

**SOCIALISM AND LABOR
AND OTHER ARGUMENTS:
SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND
PATRIOTIC**

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Socialism and labor and other arguments: social, political, and patriotic by J. L. Spalding

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BY

RT. REV. J. L. SPALDING

Bishop of Georgia



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SOCIALISM AND LABOR

AND OTHER ARGUMENTS.

I.

SOCIALISM AND LABOR.

THE interest which all who think take in the laboring classes, whether it spring from sympathy or fear, is a characteristic feature of the age.

Their condition seems to be the great anomaly in our otherwise progressive and brilliant civilization. Whether when compared with the lot of the slaves and serfs of former times that of the modern laborer is fortunate, is not the question. He is not placed in the midst of the poverty and wretchedness of a rude and barbarous society, but in the midst of boundless wealth and great refinement. He lives, too, in a democratic age, in which all men profess to believe in equality and liberty; in an age in which the brotherhood of the race is proclaimed by all the organs of opinion. He has a voice in public affairs, and since laborers are the majority, he is, in theory at least, the sovereign.

They who govern profess to do everything by the authority of the people, in their name and for their welfare; and yet, if we are to accept the opinions of the Socialists, the wage-takers, who in the modern world are the vast multitude, are practically shut out from participation in our intellectual and material inheritance. They contend that the poor are, under the present economic system, the victims of the rich, just as in the ancient societies the weak were the victims of the strong; so that wage-labor, as actually constituted, differs in form rather than in its essential results from the labor of slaves and serfs. And even dispassionate observers think that the tendency of the present system is to intensify rather than to diminish the evils which do exist; and that we are moving towards a state of things in which the few will own everything, and the many be hardly more than their hired servants. In America, they admit that sparse population and vast natural resources that as yet have hardly been touched helped to conceal this fatal tendency, which is best seen in the manufacturing and commercial centres of Europe, where the capitalistic method of production has reduced wage-earners to a condition of pauperism and degradation which is the scandal of Christendom and a menace to society.

The present condition of labor is the result of gradually evolved processes, running through centuries.

The failure of the attempt of Charlemagne to organize the barbarous hordes which had overspread Europe into a stable empire was followed by an era of violence and lawlessness, of wars and invasions, from which society sought refuge in the feudal system. The strong man, as temporal or spiritual lord, was at the top of the feudal hierarchy, and under him the weak formed themselves into classes. The serf labored a certain number of days for himself, and a certain number for his lord. In the towns the craftsmen were organized into guilds which protected the interests of the members. The mendicant poor were not numerous, and their wants were provided for by the bishops and the religious orders.

Then the growth of towns and the development of trade and commerce brought wealth to the burghers, who became a distinct class, while domestic feuds and foreign wars, especially the Crusades, weakened and impoverished the knights and barons. The printing-press and the use of gunpowder in war helped further to undermine the feudal power, while the discovery of America, the turning of the Cape of Good Hope, and the Protestant revolution threw all