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HUMANITY AND MATERIALISM.

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We live in a junction of eras. No less is it a period of conflict of interests. Phenomenal conditions are everywhere present. From every quarter of the civilized globe come complaints of industrial depression, of labor condemned to enforced and involuntary idleness, of capital hoarded and wasting, and of want and suffering. Armies of tramps and myriads of locomotives traverse the same region, and almshouses and prisons multiply alongside opulent warehouses and magnificent churches.

This is not the picture of pessimism but it is plain, bald fact. "The times are out of joint," and problems weigh upon the spirits of the wisest and best like the burden of the Lord on the hearts of the ancient prophets. Penury and idleness prevail correspondingly with material progress. Behind these phenomenal effects must lie equal causes, for effect never exceeds cause. Let us see if we cannot ascertain the great primal occasion for this extraordinary condition.

In order to do this only the plainest phraseology should be employed. In conditions so antipodal there is necessary friction arising from the contention of forces as opposite as extremes can make them. It is a struggle for ascendancy—a conflict universal between Materialism and Humanity. Nor is it a new struggle. As old as the races of men, it now merely assumes new shapes to which contour is given by inventive genius, rapid development, and ability to focus and concentrate. Intoxicated by dreams of material accomplishment awakened by possibilities suggested by speed, inventive force, and the ingenuity of policy, the thoughtful world has largely thrown itself in the direction of materialism with a growing disregard for the fundamental principles that underlie the moral code. Success has, in consequence, come to

be measured by the length of one's purse or by the balance of his bank account. The standard is not that achieved so much in the fields of philosophy, of scholarship, of philanthropy, or of religion, as in the accumulation of fortune. Captains of industry have come to supercede great reformers, great statesmen, great philanthropists, and great revivalists. The success of one in the sphere of commercialism incites to activity thousands of others. It thrills through all classes of society, for not infrequently is the fact exploited that the multimillionaire of to-day was a few decades ago an obscure lad working for a few dollars a month.

By reason of its phenomenal success, Materialism has come to the mastery of most else, and has forced most prevalent agencies into its own contracted channel. The question on every hand is, "Will it pay?" That settled favorably, octopus-like it extends its tentacles and draws to itself whatever conduces to success, according to the standard of success already named. Advantage is taken of the undeniable indispensableness of capital, and thus all interests and all causes are forced into a recognition, not of the value of money, which is universally known, but a recognition of money as at present residing in the possession of the few, and acquired largely in compliance with the conditions already set forth, as a result of the dominant materialism of the times.

It thus comes to pass, as a result of these conditions, that all interests become, to a greater or less degree, affected by the materialism of the times. All standards come to be measured largely by the one standard of success in money. Position in society, attainment to station, and much else, and frequently with disregard to all else, are derived from the same standard of success. Pastoral calls and successful operations in many religious spheres are not exempt from the application of the same rule. The question is not one of the successful accumulation of wealth, nor of its inheritance, but of its dominance to

the exclusion of regard for fundamental ethical principles. It is the question of the uses for which it is employed. As much as any other element, money gauges character. How does fortune affect one? To what uses is it devoted? What ends does it serve? These questions as much affect character as any others.

That there is a comprehensive diversion of capital in myriads of directions and that there is a prevalent disregard of human interest in its accumulation, the conditions of the present fully attest. Nothing is more abnormal than prevailing want in the presence of plenty; of the enforced idleness of millions of eager hands, and the necessary hunger of innumerable households where abundance is, and of artificial prices for the necessities of life where superabundance prevails. The moral side of the high price of living is obscured by the regnant thought of how more can be had, and the beauty of benevolence is impaired in the arrogant possession of vast accumulation.

Regardless of the claims of Humanity this is done. All that centers in the term selfishness finds expression here. It has become an aphorism that it is very difficult to procure money for a good cause. A foreign missionary returning to his distant field, a few years ago, with a small sum which he was able to beg, reached the metropolis on the day when there was to be a marriage in one of the wealthy families of the city, and the press was full of the descriptions of the adornments of that palatial mansion for the festal occasion. Among the other statements made in the metropolitan journals was that of the fact that the flowers and other ornaments alone cost \$100,000.00. Dr. Josiah Strong is the authority for the statement that on the occasion of a banquet given by a private gentleman, the paper used for making cigarettes was ten-dollar bills. Yet not many leagues away, in crowded tenements was abounding hunger and squalor. All of this is equalled by a lady member of a certain

fashionable church, who, when the plates were passed for a collection for missions, reached forth her fingers glittering with jewels and deftly let fall a nickel into the plate.

It is said that the term *anger*, has as many as twenty-seven synonyms representing the different phases of that passion. It would be difficult to name the many expressions of the one word *Materialism*, but among them would be conspicuous the principle of selfishness. In view of these conditions apparent in modern practice, the well-worn expression of James, "The love of money is the root of all evil," assumes fresh significance. As has already been said, the contest between Humanity and Materialism is not new, but under the cumulative pressure of the times the conflict is joining here and there about the world. In the American States it assumes the peaceful form of legislation as a result of popular propaganda. Child labor, trusts, recall and referendum, the tyranny of the saloon, and much else are movements in the direction of the promotion of humanity. This procedure is due to the flexibility of our institutions, our freedom of speech, and freedom of the press.

Across the seas it assumes the aspect of the most wanton war in the annals of time. In that distant region, where conditions are so vastly different from our own, the issue joined is not so much one of a clash of the opposing camps of Humanity and Materialism as it is that the latter, having reached an air of arrogance, so lofty, proposes to lay low Humanity by one fell blow, while at the same time using this same Humanity as an engine of its own destruction in the enthronement of Materialism. The result of the conflict, however, is destined to conduce to the elevation of Humanity. The sacrifices made for the attainment of this end are both enormous and appalling, but there seems little doubt that the result will be promotive of European humanity. The heart sickens, even at this distance, at the price paid for this exalted

principle, but the principle itself is worth it. While in the glut of imperial ambition no thought is had of humanity, it is to the final result that we must look and not so much to the crucible through which it is passing. Beyond the slaughter of millions, the desolation of churches and of ancient seats of learning, the devastation of a defenseless people, the reduction of a nation to beggary, and the orphanage and widowhood of countless multitudes, lies somewhere in the time to come an unshackled Humanity with enlarged liberty, a boundless horizon of hopefulness, and a clearer view of an invisible sovereignty that governs the world. Fraught with many lessons are the strenuous times in which we live, and numerous are the dire predictions of those who look only on the dramatic tumult now raging, but within it all is a coming Humanity that is struggling to a new birth. The Lord God omnipotent still reigns, and as from the beginning Humanity was His chief concern, so it is now.

It is true that

“The days of the nations bear no trace
Of all the sunshine as far foretold;
The cannon speaks in the teacher’s place—
The age is weary with work and gold,
And high hopes wither, and memories wane;
On hearths and altars the fires are dead;
But that brave faith hath not lived in vain,
And this is all that our watcher said.”

Yet the pageant of carnage and ruin must eventually pass and leave in its wake a renewed Humanity.