THE SALARIED MAN

THE STORY IN TWO EPISODES
OF AN EVERY-DAY PERSON
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EPISODE I

When I sat down in the street car besides him, he did not even lift his head, although I purposely jostled him. He was absorbed in a book whose title read, "Motion Study in the Factory," and he was drinking it in with the eagerness of a young girl in the clutches of a novel.

Before I addressed George Cox, whom I had not seen for nine years, I scrutinized him out of the corner of my eye, and I was a little startled.

Cox was a man who had set a new high record for scholarship at his college. With his leaning towards business, we more humble classmates expected him in time to bestride the commercial world like a Colossus. Professors deplored the fact that he would not teach, but admitted that there was no money in it. Was there money in what Cox had done?

For as I studied him, I became aware that he did not have the "clothesmarks" of success. The careful pressing of his suit could not conceal the fact that it was distinctly of a cotton mixture. His collar was somewhat frayed. The tie had nothing of that texture which goes with a generous expenditure. And his hat was one of the cheap, vulgar brood which is turned out by a manufacturer in hundred thousand lots for all comers.
Despite the prophecies, then, Cox had not succeeded in a big way. He who was to travel in seven-league boots to the Land of Success was shod in the rather flimsy leather of the cheap shoestore. What had happened?

My curiosity was now too much for me. I spoke up.

“Well, Cox, it’s been a long time since we put it over the professors!”

He was warm in his greeting, and immediately wanted to know how I had fared. I was pleased to find him the same unselfish individual whom we had liked even in our hours of most intense student rivalry.

I quickly swung the talk in his direction. “In business for yourself?” I asked.

“No, just now,” he said. But it appeared that at one time or another he had ventured out on his own hook. He had tried publishing books, because that seemed a dignified pursuit, and because he loved the association of books. But the cheap, shoddy, illegitimate offsprings of whirling presses soon lost interest for him.

“When I found there wasn’t enough money in it, there was no use keeping it up,” he explained. “There was nothing to compensate me for my loss of self-respect.”

The book business, however, showed him the possibilities of mail-order selling. In this he embarked with another man who put a whole life’s savings into it. They tried to market numberless things.

“We worked day and night,” he said. “In fact, we almost worked ourselves to death. We consumed enough brains and enough muscle to have kept a business five hundred times that size on the go if we’d only had the capital. But we couldn’t compete with the fellows who had twenty years’ start of us.”

After that, not at all discouraged, he concentrated on salesmanship: “The scientific kind. None of this half-baked conversation by which nine-tenths of the solicitors prod some business out of a harrased man.”
He went after the jobbing trade up and down the country with an important office specialty. He had come across this particular article in his mail-order work.

“Curious,” he commented, “how almost all the things I have done dovetail into each other!” And he laughed pleasantly, as if the past sat lightly on him.

He made some money this time—at least enough on which to marry; and, to use his own words, he “settled down.”

“Lost nothing in getting around the country,” he remarked with enthusiasm. “I got to believing more than ever in our little U. S. A. Its vastness spelt OPPORTUNITY with capital letters. It seemed to have the sort of message I needed. I tell you, it made me proud to be an American! The inspiration I derived helped me get rid of the critical feeling I was beginning to have about business conditions. I kicked out that pessimistic stuff once for all!”

In his settling down period he made a bid for a salesmanship. His experience, personality and confidence counted—and he was put in charge of a big office.

A new brand of silverware for the table was being marketed, backed by a big advertising campaign in the women’s magazines. Salesmen were to go after the dealers, and to see that they were properly stocked up. Cox was to take the salesmen in hand, haggle with them about their commissions, teach them the tricks of the trade, inspire them, route them, send them off, study their reports, and get rid of those who fell down in their volume of business.

“The best salary I got up to that time!” he said, in his straight-forward manner.

“The business went like a house afire at first,” he narrated, “but pretty soon there was a fly in the ointment—or rather, too much basemetal under the silver and not enough silver plating. They had been over-watering the stock to allow some insider to clean up. The financial strain on top of the bad name which the ware was getting in the trade busted things up.
"I tried to save some of the pieces by suggesting that they reorganize on a more honest basis; but they practically told me that I was butting in. It wasn't long, therefore, before I 'butted out.'"

He mused silently for a minute as if reliving that particular business experience. Then he apologized for talking about himself, but I insisted that he go on.

"Oh, there is very little more to tell," he said. "That was the year when I felt my best. I saw the magic possibilities of commercial enterprise. I realized that all one needed for a proper leverage on things was intelligence. Given that, you were master of the situation!

"The raw materials are here aplenty; the machinery is waiting for guidance; investors have but to be told. It is merely up to you to so organize yourself and your abilities as to dominate these essentials.

"That sales-managership was a liberal education. I was ready for the next step. There's romance in machinery, and I was tickled to death to get hold of the management of an office selling gasoline engines for various purposes. Of course, I've only got a strip of territory to supervise, but I am making it productive.

"Machinery is the sort of merchandise you can have a lot of respect for. You do your work with real interest because you're really helping production. Sounds enthusiastic, I know.

"I'm studying mechanics, too. And learning how to improve my office organization. Ultimately I shall take that particular engine and other machinery to the four corners of the world. There's the bigger job I'm dreaming about!—to carry the American flag over the seven seas in behalf of American products!"

Then he was a little quiet, as if somewhat shy after this frank bit of personal history. I talked about college days, and we chuckled reminiscently about the failings of the solemn professors who had taken themselves so seriously.

When we parted, Cox insisted that I look him up, and
gave me his card. He walked out of the front door of the car with head erect, shoulders thrown back, jaunty step, and altogether conveying a sense of youth and vigor which brought back vividly the undergraduate of twelve years before.

I wondered. Thirty-three, and still fighting for a vantage point in the business world! What had been the trouble with this undoubtedly able man? Had he been following wrong leads? Or was it lack of money? Or both?

Here was intelligence, dogged ambition and devotion to the one ideal of business. Yet he was far from the leadership which we had prophecied for him.

Still, he did not in the least convey the impression that he was a defeated man. According to his own estimate he was making progress, with victory just around the corner. And he was not going to be satisfied with a mediocre prize—that was indicated by the way in which he regarded the preliminary steps.

When finally he would enter the throne room of Big Business, would it be as a heroic figure, or would he be apologetic, beaten, humbled and a nonentity?

I was not to know the answer for four years.

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**EPISODE II**

**IN WHICH OUR HERO DOES THE UNEXPECTED.**

This time George Cox was sitting in a corner of a "tea-room" where the height of refinement is reached by multiplying the number of dishes so as to overcome the difficulty of not putting enough food on any one dish. It was one of the many typical eating places to which small salaried men went to escape the uproar of large food-shops.
If I was surprised to find Cox there, I gave no sign of it, and took him very much for granted. He, on his part, upbraided me for not having hunted him up in the long interval.

He looked distinctly older, yet his air betokened no abatement of his old-time confidence, even though his appearance did not indicate any floodtide of prosperity. I could not help expecting that he would speedily offer some explanation of why he had not climbed up into the tower of Success and rung the bell of "I."

He made neither explanation nor apology. Instead, in reply to my question as to how he was getting on, he said: "Oh, very much like a few million other people, I guess."

I was so aghast to see him come tumbling down from the heights where I had always placed him, that I almost stammered as I gave my order to the aenemic waitress hanging over the table.

Finally I managed to ask casually, "Still in the machinery business?"

He was; and he went on to say that he expected to be in it for a long time to come.

"I had some big plans when I saw you last, didn't I? Let's see: that was about four years ago. If I remember, I was talking very much like a hero in the Saturday Evening Post. Well, just after I saw you I tried one more adventure in business.

"That time I came near landing the big prize. I got a fellow with some real, honest-to-goodness capital to join me in an export venture. We were to be sole selling agents for several machinery concerns. Everything looked rosy. But the fellows at the other end in Europe and South America were long on promises and short on performance. Their orders came through quickly enough but the banks were inclined to shy at them.

"My partner decided to make a trip of investigation. He finished by staying abroad and telling me to wind things up—the partnership seemed no longer to be es-
sential to his plans. I tried to tell him in a letter what I thought of him, but the letter got too long, so I decided not to send it.”

Cox laughed, not at all ill-humoredly.

“That’s not the way the Saturday Evening Post hero winds up. Nor does he go back to his old job and eat humble-pie, as I did. They took me back because they knew that I was a reliable salesman.”

He ate microscopic sections out of his sparse portion of dessert, like a child that wishes its favorite dish to last. Suddenly, as if conscious of the questions I was leaving unasked, he laid down his spoon, and said with extended finger:

“Don’t think that I don’t realize that according to certain standards I’m only a ‘near-success.’ The class prophecy which foretold how I was going to keep a billion dollar corporation on the tracks and give orders to Washington, sounds like a schoolboy’s joke, doesn’t it? I’m not so sure now that I couldn’t go it big yet if I drained all the decency out of my soul and the blood out of my body; and the ghost that would be left of me would get a fine obituary notice in the Journal of Commerce.”

After a pause he went on quietly:

“I am through chasing the great god Success. While I’m on the lookout for more salary, I’ve reached a point where I begin to see that there’s no use trying to break out of the corral. I am willing to call it a day’s work.

“Everytime I tried to become a Napoleon of Business, I ate up my little reserve stock of cash. And when you’ve been through the experience of wondering whether there is going to be food for the wife and the children next week, the game of trying to pull yourself up by your bootstraps ceases to be fascinating.”

I asked whether this didn’t imply a philosophy of despair, and whether it wouldn’t make an unhappy man of him. He shook his head vigorously.

“Don’t you believe it for a moment!” he said. “A man is never so good a fighter as when he knows just what
he’s up against. Once you stop nursing dreams and come down to earth, you’re in a position to be of greater use to yourself and the next fellow.

“For the fact is, I’ve discovered that I’m one of the vast army of salaried men who are the victims of a carefully worked up lie. That sounds pretty strong; but I happened to have stepped behind the scenes. I know how the fake scenic effects are obtained, and what the deceiving footlights do, and how the sentimental lines are written to sugar-coat the real thing.”

When I suggested that he had gone pretty far since I saw him last, he said:

“A man who has been through hell has a right to a change of viewpoint. When you’ve seen the wolf sniffing around the door of your home, you are going to stop believing nonsense. There’s no glamor then in being a private in the army of General Bunk, in the hope of being a captain sometime.”

His jaw fairly snapped as he exclaimed, “I’m not apologizing for anything! That’s not my way! You’re seeing a man who is one hundred percent alive. I simply no longer believe that every member of the salaried class has a chance to become a captain of industry. On the contrary, I believe that the salaried class is one of the most tragically helpless sections of society, and I believe that its suffering is due to the fact that it thinks itself part of the middle class!”

He shook his head angrily because of the thoughts this evoked. He tried to keep down his indignation as he said:

“Just look about you! Study us as we crowd into offices and stores, and hurry to work, and to lunch, and to work again, and finally crawl back home. Some of us think we are important to the progress of civilization, but most of us buried our hopes long ago.

“Only brutal irony could lead one to preach the Simple Life to salaried workers—offsprings of a hope and a wish!

“On the dyspeptic pay envelope which the salaried
class gets, it has to see first of all that it dresses decently, with the result that many a pinched, hungry stomach makes insulting remarks under a respectable garb.

"Decent looking clothes are essential, for the employer who may not pay us enough to live decently would feel insulted if we exhibited shabby clothes. If we dressed like workmen, we would lose caste at once.

"And because ours are the wives of salaried men and not of workmen, the cruel joke is carried still further. They must wear clothes in keeping with their 'station.' And, of course, the children must help to carry on the cruel fiction of a comfortable salary, even though many a little body suffers from malnutrition.

"Don’t forget, too, that the salaried class is the consumer of cheap products—cotton in clothing where there should be warm, cold-resisting wool, foods devoid of real nutriment, household furnishings which go to pieces rapidly."

Cox was bitter as he proceeded with the indictment.

"Unfortunately the salaried have come in contact with ‘nice’ things—like books, and pictures, and music. Having acquired a ‘hankering’ for the better things of life, they dream of little Anna and Jack going through high school and perhaps through college. Devoted lives are sacrificed that some fraction of the next generation may get advanced schooling. The soldier in battle sometimes sees the victory won before he dies; but many are the homes where the father and mother fight a losing fight, and with seared souls finally watch the growing children drift off to jobs to help supplement the family income.

"To make matters worse, most of these children are thrown into businesses for which they have absolutely no aptitude. In consequence, they either move lifelessly in the groove in which they find themselves, or drift from position to position. The accident which flings the average human being into a business or profession is one of the tragedies of an age which lays claim to efficiency. But why should society care? The salaried man and woman are cheap, and with all their defects, get through
their five and a half day stunt with a definite balance of profit to the firm. So what does the human wasteage matter?

"And when the 'salaried' working children become 'salaried' adults, what do you find? Many of them postpone marriage as long as possible, fearful lest their meagre earnings will result in positive want. Heaven alone knows what sort of sex life the men live. And the young women grow into listless types that surrender almost without a struggle the instinct of home-making."

The little restaurant was fast emptying, and George Cox could sit back and speak without being overheard by those who represented the class he was discussing. He spoke quietly, and with a fixed look ahead as if watching a line of people filing past.

"Some don't give in without a struggle. In fact, so many fight against the innumerable obstacles to better their position, that it explains the self-delusion of the salaried class about their opportunities. Prodded on by hope, they burn the candle at both ends—tiring work during the day, more frightfully tiring study at night. If it were not futile, it would challenge admiration.

"At best, some of these climb up a bit to a few more dollars, or to a higher sounding occupational name. But the success of the night student is not universal, despite the alluring claims of the correspondence school advertisement. There are too many competitors for the same job, and most of the big jobs up top are held by the favored friends of stockholders, or by their sons, or by other relatives.

"But the time comes in the life of the salaried man, graduate of night study or not, when he comes to grips with actuality—the day he asks once too often for a 'raise.' That is the dramatic point!

"If you watch what occurs then, you've got the keynote of the whole situation. The earlier requests have been more or less grudgingly allowed—our applicant most likely has been much underpaid. But now we've reached a point when the employer refuses to grant a
raise, for he knows that he can go into the open market and buy ability at a 'better' price than is asked.

"He expresses astonishment that the man before him cannot see that he is getting as much as the firm can afford to pay anyone in his position. Or he takes time to point out a number of deficiencies in the employee's work. Or he pleads business stagnation, or bewails his large overhead expenses. If he has grown to like the dogged loyalty of the petitioner, he promises that perhaps at some future time he will do something. But why rehearse any further the ancient tale?

"That's about the last interview for a better salary. By this time the employee has in all likelihood made up his mind that he can improve his lot and his income by going elsewhere. So he secretly begins to answer 'Want' advertisements, and risks a few dollars to break into the 'Situation Wanted' column, where he rehearses his long experience in a few lines. The results are a revelation to him! The proffers of salary are well within the limits of that which he is drawing. Of course, promises are held out that 'Hard work will be rewarded by advancement,' whatever that can mean to a man to whom his position has been a treadmill.

"Another thing that the seeker after opportunity finds is that employers have a mania for the services of young people. In fields where experience should be at a premium, the bait of 'advancement' is dangled before immature minds. It would seem that there are countless employers with the ready gift of pouring wisdom and information into the mental bungholes of youth.

"It is impossible for older salaried men to warn the youthful applicant who snaps at this bait, or to make him stand out for a higher salary. That's where the organized wage worker has the advantage. The unions long ago discovered that younger blood is brought in by the employer primarily to keep down wages; and the wage worker has successfully fought this. There is no doubt that one of the big factors in keeping salaries at a low figure is the reserve army of youth."
"Taking everything into consideration, do you wonder, as you study the faces of the salaried men and women going to work, that there isn’t the ‘snap’ one would expect in such an important element in industry and business? They look as if they were driven by an invisible lash. Or if fear and worry are not apparent, you are met instead by listless, dull countenances, the aspect of men who are defeated before they have made a start.

“They are heartily sick of their positions, except at moments when they compare their lot with that of someone a degree lower in the scale. They detest their fellow-workers. The office frequently becomes a place where one employe tyrannizes over another; and there is sharp criticism, and snarling, and back biting, and rampant unhappiness.

“It is into this atmosphere that ‘Tom’ and ‘Dick’ and ‘Mary’ come out of the public school to start a career—children who could have stood at least four or five years more of education—immature minds indiscriminately gulped down by big business and small business, to float along in undigested fashion in the sorry stream of life.

“In view of all this, while wage-workers are winning fight after fight for shorter hours and more pay, is the salaried man to continue to live on the pay scale of yesterday, and to shrink from any form of protest? And if the climbing wage represents organized power, and the dwindling salary the helplessness of timid, loose atoms competing for jobs, is the answer organization?”

Cox shook his head even as he asked this. “It can’t be done, except in isolated instances. The salaried do not as a rule work in large groups. In addition, there are hundreds of demarcations because of the different types of business involved. There can be no real coherence. There would only be fear. No; real solidarity is out of the question.

“But if this helpless section of human society can’t organize, what in God’s name can it do to make it decently assertive? How can it fight to force action, to bring about a loosening of the awful pressure that is crushing it?”
George Cox looked sharply at me to see if I would be willing to go farther with him, now that he had gone so far. Then he glanced about as if the thing of which he wished to speak might be too much for the sensibilities of the pale waitresses and the solitary hangovers of the noon-meal crowd.

He leaned forward, and spoke with the precision and force of the practiced orator. He spoke with the ease of one who has long rounded into form the thoughts which he had been secretly nursing. His conviction had the earnestness of religious fervour.

"I got an answer to my question," he declared. "But not the sort of answer the salaried man gets from the press controlled by the employing class. For let me tell you, that press is a source of misinformation it behooves every lover of personal liberty to be on his guard against! It is being used to keep the salaried men divided, and right now is fomenting discord between them and the wage-workers.

"I got my answer from an occupant of a Pullman smoker going West. We were alone except for a cattle-man who was dozing in a corner, having gotten tired of the landscape.

"My companion told me that he was on his way into the Northwest to help organize the farmers into an independent political body which would seek to wrest control from the two old political parties. The farmers had borne shameless betrayal by these parties year after year, but at last they were going to take their destinies into their own hands.

"I was rather startled by the picture he drew of what the farmer had to contend with, of the conspiracies engineered against him by the interests which controlled the banks and the grain elevators and the shipments to distant markets and the prices paid for farm products. I had always believed that my country stood for fair play to the men who till the soil. But I saw that a species of pawnbroking was keeping tens of thousands of them virtually in a state of slavery."
“As he described the helplessness of these people and the way they had been divided into various political camps to keep them from thinking and acting as a group, it came to me like a flash that to all intents and purposes he was talking about the salaried class.

“But he was talking organization! How could the countless occupants of offices and stores organize politically? How could they find the courage to come out into the open and through formidable protest better their conditions? It would be individual suicide, pure and simple!

“As I continued to listen, a way out did present itself. But I had first to realize that the governing of our great democratic nation of which I had so long boasted was being done by hand-picked agents of Big Business—that Big Business was concerned with the running of it, because politics is an expression of what is going on industrially.

“As long as the industrial heads dictated political policies, they could dictate working conditions, and so protect their own economic interests in every detail. And therefore only when the control of the nation was wrested from them politically by the salaried and working classes would the latter come out of the industrial jungle of want and frustration.

“A state democratically so controlled would help shape the life of every human being in it, would ensure to every child brought into this world the maximum of education, and of training in productive citizenship; it would provide in return for work a good home, nourishing food, good clothes and proper recreation. It would, in other words, be an efficient expression of the aspirations and hopes of the brain and hand workers of the nation.

“Of course I shied violently at the word Socialism. I opposed it because it was a working-class movement; and my fellow traveller rejoined that the sooner the salaried man took his stand with the manual worker, the better for both, because there were enough benefits to go around, whereas lack of unity might in the end destroy the freedom and opportunities of both.

“I objected that Socialism aroused class antagonisms;
to which the reply was that Socialism could not create that which had always existed. The owning class and working class were already lined up for the fray, and the salaried man in mistaking the class to which he belonged was suffering in the collision of interests.

“I said that if the brain and manual workers took over industry and business, they would make a mess of it; and I was asked whether a dreadful mess hadn’t already been made by the powers that be, and whether there weren’t enough intelligent men among our hundred million who if working in behalf of their fellows could not do better than the several thousand industrial over-lords who through their brutal indifference made life a nightmare for the greater portion of humanity.

“I argued that radicalism stood for revolution. My companion told me that a silent industrial revolution was already in progress, if only I could understand what was going on about me; and that all that the radical did was to educate the masses to the possibilities of the change, just as our revolutionary forefathers educated the American colonists in the principles of self-government. A revolution did not necessarily mean violence, except when those who stood for the old order used violence to prevent change. And as a rule they did use it, cunningly, under the guise of patriotism, and even of religion. Only when the masses could properly interpret and intelligently help shape the silent revolution in business and industry, would they arrive at their purpose efficiently.

“This organizer made considerable use of that word ‘efficiency.’ He believed the American people needed a great deal of education in organized, collective effort, and thought it would fall to the technically and professionally trained men among the radicals to rear an efficient society in the place of the one that was going to pieces.

“I fought my train companion bitterly, bringing to bear every anti-Socialist argument I had ever heard. He finally asked, ‘Do you realize that all that you have said has really been put into your mouth by those who control public opinion? Have you ever stopped to think
what you would lose by a change in the ownership of industry in this country? Do these powerful business-controlling factors really care about the happiness of the nation? Would they voluntarily surrender a tithe of their incomes? No! They want dividends! dividends! and still more dividends! And at the other end of the scale are millions of human beings who more or less abjectly ask: 'O, give us this day our daily bread!'

"I demanded to know how Socialism would help the salaried man. He explained that only when these salaried men would have a share in the control of this country's business would their lot be bettered, for such a share would give them the opportunity to dictate earnings, working conditions and living conditions. This would arise from the fact that industry would be operated for the benefit of those actually engaged in it.

"I had never before conceived of business and industry being run for the general good rather than for personal profit. Heretofore, the world had been to me a mixture of all sorts of classes whose interests could not really conflict. Now I saw two antagonistic groups—those who owned industry and allowed it to operate only as long as it was profitable, and those who were literally the serfs of this holding-group. The fact that the salaried man did not wear overalls and carry a dinner-pail no longer created confusion in my mind. He, too, was one of those who did not own his job, but whose job owned him!

"And because the owning groups, or holding groups, ran business and industry for profit only, I began to see why in a nation rich in machinery and natural resources, and plentifully supplied with unskilled labor and with those technically trained to direct labor, there could be panics and depressions, slums and underfed human beings, suicides and prostitution, strikes, lockouts, boycotts, crowded prisons and the Potters' Field. And there stood out the damning count that this irresponsible system of ownership carried tyranny with it, for the man who owns my job owns me, body and soul, if only I have the intelligence to know it!"
Cox stopped. His face was almost ecstatic. He leaned forward, and put his hand on my shoulder as he said:

"Old man, there are times when we are lifted out of our narrow view of things to bigger and broader conceptions. Sorrow will do this for us, as when someone we deeply love goes out to that Great Unknown we call Death. Or when we are stirred by the great joy of looking at our first born. So when I listened to this man who was going on his great errand of education, human lives became grand, and selfish business did not loom quite to advantage.

"Heretofore I had been prone to blame the individual for his failure. Having worshipped at the shrine of Commercial Success, I had no pity for those who fell by the wayside. Now I saw that the path worn by the pilgrims to the shrine of this brutal god was strewn with the bones of the best manhood of the race. And I also saw that those who finally reached the shrine alive were so blinded and worn by the long journey, that they could no longer sympathize with the dead and dying along the road.

"Of course I repeated to the organizer that Socialism would not work—that it was a delightful theory at best, and nothing more. And he retorted that universal suffrage had been considered just that by supposedly wise men. Who would have dreamt five hundred years ago that a nation of a hundred million could on one day select its representatives, and that these would gather in one place to enact laws for those whose wishes they were supposed to voice? As my friend pointed out, about the only hard thing in an age which talks without wires, and sails under the sea, and sends its ships into the clouds, and weighs the stars—the only hard thing for that kind of a civilization is to solve the problem of escaping the uncertainties of a tribal existence.

"In the midst of grain elevators bulging with food, man dies of hunger; and supplied with whirring looms, he goes without adequate covering against the icy blasts of winter; and surrounded by the products of the best minds of three thousand years, he is so poorly educated that he cannot explain the simplest natural phenomena.
"But if the salaried man cannot organize, what part can he play in social reconstruction? If he is to demand that the state, or society, or the nation, is to do something for him, how is he to make that demand effective? If there is any group, or class, whose ownership of the means of life keeps him under its heel, how is he to escape the frightful pressure?

"As I said before, to openly join some organization for this end may mean starvation for the salaried man. He hasn't the advantages of a trades unionist with fellow-workmen to back him. The moment his employer knew that he believed in a thoroughgoing democratization of industry, there would be an advertisement in the 'Help Wanted' column of the newspaper, and minus the necessary references he would virtually be blacklisted.

"Yet he can register his protest, and a mighty protest!—and do it so secretly, so quietly, that the fall of a snowflake alone can be compared with it. He can escape his servility and strive for free citizenship by the right use of the ballot. That is a way out of the wilderness into which he has been thrust.

"While he is dropping into the ballot box that bit of paper which so eloquently expresses his demands and his class consciousness, tens of thousands of others are at the voting booths for the same sacred purpose. The combined, massed power of those ballots, backed by the already organized strength of the nation's wage-workers, will break through the chains forged by industrial despotism!

"The remedy is so simple that it sounds almost impossible. Yet let us understand what has preceded that act at the voting booth. All over the country there are men and women who openly champion the taking over of industry by the people. They have their programme—a Socialist programme. They defend the issue openly despite the personal sacrifices it entails and the vilification to which they are subjected. They state clearly the undesirability of existing conditions. They demand a scientific, orderly organization of business and industry from the standpoint of the people and not of a small privileged class with unlimited
power. They are the educators—and their number is growing daily.

"They are of the same heroic mould as the men who won for us the right of suffrage. It is through the efforts of agitators like these that the ballot has managed to survive. And in the period of the American revolution, equally brave men wrote that wonderful and illuminating rallying cry into the Declaration of Independence which we must not forget: 'Whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness) it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.'

"That is good Socialist doctrine. And the polling booth is the logical place to endeavor to put into effect the vital principles of the Declaration of Independence.

"Of course, our employers want none of this. They raise the cry that if affairs were run solely in the interests of the community, civilization would be wrecked. If they honestly believed that, we might respect their opinion. But as a matter of fact, they are fearful that the people will successfully manage the nation's business; and they see to it that their subsidized press sneers and belittles and conspires against every effort and experiment at Socialism elsewhere in the world.

"Why shouldn't the industrial overlords be worried? Right down in their hearts they know business would be able to get along without them. They don't really run business themselves. They hire brains to run it for them. When the mental and manual workers really take over the management of industry, the experts now in charge will be there just the same, just as ready to work for the common weal as for the profit-hunting private owner. And all the raw material will be there. And the machinery. And the labor.

"No, we can't take seriously those employers who keep talking about the inefficiency of collective effort. They are
in reality concerned with their pocketbooks, not with the well-being of their fellow-men. You will hear some of them talk about spiritual welfare. They lay emphasis on this rather than on physical welfare, because the risk is less. And their ministers preach sermons from the pulpit to the salaried class on contentment, lest discontent hit dividends. A witty economist said that an Englishman would rather give up the whole Thirty-nine Articles of his creed than one-thirty-ninth of his income.

"Of course, that day when you look out on the world with eyes opened to the facts, when you contemplate with hope a social order that will be a real expression of your needs, your rejoicing may have to be in secret, lest your employer mark you out for destruction. But you are not alone. Hundreds of employers of salaried men and women have not the faintest suspicion that those in their offices who work with such docility, with such a suppression of individuality, are already imbued with the new hope and vision, and are giving their secret aid to the consummation of the greatest ideal ever held out to the world!

"No, you are not fighting an isolated man's fight! On your side are hundreds of thousands of men and women who have awakened to the delusion of 'Government by Big Business.' They are becoming more and more conscious that their protest must be expressed politically. They include tenant farmers who have been veritable serfs, slaving for absentee landlords—and their number is legion! They include wage-workers who are not fooled by increasing wages which never catch up with increasing costs. They number architects and engineers and chemists and teachers and ministers and office drudges and physicians and dentists and law clerks and newspaper men. Every vocation is represented in this army of protest, for every line of activity has been kept on the bare edge of subsistence.

"There they stand, refusing any longer to be 'bluffed,' quick to see through the fake issues which divided them in the past.

"They know that in a period of billion dollar corporations and interlocking directorates, their own ambitions are but chaff in the wind. Land? Farming? The terrible dis-
content of the bulk of our farmers is the answer. And good
land has never been so high in the history of this country.
The professions? Graduates of law schools are clerking for
fifteen dollars a week in law offices. Store-keeping? Bet-
 tween the jobbers or the commission merchants on the one
hand, and the manufacturers on the other, little is left for
the man with limited capital who wishes to try retailing.

"So the disillusioned millions have begun to group them-
selves for the great political contest of the Have-nots against
the Haves, of democracy against autocracy. Just because
the salaried man wears clothes which bear a resemblance
to those of his employer rather than to the overalls of the
wage-worker, he must not lose his sense of direction. The
employer is not worrying as to what his employee is going
to face in old age. The moment the salaried worker can-
not give what is called '100% Service,' into the discard
he will go, like a wornout shoe!

"It therefore behooves the salaried man, as he faces from
week to week the drudgery, the fear and the insufficiency
of his existence, to think fearlessly, to think hard, and to
ask hard questions: He must shake off the sentimental no-
tions and the illusions on which he has been fed to keep
him from asking those questions. Let him analyze with an
eye to the facts all the loose talk about 'chances to make
money.'

"And since at the ballot box his vote is equal to that of
his employer, he must be as jealous of the opportunities
it presents as of his very life. He should pay no attention
to all the talk of putting 'good' men into office. There are
great numbers of 'good' men in political office who are serv-
ing the interests of the industrial masters without being
kept awake at night by their conscience.

"At first when these politicians and their overlords see
the evidence at the polls of revolting citizenship, of a rising
tide of intelligent protest, they will try to frown it down,
then to beat it down. State legislatures and the Federal
government will pass laws to curb freedom of public expres-
sion. The newspapers of the industrial barons will resort
to the most contemptible distortion of all facts. We will
see attempts to undermine personal liberty and even to null-

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ify representative government. Police power will be invoked. No weapon will be overlooked by the ruling class.

“But this desperation can avail nothing. Already there are signs that the overlords feel that the old order is unstable. You can see it in the clumsy way in which they are trying to soothe the discontented while still insisting on their ‘pound of flesh’—on their everlasting dividends and profits. There is further proof in the fact that the issues presented by the old political parties are becoming more and more confused and meaningless. No real, constructive programme is offered. The pretense in this direction is pretty nearly played out.

“It is little wonder, then, that the masses are putting forward leaders of their own, and are beginning to understand the importance of a clear-cut political and industrial programme. With enough men in Congress and in the various legislatures, part of that programme can be worked out at once. The first attack will be to put taxation where it belongs—on those whose stupendous incomes are derived from the control of prices on necessities. And Big Business will not be allowed to shift the taxation back on the people through higher prices.

“They may offer compromises in the hope of staying off the next step. That next step in Socialist legislation will be a hard and fast control of prices. This virtually also means that the community will decide what the earnings on stocks and bonds and rentals and other sources of income shall be. Once you have gone that far, once the industrial overlords find that they can no longer gouge huge profits out of the masses, they will begin to talk about government ownership, hoping in this way to get guaranteed returns for all time to come—while everybody else does the work.

“That flag of surrender will mark the beginning of the end. We will be very close to the permanent, undivided possession of all the means of life by those who make up the salaried and wage-workers.

“Mark you, only when we have clearly decided where we stand and what we want, will these things begin to be. If
we grow excited about minor issues, then we will indeed swap the shadow for the substance! Think how often the people of this country have been thrown off the main track by talk about the tariff, and about free silver, and about unworkable anti-trust laws, and about the virtues and scholarships of this candidate and the unblemished Americanism of that. Meanwhile we have been candidates for perpetual worry, and have not failed of constant reelection as we deposited into the ballot box the ballot prepared by those who were riding on our backs.

“There was a wise student of social conditions who wrote the slogan, ‘Workers of the world, unite! You have but your chains to lose! You have a world to gain!’ That should certainly be rephrased to read, “Salaried men of the world, protest! You have but your chains to lose! You have a world to gain!’—for their chains bite deeper, and they get but little of the rich bounty of the world, a world magnificently designed, but malignantly ruled.

“The Salaried Man, the twentieth century’s worst serf, is the big balance of power which will help turn the tide for human freedom. He must strive for self-respect by refusing to be deluded and hoodwinked. He must force the world of employers to awaken to the fact that he is no longer a mere pawn on the economic chessboard, pushed helplessly hither and thither, without a will of his own. He must demand recognition in an unmistakable way. In that direction lies mental and physical emancipation. And his self-assertion will help give us the much needed democracy we have long been seeking. If government was not meant to secure the utmost happiness to every individual, what earthly purpose can it serve?”

Cox had finished. There was not the slightest indication in the way he looked at me that he felt that he had overstated his case. On the contrary, his was the air of a pleader who had inexhaustible data upon which he had as yet but scantily drawn.

When I left him that noon, I had a new picture of my old classmate—a man whom I might yet see as a leader of
men, who might be a lawmaker and find joy in it, who might be a commercial Colossus in an altogether different sense than his classmates had prophecied.

As we shook hands, with a more genuine promise on both sides of looking one another up, he said:

“Last time I was so engrossed in myself, that my constant stunt of trying to pull myself up by my bootstraps didn’t look foolish to me. That stunt is over. I’ve got my bearings now. I know what we want; but what is more important I know how we’re going to get it. If Socialism hasn’t the message the salaried man has been straining his ears to catch, to what else can he turn? In God’s name, for whom can it have more significance?”
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