

CHAPTER XVII. {20}

Into the delusion that I could help others I was led by the fact that I fancied that my money was of the same sort as Semyon's. But this was not the case.

A general idea prevails, that money represents wealth; but wealth is the product of labor; and, therefore, money represents labor. But this idea is as just as that every governmental regulation is the result of a compact (contrat social).

Every one likes to think that money is only a medium of exchange for labor. I have made shoes, you have raised grain, he has reared sheep: here, in order that we may the more readily effect an exchange, we will institute money, which represents a corresponding quantity of labor, and, by means of it, we will barter our shoes for a breast of lamb and ten pounds of flour. We will exchange our products through the medium of money, and the money of each one of us represents our labor.

This is perfectly true, but true only so long as, in the community where this exchange is effected, the violence of one man over the rest has not made its appearance; not only violence over the labors of others, as happens in wars and slavery, but where he exercises no

violence for the protection of the products of their labor from others. This will be true only in a community whose members fully carry out the Christian law, in a community where men give to him who asks, and where he who takes is not asked to make restitution. But just so soon as any violence whatever is used in the community, the significance of money for its possessor loses its significance as a representative of labor, and acquires the significance of a right founded, not on labor, but on violence.

As soon as there is war, and one man has taken any thing from any other man, money can no longer be always the representative of labor; money received by a warrior for the spoils of war, which he sells, even if he is the commander of the warriors, is in no way a product of labor, and possesses an entirely different meaning from money received for work on shoes. As soon as there are slave-owners and slaves, as there always have been throughout the whole world, it is utterly impossible to say that money represents labor.

Women have woven linen, sold it, and received money; serfs have woven for their master, and the master has sold them and received the money. The money is identical in both cases; but in the one case it is the product of labor, in the other the product of violence. In exactly the same way, a stranger or my own father has given me money; and my father, when he gave me that money, knew, and I know, and everybody knows, that no one can take this money away from me; but if it should occur to any one to take it away from me, or even not to

hand it over at the date when it was promised, the law would intervene on my behalf, and would compel the delivery to me of the money; and, again, it is evident that this money can in no wise be called the equivalent of labor, on a level with the money received by Semyon for chopping wood. So that in any community where there is any thing that in any manner whatever controls the labor of others, or where violence hedges in, by means of money, its possessions from others, there money is no longer invariably the representative of labor. In such a community, it is sometimes the representative of labor, and sometimes of violence.

Thus it would be where only one act of violence from one man against others, in the midst of perfectly free relations, should have made its appearance; but now, when centuries of the most varied deeds of violence have passed for accumulations of money, when these deeds of violence are incessant, and merely alter their forms; when, as every one admits, money accumulated itself represents violence; when money, as a representative of direct labor, forms but a very small portion of the money which is derived from every sort of violence,--to say nowadays that money represents the labor of the person who possesses it, is a self-evident error or a deliberate lie.

It may be said, that thus it should be; it may be said, that this is desirable; but by no means can it be said, that thus it is.

Money represents labor. Yes. Money does represent labor; but whose?

In our society only in the very rarest, rarest of instances, does money represent the labor of its possessor, but it nearly always represents the labor of other people, the past or future labor of men; it is a representative of the obligation of others to labor, which has been established by force.

Money, in its most accurate and at the same the simple application, is the conventional stamp which confers a right, or, more correctly, a possibility, of taking advantage of the labors of other people. In its ideal significance, money should confer this right, or this possibility, only when it serves as the equivalent of labor, and such money might be in a community in which no violence existed. But just as soon as violence, that is to say, the possibility of profiting by the labors of others without toil of one's own, exists in a community, then that profiting by the labors of other men is also expressed by money, without any distinction of the persons on whom that violence is exercised.

The landed proprietor has imposed upon his serfs natural debts, a certain quantity of linen, grain, and cattle, or a corresponding amount of money. One household has procured the cattle, but has paid money in lieu of linen. The proprietor takes the money to a certain amount only, because he knows that for that money they will make him the same quantity of linen, (generally he takes a little more, in order to be sure that they will make it for the same amount); and this money, evidently, represents for the proprietor the obligation

of other people to toil.

The peasant gives the money as an obligation, to he knows not whom, but to people, and there are many of them, who undertake for this money to make so much linen. But the people who undertake to make the linen, do so because they have not succeeded in raising sheep, and in place of the sheep, they must pay money; but the peasant who takes money for his sheep takes it because he must pay for grain which did not bear well this year. The same thing goes on throughout this realm, and throughout the whole world.

A man sells the product of his labor, past, present or to come, sometimes his food, and generally not because money constitutes for him a convenient means of exchange. He could have effected the barter without money, but he does so because money is exacted from him by violence as a lien on his labor.

When the sovereign of Egypt exacted labor from his slaves, the slaves gave all their labor, but only their past and present labor, their future labor they could not give. But with the dissemination of money tokens, and the credit which had its rise in them, it became possible to sell one's future toil for money. Money, with co-existent violence in the community, only represents the possibility of a new form of impersonal slavery, which has taken the place of personal slavery. The slave-owner has a right to the labor of Piotr, Ivan, and Sidor. But the owner of money, in a place where money is

demanded from all, has a right to the toil of all those nameless people who are in need of money. Money has set aside all the oppressive features of slavery, under which an owner knows his right to Ivan, and with them it has set aside all humane relations between the owner and the slave, which mitigated the burden of personal thralldom.

I will not allude to the fact, that such a condition of things is, possibly, necessary for the development of mankind, for progress, and so forth,--that I do not contest. I have merely tried to elucidate to myself the idea of money, and that universal error into which I fell when I accepted money as the representative of labor. I became convinced, after experience, that money is not the representative of labor, but, in the majority of cases, the representative of violence, or of especially complicated sharp practices founded on violence.

Money, in our day, has completely lost that significance which it is very desirable that it should possess, as the representative of one's own labor; such a significance it has only as an exception, but, as a general rule, it has been converted into a right or a possibility of profiting by the toil of others.

The dissemination of money, of credit, and of all sorts of money tokens, confirms this significance of money ever more and more. Money is a new form of slavery, which differs from the old form of slavery only in its impersonality, its annihilation of all humane

relations with the slave.

Money--money, is a value which is always equal to itself, and is always considered legal and righteous, and whose use is regarded as not immoral, just as the right of slavery was regarded.

In my young days, the game of loto was introduced into the clubs. Everybody rushed to play it, and, as it was said, many ruined themselves, rendered their families miserable, lost other people's money, and government funds, and committed suicide; and the game was prohibited, and it remains prohibited to this day.

I remember to have seen old and unsentimental gamblers, who told me that this game was particularly pleasing because you did not see from whom you were winning, as is the case in other games; a lackey brought, not money, but chips; each man lost a little stake, and his disappointment was not visible . . . It is the same with roulette, which is everywhere prohibited, and not without reason.

It is the same with money. I possess a magic, inexhaustible ruble; I cut off my coupons, and have retired from all the business of the world. Whom do I injure,--I, the most inoffensive and kindest of men? But this is nothing more than playing at loto or roulette, where I do not see the man who shoots himself, because of his losses, after procuring for me those coupons which I cut off from the bonds so accurately with a strictly right-angled corner.

I have done nothing, I do nothing, and I shall do nothing, except cut off those coupons; and I firmly believe that money is the representative of labor! Surely, this is amazing! And people talk of madmen, after that! Why, what degree of lunacy can be more frightful than this? A sensible, educated, in all other respects sane man lives in a senseless manner, and soothes himself for not uttering the word which it is indispensably necessary that he should utter, with the idea that there is some sense in his conclusions, and he considers himself a just man. Coupons--the representatives of toil! Toil! Yes, but of whose toil? Evidently not of the man who owns them, but of him who labors.

Slavery is far from being suppressed. It has been suppressed in Rome and in America, and among us: but only certain laws have been abrogated; only the word, not the thing, has been put down. Slavery is the freeing of ourselves alone from the toil which is necessary for the satisfaction of our demands, by the transfer of this toil to others; and wherever there exists a man who does not work, not because others work lovingly for him, but where he possesses the power of not working, and forces others to work for him, there slavery exists. There too, where, as in all European societies, there are people who make use of the labor of thousands of men, and regard this as their right,--there slavery exists in its broadest measure.

And money is the same thing as slavery. Its object and its consequences are the same. Its object is--that one may rid one's self of the first born of all laws, as a profoundly thoughtful writer from the ranks of the people has expressed it; from the natural law of life, as we have called it; from the law of personal labor for the satisfaction of our own wants. And the results of money are the same as the results of slavery, for the proprietor; the creation, the invention of new and ever new and never-ending demands, which can never be satisfied; the enervation of poverty, vice, and for the slaves, the persecution of man and their degradation to the level of the beasts.

Money is a new and terrible form of slavery, and equally demoralizing with the ancient form of slavery for both slave and slave-owner; only much worse, because it frees the slave and the slave-owner from their personal, humane relations.]