be far distant. That it is time the event took place, let the wrongs of man for forty centuries testify—that it is time to put an end to the bondage of labour, let the sufferings of the millions of her martyred children bear witness!

From the nature of things there must be a cause for every effect, however concealed or inscrutable that cause may be; and of all causes, none are of so much importance as those from which emanate the wide-spread poverty and discontentment which exist at the present time throughout the whole world—and, more especially, in those nations calling themselves civilised. The numerous remedies proposed, tried, and rejected, one after the other, do not prove that it is impossible to change, for the better, this unnatural state of things; such ill success merely shews that the world at large—nations as well as governments—are as yet ignorant of the origin and the nature of the great wrong which has preyed upon man for so many ages.

Of all nations on the face of the earth, the people of the United Kingdom suffer the most severely, and are, therefore, the most in want of a remedy. Throughout the country, distrust or dissatisfaction is universal. Not one class of society is at rest; but a troubled and uneasy sensation—a kind of forerunner of evil or of change—per-

vades alike the bosoms of both the rich and the poor—the trampers and the trampled upon.

Whatever may be the condition in which society now is, it could not, from the very nature of its component parts, and the circumstances which have for ages operated upon and influenced those parts, be different from what it is; and however alarming the present state of things may appear to the unjust man and the extortioner, there is in the prospect nothing that can terrify the honest and the industrious, wherever they may be.

The productive classes are bewildered amidst the multiplicity of remedies offered for their consideration. They have as many remedies as wrongs—one contradicting another, and most of them equally valueless; for they are alike based merely on passing events, instead of resting on the broad foundation of some great principle. That which appears to be a remedy in one year, turns out, in the next year, to be no remedy whatever; for the particular evil which such remedy applied to, is found to have shifted its locality, or changed to some secondary evil.

There is wanted, not a mere governmental or particular remedy, but a general remedy—one which will apply to all social wrongs and evils, great and small. The productive classes want a remedy for their incessant toil—they want a remedy for their compulsory idleness—they want a remedy for their poverty—they want a remedy for the misery, and ignorance, and vice, which such toil, such idleness, and such poverty produce.

Although it may appear difficult to obtain such a remedy, it will be seen, hereafter, that it is anything but impossible. All sciences are more or less imperfect; but of all sciences, politics, or the science of human government, is the least understood, although its great book has been open to the inspection of man for four thousand years. Man has made so little progress, because it is in the nature of good or bad forms of government, and institutions, and states of society, to perpetuate themselves, and keep successive generations in one continuous mode of thinking and of acting. Men, in general, go not to the first principles of things; they take the world as they find it, and look only to the state of society, the form of government, or the religion of their country, for the time being. But the nonage of intellect is passing away, and