THE WORKERS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

BY JAMES ONEAL

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TO THE WORKERS OF AMERICA

who are now besieged by the Powers that Prey, in the hope that this small volume will reveal to them how present tyrannies came to be and how they may be overthrown.
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FOREWORD

The object of this book is to place in the hands of workingmen, and those who are in sympathy with their ideals, information that is indispensable for a proper understanding of the problems of today. So far as the writer knows there is no other work published that attempts to trace the historic processes by which the millionaire rulers of America have succeeded to power and wealth greater than any class in history ever possessed. One writer¹ has attempted such an outline, but as his book is a small one and covers a field much larger than my own, the result is a fleeting view that leaves much unexplained. However, as he has in mind a much larger work and as he has devoted years to gathering material for it, I am sure that, with his equipment, it will prove an indispensable work to those who would understand our past.

In this work I have only considered the period from settlement times down to the nineteenth century. This has enabled me to use a great deal of material that could not be used at all in a book of this size had I attempted to include the period following the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. Even as presented the writer is conscious that his treatment of our past history is necessarily fleeting, but to have made it a larger work would have been to publish it at a price that would have restricted its sale among workingmen, and I am more anxious to get the information into their hands than to publish it at a price more remunerative to me.

Some of the statements made in the following pages will come as a shock to those who have absorbed the current views of American history, and yet no important assertion is made without reference to standard authorities. The references will serve as a guide to those who would like to consult the original sources or pursue their investi-

¹ Simons, "Class Struggles in America," Chas H. Kerr & Company, Chicago.
gations further. Most of the works quoted may be found in any fairly well-equipped public library.

We may briefly summarize the important factors or events that led to the control of government and wealth productive resources by a small class, and their relation to the workers, past and present, as follows:

1. The discovery of America followed by the landing of a horde of adventurers drawn by the lure of gold.
2. The confiscation of immense tracts of land by foreign princes who gave them to favorites, including in the grants extensive powers of rulership over these domains.
3. Luring beggared workers of Europe to the New World with deceptive promises and selling them into temporary slavery on their arrival. Kidnapping whites in Europe and raiding Africa for blacks and selling both in America.
4. Enactment by the land aristocracy of penal codes and fugitive slave laws applying to black and white slaves.
5. Withholding political privileges from all those not belonging to the property-owning classes.
6. Breaking of ties binding the American aristocracy to their brethren of the Old World through the American Revolution.
7. The Constitutional Convention, a secret conspiratory body and counter-revolution against poor debtors, representing a usurping minority of aristocrats, who secured by force, fraud and deception a strong government giving them more efficient legislative, police and military power over the workers.
8. This ruling class later dividing into the owners of blacks in the South and sweaters of whites in the North, resulting in a struggle that ended by extending the sway of the Northern exploiters to the gulf and to both seas.
9. The rise of the labor movement in the first quarter of the nineteenth century gradually extending its organization until today the most advanced of this army challenge the masters of America for control of its wealth-producing and governing powers.
10. The future triumph of the workers by conquering the governing and wealth-producing powers and managing them for the common good of all.

The last three stages mentioned are scarcely considered at all in this work, as they are more familiar to the people today and to review them would make this book a larger one than the author planned. Besides, there are many works accessible to workingmen where these stages are discussed at length.

The writer may here anticipate some criticisms that may be made regarding what is said of Penn, Washington, Hamilton, Madison and other "heroic" figures in American history. Those who profit by the miserable mismanagement of society today use the "great men" of the past as a valuable asset in appeals for support of their rule. The distorted "history" which our school books present has also given us some historical traditions that have no basis in fact. To topple both over and present these men and these traditions in their true perspective is a service in behalf of the sweated millions of today. In this connection we may here quote what Wendell Phillips said of Webster, in 1853, as it applies to this hero worship which is so much cultivated by the masters who rule:

"We seek only to be honest men, and speak the same of the dead as of the living. If the graves that hide their bodies could swallow also the evil they have done and the example they leave, we might enjoy at least the luxury of forgetting them. But the evil that men do lives after them, and example acquires tenfold authority when it speaks from the grave. How shall we make way against the overwhelming weight of some colossal reputation, if we do not turn from the idolatrous present, and appeal to the human race? saying to your idols of today, 'Here we are defeated; but we will write our judgment with the iron pen of a century to come, and it shall never be forgotten that you were false in your generation to the claims of the slave'. . . . We warn the living that we have terrible memories, and that their sins are never to be forgotten.
We will gibbet the name of every apostate so black and high that his children’s children shall blush to bear it.”

Of course, we do not hold individuals responsible for social or economic evils, but when “great men” profit by oppressive institutions or by their acts add to the abuses and grievances of the workers, we protest against placing them on pedestals to be worshiped as many of them are. They are products of their age and environment and naturally followed courses dictated by their material gains. Their incomes were derived from holding labor in subjection, whether white or black, and establishing laws that enabled them to enforce their class domination against the protests of the laborers.

I have allowed competent authorities to speak as often as possible in the following pages. To do this I have found it difficult to avoid making the book a larger one than I send out. Much interesting material has been sacrificed in this effort, but enough is presented to indicate some of the main outlines and important institutions that form the background of civilization in America.

The writer makes no pretense at literary style and any criticism from this point of view will be lost on him. His observation has been that most bourgeois writers today pen beautiful inanities in flowing English that charm and soothe jaded idlers or suspend the thinking faculties of workingmen. Empty platitudes and “blessed words” are their stock in trade. The writer has no wish to indulge in them. He has tried to deal with some forgotten or suppressed facts of American history, and if what he has written arms thinking workingmen with some knowledge that will render them immune to the arts of vulgar politicians, he will feel repaid for the labor of writing this small volume.

The European Background

To understand the history of America it is necessary to review briefly the main events in Europe which had a marked influence in shaping our destiny here.Masses of men do not emigrate to another continent merely for the love of adventure, especially when such emigration implies a hazardous sea voyage and the hardships of a wilderness inhabited by savage tribes. Influences more effective and less romantic brought hordes of workingmen to people the New World; influences that make one of the blackest pages in history, for they include the crucifixion and spoliation of a wealth-producing class. They led not only to the forcible exportation of pauperized workers, but inaugurated a slave traffic in white laborers that included kidnapping of men, women and children in European ports and selling them into temporary slavery in every American colony.

We may trace the beginning of this process with the year 1348, when the Black Death swept over Europe. It is estimated that fully one-third of the population perished of the plague. With the scarcity of laborers wages naturally began to rise. They rose thirty and even fifty per cent. Parliament, under the control of the ruling class, attempted to interfere with the "law of supply and demand." The famous Statute of Laborers provided that wages should be the same as two years before the plague, but the laborers succeeded in evading the law. The scarcity of laborers made higher wages inevitable and the employer connived with the laborer to violate the statutes as he considered himself fortunate to have any laborers at all. Conditions for the workers became so improved that this period came to be known, in England, as the Golden Age of Labor, an age when the highest well-being known to the poor was enjoyed. The old chroniclers frequently refer to it as "Merrie England." From the point of view
of the hours worked and the purchasing power of the wages received, the income of these workers was the highest ever realized. Professor Rogers asserts that "The artisan who is demanding at this time an eight-hour day in the building trades is simply striving to recover what his ancestors worked by four or five centuries ago." The highest point reached was in the closing years of the fifteenth century. The sixteenth century brought with it the Reformation and the beginning of a series of acts that robbed the laborers of their advantages and forcibly transformed them into beggars and outcasts.¹

The Catholic church was proprietor of a great part of the land of Great Britain. In fact, "The Church had become the largest land owner in all Western Christendom, nearly one-third of all the land in Germany, France and England belonging to her."² The suppression of the monasteries, which had been a refuge for the laborers in times of distress, threw masses of them on the market, helpless and dependent. The Reformation brought with it pillage and spoliation of church property. The estates of the church were given away to favorites of the court or sold to speculators who drove away the tenants. Seizure after seizure of lands was made. It was the beginning of an era of conquest which was to have the New World as its greatest prize. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries parliament continued the process of pauperizing the masses by enclosing the common lands which had been at the disposal of the poor. These acts simply legalized the thefts, the ruling classes merely voting to themselves what they wanted.

There was the further process known as "the clearing of estates" which extended into the nineteenth century. Marx gives one classic example where the Dutchess of Sutherland, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, with the aid of British soldiers, rooted out 15,000 people and took possession of nearly 800,000 acres of land.

¹ See Rogers, "Six Centuries of Work and Wages."
and transformed them into a sheepwalk. The good lady later entertained Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," by way of showing her sympathy with the abolition movement in America!

This driving of the workers off the land to wander as vagabonds on the highways had its counterpart in other countries. In 1452 "A similar though less influential part was played in many districts of Bohemia by the fishponds constructed by the landlords. If, as Thomas More said, the sheep ate up the peasants of England, those of Bohemia were equally devoured by carp."3

The ruling class, having reduced the workers to beggars and outcasts, began the bloody legislation on which rests many of the fortunes of British "gentlemen" today. A few examples from English history will suffice. A statute of Henry VIII in 1530 provided that beggars old and unable to work should receive a license. Whipping and imprisonment were provided for the able-bodied. They were to be "tied to the cart-tail and whipped till the blood streams down their bodies then to swear on oath to go back to their birth place" and work. The oath they could not keep as the lands were confiscated and manufacture, then in its infancy, could not employ them. "For the second arrest for vagabondage the whipping is to be repeated and half the ear sliced off; but for the third relapse the offender is to be executed as a hardened criminal and an enemy of the common weal." The baptism of blood and fire continues for a statute of Edward VI, nineteen years later (1549), gives power to the masters to enslave any worker whom they denounce as an idler. The master may force him to any work with whip or chains. If the worker absents himself for a fortnight he is to be branded on the forehead with a letter S and be a slave for life. The master can sell him or bequeath him to others. If the slave revolts he is to be executed. Anyone can take away the children of vagabonds and keep them as apprentices. Similar laws were enacted in France, Holland, and the Netherlands. Organizations of laborers to improve their

3 Ibid, p. 77.
conditions were, in England, outlawed from the fourteenth century to 1825. The break-up of Feudalism and the Reformation, coming in the name of "freedom of conscience," released all the vilest passions of the dormant commercial classes who started their career of conquest and plunder with the methods briefly outlined above. They brought a scourge to the back of the laborer. The generation that came after the Golden Age was a landless, pauperized, vagabond host of beggars, crowding the highways of England, branded with irons for their poverty by the class that had reduced them to want, and "Merrie England" became only a memory.

Luther incarnated the interests of this pitiless ruling class. "He resisted every attempt of the lower classes to derive material benefit from the Reformation, by favoring each step taken by the Princes in this direction. They were to become the owners of the Church property, not the peasants. 'It is not our business to attack the monasteries,' he writes (1524), 'but to draw hearts away from them. When, then, churches and monasteries are lying deserted, let the reigning princes do with them what they please.'"4

It is not our purpose to attack Protestantism or its opponent, but merely to show that the "liberty" the former brought into the world was not for the workers. Their liberty, like their "salvation," was relegated to the "other world." Luther's crusade was the championship of a new ruling class that wished to throw off the old feudal restrictions. It stood for a new ruling class and its opponent defended an old one. "The religious reformation of the sixteenth century was not the cause, but the effect, of the social reformation that followed upon the shifting of the economic center from the manor to the city. And that was preceded by the rise of navigation and the discovery of the New World and new trade routes, which indicate the rise of manufacture."5

In France the reduction of the workers to beggary is

4 Ibid. p. 128.
5 Dietzgen, "Philosophical Essays," p. 87.
a grim record of horrors. The frightful poverty of the peasants and laborers reached a depth perhaps unknown to any other country. Taine quotes La Bruyere who wrote in 1680: "Certain savage-looking beings, male and female, are seen in the country, black, livid, and sunburnt, and belonging to the soil which they dig and grub with invincible stubbornness. They seem capable of articulation, and, when they stand erect, they display human lineaments. They are, in fact, men. They retire at night into their dens where they live on black bread, water and roots. They ... should not be in want of the bread they have planted." Taine adds: "They continue in want of it during twenty-five years after this and die in herds. I estimate that in 1715 more than one-third of the population, six millions, perished with hunger and of destitution."  

By 1727 many live on the grass in the fields, which provokes St. Simon to declare that "The first king in Europe is great simply by being a king of beggars of all conditions." Another writer in 1739 mentions three famine insurrections. The Bishop of Chartres told the king that "the famine and the mortality were such that men ate grass like sheep and died like so many flies." Two years later one town of four thousand people has eighteen hundred poor. "The clothes of the poor are seized and the last measure of flour, the latches on their doors," etc.  

In Germany the thirty years' war, 1618-48, wrought terrible havoc, the peasants and laborers being reduced to conditions of suffering that words cannot exaggerate. Whole provinces were laid waste and transformed into deserts. "Friend could not be distinguished from foe, and men would wrest from their starving neighbors a crust of bread. It has been recorded that not even human flesh was sacred, that the gallows, and church-yards were put under guard to protect them against theft by desperate, famine-stricken people. Incredible as it may seem, in some instances even murder and cannibalism were resorted to. The neighborhood of the city of Worms ... now af..."
forded cover for a group of beggars, who fell upon pass-
ers-by and devoured their bodies for sustenance."  

The wars waged by Louis XIV on the Rhenish Palatinate, in 1674 and 1688, devastated that beautiful country to such an extent that it required two generations to re-
store it to its normal condition. Cities and villages were burnt, thousands were beggared, and lands were con-
fiscated by the French king. Famine and pestilence were added to the other miseries of the unfortunate inhabit-
ants. The invasions seemed to follow a settled policy. The people would no sooner recover from one than another would follow, with the customary pillage of crops and thefts of property. One French army gave seeds to the farmers for another harvest after having robbed the dis-

All this made the victims an easy prey to the emigra-
tion agents of William Penn who were in Germany en-
gaged in an enthusiastic crusade in behalf of emigration to Pennsylvania. Penn had also won the admiration of Queen Anne, who was interested in his colonization plans so that “systematic effort was made to induce them (the Germans) to come to England in order to be shipped to America. Thus in the years 1708 and 1709 more than thirty thousand Germans crossed the Channel, and were soon afterward brought in English ships to New York and the Carolinas, but, above all, to Pennsylvania.”

It will be seen from this brief survey that all Europe was undergoing changes that transformed the peasants and laborers into homeless vagrants. Crowding the high-

9 Ibid, p. 58.
France, cannibalism in Germany and starving outcasts in England, they turned eager eyes toward the New World. A virgin continent awaited them, a land that would serve as a basis for winning the peace and comfort which they had been denied at home. But their pleasant dreams were to be shattered. They did not know or suspect that the ruling classes would even coin their dreams into yellow gold, or that their wretched plight only served as another means of further enrichment for their home exploiters and for another type that awaited them on the shores of the Atlantic in the New World. These victims of class rule were destined to form the basis of a slave trade to recuperate the broken fortunes of a host of adventurers who carried them into a species of slavery on American soil that was, in some respects, as galling as that which they left behind. The character of this white slave trade and the servitude that was to be their lot will be described in a future chapter of this work.
Land Conquests in America

A glamour of romance has grown up about the persons and deeds of navigators like Columbus, so that today they seem to tower above the rest of humanity in courage, endurance of hardships and sacrifice for ideals. They are regarded as disinterested pioneers prompted by the highest motives and inspired with the lofty desire of carrying civilization to barbarian peoples. Nothing is farther from the truth than this. "It is but a survival of the barbarian past to regard great historic names, not only as brilliant leaders, but also as demigods, though such opinions are still prevalent among many learned as well as ignorant men." 1 Columbus was only one of a number of navigators who were seeking a new trade route to India. The march of the Mohammedan hordes to the north out of Africa had been going on for more than two centuries, when finally in the middle of the fifteenth century Constantinople fell into their hands and blocked the trade routes to India. The merchant traders had to seek new trade routes for their merchandise, and it was while seeking a westward route that Columbus made his discovery. The lure of profits, not the love of adventure, was the primal cause of the navigators venturing out into unknown seas.

Events that followed the landing of the white man on the American continent also confirm this view. The era of colonization is an era of conquest, pillage, enslavement and robbery, the victims being the Indians and the great mass of pauperized workers crowding European shores. Columbus himself bears testimony to the sordid motives that guided his policies in the New World. Writing of the natives of one of the Bahama group of islands he informs the king that "Their conversation is the sweetest imagi-

1 Dietzgen, "Philosophical Essays," p. 104.
nable; their faces always smiling; and so gentle and so affectionate are they that I swear to your highness there is not a better people in the world." Yet in his memorial of the second voyage to the Indies, dated January 30, 1494, and addressed to Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus called attention to the prospects for gold in the island and to the Indians as a good source of slave labor. He asks for "cattle, provisions and other articles" which may be "sold at moderate prices for account of the bearers; and the latter might be paid with slaves, taken from among the Caribbees, who are a wild people fit for any work, . . . who will be better than any other kind of slaves." The advice did not fall on deaf ears. Commencing in 1509 "the Spaniards almost depopulated the islands; 40,000 of these innocent aborigines were carried away to a wretched death in the mines of Cuba." What glorious work for a "Christian navigator" whose virtues are sung in every schoolroom in America!

However, in colonizing new countries, a ruling class is face to face with a problem that forces this conquest of barbarous peoples. The capitalist system can only gain a foothold in any new country by compulsory labor of one form or another. In the home countries the ruling classes are in possession of institutions based on thousands of years of history. Land and other forms of production are in the hands of the ruling classes and there is no alternative for the workers but to work and produce surplus incomes for others. Custom, tradition, the schoolmaster and the church have in the meantime played their part in making these workers resigned to their fate, either as one that is the decree of an all-wise providence, or of natural laws which to oppose would be folly. Their fathers had been poor, law and religion sanctioned it, and every educational agency had so perverted their perception of their interests that they not only accepted their fate but shed their blood in behalf of those who lived on their toil. The workers were conquered, intellectually and morally.

2 Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 239.
3 Old South Leaflets, No. 71.
4 Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 239.
But in new countries the institutions of class rule are absent. What exists is a virgin island or continent with natural resources awaiting the skill of men to transform them into the forms that serve the wants of mankind. The rivers and lakes, forests and harbors, fields and deposits lack the basic character of civilization: that is, they are not the property of a class. Hence, if wealth is to be accumulated in such countries the possessor thereof must acquire it by toil. If accumulation through ownership is to be realized—and this is the "ideal" of capitalist society—the land must be seized and thus, by abolishing self-employment, enforced labor will be secured. "Law and order," with all its accessories, such as police, judges, armies, etc., will naturally follow to guard the conquest against the protests of the propertyless. This has been the historic process in every new country, including America.

It is not surprising, therefore, that advance agents of the merchant fleecers of Europe, like Columbus, facing the alternative of either working themselves or enslaving others, should choose the latter course. Besides, they left the old world with other visions than a life of hardship and wealth acquired by hazardous toil. "Most of them were adventurers, who had embarked with no other expectation than that of getting together a fortune as speedily as possible in the Golden Indies. . . From the first moment of their landing in Hispabola they indulged the most wanton license in regard to the unoffending natives, who in the simplicity of their hearts received the white men as messengers from heaven. In less than four years . . . one-third of its population, amounting probably to several hundred thousands, were sacrificed! Such were the melancholy auspices under which the intercourse was opened between the civilized white man and the simple natives of the Western world."5 The adventurers' thirst for gold prompted Winsor to characterize Columbus as "the man who was ambitious to become the first slave-driver of the New World."6

5 Prescott, "Ferdinand and Isabella," Vol. II, Chap. XII.
6 Winsor, "Life of Columbus," Chap. XII.
Unless the worker is enslaved or the masters make it difficult for him to have access to natural resources he will occupy the land, which costs nothing, rather than hire out to others and produce a surplus for them. If the capitalist could export all his institutions to the colonies, if he could call into existence almost over night private possession of resources and have police and military power to enforce obedience, he could start with what he calls "free labor"—that is, labor dependent on him in the beginning. This being impossible all the twaddle about "free labor," which his intellectual police chant, is abandoned and the land is forcibly taken and slavery is introduced. These economic difficulties that faced the merchant adventurers in colonizing the New World, started them on their career of plunder. "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of blackskins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production."7

The rulers of the Old World solved the question of conquering the New and securing slave labor in a characteristic fashion. They simply granted great tracts of land to broken-down court favorites and adventurers, transported their helpless paupers as slaves to America, and early in the seventeenth century began to raid Africa, transforming that country into a bloody shambles to secure further supplies of slave labor. We will notice the land policy first. It was easy to deprive the workers of the soil and make them dependent by giving the land outright to chartered companies of speculators. The charters usually gave exclusive powers of sovereignty over the domains within the royal grants and rendered workmen dependent vassals. All of the colonies were settled by these chartered monopolies. Just as the English ruling class confiscated the common lands and enclosed vast estates and transformed the laborers into vagabonds, so the land was

taken from beneath the feet of the workers here. Many of the fortunes of settlement times came from these monopolies. The first charter of Virginia, granted by King James in 1606, may be cited as an example of the exclusive powers and privileges given to these adventurers.

This grant included an extensive domain along the Atlantic coast for over two hundred miles and inland one hundred miles, as well as the islands within one hundred miles of the coast. The grant provided that the adventurers should have "all the lands, woods, soil, grounds, havens, ports, rivers, mines, marshes, waters, fishings, commodities, and hereditaments whatsoever." It further provided that no others would be permitted "to plant or inhabit behind, or on the back side of them, toward the main land, without the express license or consent of the Council of that Colony." They are granted the right to fortify their territory; to resist and expel on sea or land any person or persons who attempt to inhabit their domains or to annoy them in any way. They are empowered to confiscate any person or persons, ship or ships, vessels, goods and other furniture, which shall be found trading or trafficking in any harbor, creek or place within the limits of the plantation until they pay two and a half upon every hundred of anything by them trafficked, bought or sold. The loot realized from this legalized piracy went to the adventurers for the first twenty-one years; after that they sent it to the king. They were also exempted from paying any duties levied by the home government. Corporate privileges more sweeping than these can scarcely be imagined.

The empire of these favorites extended from the mouth of the Hudson river to the southern boundary of North Carolina. John Smith catalogues those going to Virginia as "poor gentlemen, tradesmen, serving-men, and libertines." The workers, of course, were not included in the grant of privileges, as they invariably came as bond slaves of the "idle and dissolute adventurers, attracted

8 Bryce, "The American Commonwealth," Appendix I.
solely by the hope of speedy fortune." These had no intention of staying in the New World and share in the task of clearing the wilderness and making civilization possible. They left their wives and children at home in the expectation of returning soon with sufficient wealth to live a life of ease. The company was simply a commercial corporation, the main object of its existence being to swell the incomes of the shareholders. Much is said by historians regarding the religious ideals which they assume inspired many to come to America. But whatever religious motives may have possessed the ruling classes and the adventurers it is certain that these served as a convenient shield for the visions of plunder that dominated their lives. Thirteen years after the founding of the colony a Dutch ship sailed into Jamestown and sold the first black slaves to Virginia planters. The same year, 1619, young girls were shipped from England and sold as wives in Jamestown for 120 pounds of tobacco, or about $80 each. A load of convicts also came and were sold into servitude. In 1692 an incident occurred that throws some light on the holy aspirations of the land conquerors. "When a delegation from Virginia were soliciting a charter for the College of William and Mary, on the ground that a higher education was necessary as a step towards the salvation of souls by the clergy, he (Attorney General Seymour) blurted out: "Souls! Damn your souls! Grow tobacco!" 10 Virginia became a class aristocracy, composed of an idle, fox-chasing, cock-fighting, gambling, drinking, ruling class; served by black and white servile labor, controlling church and state, establishing customs, forming current opinions and ruling all classes below it; a society that had little to command our admiration and still less to elicit the praise of historians.

In 1681 Charles II gave William Penn a proprietary charter of 40,000 square miles in America to liquidate a claim Penn's father, an admiral in the British navy, held against the government. It was a habit in those days for

9 Lodge, "History of the English Colonies in America," p. 66.
British kings to pay debts or extend royal favors to friends by extensive grants of land and these grants sometimes included land already given to other Englishmen. These conflicting grants frequently caused endless quarreling between rival claimants. It was an easy method of paying debts or advancing royal favorites. It cost kings nothing and only placed the poor, who emigrated to the New World, into the hands of the land kings. Penn proved to be one of the world's greatest land speculators and a promoter of trade in white slaves on a colossal scale, as we shall see in another chapter. Although the rule of Penn was mild compared with the southern colonies, the conditions under which the vagrant poor made the voyage to the colony were in some respects more inhuman than that which developed with the black slave trade.11

In 1682 a pamphlet, the authorship of which is ascribed to Penn, appeared. This was followed by many others, all of them being distributed throughout Europe, but especially in Germany. One authority passes the following judgment on the first document mentioned: "The scheme here proposed is to induce men of wealth to take up large tracts of land, and to encourage those of little or no means to settle thereon for the benefit of the rich."12 The pamphlet was carefully written and the terms of settlement for the poor stated in language that would appeal to them. The emigrant was given to understand that here was a rare opportunity to escape the oppression of the Old World and win economic independence. "The dark side of colonial life—subduing the forest, the constant fear of savages, the want of facilities incident to a sparse population—was not represented to them in the mass of literature which advertised the new colonies. For unfavorable reports were carefully suppressed by those whose interests lay in the settlement and growth of the colony."

To further stimulate immigration, agents were sent abroad to induce people to go to America. These were

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11 See chapter on The White Slave Trade.
12 Karl Frederick Geiser, "Redemptioners and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania," p. 10.
often in the employ of ship captains, the latter promoting the scheme because of the large profits in it. The agents were known as “Neulanders” (Newlanders), who received a commission for every one they induced to make the voyage. They resorted to many tricks and devices to increase their incomes. They dressed well and paraded gaudy jewelry to impress their victims with the belief that gold and opulence were easily obtained in America. Letters entrusted to the Neulanders to friends in Europe were opened and if they contained the truth as to conditions in the colonies they were rewritten by the sharks. Abbe Raynal, writing of these infamous practices, said: “Simple men seduced by these magnificent promises blindly follow these infamous brokers engaged in this scandalous commerce.”

The drain on the population of Germany became large enough to rouse the resentment of the ruling classes who feared an undersupply of laborers and a rise in wages as a consequence. Literature giving a more accurate account of conditions in America was spread broadcast and laws passed prohibiting the trade of the emigration agents. A colonial newspaper in 1751 contained the following announcement: “The Elector Palatine has issued a command that no Neulanders are to be tolerated in the whole of the Palatinate; that if captured they shall be thrown into prison.” But mandates of princes or other rulers only succeeded in forcing the agents to work in secrecy, and literature continued to be circulated by them. One pamphlet states that cows roam on excellent pasturage the entire year, honey is found in hollow trees, there are wild turkeys in flocks of five hundred, and geese in two hundred. Buffaloes place their heads through cabin windows, bears are smaller and herd with swine, while the alligator is harmless and its tail is good for food! With such tricks and deceptions thousands were lured to the colonies and embarked on a voyage that made them thank their

14 Quoted by Geiser, p. 19.
16 Ibid, p. 64.
God the moment they were free of the white-slaver ship captains.

New Netherlands (later New York) was perhaps the nearest approach to the establishment of a feudal regime in America, and remnants of the feudal privileges granted early in the seventeenth century survived the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This province, like Virginia, became a class aristocracy, though, unlike the latter, black slaves did not play any large part in its history. New Netherlands constituted the section of land that the ruling class of Holland, through its States General, took for itself. The Dutch West India company, a chartered corporation of Holland, decided in 1629 to give “any member of the company founding a colony of fifty persons the right to an estate with a river frontage of sixteen miles, and of otherwise indefinite extent, while with these estates went every sort of feudal right, including manorial courts and the privilege of trading within the dominions of the company.”17 The title was made perpetual and the monopoly of trade exclusive except that in furs. . . . In these grants the resources of wealth and political power are given with a stroke of the pen to the proprietors. It required no iron collar about the neck of the worker to emphasize his status as a serf under these grants. Out of these little land kingdoms sprang a powerful landed class with mighty estates along the banks of the Hudson, surrounding themselves with courts in imitation of the ruling princes of the Old World.

Six years later still greater privileges are granted to the adventurers. Anyone establishing a colony of forty-eight adults is given six years to pay. No one could approach within eight miles of the grant without the proprietor's consent. “He and he only was the court with summary powers . . . which were harshly or capriciously exercised. Not only did he impose sentence for violation of laws, but he, himself, ordained those laws. . . . He had full authority to appoint officers and mag-

istrates and enact laws. And finally he had the power of policing his domain."18

The only redress the workers on these domains had was to appeal to the New Netherlands Council, but the adventurers generally succeeded in avoiding this by binding the settlers before starting out not to exercise this right.19 It is not surprising, therefore, that the land kings "encased themselves in an environment of pomp and awe. Like so many petty monarchs each had his distinct flag and insignia; each fortified his domain with fortresses, armed with cannon and manned by his paid soldiery."20

Neither are we surprised that any man or woman servant could not leave the master if the latter violated the terms of the contract, or that the master "forced his tenants to sign covenants that they should trade in nothing than the produce of the manor; that they should trade nowhere else but at his store; that they should grind their flour at his mill, and buy bread at his bakery, lumber at his sawmills and liquor at his brewery."21

This work of seizing the land as fast as the laborers could be shipped to America placed the latter as securely in the grasp of a colonial ruling class as the evictions from the common lands in Europe did the workers there. In addition to the confiscation was the bond slavery of thousands enforced by the voyage to the colonies. We reserve the discussion of this white slavery for another chapter. It remains for us to briefly consider a few of the other royal grants that established broken libertines, adventurers, and speculators as masters over the workers.

In 1629 Charles I granted to Lord Baltimore and his heirs the present state of Maryland, and a large part of what is now the state of Delaware. His son succeeded to his titles on his death. "The proprietor could declare war, make peace, appoint all officers, including judges, rule by martial law, pardon criminals and confer titles."22 Mary-

20 Myers, p. 21.
22 Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 82.
land society became similar to Virginia, though it may be said that the ruling class of both colonies did not make any pretensions of democracy such as the Puritan aristocracy of New England did. In Maryland there was a savage law code against the black slaves while the white slaves included imported convicts who worked on the roads in gangs, loaded with irons, and were frequently employed in building houses for the great planters. The other white slaves were kidnapped in Europe, a “business” which we will discuss later. Those who made the voyage to Maryland of their own accord, were usually the victims of the emigration agents who falsified the contracts and added to the terms of servitude.23

The Maryland clergy aped and served the ruling class with a degree of servility perhaps unequalled in any other colony. It was no uncommon thing for them to be found drunk or to extort marriage fees from the poor and refusing to go on with the ceremony until their demands were granted. They “set decency and public opinion at defiance. They hunted, raced horses, drank, gambled, and were the boon companions of the wealthy planters. . . . They became a by-word in the other colonies, and every itinerant clergyman who was a low fellow and a disgrace to his profession passed under the cant name of a ‘Maryland parson.’”24 With land and political power in the hands of a few slave masters and a rotten clergy to chant their praises, there was little hope for the workers of Maryland even if large numbers of them were not in a species of slavery yet to be discussed.

In 1629 Charles I granted North Carolina to his attorney general, as “the province of Carolana,” on condition that he should colonize it within a reasonable time. The condition was not complied with, but settlers, who by 1663 had purchased land from Indians, were robbed by Charles II, who gave the territory to eight royal favorites. “gentlemen who had done him inestimable services.” The following year the speculators secured a new charter which

24 Ibid. p. 123.
granted to them additional land which included the southern half of what is now the United States and which was intended to extend as far west as the Pacific. This colony developed the most atrocious type of slavery, a type that scarcely had a redeeming feature. The cultivation of rice and indigo in the swamp lands of the colony proved deadly to white men, so that early in the eighteenth century the demand for black slaves was enormous. By 1765 they numbered more than 100,000. In one year the slave would produce more rice than sufficed to pay his value. In other words, it became profitable to work the slaves to death. The rich planters did not live on the plantations in the swamps, but retired to Charleston, leaving overseers in charge. The slaves became prematurely old, presenting a marked contrast to the slaves of the other colonies. In Charleston the masters lived a life of ease attended by slaves, drinking, gambling, and attending dinners, balls and concerts. Their lives were dissipated and drunkenness in that climate usually brought early death. Their mortality was so marked that the women, who contented themselves with . . . water . . . . always married two or three times."

These examples of the wholesale confiscation of land in America suffice to show the methods employed to establish an aristocracy of wealth and to render poor immigrants from the Old World dependent on the land kings. The first forms of capital instead of being based on "thrift," "industry," and hard work, were accumulated through theft, piracy and fraud. The former theory is taught in the schools and the latter by history. The schoolmasters and historians have employed such skill in telling of the past that the land conquests do not linger even as a memory with the laborers today. It was not so in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first great labor movement in America, beginning in the first quarter of the last century, had not forgotten the methods of the colonial masters in enslaving the workers. For example, the

25 Ibid. p. 125.
26 Ibid. p. 185. See also Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 29.
Workingmen's Party, in New York, in 1829, declared "that the first appropriation of the soil by the state to private and exclusive possession was eminently barbarous and unjust. That it was substantially feudal in character, inasmuch as those who received enormous and unequal possessions were lords and those who received little or nothing were vassals."  

The confiscation of land did not stop with the original charter grants. It was continued by royal governors sent to America by the rulers of Europe. As fast as the frontier was pushed westward land was given by governors to speculators or sold to them or the Indians were given whisky and when they recovered from their stupor found they had been traded or cheated out of their lands. One authority says: "Broken-down court favorites considered an appointment to the colonies as governor a means of retrieving fallen fortunes, and official morality was much of the time in a low condition."  

Colonel Fletcher, one governor of New York, was a conspicuous example of these grafters. Governor Bellomont, in 1700, one of the few honest governors of that time, repeatedly wrote to the Lords of Trade in London calling attention to Fletcher's acts. Fletcher "was in league with the pirates who infested the coast, openly sold them licenses, and is even said to have shared their spoils; while at the same time he plundered the revenue, and connived at smuggling and every sort of illicit trade."  

He also gave great tracts of land away for trifling sums. In 1698 Bellomont charged Fletcher with having embraced a notorious pirate who had returned from India with plunder; that he sold protections commonly rated at $100 per man; that protections were publicly offered for sale at these rates, and that other officials shared in the graft.  

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28 Thwaites, "The Colonies" p. 110.  
By the middle of the eighteenth century land speculating companies came into existence. The Ohio company, of which George Washington became a prominent member, was organized in 1749. King George generously gave these speculators 500,000 acres, on which they were to plant one hundred families and maintain a fort. In 1787, while Washington was presiding over the secret constitutional convention at Philadelphia, the agent of the company, Manasseh Cutler, a preacher (!), was in New York "steering" through congress what McMaster calls "the first great 'land job' of the republic." This steal was accomplished with all the arts of the professional lobbyist, many members of congress sharing in the spoil. Five millions of acres of land were disposed of at two-thirds of a dollar per acre, but as payments were made in depreciated currency the real price was not far from eight or nine cents per acre. While Washington was serving his first term the same corporation, in 1792, secured another concession of nearly one million acres, paying for it in certificates of public debt and army land warrants purchased at a heavy discount. Enormous profits were made by the speculators. They constituted a strong element of the ruling class during the colonial period and long after the Revolution. We shall later see a land and navigation corporation initiating a movement that resulted in the meeting of a constitutional convention behind closed doors at Philadelphia.

Land grants and steals in behalf of adventurers and speculators have continued down to the present day. It would be tiresome to review the different methods by which wholesale thefts of land have been accomplished, and particularly with the rise of railway corporations. That these thefts have not ceased is evident from the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy now disturbing the dull routine of congress. Most of the railway companies have either stolen great tracts of land or had their agents in legisla-

34 March, 1910.
tive bodies vote land to them. The same is true of land
speculators and other groups of "public spirited" pilferers.
Enough has been said to show that, in the main, since the
white man landed on American shores, the natural re-
sources of this country have been appropriated by ruling
classes and their kin because they had the power to take
them. Possessing political power and excluding the work-
ers from the franchise, it was easy for the wealthy classes
to legalize their methods and enforce their conquests with
the civil, police and military powers which control of gov-
ernment gives. It now remains for us to consider the
character of the white servitude established by the colonial
rulers and the "fathers" of our country.
White Slavery in the Colonies

Marx has said that "A great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any certificate of birth, was yesterday, in England, the capitalized blood of children." The same holds true of men and women of other countries of Europe. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the beggared population of England became a "problem" to the ruling class. The extension of the wool trade gave added stimulus to the eviction of the poor from the land and transforming great estates of fertile soil into sheep pastures. The gulf between the plunderers and their victims widened and the desperate poverty of the latter increased the fear of labor revolts. "Colonization was thought by many to be the only means of obtaining permanent relief from the pressing political and economic dangers of pauperism." But even this pauperism was not permitted to be an unprofitable by-product of land thefts. The American colonies were regarded as a convenient dumping-ground for these unfortunates so that between the years 1661 and 1668, various proposals were made to the king and council to constitute an office for transporting to the plantations all vagrants, rogues and idle persons that could give no account of themselves, felons who had the benefit of clergy, and such as were convicted of petty larceny—such persons to be transported to the nearest seaport and to serve four years if over twenty years of age, and seven years if under twenty. It was poor wretches like these in England, Germany and other countries who were seized upon to provide white slave labor for the colonies.

haps the best general description of their servitude is given by the historian, McMaster. After describing the status of the black slaves he says:

"One step above the slaves were the convict bond-servants, or men and women in a state of temporary involuntary servitude. These people were either political offenders or felon convicts. Those guilty of political offenses, as the Scots taken in battle in 1650, the prisoners captured at the battle of Worcester in 1651. Monmouth's men, 1685, the Scots concerned in the uprising of 1678, the Jacobins of 1716, the Scots who went out in 1745, were, of course, of this class of offenders; and during that period, between 1650 and 1745, as many as four thousand are known to have been sent over to this country.

"The felons formed the great source of supply, and had been sent over in very considerable numbers from the earliest days of colonization. . . . One historian of Maryland declares that up to the Revolution twenty thousand came to that colony and half of them after 1750. Another authority . . . asserts that between 1715 and 1775, ten thousand felons were exported from the Old Bailey Prison in London. . . .

"But the indentured servant and redemptioner did not cease to come when the colonies became the United States. Speaking generally, the indentured servants were men, women and even children, who, unable to pay their passage, signed a contract called an indenture before leaving the Old World. This indenture bound the owner or master of the ship to transport them to America, and bound the emigrant after arrival in America to serve the owner, or their assigns, for a certain number of years. On reaching port the owner or master, whose servants they then became, sold them for their passage to the highest bidder, or for what he could get.

"The redemptioner, on the other hand, was an immigrant who signed no indenture before embarking, but agreed

3 The name comes from the practice of tearing the contract into two halves, with jagged edges; the master kept one and the slave the other.
with the shipping merchant that after reaching America he should be given a certain time (generally a month) in which to find somebody to redeem him by paying the passage money, or freight, as it was called. Should he fail to find a redeemer within a specified time, the ship captain was at liberty to sell him to the highest bidder.

“When a ship laden with one to three hundred such persons arrived, we will say at Philadelphia, the immigrants, arranged in a long line, were marched at once to a magistrate and forced to take an oath of allegiance to the king or, later, to the United States, and then marched back to the ship to be sold. If a purchaser was not forthcoming they were frequently sold to speculators who drove them, chained together sometimes through the country, from farm to farm, in search of a purchaser.

“The contract signed, the newcomer became in the eyes of the law a slave, and in both the civil and criminal code was classed with negro slaves and Indians. None could marry without consent of the master or mistress under penalty of an addition of one year’s service to the time set forth in the indenture. They were worked hard, were dressed in the cast-off clothes of their owners, and might be flogged as often as the master or mistress thought necessary. Father, mother and children could be sold to different buyers.”

The only difference between these white slaves, sold in American ports, and the blacks was that the slavery of the whites was limited and the blacks were slaves for life. The white slaves were sold in all the colonies, though New England’s supply was smaller than the middle and southern colonies. It may be said with truth that both black and white slaves formed the basis of the landed aristocracy.

4 These dealers in white slaves were known as “soul drivers” and were cordially hated by the workers throughout the colonies.

5 McMaster, “The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America,” pp. 32-35. This book is a scholarly summary of the economic, social and political status of the workers from the Revolution to the middle of the nineteenth century. If the facts given by the author were generally known by workingmen they would revolutionize the popular conception of American history. It seems, therefore, more than a coincidence that the book, published in 1903, has been limited to 500 copies!
of the colonies before and long after the Revolution. Yet this fact is suppressed by most historians in order that historic figures, who witnessed the auction of white laborers without a protest, and some of whom were interested in the traffic, might be glorified. It was a modified form of chattel slavery and admirably served the purposes of the classes who confiscated the land or inherited it from those who did. With the resources of life in their hands and whites and blacks held in servitude, the ruling classes had all the advantages that the masters of any age might wish.

But we have not exhausted our review of the life of these forgotten white slaves in quoting McMaster's excellent summary. The oldest document recognizing the existence of Harvard college is a pamphlet entitled "New England's First Fruits." It is dated "Boston, Sept. 26, 1642," and gives an account of the experience and needs of the settlers. One of their appeals to Englishmen is to stir up "some well-minded to cloath and transport over poore children, Boyes and Girles, which may be a great mercy to their bodies and soules." It would thus seem that New England "democracy" was alive to the value of bond-labor. It also became the fashion to place paupers up at public auction in Boston and other New England towns and sell them to the lowest bidder for their support. New Jersey followed this simple Puritan plan as did New York, where their children were also sold as apprentices. New England "democracy" found its way over into Pennsylvania and blessed the workers there with its presence. We are informed that in this colony "The class of indentured servants was not recruited from immigrants alone. The courts of this period (1684) and for many years after, frequently sentenced freemen to be sold into servitude for a period of years, in order to liquidate fines or other debts; orphan children were brought to the court to be 'adjudged,' there being on one occasion, in the Chester

6 Old South Leaflets, No. 51.
8 Ibid, p. 275.
9 Ibid, p. 327.
county court, in 1697, thirty-three whose terms of service were fixed by the court.”

It was New England “democracy” that also set the fashion in punishing offenders with whipping, branding, cropping, mutilation, the pillory and the stocks.

To be sure that “democracy” was securely established in Massachusetts the colonial legislature, in 1641, adopted a “Body of Liberties” among which there was a provision that “There shall be no bond slaverie (!) Villinage of Captivitie amongst us unless it be lawfull captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly (!) selle themselves or are sold to us.” To clinch the “liberties” the poor were enjoying the death penalty was provided for any who conspired or attempted rebellion against “our frame of politic or government fundamentallie.”

The fact that white servitude was not as general in New England as in the colonies to the south, does not necessarily mean that “free labor” was allowed to reap the reward of high wages that usually comes of a scarcity of labor. The Puritan aristocracy met this scarcity by fixing wages by law. As early as 1633 Massachusetts Bay colony adopted a statute commanding that carpenters, sawyers, masons, bricklayers, tilers, joiners, wheelwrights, mowers and other workmen were not to receive more than two shillings per day, each paying his own board, or if furnished with living they might receive fourteen pence per day. The constable and two others associated with him was to fix the rates of pay of inferior workmen in the same occupations. Other classes of workmen also had their wages fixed by law. An employer who paid more than the legal rates, as he would be tempted to do during a brisk demand for labor, or the workman who accepted wages higher than the legal rate, were both subjected to penalties for violating the law. Lest these regulations might pro-

10 Geiser, “Redemptioners and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania,” p. 28.

voke the workers to refuse to work at all the “virtues” of thrift and industry were encouraged by providing that there should be no idleness, and the workman who indulged in this peculiar privilege of the aristocracy was subjected to a penalty fixed by law.

One year after the passage of this act there was an increase in the demand for labor and the clause penalizing the employers for paying wages higher than the legal rates was repealed. The towns were then authorized to appoint a board of three men to fix wages when the employers and workmen failed to agree. As the workers had no political power it is evident that the town boards always represented the masters and any interference was seldom to their disadvantage. While the employers were exempt from penalties for violating the act the workmen continued to be fined. The law was later repealed, but another took its place in 1636 giving towns jurisdiction in fixing wages. But in 1640 prices collapsed and there was danger of the workers reaping some benefits from the lower prices. The colonial legislature then went over the heads of the towns and commanded the workmen to reduce wages to correspond with reduced prices and those who failed to respond were fined as usual.12

Work was plenty in New England and laborers were not sufficient to serve the needs of the employing class. The real wage was low as “the workingman was obliged to pay comparatively high prices”13 for everything. Agricultural laborers received wages from 1752 to 1760 averaging thirty-one cents per day; butchers in 1780 were paid thirty-three and carpenters fifty-two cents. On the eve of the Revolution (1774) the wages in the colonies were about seven shillings, a sum less than two dollars per week and “on such a pittance it was only by the strictest economy that a mechanic kept his children from starvation and himself from jail.”14

12 See Carroll D. Wright’s “Industrial Evolution of the United States,” Chap. IX.
13 Ibid., p. 110.
Although black and white slave labor were not abundant in New England, the policy of fixing wages by law gave the ruling classes all the cheap labor they desired. These facts compel one conservative historian to admit that "An aristocracy unquestionably existed in New England from the beginning, always possessing great power, and fully recognized." Yet Carroll D. Wright asserts that "The colonists secured one thing which the workingman appreciated. They were free (?) men; they were not tied to the soil, such servitude which had wrought great evil under the feudal system being utterly forbidden." He also regards this legislation as a sort of mania rather than an example of class rule by the wealthy. Yet this mania for keeping down the wages of the workers through the agency of courts, constables, fines and foul prisons did not extend to a like regulation of the incomes of the wealthy classes. On this point the aristocracy was perfectly "sane." The "mania" in this instance was "get all you can." But this fact has no significance for the late labor commissioner of the United States.

What has been said of "free labor" in New England is true in large measure of the same class of workmen in the other colonies. We have dwelt upon it at some length because of the persistent advertising of New England as "the cradle of democracy in America." We shall later see these Puritan upstarts engaging in the slave trade while denouncing slavery; developing smuggling as a fine art, and establishing vile prisons for poor laborers unable to pay their debts. For the present we return to a consideration of the unfortunate white laborers who were bought and sold in the colonies.

There is abundant evidence to show that the life of the indentured slaves was hard and cruel. In fact, some of the legislation applying to them recalls the bloody legislation against the poor in the Old World. There are, of course, some works that have come down to us that give a favorable picture of the life of these slaves, but in most

cases these works were written by those interested in the white slave trade or their agents and are, therefore, untrustworthy. Lucy Maynard Salmon in her excellent book mentions a number of these works. The fact that today glowing accounts are sent by ship agents and capitalist firms to European countries advertising alleged opportunities in America, indicates that modern swaters are merely following the example of the Puritan slavers of two centuries ago.

The laws directed against disobedience and misdemeanors of white slaves were rigorous. Those calling for the severest punishments were generally offenses against property—the God of capitalist civilization. In Virginia, in 1610, pilfering on the part of launderers, laundresses, bakers, cooks and dressers of fish is punished with whipping and imprisonment; for purloining flour and meal given out for baking purposes, offenders have their ears sliced off; for the second offense a year imprisonment and for the third offense, three years. This brutal treatment produced a reaction and by 1700 laws were being enacted prescribing limits to the punishment allowed and in some cases providing penalties for violation of the acts. The laws included better provision for their food, clothing, shelter and medical attendance; against bodily maiming; whipping without the consent of the proper authorities and other regulations which throw considerable light on the treatment they were subjected to.

Fugitive slave laws as applied to these slaves were a part of the legislation in all colonies. The laws generally provided penalties for both fugitives and those who gave them shelter or aided them in any way to escape. The penalty for fugitives generally included an addition to their terms of servitude which varied in each colony. Advertisements appear in all the colonial newspapers. The following from the Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), July 14, 1737, may be cited as an example of hundreds:

"Ran away some time in June last from William

17 "Domestic Service." In the third chapter the author gives an interesting digest of laws in the colonies applying to white slaves.
Pierce of Nansemond county, near Mr. Theophilus Pugh's, merchant; a convict servant woman, named Winifred Thomas. She is Welsh woman, short black hair'd and young; marked on the inside of her right arm with gunpowder W. T. and the date of the year underneath. She knits and spins, and is supposed to be gone by the way of Cureatuck and Roanoke inlet. Whoever brings her to her master shall be paid a pistole besides what the law allows, paid by William Pierce."

It will be noted that this woman serf had her initials and the date when she was purchased branded on her right arm.

There was always the temptation for masters to harbor runaway slaves because of the scarcity of labor and each colony prescribed penalties—generally fines—for offenders. Maryland punished slaves, who aided fugitives, with lashes, not to exceed thirty-nine, on the bare back. The colonial legislatures also provided standing rewards, some payable in cash, others in cloth or tobacco, to those who aided in the capture of runaways. Fugitive and disobedient servants, as they were usually called, suffered humiliating corporal punishment prescribed by law. This generally took the form of public whipping, the number of lashes being prescribed as in the case of North Carolina where the justice of the peace directs the constable to give strokes "not exceeding the number of thirty-nine, well laid on, on the back of such runaway." Bartering with white slaves or buying from them is a crime punished with fines or whipping or both. Other harsh laws were enacted tending to make more secure the servitude of these unfortunates.

We have already mentioned that these bond slaves worked on the highways of Maryland in chains and that little discrimination was made in the treatment of men and women. In this colony they were generally worked without mercy. A document written in 1679 states that "The servants and negroes (in Maryland), after they have

worn themselves down the whole day, and gone home to rest, have yet to grind and pound the grain, which is generally maize, for their masters and all their families as well as themselves, and all the negroes to eat.\(^{19}\) Working under such harsh conditions it is not surprising that runaways were numerous. In fact, they became so frequent that it became hazardous for anyone to venture on a journey, especially if poorly clothed, as it was the custom of sheriffs to lock such suspicious characters up. They were then advertised in the papers and in some cases if no owner was found within a certain time, *were sold to defray their charges.*\(^{20}\) Benjamin Franklin tells somewhere in his Autobiography of his fear of being jailed as a runaway during his memorable walk from Boston to Philadelphia where he became famous.

A confederation of the New England colonies was formed in 1643. Section 8 of the Articles of Confederation *provided a uniform fugitive slave law for all the colonies to aid in recovering white runaways for their owners.* The section reads as follows:

> "It is agreed that if any servant run away from his master into any other of these jurisdictions, that in such case, upon the certificate of one magistrate in the jurisdiction out of which the said servant fled, or upon other due proof, the said servant shall be delivered, either to his master or any other that pursues and brings such certificate of proof."\(^{21}\)

We shall later see a similar clause in the Constitution of the United States which we have every reason to believe applied to white as well as black slaves.

There is abundant testimony to indicate that the aristocracy in many respects not only regarded some classes of white slaves as beneath the blacks, but that the latter also, in some cases, felt a sense of superiority. One authority says: "The negro slave might take a certain sort of pride in belonging to the grand establishment of a pow-

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20 See Hart, "American History Told by Contemporaries," pp. 299-300, where advertisements of colonial newspapers are given.
21 Bryce, "The American Commonwealth," Appendix III.
erful or wealthy master, and from this point of view society might be said to have a place for him, even though he possessed no legal rights. There was no such haven of security for the mean whites. If the negro was like a Sudra, they were simply Pariahs.\textsuperscript{22} Again, speaking of the whites, the same writer says: "Their lives were in theory protected by law, but where an indented servant came to his death from prolonged ill-usage, or from excessive punishment, or even from sudden violence, it was not easy to get a verdict against the master."\textsuperscript{23}

In Pennsylvania fugitives received five days additional servitude for every day of absence by flight and were whipped for theft at the cart-tail. A severe penalty was also provided for marrying without the master's consent, and women having illegitimate children were punished by adding more days to their time of service. \textit{White slaves were also recruited from the offenders who could not pay fines and were sold into servitude.}\textsuperscript{24}

For trifling offences the masters were able to prolong the period of servitude fixed in the indentures which rendered the lives of white slaves miserable in the extreme. Loosely drawn indentures also placed them at the mercy of the owners. This was particularly true of Virginia, the "Mother of Presidents," where they were also "coarsely clothed, and fed upon meal and water sweetened with molasses; and were frequently punished with great barbarity."\textsuperscript{25} In Virginia and Maryland the redemptioners outnumbered the negro slaves until the latter part of the seventeenth century, and the traffic in them continued well into the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Virginia, like Massachusetts, made provision against revolt of its serfs early in the history of the colony. "Not only to speak evil of the king, but even to vilify the London company, was a treasonable offense, to be punished with death."\textsuperscript{26}

In South Carolina the white slaves were mostly re-
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demptioners. The masters were at liberty to whip them; no one was allowed to trade with them and their travel was limited. When their terms expired they were soon lost among the small farmers and poor whites. In North Carolina corporal punishment was frequently resorted to and if the bond slave ran away he had to serve a double term when caught. “If a woman servant gave birth to an illegitimate child she was to serve an additional term, and if the master was the father, then she was sold by the church wardens for the public benefit.”

In Georgia the slave code was similar to North Carolina and Virginia. The white slaves of Georgia and other colonies frequently escaped to the Spanish border and led a wild barbarous life, repaying their former masters with brigandage and robbery. When these vagabonds were captured whipping, branding irons, and the pillory were employed to teach them the error of their ways. But the Georgia border continued to be a turbulent section even after the Revolution. It was from these white bond slaves that the mass of “poor whites” in the mountain districts of the South were recruited. Owing to the existence of negro slavery to work for a living became a badge of shame and the “poor whites,” long after the redemptionist and indentured system disappeared, were still regarded as mudsills by the slave-owning aristocracy and were shunned as though they were beasts. In fact, before the Civil war, it was no unusual thing for a slave owner to hire out his negroes to other employers for terms much higher than what the poor whites could get. A few examples will suffice. “Sober, energetic white men, engaged in agricultural pursuits at $84 per annum—including board; slaves . . . who performed little more than half the amount of labor . . . were hired out on adjoining farms at an average of $115 per annum, including board, clothing and medical attendance. Free white men and slaves were in the employ of the North Carolina Railroad company; the former . . . received only $12 per month each; the masters of the latter received $16 per month for every slave so em-

ployed." White girls, as domestics, received $10 per annum and board, while slaves, for the same service, were hired out for $65 to $70 per year, including board, clothing and medical attendance. Many of these "free" whites passed through life without ever owning so much as five dollars. "Thousands of them die at an advanced age, as ignorant of the common alphabet as if it had never been invented. All are more or less impressed with a belief in witches, ghosts and supernatural signs." Such was the legacy bequeathed to the nineteenth century by the "fathers" of the American government.

It may not be amiss here to state that many men who were prominent in the Revolution profited from this system of servile white labor. For example, George Washington, in 1774, wrote a ship captain expressing his desire for a supply of servants to place on his Ohio lands. He writes of his desire to import them at his expense, "where they are unable to transport themselves, into the Potomac river, and from hence to the Ohio; to have them, in the first case, engaged to me under indenture, in the second, by some other contract equally valid, to become tenants upon the terms hereafter mentioned." The terms suggested are that the slaves jointly bind themselves to reimburse Washington for any losses he might sustain by deaths or accidents. This proposed toll of death or disease was probably suggested by the inhuman practices of the ship captains engaged in the white slave trade, which is reviewed in the next chapter. The most grasping of modern swindlers could not ask for more iron-clad terms from his victims than those suggested by the "father of his country."

It may come as a surprise to some that Booker T. Washington, one of the leaders of the negro race, offers

28 Helper, "The Impending Crisis of the South," p. 380. This book, the work of a Southerner, was written a few years before the Civil war to show the superiority of wage labor over slave labor. It had a great deal of influence in forming opinion regarding slavery. A tragic coincidence is that Helper, after having played such an important part in giving capitalism a free field for development in America, was unable to succeed under the new regime and, in April, 1909, blew his brains out in Washington, D. C.!


consolation to his people for the slavery they endured by assuring them that the white man sold his own people in America as well as the blacks. Not only this, but he emphasizes the historical fact that white servitude prevailed in the colonies before the first black slaver sailed into Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619. He further points out, what is no doubt true, that "it seems probable if the negro had not been discovered and brought to this country as a laborer the system of white servitude would have lasted in this country a great deal longer than it actually did." The negro, because of his powers of endurance, became a more efficient and profitable slave than the white worker and, naturally, in time displaced the white slaves.

Many tragic as well as humorous incidents accompanied the system of white servitude. One authority relates how one "soul driver" in Pennsylvania was tricked by a shrewd Irish redemptioner he was trying to sell. The servant "by a little management, contrived to be the last of the flock that remained unsold, and traveled about with his owner without companions. One night they lodged at a tavern, and in the morning, the young fellow who was an Irishman, rose early and sold his master to the landlord, pocketed the money, and marched off. Previously, however, to his going, he used the precaution to tell the purchaser that his servant, although tolerably clever in other respects, was rather saucy and a little given to lying—that he even had presumption enough at times to endeavor to pass for master, and that he might possibly represent himself so to him. By the time mine host was undeceived, the son of Erin had gained such a start as rendered pursuit useless."

One gentleman in the city of Philadelphia wanted to buy an old couple for house servants. An old man, his wife, and daughter were offered, and after paying the price he discovered he had bought his father, mother and sister!

Generally speaking the white slaves remained in pov-

32 Geiser, "Redemptioners and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania," p. 54.
33 Ibid, p. 55.
erty after they worked out their terms of service. The system being devised to serve the material interests of land speculators, rich planters and others of the employing class, had little in it to stimulate ambition to be something in the world. The period of slavery, carrying with it the shame and humiliation of a subject class, left most of them dull and shiftless when they were released. Out of their sufferings and those of the blacks arose the aristocracy of Southern planters, the New York land kings, and the fishing, commercial and slave-trading aristocracy of New England. A few of the slaves became distinguished. George Taylor, a Pennsylvania redemptioner, was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Matthew Thornton, a signer from New Hampshire, also belonged to this class, as did Charles Thomas, secretary of congress during the Revolution, and General Sullivan, a commander in the Revolutionary war.34

Prof. Marion Dexter Learned of the University of Pennsylvania in his book, "Abraham Lincoln—An American Migration—Family English, Not German," traces Lincoln's genealogy back to Samuel Lincoln, who sailed from London, April 18, 1637, as the servant of Francis Lawes. Samuel Lincoln, the white serf, was the great-great-great-grandfather of Abraham who fell a victim to the slave power.35

During the American Revolution the white slaves as well as the blacks were a source of dread to those sections of the aristocracy who were active in the movement for separation from Great Britain. There was the constant fear that during these turbulent times the slaves would desert their owners and fight with the British. The officers of the British army were not slow to take advantage of the situation and offer inducements to the servile population to join in the struggle to subdue the colonial masters. Lord Dunmore, governor of Virginia, in 1775, published a proclamation declaring martial law and proclaimed free-

dom “to all indentured servants, negroes or others appertaining to rebels” who would “join for the reducing of the colony to a proper sense of its duty.” Washington received this news with alarm and referring to Dunmore, wrote “that man ... will be the most formidable enemy of America if some expedient cannot be hit upon to convince the servants and slaves of the impotency of his designs.”

No doubt many took advantage of the British offer of freedom, but thousands also joined the American forces to escape the service of their masters, believing that independence would also bring freedom. A law of Virginia was enacted—perhaps to counteract the effect of Dunmore’s proclamation—providing that all white servants would be freed who enlisted in the Revolutionary army. It was the farmers, laborers and bond slaves who made up the bulk of the fighting forces under Washington and his generals. Ida M. Tarbell, in her story of “The American Woman,” tells of a “bound girl,” Deborah Sampson Gannett, who used the first money she earned at teaching to buy cloth with which she made herself a suit of men’s clothing and enlisted in the army under the name of Robert Shurtleff. Wounded twice, her sex was not discovered until the Yorktown campaign, when she was seized with brain fever. She was later voted a pension by congress.

The Revolution brought few changes for the better for white slaves. The traffic in them continued and the laws affecting them remained on the whole about the same. What few laws were enacted making the lives of the unfortunate less wretched were not initiated by the men who were mouthing phrases about “liberty,” but by charitable societies of Germans and other nationalities whose experience and observation revealed the sufferings their enslaved countrymen were forced to endure. As early as 1764 the Germans of Philadelphia organized the first of a number of societies in the seacoast cities to improve the lot of redemptioners. By constant agitation they succeeded in abol-
lishing some atrocious abuses that had developed with the traffic.\textsuperscript{39} One writer\textsuperscript{40} mentions the sale of one German Swiss and two French Swiss from a ship in Philadelphia in August, 1817. Another\textsuperscript{41} asserts that the sale of redemptioners was abolished in 1820. Still another states that though the system was declining, "the German redemptioners are mentioned in statutes of Pennsylvania as late as 1818, and the registry of redemptioners at Philadelphia shows that the last servant was bound in 1831."\textsuperscript{42}

In other words, a half century had passed into history since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, which declared "all men are free and equal," and yet the purchase of white flesh had not become extinct.

The general character of this white bond service may be seen from the following written in 1770 by William Eddis an English traveler in America and for eight years a resident:

"Negroes," he writes, "being a property for life, the death of slaves, in the prime of youth or strength, is a material loss to the proprietor; they are, therefore, almost in every instance, under more comfortable circumstances than the miserable European (immigrant) over whom the rigid planter exercises an inflexible severity. They are strained to the utmost to perform their allotted labour; and, from a prepossession in many cases too justly founded, they are supposed to be receiving only the just reward which is due to repeated offenses. There are doubtless many exceptions to this observation, yet, generally speaking, they groan beneath a worse than Egyptian bondage. By attempting to lighten the intolerable burden, they often render it more insupportable. For real or imaginary causes, these frequently attempt to escape, but very few are successful; the country being intersected with rivers, and the utmost vigilance observed in detecting persons under suspicious circumstances, who, when apprehended,
are committed to close confinement, advertised and delivered to their respective masters. ... The unhappy culprit is doomed to a severe chastisement; and a prolongation of servitude is decreed in full proportion to expenses incurred, and supposed inconveniences resulting from a desertion of duty."\(^{43}\)

This general subjection of white immigrant laborers, together with the kidnapped blacks, was a factor second in importance to the conquest of natural resources in making a ruling class possible. Both gave wealth, power and influence to an aristocracy in all the colonies and, together with political privileges based on the ownership of property, placed the governing powers in the hands of the masters so that the legislation of the colonial period reflects the property interests that ruled. Cheap slave labor was essential to the continuance of class rule until the control of natural resources had extended far enough to permit the system of indentured service to die. With such control the masters could gradually release white slaves in a market fairly well stocked with "free laborers" compelled to compete with each other for employment.

Of course, there was the western frontier for the oppressed to move to, but here also there were two factors at work, after the passing of indentured service as well as before it, which made the free lands of the West largely a myth of the historians. One was the continued confiscation or acquirement by fraud or bribery of the western lands by land speculators and land corporations and the consequent exploitation of the more daring and rebellious who advanced into the wilderness. The second was the policy of the colonial rulers in dealing with the Indians. The frontier settlements were continually exposed to attacks by Indians and massacres frequently took place. The aristocracy controlling the legislatures, before and after the Revolution, seldom provided the military protection these settlements required. In 1794 the settlers at Lexington, Kentucky, adopted revolutionary resolutions, de-

declaring that "the protection of the frontier was a duty of the United States government." Early in the same year a debate in congress disclosed the miserable wages paid even those who engaged in protecting the frontier. "Each private at that time received every four weeks, as compensation for the hunger and privations he suffered at the frontier posts, a sum not so great as is now paid for three days of toil. *His hire was three dollars a month.*"

This wretched remuneration was calculated to discourage enlistments for frontier duty. The "free laborer," therefore, had the alternative of staying within reach of the masters and working for them, or moving out into the forests to incur the danger of massacre by savage foes. In other words, the ruling classes preferred to see the poor man scalped than to allow him to escape from serving for wages that scarcely guaranteed subsistence. This frontier policy was one cause of "Bacon's Rebellion" in 1676, which we will consider in another chapter.

The conquest of land and laborers, together with this military policy, made the triumph of the ruling classes nearly complete. Before leaving the subject it is necessary to review the horrors of the white slave trade to the colonies, a trade that began before the slavers brought negroes to America and one as atrocious as the commerce in these African aborigines.

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The White Slave Trade

Few people today know or even suspect that a slave trade in white men, transported to America, reached large proportions in our early history. It is one of those unpleasant facts which historians prefer to dwell on briefly or not at all, so that he who wishes to know the extent and character of this commerce must consult a dreary mass of historical documents and even then must piece together the fragments of information which his research reveals. And yet any view of our history, including the colonial era and the half century that followed independence, that does not include a knowledge of the gains of this traffic; the sufferings of the victims in the voyage to America; the methods employed to induce them to emigrate; the brutality of the slavers who engaged in it, and the servitude the workers endured in America, is a view as distorted as though one were to describe the wealthy residence section of New York today and hand this view on to posterity as a faithful picture of present civilization. This latter view would leave out of consideration the East Side with its millions in tenement hells and sweatshops, the bread lines, the unemployed, and the hand-to-mouth existence that other multitudes are forced to live.

The historian is invariably a man whose associations and environment have formed an aristocratic type of mind which shrinks from revealing anything that reflects discredit on the “great men” of the past. The past must be vindicated in the interests of the class that today possesses resources originally secured by force, fraud and the servitude of workingmen. And it must be confessed that the writer who would tell the whole truth would pay the penalty by having his work killed by the literary police who pass judgment on current literature. It, therefore, happens that in addition to the habits, associations and train-
ing which give a conservative cast to the mind of the historian, there is the safeguard that he will not become "sensational,"—that is to say, truthful—because of the penalty his folly would invite. Hence the history of colonial society has been written with one chapter usually left out, and that one more important than the silly gossip of some "statesman" or the love affairs of a colonial flirt.

In considering the slave trade it has been the fashion to dwell entirely on the traffic in negroes, and as this traffic at one time or another was indulged in by the ruling classes of most modern nations, no special discredit attaches to America and its rulers. In fact, one may easily find graphic descriptions of the horrors of this trade. It is certainly revolting to know of the slave raids in Africa by men trained for their work; of the crowding of vessels with slaves to the limit of their capacity; how the stronger strangled the weaker to get more air; how the stench from below was so great that the slavers could not stand near the hatchways; how the steaming bodies of the dead were constantly cast into the sea; or the wretched spectacle of the half-starved survivors—frequently only one-third of those who embarked—who were finally sold to Southern planters. We may even recoil from the inhumanity that prompted slavers to chain an entire cargo of these unfortunate to an iron cable and with a blow of an ax send them to the bottom of the sea.¹

But atrocious as these practices were it is doubtful whether they were not equaled by the practices of the men who engaged in the business of transporting white slaves.

¹ "Ethiopia, Her Gloom and Glory," pp. 82-83. This is an interesting series of lectures delivered by David Christy for the Colonization Society before the Civil War. The author regarded the slavery question as the old conflict between "evil and good," or as a consequence of "the Fall of Man." Yet the lectures are brilliant in their portrayal of the economic basis of slavery and emancipation. For example, British emancipation in the West Indies instead of inducing the negroes to work long hours for wages resulted in them working only three or four days in the week, and only five or six hours each day, just enough to supply their simple wants. The rest of the time they spent under shade trees. Christy remarks that "they have no stimulant to perform an adequate amount of labor." In other words, to supply his own wants is not "adequate." The proper "stimulant" was later provided with capitalist production when both blacks and whites sold themselves daily for wages and produced surplus incomes for British exploiters in addition to their own subsistence.
from European countries to America. The demand for servile labor in a sparsely settled country and the struggle to share in the large profits growing out of the traffic, made abuses inevitable. The gains of the trade took the curse off for "it takes men a weary while to learn the wickedness of anything that puts gold in their purses." (Fiske.) Fortunately for the ship captains and speculators, as we have seen, the economic changes taking place in Europe provided them a large supply of helpless poor to draw upon.

The London company of adventurers who settled Virginia was eager to employ child labor in developing the resources of the colony. In 1619 its records acknowledge the arrival of one hundred children, "save such as dyed on the waie," and another hundred, twelve years old or over, is asked for. In 1627 many ships arrived bringing fourteen and fifteen hundred children kidnapped by "spirits" in European ports, and a few years later they send a request to London for another supply of "friendless boyes and girles." In England Bristol was one of the last cities to give up the traffic in white children sold in American colonies. This city for several hundred years remained a white slave market where it was "no uncommon thing to behold young girls exposed for sale." By 1664 the kidnapping had increased to such proportions that the committee for foreign plantations interfered, and an office was created with the duty of "keeping a record of all persons going to America as servants, and the statement that they had voluntarily left England." A penalty of death was later provided for kidnapping, yet "ten thousand persons were annually kidnapped after the passage of the act."

The practice of forcible exportation of poor wretches

2 The term had its origin in the skill and cunning employed by the kidnappers who "spirited" away their victims. Ship captains would send their crews ashore to steal children and, in many cases, adults, who were sold in America. These "spirits" were a source of terror to the poor in those ports which the slavers visited.
was taken advantage of by wealthy persons. Those belonging to the upper classes and having family skeletons to conceal or inheritances to secure or some criminal scheme to advance, had objectionable members of their class or family seized and transported to America and sold.⁶

We have already mentioned the Neulanders and their work in Europe in stimulating emigration. Though they circulated stories of opportunities to be had in America they were invariably failures themselves and took up slave-hunting as a profession. Advertising of various kinds was distributed broadcast and the emigration from Germany threatened to depopulate the provinces. The Neulanders received a commission for every person they persuaded to emigrate, generally three florins or a ducat in Holland, while the merchant in Philadelphia sold them for sixty or eighty florins each in proportion to the debt incurred by the emigrant on the voyage. One Scotchman, in the middle of the eighteenth century, tells of his being kidnapped and, after a six months' voyage, being sold into seven years' servitude at Philadelphia for sixteen pounds.⁷ From 1682 to 1804 the proportion of white slaves to the whole number of immigrants to Pennsylvania steadily increased, till they constituted two-thirds during the last nineteen years.⁸ This enormous exodus from Germany and Holland is suggestive of the work of the emigrant hunters in these countries.

These agents came mainly from Pennsylvania as representatives of William Penn or land speculators who had secured land from the immense domains he possessed. Early in the eighteenth century the migration from Rotterdam and then to London reached enormous proportions. Five thousand arrived in the latter city during May and June, 1709. This number was doubled by August and two months later thirteen thousand were in London. Still the stream of deluded pauperized poor swelled. So great was the exodus that it became a serious problem to feed them while waiting for ships to transport them to America. "Star-

⁶ Salmon, p. 21.
⁸ Ibid, p. 41.
vation staring the needy Palatines in the face, England for months provided them with food. Having no homes, they were sheltered in barns, empty dwellings, ware houses, and a thousand tents taken from the army stores. The queen allowed each ninepence per day, for subsistence, and such lodgings as could best be obtained. The paupers of London grew envious of the provision made for the foreigners, and filed complaints against such exceptional treatment.9

The atrocities which developed with the transportation of emigrants would be incredible were it not for the unimpeachable evidence collected in a few works. We have shown the kidnapping of blacks in Africa duplicated by the kidnapping of whites in Europe. The overcrowding of ships in the African slave trade, with its consequent horrors of epidemics of scurvy and small pox, deaths by starvation, smothering and violence, also had their counterpart in the white slave trade of American ship masters with Europe. In fact, some of the details of this traffic are sickening and are scarcely exceeded in cruelty by the deeds of barbarous peoples who lack the culture of civilization. The death of a black slave on the voyage to America meant a distinct loss to the slaver; but death did not always rob the ship captain of his profits on the white slave trade. The white slavers managed to collect a toll of death by providing that “surviving relatives of those who died at sea after the vessel had made more than one-half of the journey, were held responsible for the debts of the deceased.”10

Not all those who left Europe did so with the intention of serving a period of years in the colonies to pay for their passage. Many of them after many sacrifices saved sufficient sums to pay the expense of the voyage. But ship captains, co-operating with Neulanders, contrived methods by which they robbed emigrants of their money and sold them into servitude to pay debts contracted on the voyage. In the journey from their homes to the ships tolls, fees and

10 Geiser, “Redemptioners,” pp. 53-54.
duties were exacted on their baggage. The baggage itself, often containing money or valuables, was either stolen or sent by another boat leaving the emigrant at the mercy of the ship master. Enormous prices were also charged for meals so that the poor wretches thus swindled were sold on their arrival in America to pay for debts forced upon them. Even those whose funds were not exhausted by these practices had no guarantee that they would not be sold. "The well-to-do would have to pay for those who could not, or be themselves sold as redemptioners. This arrangement protected the captain against loss, in case a large number of redemptioners died on the way, and also gave him an excuse for extortions. The Germans of Philadelphia attempted to legislate against these abuses, beginning in 1750, but were for a long time unsuccessful, because of the presence in high places of influential grafters heavily interested in the profits of immigrant transportation."11 It may be said in passing, in that day the payment of fare did not include board, and as the immigrant's provisions were often with his baggage, the theft of these left him at the mercy of his exploiters.

However, this robbery, bad as it is, is humane compared with the terrible experience of these unfortunates on board the ships. Here the wretchedness growing out of the avarice of the slavers runs the gamut of human suffering. The large profits to be obtained from the traffic led to overcrowding. Almshouses and prisons were emptied to secure human merchandise for American employers. "The crowded exportation of Irish Catholics," Bancroft writes, "was a frequent event, and was attended by aggravations hardly inferior to the usual atrocities of the African slave trade."12 Starvation and death from thirst were common occurrences. Ship wrecks were also frequent and reports of these were suppressed in Europe. Two thousand died in one year of diseases resulting from overcrowding. One ship sailing in 1730 with 150 emigrants only had 13 sur-

vivors. Another sailed in 1845 with 400 Germans of whom only 50 lived to see America. Still another bearing 1,500 lost 1,100 from deaths on the voyage. Children seldom survived the journey; "many a time parents are compelled to see their children die of hunger, thirst or sickness, and then see them cast into the water. Few women in confinement escaped with their lives; many a mother is cast into the water with her child."

The space allotted to the emigrants on board ship accounts for the frightful mortality from diseases. Emigrant ships sailing from Holland packed their passengers in a space two feet wide and six feet long. The rations served are small and poor; the drinking water is black, thick and full of worms; spoiled biscuits, full of red worms and spider's nests, are served to the starving. Hunger on one boat drove the starving men to break into the food apartment for which all the passengers were punished. The men received no bread and the women only one biscuit. Twenty men, women and children died of hunger. "The hunger was so great on board that all the bones about the ship . . . were pounded with a hammer and eaten; and what is more lamentable, some of the deceased persons, not many hours before their death, crawled on their hands and feet to the captain, and begged him for God's sake, to give them a mouthful of bread or a drop of water to keep them from perishing, but their supplications were in vain; he most obstinately refused, and thus did they perish." Mittleberger, a German traveler, mentions "thirty-two children in our ship all of whom were thrown in the sea. . . . Children who have not yet had the measles or smallpox generally get them on board the ship, and mostly die of them . . . sometimes whole families die in quick succession; so that often many dead persons lie in the berths beside the living ones, when contagious diseases have broken out. . . ."
When these slave ships landed at Philadelphia or other ports the scenes were pathetic in the extreme. The immigrants are examined before the ship casts anchor. Those not paying their passage are advertised in the newspapers for sale. Unmarried people of both sexes find ready buyers. Old married people, widows and the feeble, are a drug on the market, unless they have healthy children who assume the debts of the parents which extends the period of their servitude. But "the sick are frequently detained beyond the period of recovery, when a release would frequently have saved them."¹⁶ When land is sighted the wretches crowd the deck and weep and sing and pray and praise God. But the rejoicings soon cease and give way to cries of despair because "parents must sell and trade away their children like so many cattle."¹⁷ Batches of twenty-five and fifty are purchased by the hated "soul drivers" and retailed to wealthy farmers. This auction of white flesh is a common occurrence in Philadelphia and excites no more comment than the sale of hogs.

To see loved ones sold with the possibility of never seeing them again was dreadful; but to remain in the clutches of the slavers seemed a worse evil than to be sold. To escape the ship captain and forget the tragedies of the voyage was the consuming desire of the victims. In fact, many felt disappointed if not purchased. William Eddis, an English traveler who boarded a white slave ship in Philadelphia forty-one years after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence (1817), describes an incident of this kind. "As we ascended the side of the hulk," he writes, "a most revolting scene of want and misery presented itself. The eye involuntarily turned for some relief from the horrible picture of human suffering which this living sepulchre afforded. Mr. ... enquired if there were any shoemakers on board. The captain advanced; his appearance bespoke his office, he was an American, tall, determined, and with an eye that flashed with Algerine cruelty. He called in

¹⁷ Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 52.
the Dutch language for shoemakers, and never can I forget the scene which followed. The poor fellows came running up with unspeakable delight, no doubt anticipating a relief from their loathsome dungeon. Their clothes, if rags deserve that denomination, actually perfumed the air. Some were without shirts, others had this article of dress, but of a quality as coarse as the worst packing cloth. . . . When they saw at our departure that we had not purchased, their countenances fell to that standard of stupid gloom which seemed to place them a link below rational beings.”

As though the frightful conditions of the voyage were not sufficient to break the spirit of the victims of the slave trade, corporal punishment was administered for many offenses. Just how widespread this practice was cannot be determined with certainty, but that it prevailed there can be no doubt. John Harrower, a redemptioner, kept a diary from 1773 to 1776. He relates, among other things, the experience of a servant, Daniel Turner, who returned to the ship drunk, and for using abusive language toward two officers he was horsewhipped, “put in irons and thumbscrewed.” One hour later he was released from the screws, taken out of the irons and bound and gagged for the remainder of the night.

The diseases contracted on the voyage by those whose destination was Philadelphia alarmed the inhabitants of that city. On the recommendation of Governor Thomas of Pennsylvania in 1742, an act was passed providing for the purchase of a site for a pest-house. Laws had been passed at an earlier period prohibiting the landing of convicts, lunatics and those infected with contagious diseases, but ship captains managed to smuggle these classes ashore during the night. Ship masters also acquired the habit of confiscating the property of the dead.

The pest-house law remained a dead letter, for seven years later a petition is presented to the assembly asserting, among other things, “that for want of suitable buildings

18 Quoted by Geler, p. 57.
and other conveniences, the sick had been induced to wander from one place to another, without care, and to the manifest danger of the inhabitants." From this we would judge that the "grafters in high places" were still on good terms with the slavers and shared in the latter's spoils. More acts were passed, but were easily evaded or not enforced. "In the act of 1749, for example, which was primarily intended to prevent the importation of passengers in too great numbers in a single vessel by specifying the space that each passenger should have, no provision was made for the height of each berth. Vessels were still crowded as much as before the act was passed. To comply with the two dimensions specified by law, the berths were so constructed as to reduce the former height, thus giving no increase in the number of cubic feet per capita. On the whole the conditions through the middle of the century were bad. The increase of immigration brought with it an increase of disorder. The sick were neglected; contracts made in Europe between importers and passengers were disregarded; immigrants were sold into service to pay the fare of friends or relatives who had died on the journey; husband, wife and children were still separated by being sold to different masters; passengers were robbed of their baggage on landing, and held and treated as prisoners until sold." 20

As stated in a previous chapter the Revolution brought few changes in legislation to improve the lot of imported servants and, in Pennsylvania, "not until a law was passed preventing imprisonment for debt did the merchants and importers lose their grip on this most lucrative traffic." 21 And improved conditions in debtor's prisons did not take place till 1814. A law of Pennsylvania in 1794, passed ostensibly to provide food, clothing and shelter to the poor in the debtors' prison in Philadelphia, granted only seven cents a day for food for each prisoner! 22

Such was the white slave trade to America from the

20 Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 64.
21 Ibid., p. 70.
22 McMaster, "The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," p. 51.
earliest days of colonization down to a period which closed with the election of the seventh president of the United States. Only the superiority of the negro as an agricultural slave and the gradual cheapening of wage labor finally put an end to indentured servitude and the slave traffic based upon it. One may search the resolutions, platforms, or declarations of the Federalist or anti-Federalist, the Republican or Democratic parties down to the administration of President Jackson, when the system of indentured service finally disappeared, and he will look in vain for any denunciation of the atrocities reviewed in this chapter and the one preceding it. Only one party even mentioned it. This was a remnant of the almost dead Federalist party of Washington and Adams which met in Hartford, Connecticut, in December, 1814. Among the resolutions adopted by the convention is a demand for a constitutional amendment providing that “Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included in this Union, according to their respective numbers of free persons, including those bound to serve for a term of years and excluding Indians not taxed, and all other persons.”

Like the aristocrats who met in the constitutional convention twenty-seven years before, these gentlemen regarded the white slaves only as living merchandise to estimate the share of political power to be apportioned among the property owners of that time. For it must not be forgotten that property qualifications for the suffrage in the states excluded the mass of workers from the privilege of voting.

More could be said on this infamous traffic, but as it would expand this book beyond the limits the writer has planned the reader must be content with the fleeting view presented. Enough has been said to indicate the extent of the trade and the inhuman practices which grew up with it. For the present we must pass on to a review of other historical conditions that played their part in giving wealth and power to a few, and enabled them to deprive the workers of the peace and plenty which should be theirs.

Chicago, 1896.
Rebellions of the Poor

It need occasion no surprise if the economic, social and political status of the working people in our early history provoked revolts of both individuals and masses of the poor. Their lot on the whole was a desperate one and though rebellion generally brought savage retaliation, this knowledge did not deter them from hazard ing an occasional blow at their exploiters. Deprived of education and lacking knowledge of the powers they had to contend with, these revolts were generally ineffective in securing any changes for the better until the dawn of the nineteenth century. The rebellions included all classes of workers such as the indentured servants, the redemptioners, the black slaves, the so-called “free laborers,” poor farmers and, in some cases, small shop keepers and petty tradesmen who felt the heavy burden of taxation imposed by grafting colonial governors and their fellow pilferers. Where masses of these rebelled they always lacked any definite plan of action. They were blind uprisings striking against economic, political and social rulers and the latter, possessing the coercive powers of government, were able to suppress them.

The intolerable conditions of the blacks provoked at least twenty-five rebellions of these slaves in the United States before the American Revolution. The fear of these slave insurrections gave rise to the atrocious slave codes of the southern states. Rebellions on the slave ships were put down by applying the thumb-screws, chaining slaves together, or shooting down the leaders and casting the dead into the sea. To reduce the danger of revolts slaves were generally prohibited from meeting together without a white man being present or to leave the plantation without a permit. A free man could lash disobedient slaves and could kill them if they struck in self-defense. To take the
life of a slave was no crime. Some offenses were punished by cropping the ears or branding the cheek; cutting off the right hand, severing the head from the trunk, dismembering the body and hanging the pieces up to public view.\(^1\) One rebellious slave in the Bermudas had his right hand chopped off at the wrist and the bleeding stump thrust into boiling pitch. After suffering excruciating agony he was immersed and burned to death.

During Governor Hunter's administration of New York in 1712, a party of negroes, armed with guns, knives and hatchets, fired a building and shot and slashed those who ran to the spot. Soldiers captured the slaves and twenty-one were executed. "One was broken on the wheel, and several were burned alive at the stake, while the rest were hanged."\(^2\) In 1774 a revolt in Georgia was suppressed and two leaders burned at the stake after having murdered four and injured as many more. About one thousand blacks revolted in Virginia in 1800 and marched on the city of Richmond. A swollen stream interfered with their march; the leaders were captured and executed. The rebellion under the leadership of Nat Turner in the same state, in 1831, terrorized the haughty planters. Local militia co-operating with United States troops crushed the uprising after the blacks had killed sixty white people. Twelve of them were sold out of the state and twenty, including Turner were hanged.

In 1792 the slave insurrection under Toussaint L'Ouverture took place in St. Domingo. As this rebellion was the most notable one of the blacks and had considerable influence on the agitation against slavery, we will notice it here. The island had a population of 30,000 whites, 30,000 mulattoes and 500,000 slaves. Sugar culture killed the slaves off so rapidly that 25,000 negroes were imported annually. The mulattoes were children of the slave owners and their fathers, as a rule, did not forget them because their mothers were slaves. The mulattoes

were given everything but their fathers' names; given wealth, plantations, slaves and many of them were even sent to Paris to acquire an education. But these mulattoes were politically and socially ostracised.

St. Domingo was a colony of France. When the Revolution broke in that country and the words "liberty, equality and fraternity" floated across the seas, the white masters heard them with fear, the mulattoes with joy and the blacks with indifference. The mulattoes pledged their support to the Revolution and sent 6,000,000 francs. The French national assembly issued a decree proclaiming that all "free born citizens are free before the law," and sent a representative to the island with the message. The white slave holders, possessing the political power, laid the message on the table, broke the body of the Frenchman on the wheel and ordered the four quarters of his body hung up in four of the principal cities.

This led to the insurrection under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, a black negro born in slavery and by Wendell Phillips credited with being the noblest of his race. He displayed a generosity, courage and military genius that astounded the whites, and the rebellion lasted more than ten years. Toussaint proclaimed religious freedom for all and preserved the property of the whites, who left the island, and gave it back to them on their return. But that "personification of national murder," Napoleon The Great, was thrown to the surface by the froth of the French Revolution and sent an army to suppress the blacks and reduce them to slavery. The island was laid waste with sword and fire, but the French were forced to employ bribery and treachery to subdue the blacks. Toussaint was betrayed, sent to France, starved to death in an icy tomb by Napoleon, and after unspeakable butchery of the blacks, they were again enslaved. The insurrection terrorized the slave holders of America and supplied a convenient argument against the advocates of emancipation.

3 This uprising gave Wendell Phillips a theme for one of his most powerful orations. The address is printed in the first volume of his "Speeches, Lectures and Addresses," Lee and Shepard, Boston, 1902.
In Virginia a rebellion of poor whites took place in 1676 that startled the planter aristocracy. Roughly speaking, there were four classes in the colony; the great planters below tide water on the main rivers who lived in luxury and possessed the governing power; the middle class of small planters and farmers who aped the manners of the ruling class; the poor whites and indentured slaves, and the blacks. The frontier was peopled by the poorer classes of farmers and frequent Indian raids had destroyed crops and many families were massacred. Appeals for protection repeatedly made to Governor Berkeley, one of the many colonial grafters of that time, met with little encouragement. Berkeley was interested in the fur trade with the Indians who were making war on the settlers and to recruit sufficient militia to protect the latter would have meant a loss of his profits in the traffic. The governor had also failed to convene the House of Burgesses (legislative assembly) for years and in 1670 increased property qualifications for the franchise increased discontent among the poorer classes. All these factors contributed to what has come to be known as “Bacon’s Rebellion.”

Nathaniel Bacon was a young man of 28 and a descendant of the great Lord Bacon. He was a land owner, a member of the council, a persuasive speaker and sympathetic with the struggles of the poor. His land was in the zone of the warring Indians and he asked for a commission against them. Receiving an evasive answer from the governor he took the field at the head of the distressed settlers. Having defeated the Indians he was arrested on his return to Jamestown, but after giving promise of good behavior was released.

In the elections to the House of Burgesses which shortly followed, many ignored the new property qualifications and voted. Bacon was elected a member by a large majority. Under his leadership the house restored the old basis for the suffrage, some trade monopolies were overthrown and two magistrates disfranchised for misconduct in office. All these popular measures were enacted over the opposition of the aristocratic members of the house.
and Bacon was cordially hated by Berkeley and the aristocracy. Fearing that his life was in danger the rebel left Jamestown, but returned in a few days.

He then charged the governor with having imposed unjust taxes “for the advancement of private favorites and other sinister ends,” for “having rendered contemptible the majesty of justice, of advancing . . . scandalous and ignorant favorites,” for having assumed “the monopoly of the beaver trade,” and failure to “give protection against the assaults of the Indians.” He also denounced the aristocracy, the “juggling parasites whose tottering fortunes have been repaired at the public charge.” These charges committed Bacon to open revolt against the governor and the ruling class.

He again entered the field against the Indians and on the return march the rebels burned Jamestown. But his radical utterances and general policy frightened some of his well-to-do followers who deserted him—a treachery for which the middle class is noted in all countries and at all times. The poorer classes were left to form the ranks of his small force and the struggle assumed the character of a class war with all the elements of the aristocracy arrayed against the rebels. Shortly after the burning of Jamestown, while marching north, Bacon fell a victim of malaria fever. His death brought the collapse of the rebellion, though small groups held out for some time. Berkeley punished the rebels with such ferocity as to call forth the protest of the king who said, “the old fool has put to death more people in that naked country than I did here for the murder of my father” 4

It was the leading families who had large estates and made up the wealthy aristocracy of Virginia that supported the grafting governor in the rebellion. This class had gradually usurped powers in the government and restricted the privileges of the poorer classes. A great section of the population was also in the direst poverty so that the economic and political conditions favoring revolt

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were abundant. William Sherwood, who later became attorney general of Virginia, referred to the rebels as "ye scum of the country." A member of the council says that Bacon "gathers about him a Rabble of the basest sort of people, whose Condicion was such, as by a change could not admit of worse, . . . who for ye ease of the poore will have noe taxes paied, . . . but would have all magistracie & Governm'nt taken away & Sett up one them-selves, & to make their Good Intentions more manifest stick not to talk openly of sharing men's estates among themselves."

This testimony comes from the aristocrats, and indicates that they regarded the rebellion as a revolt of the poorer classes to secure equality of political rights and economic opportunities. The rebels are even charged with having communistic aspirations—with the desire "of sharing men's estates" in common. It is probable that Bacon may have had a communistic program in mind. It would have served to unite the poor against the landed aristocracy. They also knew that early in the history of Virginia the planting of corn, clearing the wilderness, fortifying the settlement and work in general was performed, for a time, on a communistic basis. The charge against Bacon then was that he promised a return to this early stage in the history of the colony.

Bacon was driven to this radicalism in order to hold the loyalty of the poor after the desertion of the better-situated elements and also because of the knowledge that should he fail he would probably be hanged or shot. The causes of the revolt are well summarized by the historian Fiske.

"The years preceding the rebellion," he writes, "were such as are commonly called 'hard times.' People felt poor and saw fortunes made by corrupt officials; the fault was with the Navigation Act and with the debauched civil service of Charles II and Berkeley. Besides these troubles, which were common to all, the poorer people felt oppressed by taxation in regard to which they were not consulted and for which they seemed to get no service in return."
The distribution of taxation by polls, equal amounts for rich and poor, was resented as a cruel injustice. The subject of taxation was clearly connected with the Indian troubles, for people paid large sums for military defense and nevertheless saw their houses burned and their families massacred.\footnote{5} We have seen in a previous chapter that lack of protection for the frontier was generally the policy of the colonial rulers, and Bacon's Rebellion is a noted example of the discontent this policy provoked. Had Bacon proved successful he would have become noted as a pioneer in the struggle for popular rule.

The next revolt of importance was that of Leisler's Rebellion in New York twelve years later. As already noted\footnote{6} New York was the nearest approach to the establishment of feudalism in America. The sweeping powers and privileges given the manor lords created discontent from the beginning of colonization. Their descendants claimed feudal rights well into the nineteenth century and on the great Van Rensselaer estate an attempt to collect long arrears of rents developed an anti-rent movement (1839-1846) which resulted in bloody riots.\footnote{7}

Coupled with the existence of an overbearing, wealthy, ruling class, was the usual administration of grafting governors. Fletcher, we have seen, had a close alliance with the pirates and shared in their loot. The pirates were underselling the regular merchants which added this class to the mass of the discontented. This pirate commerce was enormous and for a time New York resembled an oriental city. "For a dozen years or more the streets of New York might have reminded one of Teheran or Bassora, with their shops displaying rugs of Anatolia or Daghistan, tables of carved teak-wood, vases of hammered brass or silver, Bagdad portiers, fans of ivory or sandalwood, soft shawls of myriad gorgeous hues and white crape."\footnote{8}

The landed aristocracy shared some of their power with rich fur traders, lawyers and officials. At the bottom

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item[6] Chapter II.
\end{itemize}}
of society were the small farmers, sailors, shipwrights, artisans and indentured slaves who were viewed with contempt by the aristocracy.

Jacob Leisler, who gave his name to the rebellion, was a German of humble origin, born at Frankfort-on-the-Main. He had married a daughter of a rich family, but was not accepted on terms of equality with the ruling class. He was lacking in the education and polish that distinguished the wealthy idlers. His sympathy with the poor was expressed in deeds. In 1689 he bought a piece of land for Huguenots and at another time when a poor Huguenot family were to be sold as redemptioners, he delivered them from servitude by paying their passage money. He was admired by the poor for his honesty and unselfishness, which made him the logical leader of the discontent that had been long gathering in the city.

King James II had consolidated New England, New York and New Jersey under Governor Andros. The latter went to New England leaving Francis Nicholson as lieutenant governor when news came of the flight of King James and the landing of William of Orange in England. Nicholson withheld the news and Leisler, hearing of the event, made it public. The latter also refused to pay duty on a cargo of wine on the ground that the collector was a Catholic and since King James' flight no legal government existed in New York. There was also the popular belief that Governor Nicholson had gone over to Louis XIV and an invasion by a French fleet was feared.

An insolent remark of the governor released the pent up forces of revolt. A militia company representing the popular party, seized the fort and Leisler, after repeated solicitations, took command. A committee of public safety, elected by popular vote, turned the aristocratic government out and proclaimed Jacob Leisler commander in chief of the fort and city. At another election the aristocracy was completely routed and Leisler was proclaimed supreme commander of the province. The defeated masters endeavored to stir up discord. "The name of Leisler was

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dragged through the mire. He was branded as a tyrant, usurper, demagogue, even as a Papist and Jacobite, by the very persons who had proved their disloyalty to the new dynasty.”

The aristocrats tried to kidnap the popular commander, but failed and three of them were themselves imprisoned. Leisler held power for several years during which the first American congress of the colonies met in New York at his call in May, 1690. But his rule was not to endure long. Discontent over taxes, the refusal of William to recognize his agent, the timidity and lack of concerted plans of his followers, the plotting and bitter antagonism of his enemies, contributed to his overthrow. The arrival of Governor Slaughter was followed by the seizure of Leisler and his son-in-law, Milborne. “A sham trial was instituted, in which Slaughter appointed Leisler’s personal enemies as his judges.” The councilors arrested with him were released; Leisler was charged with rebellion, confiscation of property, and the illegal levying of taxes. He and Milborne refused to defend themselves against the charges and both were sentenced to death. Both were hanged May 16, 1691, near the present site of the World building in Park Row.

Slaughter was reluctant to sign the death warrant and tradition has it that at a wedding feast of one of the aristocrats, the governor was induced to sign the paper while drunk. Leisler made a pathetic speech just before the bandage was applied to his eyes and thus died one of the early popular revolts against class rule in America.

A later governor, Lord Bellomont, a man of democratic tastes, who detested the landed parasites, declared the execution of Leisler and Milborne was a judicial murder and their estates were restored to their heirs. Though the leaders of the rebellion were removed the Leisler party was active for some years and was instrumental in secur-
ing the removal of the notorious Fletcher whose career we have had occasion to mention a number of times.  

The records regarding revolts of indentured whites are scanty, but that they took place is certain. The white bondman, like the black slave, frequently acting under the spur of brutal treatment, would murder his master. One redemptioner who was hung in chains in Virginia, in August, 1678, for murdering his owner, mistress and her maid, has left a pathetic autobiography telling of the treatment he received and how he came to the resolution to kill his tormentors.

Bernard Romans’ “Concise Natural History of East and West Florida” (New York, 1776), records a rebellion of white slaves about 35 miles south of St. Augustine, on St. John’s river. The writer asserts that the settlement was famous “on account of the cruel methods of settling it, which made it the daily topic of conversation for a long time in this and the neighboring provinces.”

“About 1,500 people, men, women and children,” he writes, “were deluded away from their native country, where they lived at home in the plentiful cornfields and vineyards of Greece and Italy, to this place, where, instead of plenty, they found want in its last degree, instead of promised fields, a dreary wilderness; instead of a grateful fertile soil a barren arid sand; and in addition to their misery, were obliged to indent themselves, their wives and children for many years, to a man who had the most sanguine expectations of transplanting Bashawship from the Levant. The better to effect his purpose, he granted them a pitiful portion of land for ten years, upon the plan of the feudal system; this being improved and just rendered fit for cultivation, at the end of that term it reverts to the original grantor, and the grantee may, if he chooses, begin a new state of vassalage for ten years more. Many were denied even such grants as these, and were obliged

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to work in the manner of negroes, a task in the field; their provisions were at the best of times only a quart of maize per day, and two ounces of pork per week; this might have sufficed with the help of fish which abounds in this lagoon, but they were denied the liberty of fishing, and lest they should not labor enough, inhuman taskmasters were set over them, and instead of allowing each family to do with their homely fare as they pleased, they were forced to join altogether in one mess, and at the beat of a vile drum, to come to one common copper, from whence their hominy (hominy) was laded out to them; even this coarse and scanty meal was through careless management rendered still more coarse. . . .

"O Florida! were this the only instance of similar barbarity which thou hast seen, we might draw a veil over these scenes of horror; but Rolles Town, Mount Royal and three or four others of less note have seen too many wretches fall victims to hunger and ill usage, and that at a period of life when health and strength generally maintain the human frame in its greatest vigor, and seem to insure longevity. Rolles Town in particular has been the sepulchre of above four hundred such victims."

He then relates the story of an insurrection of these slaves "which the great ones stile rebellion." The poor wretches driven to despair in 1769, by these intolerable conditions, entered some provision stores and seized some boats lying in the harbor. Like the other revolts we have reviewed, the rebels acted without any careful planning and the leadership fell to an Italian whose reputation was not of the best. While hiding in the harbor a regiment of troops arrived to whom they surrendered, with the exception of one boat which escaped to the Florida Keys. Romans, the historian of the affair, was one of the grand jury to investigate the rebellion and states "we only found five bills." One was found against a rebel who had maimed one Cutter, "who had been made a justice of the peace, with no other view than to enable him to execute his barbarities to a larger extent." Here, as in Pennsylvania, we find "grafters in high places" interested in this white slav-
ery. A number of the rebels were executed, one for killing a cow.

The jury room was crowded with masters whose scowls indicated the sentences they wanted. But the jury seemed more lenient than the aristocratic slavers expected for we are informed that it “disappointed the expectations of more than one great man. Governor Grant pardoned two, and a third who was obliged to be the executioner of the remaining two.” We feel some elation to be informed that the grafting justice of the peace “some time after died a lingering death, having experienced, besides his wounds, the terrors of a coward in power, overtaken by vengeance.”

These revolts are generally stigmatized as “rebellions” in the popular histories and are usually damned as unreasoning acts prompted by demagogues and agitators. However, they redound to the glory of the workers for a contented, unresisting, servile class is the most melancholy aspect of any age ruled by a privileged class. We shall not quarrel over words. Whether these uprisings were rebellions, insurrections, strikes, revolts or civil wars, matters little. That they incarnated the spirit of rebellion against the colonial slavers and rulers is of interest to us. The subject classes that are capable of turning on those who profit by their subjection—and do turn—are worthy of our admiration and esteem. It is this spirit of revolt among the poor, not the intrigues and “statesmanship” of the “great men” of the past, that we regard as glorious in American history.

We shall see in another chapter how one rebellion drove the ruling classes to Philadelphia, in 1787, to establish a “strong government” in behalf of property and thus complete the conquest of economic resources and political power by these classes.

General Status of the Workers

In reviewing the general economic and social conditions of the workers we are aware that it would be a false judgment to base our estimate on twentieth century standards. The degree of material comfort possible before the age of machinery was necessarily less than now. The capacity for producing wealth was small owing to the crude forms of production that prevailed. Yet with this reservation only one with a bias favoring aristocracy can give the appreciative view of the past that is usually found in the school books and histories. It is no exaggeration to say that the society of colonial times, and long after the Revolution, regarded labor as a badge of shame. It was because of this view held by the wealthy classes that all the colonies, and later the states, withheld the franchise from those not possessing a certain amount of property. The possession of property was a passport to the "best society" and enabled the holder to share in political and other privileges. If a poor farmer or laborer by some stroke of good fortune came into possession of wealth, it removed the social and economic curse under which he previously lived.

Massachusetts, in 1691, restricted the franchise to possessors of an estate of freehold in land or other estate to the value of 40 pounds per annum. A Maryland law (1681) limited the suffrage to those having freeholds of fifty acres or other property worth 40 pounds. In New Jersey (1688) it was 200 acres of land or 50 pounds. New York (1665) provided for town meetings and election of a constable and eight overseers by a "plurality of the voices of the freeholders." In 1680 an assembly was formed composed of eighteen deputies elected by freeholders. In Connecticut (1639) the governor and six magistrates were to be elected by a majority of the freemen. In Virginia the suffrage had been restricted to freemen, but in 1670 it
was further restricted to "such as by their estates, real or personall, have interest enough to tye them to the endeavor of the publique good." This law was one of the causes contributing to Bacon's Rebellion.

In South Carolina (1765) members of the assembly must own 500 acres of land and ten slaves or possess 1,000 pounds in land, houses and other property. In Georgia delegates to the assembly are required to own 500 acres of land and suffrage was restricted to those who owned 50 acres or a town lot. In North Carolina one must own land to hold office, and only freeholders could vote. "This system was ingrafted on the constitution adopted when North Carolina became a state, and by which senators were obliged to own 300 acres of land, and representatives 100, while the suffrage was restricted to freeholders of 50 acres."2

The Declaration of Independence and the triumph of the Revolution brought few changes in the property qualifications for the franchise. Nearly all the state constitutions adopted at this time repeated the assertion of the Declaration that "all men are created equal," but "an examination of these state constitutions reveals the fact that in their formation very little regard was paid to the self-evident truths, and that the very men who were loudly asserting the political equality of man went on and set up governments under which political equality had no existence."3 The suffrage laws in the states after the Revolution confirm this judgment. Massachusetts required the voter to have an income of three pounds a year from a freehold estate or personal estate worth sixty pounds. In Connecticut he must have a similar income of seven dollars or real estate worth $134. In New Jersey his real estate must be worth fifty pounds and Maryland the same, or personal property of thirty pounds. In Virginia he must own "twenty-five acres of land, properly planted, with a house thereon at least twelve feet square on the founda-

1 See Thwaite, "The Colonies."
2 Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 149.
3 McMaster, "The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," p. 15.
tion,” or fifty acres of wild land or a town lot. In South Carolina he must be a free white man owning fifty acres or a town lot.

To hold office the property qualifications were still higher, ranging from 100 pounds to 500, or land or slaves, and generally including a belief in the Christian religion. Everywhere the basis of office holding and the suffrage was property. “It was indeed true that all governments derived their just powers from the consent of the governed; yet under these early state constitutions, none but tax-paying, property-owning men could give that consent from which government derives its just powers. . . . The poor man counted for nothing. He was governed, but not with his consent, by his property-owning Christian neighbors. . . . In short, the broad doctrine that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, was not accepted by the ‘Fathers.’”

Exclusion of masses of workingmen from the ballot continued till the middle of the nineteenth century and in 1842 it caused an armed uprising in Rhode Island, known as “Dorr’s Rebellion.” This revolt temporarily seated Thomas Dorr in the governor’s chair, but he was finally ousted, the rebellion put down with troops, and a price was placed on the head of the fugitive governor. He was captured and sentenced to prison for life for the “crime” of endeavoring to establish popular rule. In 1845 a “liberation” governor was elected, Dorr was set free, and the clerk of the supreme court was ordered to write across the record of his sentence the words “REVERSED AND ANNULLED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.”

A study of the official declarations of the dominant political parties down to this time reveals the fact that all of them were silent regarding this policy of disfranchisement. In fact, their spokesmen opposed extension of suffrage to the poor. Daniel Webster, for example, in the Massachusetts Constitutional convention (1820) made the
most powerful argument against universal suffrage. In the New York convention (1821) Chancellor Kent, opposing universal suffrage, said: "This democratic principle cannot be contemplated without terror. . . . Universal suffrage jeopardizes property and puts it into the power of the poor and the profligate to control the affluent. . . . The poor man's interest is always in opposition to his duty, and it is too much to expect of human nature that interest will not be consulted." This expresses the philosophy of class rule nicely. It is the "poor man's duty" to serve the ruling class, but his "interest is always in opposition to his duty." If the worker should neglect his "duty" and follow the urge of his interest, as a rational human being should, what would become of the "gentlemen of substance" who live on his sweat and blood?

But the colonial masters did not rely on their class laws alone to insure their supremacy. They were skilled in the use of the most brutal practices at elections. This was necessary as there was always more or less antagonism between them and the more fortunate of the poor classes who managed to qualify for the suffrage. For example, at the annual election for members of the Pennsylvania assembly in 1742, a large number of sailors in Philadelphia were armed with clubs by one faction and assaulted opposing voters and election officials. When the ground was cleared several were carried off dead. This was repeated a number of times when an investigation showed that the sailors were hired by party leaders. A quaint letter is still preserved in which a politician of the same state, in 1765, advises that his party clique go to the polls with clubs and, if necessary, "thrash the sheriff, every inspector, Quaker and Mennonist to a jelly.”

A debate in congress in 1790 preserves some interesting information regarding elections in the southern states. In Virginia the voters of an entire county generally voted

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6 Ibid, p. 82.
7 Ibid, pp. 70-71.
at one courthouse. One candidate had a brother commanding federal troops who voted them for his aspiring relative. A congressman asserted that at his own election 500 of his partisans were armed with clubs and that force was a common thing at the polls. "A gentleman from South Carolina affected to be much surprised at this; but was promptly reminded that at his own election a riot had occurred, that it had occurred in a church, and that a magistrate began it by knocking down a voter and dragging him into the road."10 The closer we get to the patriot "Fathers" the less do they resemble the portraits usually given us.

We have seen that the wages paid in 1774, about two dollars per week, scarcely enabled the workers to keep out of jail. Their food and clothing were naturally abominable and many modern conveniences were, of course, unknown. The worker "rarely tasted fresh meat as often as once in a week, and paid for it a much higher price than his posterity. . . . A pair of yellow buckskin or leather breeches, a checked shirt, a red flannel jacket, a rusty felt hat cocked up at the corners, shoes of neat's-skin set off with huge buckles of brass, and a leather apron, comprised his scanty wardrobe. The leather he smeared with grease to keep it soft and flexible."11 The sons generally began life where the fathers ended it.

In New England the Puritan aristocracy regretted to see the children of the workers at play in the fields and constantly enacted laws to secure their labor power. As early as 1641 Plymouth ordered that those receiving relief from the towns and having children the township shall put the latter to work. Boston in 1672 ordered certain persons to place their children out as indentured servants. If parents refuse the town officials are ordered to place the children "with such masters as they shall provide." In 1682 a workhouse was ordered built to employ children who "shamefully spend their time in the streets." In Connecti-

cut children at play are often bound out to serve masters; boys to the age of 21, and girls to the age of 18, or till they marry. A law of the general court of Massachusetts, in 1643, makes it lawful for the constable to whip runaway bound boys. The "uplift movement" continues during the next century for Boston in 1720 appointed a committee who recommended that twenty spinning wheels be provided "for such children as should be sent from the almshouse." Fifty years later Mr. William Molineux of Boston asks the legislature to assist him in his plan for "manufacturing the children's labour into wearing apparel" and "employing young females from eight years old and upward." Before the close of the century manufacturing was developed and a French traveler protests that "men congratulate themselves upon making early martyrs of these innocent creatures, for is it not a torment to these poor little beings . . . to be a whole day and almost every day of their lives employed at the same work, in an obscure and infected prison?" New England, especially Massachusetts, was a hothouse for the "immortal truths" of the Declaration and other gush mouthed by Adams, Gerry and other "patriots." The sweating of women and children became a marked feature of New England "democracy" after the Revolution.

"The Body of Liberties," enacted by Massachusetts in 1641, which we have already noticed, seemed to have little reference to the men, women and children of the poor. With wages fixed by law, most of the men disfranchised, paupers auctioned off in the streets and children placed at the disposal of master employers, there was little in "The Body of Liberties" for the working people to enthuse over. Within sixteen years after the adoption of this code the Quakers felt its blessings. It was enacted that banished Quakers who returned should have their ears lopped off and for the third offense should have their tongues pierced with red-hot irons. The following year the death penalty was substituted and four Quakers were hung on Boston Common within two years. In 1660 the

12 See Abbott, "Women in Industry," Appendix A.
death penalty was repealed and the gentle Puritans con-
tented themselves with flogging their erring brothers.13

Even in the church the workers were made to under-
stand their servile status. The congregation was seated
according to the rank and social position of its members.
The minister was the source of all knowledge, the Sabbath
began with sundown on Saturday, the tithing man col-
lected fees, the constable arrested the ungodly if they re-
mained away and reported them if they were merry. In
short, it was a time when it was impious to be happy and
a virtue to be morose.

Perhaps the debtors’ prison was the most atrocious in-
stitution provided for the unfortunate of colonial times,
and this, like restricted suffrage and indentured service,
survived well into the first half of the nineteenth century.
The administration of these prisons and the treatment ac-
corded workingmen reads like a chapter from Stepiak’s
“Russia Under the Czars.” In fact, one gets the impres-
sion that the Russian jailers must have become acquainted
with the cruelty of prison regime in our early history and
adopted some practices of the “Fathers.” McMaster’s ac-
count of these prisons is a sickening one and we cannot
do better than give it here.

“There is indeed scarce a scrap of information,” he
writes, “bearing upon the subject extant which does not
go to prove beyond question that the generation which
witnessed the Revolution was less merciful and tender-
hearted than the generation which witnessed the Civil war.
Our ancestors, it is true, put up a just cry of horror at
the brutal treatment of their captive countrymen in the
(British) prison ships and hulks. . . . Yet even then
the face of the land was dotted with prisons where deeds
of cruelty were done, in comparison with which the foul-
est acts committed in the hulks sink to a contemptible in-
significance. For more than fifty years after the peace
there was in Connecticut an underground prison which
surpassed in horrors the black Hole of Calcutta. This den,
known as the Newgate prison, was in an old worked-out

copper mine in the hills near Granby. There in little pens of wood from thirty to one hundred culprits were immured, their feet made fast to iron bars, and their necks chained to beams in the roof. The darkness was intense; the caves reeked with filth; vermin abounded; water trickled from the roof and oozed from the sides of the caverns; huge masses of earth were constantly falling off. In the dampness and the filth the clothing of the prisoners grew mouldy and rotted away, and their limbs became stiff with rheumatism. The Newgate prison was perhaps the worst in the country, yet in every county were jails such as would now be thought unfit places of habitation for the vilest and most loathsome of beasts. . . . Not a ray of light ever penetrated them. In jails in Massachusetts the cells were so small that the prisoners were lodged in hammocks swung one over the other. In Philadelphia the keeps were eighteen by twenty feet, and so crowded that at night each prisoner had a space of six feet by two to lie down in.

"Into such pits and dungeons all classes of offenders of both sexes were indiscriminately thrust. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that they became seminaries of every conceivable form of vice, and centres of the most disgusting diseases. Prostitutes plied their calling openly in the presence of men and women of decent station, and guilty of no crime but an inability to pay their debts. . . ."

"No crime known to the law brought as many to the jails as the crime of debt, and the class most likely to get into debt was the most defenseless and dependent, the great body of servants, of artisans, and of laborers, those, in short, who depended on their daily wages for their daily bread. One hundred years ago the laborer who fell from a scaffold or lay sick of a fever was sure to be seized by the sheriff the moment he recovered, and be carried to jail for the bill of a few dollars which had been run up during his illness at the huckster's or the tavern. . . ."

"Men confined as witnesses were compelled to mingle with the forger besmeared with the filth of the pillory, and the fornicator streaming with blood from the whipping post, while here and there among the throng were culprits
whose ears had been cropped, or whose arms, fresh from
the branding iron, emitted the stench of scorched flesh.
. . . The treadmill was always going. The pillory and
the stocks were never empty. The shears, the branding
iron, and the lash were never idle for a day. In Philadel-
phia the wheel-barrow men still went about the streets in
gangs, or appeared with huge clogs and chains hung to
their necks. . . .

"The misery of the unfortunate creatures cooped up
in the cells, even in the most humanely kept prisons, sur-
passes in horror anything ever recorded in fiction. No
attendance was provided for the sick. No clothes were
distributed to the naked. Such a thing as a bed was rarely
seen, and this soon became so foul with insects that the
owner dispensed with it gladly. Many of the inmates of
the prisons passed years without so much as washing them-
selves. Their hair grew long. Their bodies were covered
with scabs and lice, and emitted a horrible stench. Their
clothing rotted from their backs and exposed their bodies
tormented with all manner of skin diseases and a yellow
flesh cracking open with filth."14

One grows sick at the recital of these horrors and the
fist clenches when we reflect that vulgar politicians gather
dupes every Fourth of July to extol the glories of the
"patriots" and the Revolution, when these horrors con-
tinued for fifty years after the adoption of the Declara-
tion of Independence. And here again the dominant po-
litical parties in the early days of the republic were silent
regarding these atrocities. So were the "statesmen" who
formulated the policies of the parties and determined the
issues of the campaigns. Not until the rise of the labor-
movement in the first quarter of the nineteenth century
did the "statesmen" take cognizance of this system of
imprisoning poor men for debt and allowing them to rot
of neglect and disease. The politicians began to stir then
because the independent political action of the workers
threatened some of their jobs.

The debtors’ prisons were provided expressly for poor men. Murderers and counterfeiters had their wants generally provided for by the state, but unless the poor debtor was provided for by friends or charitable societies, he was left to rot in his rags. The low wages paid necessarily increased this class of “criminals” and they were helpless to defend themselves. When they did organize to improve their lot with the opening years of the nineteenth century, they were frequently tried for conspiracy and jailed.\(^{15}\)

The numbers in debtors’ prisons and the magnitude of their “crimes” are of interest to their descendants of today. In 1816 there were 1,984 debtors imprisoned in New York City, of whom 1,129 owed less than fifty dollars and 729 owed less than twenty-five dollars each. “Every one of them would have starved to death but for the kindness of the humane society.” One man in Vermont owed a firm of two fifty-four cents. By dividing the debt the victim was imprisoned on two counts of twenty-seven cents each. The costs piled up a total of $14.54, for which he was held responsible. In Boston—“the cradle of liberty!”—between 1820 and 1822, 3,492 debtors were jailed which affected 10,000 human beings. One woman was taken from her home and two children for a debt of $3.60. One man was imprisoned thirty years and a fund of $3,000 was raised “to pay the jail fees and costs that had accumulated during the long period of confinement.” In Philadelphia—“the city of brotherly love!”—in 1828, 1,085 debtors were jailed; their total debts were $25,409; amount recovered by creditors, $295; cost of maintaining the prison, $285,000! In 1831 the same city held forty debtors owing a total of $23. “One man owed two cents, another seventy-two cents.” This penalizing of poverty began to disappear in response to the early labor agitation, the last states to abolish it being Connecticut in 1837, Louisiana in 1840, Missouri in 1845, Alabama in 1848.\(^{16}\)

The laws and the legal practices of the time were ad-

\(^{15}\) See Chapter IX.

\(^{16}\) McMaster, “The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America,” pp. 63-66.
mirably arranged so that only the poor man owing a small sum should go to jail, while the wealthy man owing a larger amount was either not liable, or could get a stay of execution, or with good legal talent could avoid conviction. An old law of Pennsylvania gave magistrates jurisdiction without appeal in cases of debt under forty shillings, or $5.33. "When the debt exceeded that sum the debtor was entitled to a stay of execution. But no such privilege was accorded the wretch who owed a sixpence or a shilling. . . ." Law and its enforcement could not be better calculated to render the rich immune and to jail the helpless and dependent.

The federal government admirably expressed this attitude of leniency toward the capitalist class. It followed the policy of remitting tariff duties to the trading class for periods of ten, twelve and eighteen months. This gave wealthy traders and shippers the free use of government money. John Jacob Astor, a successful swindler and founder of the Astor fortune, had a loan of over $5,000,000 from this source. Sometimes these traders would fail—one house failed owing the government $3,000,000—but in no case were these capitalists imprisoned for debt, though they never paid a cent they owed.

This review of the status of workingmen, fleeting though it is, reveals at least the fact that civilization in America, from settlement times down to the days of "statesmen" who were prominent within the memory of some still living, has been an unbroken development of aristocracy and class privileges. Some features of this historical development and some of its institutions, notably white slavery, the white slave trade, and debtors' prisons, will come as a shock to those who have been led to look on the past as a "Golden Age" and its prominent men as heroic figures. Our examination also discloses the fact that the American Revolution, coming in the name of "equality of rights,"

17 Ibid. p. 50.
constituted no break in the forms of class rule and the institutions based on fraud and conquest. These facts serve as a forceful comment on the silly advice of some professional politicians whose battle cry is "back to Jefferson" or "back to the Fathers." To go back to that age—a feat by the way as difficult as to repeal the law of gravitation—would be to revive a servitude and a slave trade in blacks and whites, with their accompanying political subjection, which the progress of a century has abolished.

It would be to surrender the achievements of the working class since that time, for it was the workers of brawn and brain, through organization, sacrifice and martyrdom, that abolished the debtors' prison, won the franchise, abolished conspiracy laws and won the right to associate together for the common good of their class.

The same is true of negro slavery. It was an obscure workingman, William Lloyd Garrison, who, on the first day of the year 1831, issued a little sheet, nine by fourteen inches, The Liberator, making a demand which after some thirty years of hesitation, compromise and betrayal, the "statesmen" had to carry into execution in the exigency of a civil war. It was humble men like Garrison or those like Wendell Phillips, deserting his class and deserted by it, allowing no article cursed with the slave system to cross his threshold,19 facing hissing mobs organized by the "pillars of society," and refusing allegiance to a constitution that was "a league with death and a covenant with hell"—these men lashed the "statesmen" on to the overthrow of black servitude. These men, and the unknown pioneers of the labor movement, forced the issue on the evils we have discussed while Washington, Madison, Clay, Calhoun, Webster, Buchanan and others were either silent, or apologized for, or defended the institutions of their class regime.

Causes of the American Revolution

Our survey of historical conditions in the colonies gives us a fairly accurate idea of the society out of which came the movement that resulted in breaking the ties of dependence on Great Britain. If our account is a correct one, we can only retain the general belief that the American Revolution was a popular uprising of the whole people by assuming that there was a sudden change of heart on the part of the great planters, the traders in black and white slaves, and other sections of the aristocracy. But this assumption is shattered by the facts which our investigation has revealed; namely, that the political disfranchisement of the workers, the auction of indentured whites and the traffic in them, the horrors of the debtors' prisons, and conspiracy laws against organizations of labor, survived long after the Revolution was fought and won.

This consideration also disposes of the historical traditions that are taught children in the schools and suggests that another explanation must be found for the causes of the American Revolution. Fortunately, evidence exists in abundance to show that it was a revolt of the aristocracy fought by the workers under the delusion that the grandiloquent phrases of the Declaration of Independence implied greater opportunities and liberties for the long-suffering laborers. This war, like most wars in history, was "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight." Ruling classes always represent a minority of society and they never, as a whole, risk their lives on the battlefield. Unless they can get their slaves to fight for them, wars are impossible. The workers have, thus far, fought the battles of every class but their own. To induce them to do so it is necessary to disguise the real issue under glittering phrases like those of the Declaration which asserts that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain
inalienable rights,” etc. Such statements are calculated to stir the blood of men who are regarded by their masters as unequal and who are deprived of the rights declared to be inalienable.

But the civilization of that day was such a shameless and naked system of class domination that the Revolution, as we shall see, was far from being a popular or unanimous uprising, and so suspicious were the workers of the real designs of the leaders that, with all the pleadings of the latter, great difficulty was encountered in getting enough enlistments in the Continental army to present a fighting force to the British invaders. Many who did enlist did so only after promises of certain rewards. But even promised rewards did not prevent constant desertions which provoked the despair of Washington revealed by him in his correspondence with congress and with personal friends.

The causes of the Revolution may be traced to the attitude of the ruling classes of Great Britain toward the colonies. From the time of the discovery of America these classes regarded the New World as a place of investment. As early as 1651 a navigation act was passed forbidding importation of goods into England except in English ships, or ships of the colony exporting the goods, and another act provided that no goods should be shipped to countries other than England and her colonies. This aroused the resentment of the trading classes of the colonies and gave a strong impulse to smuggling which later became a profitable calling for many of these traders.

More drastic laws were passed one hundred years later. In 1750 Parliament passed acts prohibiting the erection of any mill or engine for slitting or rolling iron, or any plating forge or any steel furnace. Hatters were not allowed to take more than two apprentices at a time or any for more than seven years. It was made illegal to manufacture hats or woolens in one colony and sell in another. These laws were generally violated by resorting to smuggling.

In 1764 further laws were enacted restricting com-
merce and manufacture. The imposition of duties aroused
the ire of the commercial class, but the method of punish-
ing violation of the acts increased discontent. The smug-
gler was tried in the courts of admiralty and deprived of
trial by jury. The judge, who was a creature of the crown,
was paid out of the fines which he himself assessed and
so had every reason to convict upon the slightest evidence.
The wealthy smugglers were thus the victims of a repres-
sive policy, the spirit of which they rigidly observed in
their treatment of the poor classes. It may be said, too,
that the British government was forced to abolish trial
by jury and substitute admiralty courts because the wealthy
smugglers exercised such power, influence and terrorism
that few juries dared to convict them.

In spite of the growing discontent of the influential
classes, the British government continued its policy. Navi-
gation laws closed colonial ports against foreign vessels
and allowed them to only export to other British colonies.
Duties were also levied on trade between the colonies.
*The British capitalists, sweating fortunes out of their work-
ing class victims, wanted no competitors in the colonies to
challenge their commerce on the seas. American employers
and traders wanted the unrestricted opportunities to ex-
plot their workers which British capitalists were enjoy-
ing.* It was a quarrel between two ruling classes divided
by a vast expanse of water, and each envying the oppor-
tunities of the other. Commerce, ship building, industry
and agriculture had developed to such an extent at the
dawn of the Revolution that these acts of Parliament be-
came a serious menace to the incomes of the colonial
masters.

Smuggling was developed to a fine art. A pamphlet
written in 1774 asserts that nearly all merchants were
smugglers and perjurers and "that such a system was ruin-
ing the morals of the country."1 In fact, smuggling be-
came so popular with merchants and shippers that they
lost all sense of gratitude toward Great Britain when
France was endeavoring to annex the colonies to Canada—

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an event which the colonial aristocracy dreaded. While Great Britain was spending large sums in defending the colonies against French aggression, "it was found that the French fleets, the French garrisons, and the French West India islands, were systematically supplied with large quantities of provisions by the New England colonies. . . . The smuggling was even defended with a wonderful cynicism on the ground that it was good policy to make as much money as possible out of the enemy."² The enormous extent of this illicit trade with the enemy is shown by the fact that the total revenue collected in the colonial custom houses amounted to between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds a year, and the cost of collecting this revenue was between 7,000 and 8,000 pounds.³ To add to this ingratitude, the French were no sooner expelled from Canada till the smuggling traders openly joined in the chorus for separation from their protector.

Buckle's judgment of the vices of smuggling and the general tendency of this traffic, though directed against the European type, applies to these revolutionary "patriots." He says "they contaminated the surrounding population; introduced into peaceful villages vices formerly unknown; caused the ruin of entire families; spread, wherever they came, drunkenness, theft and dissoluteness; and familiarized their associates with those coarse and swinish debaucheries which were the natural habits of so vagrant and lawless a life."⁴

The Boston Tea Party which has inspired so much patriotic oratory can be traced to the practice of smuggling. The tax on tea made it very profitable for smugglers to deal in this commodity. The trade in tea was largely in the hands of the East India company, a chartered corporation of Great Britain. John Hancock and other tea merchants had smuggled large quantities of tea into Boston and were doing a large business. In the meantime the financial affairs of the East India company became very

³ Ibid., p. 52.
⁴ Buckle, "History of Civilization," Chap. V.
precarious. Its stock was depreciating and it was feared that the collapse of the company would bring on a panic in England. There were 17,000,000 pounds of the East India company’s tea in British warehouses for which there was no demand, because of the large quantities smuggled into the colonies from Holland. Parliament decided to repeal the tax on tea and the New England smugglers became panic stricken. But the masses of the people “were pleased at the prospect of drinking tea at less expense than ever.” The repeal of the tax meant that the East India company would be able to sell tea at much smaller prices than Hancock and his fellow smugglers could. Their profits would not only be lost, but their tea would rot on their hands. Competition with the British corporation would bankrupt them. After comparing notes Hancock, known in Boston as the “Prince of Smugglers,” with his fellow outlaws disguised as Indians, boarded their rival’s ships and threw the dreaded tea into the harbor. In other words, if the “glorious Tea Party” is to be commended, Rockefeller should be praised for burning rival refineries.

Smuggling, of course, was not confined to tea alone, for in all forms of trade it “proved a sure road to wealth. In every town prominent characters could be pointed out, who, when the states were under British rule, had constantly stowed away in their cellars and attics goods they would have been loath to have the officers of the customs to see. . . . Of this trade Boston was long the center, and many a merchant of high repute did not disdain to engage in it. Thus, on the very day when the farmers and ploughmen of Middlesex drove the British out of Lexington, John Hancock was to have stood trial for defrauding the customs.”

One historian speaks of the “moral grandeur” of the Boston Tea Party and regards it as an “effort to defend the eternal principles of natural justice.” This is eternal

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nonsense. Just what is "eternal" in the profits of tea smugglers and their rival exploiters, the coiner of eloquent phrases leaves unexplained.

Other influential "pillars" of society were added to the forces demanding separation from Great Britain when that government laid a tax on rum and molasses. This act aroused the Puritan slavers of New England whose "eternal principles" and profits were based on the slave trade in negroes. "If the infamy of holding slaves belongs to the South," writes McMaster, "the greater infamy of supplying slaves must be shared by England and the North. While the states were yet colonies, to buy negroes and sell them into slavery had become a source of profit to the inhabitants of many New England towns. . . . Molasses brought from Jamaica was turned to rum; the rum dispatched to Africa bought negroes; the negroes, carried to Jamaica or the southern ports, were exchanged for molasses, which, in turn, taken back to New England, was quickly made into rum." 8 This trade was seriously hampered by the tax mentioned as it decreased the profits of the slavers. The rum was a delicacy also much prized by ministers of God. 9 This traffic had developed early in the history of the colonies and the slave owners of the South pointed to it as an example of the hypocrisy of New England which denounced slavery. In 1736 Colonel William Byrd, of Virginia, wrote to the earl of Egmont the following sarcastic letter regarding the pretensions of New England "democracy": "Your Lordps (Lordships) opinion concerning Rum and Negroes is certainly very just, and your excluding both from your colony of Georgia will be very happy; tho' with respect to Rum, the Saints of New England I fear will find out some trick to evade your Act of Parliament." 10

The distilleries of Boston and other parts of the New England coast, especially Newport, Rhode Island, became great in number. There were twenty-two stills in this

town and Massachusetts distilled 15,000 hogsheads annually. Rhode Island had 150 vessels engaged in the trade and rum was the main article exchanged for slaves in Africa. This wretched commerce is hardly compatible with the sentiment that "all men are created equal," etc. The combination of smugglers and slave traders in New England exercised considerable influence in forming opinion favorable to independence.

In October, 1774, the Continental Congress, seeming to appreciate the contradiction in their professions respecting liberty and the traffic in slaves and wishing to appear well before the world, passed an act declaring "We will neither import, nor purchase any slave imported after the first day of December next." But it is notorious that the slavers continued their business and it was thirteen years later before Massachusetts passed an act prohibiting it. In the same year Rhode Island passed an act prohibiting importation of slaves. The preamble stated that the inhabitants would be inconsistent to hold slaves while fighting for liberties themselves, and then inserted a clause providing "that nothing in this act shall extend, or be deemed to extend," to the slave trade. Prohibiting slavery and legalizing the slave trade harmonized with the interests of the dealers in slaves and rum.

The same juggling is witnessed in adopting the Declaration of Independence. The original draft contained a clause charging King George with waging "cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither." The southern delegates united with many of the northern delegates in striking out the clause. Jefferson, writing of this act, says that "our northern brethren . . . felt a little tender under these censures; for tho' their people have very few slaves them-

12 Ibid, p. 45.
13 Ibid, p. 50.
selves, yet they had been very considerable carriers of
them to others.\textsuperscript{14}

The southern planters, though slower to endorse sep-
oration, also joined for motives no more creditable than
those actuating the northern traffickers in slaves and their
colegues, the merchant smugglers. Many of these plant-
ers were in debt to British merchants and saw in the Rev-
olution an opportunity to repudiate their debts. A mani-
festó was issued in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1774,
which stated that "The planters are greatly in arrears to
the merchants; a stoppage of importation (of slaves)
would give them all an opportunity to extricate themselves
from debt."\textsuperscript{15}

Wendell Phillips in a speech delivered in Boston,
1861, summed up the motives of both planter and mer-
chant in demanding independence. With all of his admira-
tion for the revolutionary leaders he was conscious of the
material interests that prompted the activity of the two
classes mentioned. He declared: "It is not always . . .
ideas or moral principles that push the world forward.
Selfish interests play a large part in the work. Our Revo-
lution of 1776 succeeded because trade and wealth joined
hands with principle and enthusiasm—a union rare in the
history of revolutions. Northern merchants fretted at
England’s refusal to allow them direct trade with Holland
and the West Indies. Virginia planters, heavily mortgaged,
welcomed anything that would postpone payment of their
debts. . . . So merchant and planter joined heartily
. . . to get independence. To merchant independence
meant only direct trade—to planter cheating his creditors.\textsuperscript{16}

The home government also endeavored to restrict set-
tlement along the coast as the farther into the interior the
immigrants went the more difficult it was to tax them and
to retain their loyalty. But this policy also interfered with
the plans of land speculators whose incomes were derived
from luring men into the wilderness. The more people

\textsuperscript{15} DuBois, "Suppression of the Slave Trade," p. 44.
the speculators could induce to go West, the more profits
they could make from their land deals. Washington, Ham-
ilton and Morris were interested in land speculation. Wash-
ington had good reasons for being a rebel, as he had sur-
veyed lands outside the royal grant and in exceeding the
powers of his commission was liable to prosecution as a
law breaker. These speculators reaped their harvest of
wealth when the new government was formed.

The great mass of laborers, artisans and small far-
mers were indifferent to the agitation for liberty and in-
dependence. The redemptioner was a bond slave and knew
that it made no difference whether he was a subject of
the British crown or of the home exploiters. The “free”
laborer did not enthuse, for the laws that fixed his status
as an underling and providing imprisonment for debt were
being enforced by the very “patriots” who were talking
so glibly about independence. The slaves, of course, were
dumb, unable to speak for themselves and nothing in the
Revolution held out any promise of release for them. The
small farmers, too, were on the whole indifferent, for taxes
fell heavily on their shoulders and the high prices of living
and excessive rates of interest made them suspicious of
the coast merchants and money lenders. The lot of the
toilers of every class was not to be envied, and though
having little chance to secure an education, their experi-
ence with the wealthy classes taught them to beware when
the masters came bearing gifts.

Yet it was necessary to draw fighters for the Revolu-
tion from the ranks of the subjected population if a strug-
gle was to be waged at all. This was not an easy task, but
it was accomplished nevertheless. Those who have today
seen poor wretches half clothed, unemployed, liable to evic-
tion for non-payment of rent and dodging the collector of
a grocer’s bill, and patiently listened to one of these cheer-
ful idiots while he proved the existence of “prosperity,”
can understand how the reasoning powers of men can be
completely suspended under the influence of interested

17 Simons, “Class Struggles in America,” p. 16.
demagogues. The Declaration of Independence, though it does not mention a single distinct working class grievance, by its eloquent phrases deluded large numbers of the poor classes into the belief that a new era was dawning for them. But this was not a unanimous sentiment by any means—either of the poor or even the wealthy classes. John Adams wrote that “New York and Pennsylvania were so nearly divided, if their propensity was not against us, that if New England on one side and Virginia on the other had not kept them in awe, they would have joined the British.” In another letter he declares “on mature deliberation I conclude . . . that more than one-third of influential characters were against it.”

In fact, the Revolution was the work of an aggressive minority “who succeeded in committing an undecided and fluctuating majority to courses for which they had little love, and leading them step by step to a position from which it was impossible to recede.” Nor did the “patriots” rely on pursuasion alone. *The more effective arguments of tar and feathers, physical assault, the boycott and exile* were employed against those who regarded the claims of the smugglers and slavers with suspicion or openly opposed them. It is interesting to note in this connection that the robed tools of capitalist power in the courts today have outlawed the peaceful form of boycott sometimes used by labor unions.

The wide extent and character of the violence employed by Samuel Adams and other rebels is instructive. “Men were ridden and tossed on fence rails; were gagged and bound for days at a time; pelted with stones; fastened in rooms where there was a fire with the chimney stopped on top; advertised as public enemies, so that they would be cut off from all dealing with their neighbors. They had bullets shot into their bedrooms; money or valuable plate extorted to save them from violence. . . . Their houses and ships were burnt; they were compelled to pay the

guards who watched them in their houses; and when carted about for the mob to stare at and abuse they were compelled to pay something at every town.”

This reads more like a drunken riot than the acts of men believing in the “inalienable rights of man.” Chief Justice and Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts, who was born in America, was eminent as a historian, had opposed the restrictive acts against commerce and the Stamp Act, became disgusted with these rioters. He paid for his opposition in the memorable Hutchinson Riot in Boston, August 26, 1765. Josiah Quincy, Jr., writes of the mob besieging Hutchinson’s house, the latter barely escaping serious injury or death. The rioters gutted the house and destroyed nearly everything of value, including some records and rare documents of great value to historians. These were irreparable losses to Hutchinson who was occupied in writing a history of New England. He was a pathetic figure when he entered court next day with tears in his eyes and clothed in garments part of which he was compelled to borrow. The “patriots” evidently had their share in contributing to us the practice of lynch law which disgraces the United States today.

Among the favored classes who refused support to the Revolution may be mentioned the following:

The official class holding various positions in the civil, military and naval services of the government.

Colonial politicians who believed the Revolution could not succeed and who expected their loyalty to be rewarded by offices and titles and the confiscated estates of the rebels who would be either exiled or hung.

Commercial men having tangible property and considerable to lose, who would rather bear the restrictive acts of Parliament than to stake all on the Revolution.

Professional men such as clergymen, physicians, lawyers and teachers, a clear majority of whom seem to have been against the ultimate measures of the Revolution.

Those of no particular classification who by habit or training were conservative and opposed any change in the established regime.22

One agency established to promote the agitation was the secret "committees of correspondence" which enabled the agitators to keep in communication with each other. Much of the violence had its source in these secret groups. The Continental Congress was not a body whose members were elected by popular vote. The delegates sent by Connecticut, New York and Maryland were chosen by these committees.23 The legislatures that sent delegates were all representative of property for, as we have seen, the workers without property were disfranchised. The committees were "always in session and no governor could dissolve or prorogue" them.24 They watched the movements of their opponents, exchanged information, boycotted their enemies and drove Tories to Canada or England.

By silencing their enemies through terrorism, or exiling them to Canada or New York, which was largely Tory in sentiment; by constant appeals to patriotism, threats, promises of the rewards and glorious future to be realized, sufficient numbers of adventurers, politicians and poor farmers were induced to enlist and present the appearance of a fighting force against Great Britain. Though pictures of the revolutionary army generally present its recruits in neat uniforms, in reality they resembled a "Coxy Army" more than anything else. Washington's soldiers were a ragged, ill-equipped, undisciplined crowd of men, many of whom enlisted half-heartedly and in every defeat there were desertions. During the terrible winter at Valley Forge, when they nearly starved or froze, the farmers in surrounding territory daily carted provisions to the British army in Philadelphia. Washington's scanty rations that winter were partly secured by scouting parties capturing these supplies. The army was not a large one—about 25,000 men at one time, but the number frequently declined to ten, six and even four thousand.

An interesting fact generally ignored by American historians is that Lord Howe, commander of the British forces, was a member of the Whig Party which sympathized with the revolutionists and defended them in British politics. Howe conducted his campaign to the entire satisfaction of Washington and his generals. The British general delayed and feasted in New York and Philadelphia, giving ample opportunity for the rebel forces to make the best of their precarious situation. *Howe could have annihilated the rebels at Bunker Hill, Long Island, Brandywine and especially at Valley Forge had he any intention of doing so.* When he was recalled Parliament investigated his peculiar conduct and only influential friends saved him from punishment.\(^25\)

A horde of adventurers, petty grafters and other designing men fished in the troubled waters of the Revolution and followed in the wake of the armies to pick up what loot they could. "Among the enterprising men who had thrown themselves into the first movement of the Revolution were many of broken fortunes and doubtful antecedents, many ardent speculators, many clever and unscrupulous adventurers. Such men found in . . . the sudden fluctuations of the currency . . . a new and sinister interest in the continuance of the struggle." One adventurer became a brigadier general and paid debts amounting to nearly 8,000 pounds with 1,000 pounds of gold and silver. Noah Webster observed that "The first visible effect of an augmentation of the medium and the consequent fluctuation of value was a host of jockeys, who followed a species of commerce, and subsisted on the ignorance and honesty of the country people; or, in other words, upon the difference in the value of the currency in different places. Perhaps we may safely estimate that not less than 20,000 men in America left honest callings and applied themselves to this knavish traffic."\(^26\)

The army itself was demoralized by these and other similar practices and it became difficult to maintain dis-

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cipline. As an aid in this direction offending soldiers were given one hundred lashes or more on the naked back while tied to a tree. The whip was formed of "several knotted cords, which sometimes cut through the skin at every stroke." Some disobedient soldiers were punished "at several different times, a certain number of stripes repeated at intervals of two or three days, in which case the wounds are in a state of inflammation, and the skin rendered more sensibly tender; and the terror of the punishment is greatly aggravated."27

One other consideration we have to offer as among the contributing causes of the Revolution. The acts restricting commerce and manufactures were aimed, as we have seen, by the British ruling class against the colonial ruling class. This was sufficient to arouse the resentment of the latter and drive most of them to revolt. But our colonial manufacturers were also aware of the great advantages which their British brethren possessed in the new machinery that Arkwright and others were inventing across the sea. Machines for carding and spinning were fast displacing the old hand processes in making cloth. The small skill required to operate these machines enabled the British factory lords to sweat large numbers of women and children. To guard this advantage the British Parliament passed acts prohibiting the exportation of machines, plans, or models of machines or any tools used in cotton or linen manufacture, under penalty of 200 pounds. Even the possession of them for export rendered the offender liable to arrest. Watt was also making his first improvements on Newcomen's engine.

These inventions brought with them the crucifixion of men, women and children of the working class. Children from seven to twelve and fourteen years of age were worked fourteen and sixteen hours per day under brutal taskmasters. Women frequently fainted at machines or gave birth to children on factory floors. The workhouses and almshouses of London and Birmingham and other

cities were raided for children, idiots being taken with the rest. The factories became torture chambers and in some cases places of murder, with the child slaves as victims.

Every ship and every mail that came to America brought news of these events and stimulated the desire to apply the new processes here. But British acts stood in the way and we have already noted the efforts of the colonial masters to make child labor profitable. Although the colonial appetite for child labor was whetted by the industrial changes in England it was not till 1789 that the new machinery was secured. In that year Samuel Slater, "The Father of American Manufactures," established the first cotton mill in this country, in Rhode Island, and all of his employes were children between seven and twelve years of age. From that time the profitable exploitation of children became one of the "inalienable rights of man." Furthermore, the second act of the first United States congress was for the "encouragement and the protection of manufactures" by levying a protective tariff, and Hamilton, in his famous "Report on Manufactures," urged that "women and children are rendered more useful by manufacturing establishments than they otherwise would be.

The "Fathers" were not slow to follow their British kin's example after they had settled their temporary quarrel, and were free to take the child from the cradle and the woman from the home.

From the foregoing review it will be seen that the merchant smugglers, the New England slavers, the land speculators, the southern planters, the money lenders, and a host of adventurers with itching palms were interested in fomenting the agitation for independence. When the Declaration of Independence passes from eloquent phrases to an enumeration of grievances these are seen to be ills that affected some one of these classes. The tyranny of George III is denounced; he has taken away their charters, hired Indians in the war, denied them trial by jury, restricted their commerce and industry, kidnapped their

28 Abbott, "Women in Industry," p. 44.
citizens on the high seas, quartered armed troops among them, and in general denied them the "liberties" of British subjects.

The poor classes composed of the poor farmers, the pioneers on the frontier, the bond and chattel slaves, the laborers and artisans, could have drawn up an indictment against these "patriots" and included in it the following charges:

*If Britainkidnaps American sailors in time of war, you kidnap us in Europe in times of peace and sell us, our wives and children, into slavery; if Britain hires the Indian as a soldier, you allow the savage to scalp us on the frontier; if Britain suppresses your commerce, you suppress our right to associate and deprive us of the franchise; if Britain imprisons your sailors in her ships, you imprison us for debt and allow us to rot in rags and filth; if Britain has taken away your charters we know when you had them you enacted fugitive laws for us when we tried to escape your clutches; if you suffer from British tyranny we suffer because you give us no lien on the products of our labor and frequently cheat us out of our miserable wages; when we are driven to steal bread you place us in the pillory, or brand us with irons, while in your law code you class the white indentured slave, the conquered Indian and the enslaved black as merchandise to be bought and sold like cattle. Your declaration is a class declaration. So is ours. Only we represent the toiling masses of these colonies on whose skill, labor and sacrifice your pre-eminence and rule have been established.*

Such a declaration coming from the masses of the poor would have been based on facts and would set in bold relief the class character of the struggle for independence. That it is a true estimate of the historical conditions of that time will become apparent in the next chapter where we will consider the treatment accorded the workers after having fought the battles of the interested and ruling classes of that time.
"It is not too much to say," writes the historian, Fiske, "that the period of five years following the peace of 1783 was the most critical moment in all the history of the American people." It was a critical period—for the smugglers, speculators, slavers and others of the privileged classes, for it seemed to these that the great landed empire, tremendous resources and power which the Revolution gave them all hung in the balance and with strong possibility that the insurgent poor would secure these advantages for themselves. The workers by their heroism and sacrifices at Bunker Hill and Yorktown; by their sufferings during the terrible winter at Valley Forge had won the Revolution and were certainly entitled to the fruits of victory or, at least, deserved exceptional consideration.

But the last shot had scarcely been fired till these veterans, retracing their weary steps homeward, were confronted with a terrible situation. It is doubtful whether history affords another such example of the shameless ingratitude and contemptible greed displayed by a ruling class toward its benefactors, that the "Fathers" displayed toward the poor veterans of the war. The farmers and laborers found that while they were at the front risking their lives in the struggle, the wealthy classes were confiscating their little farms and household goods for debts contracted during the war and imprisoning thousands for debt. The rebellion which this process of confiscation provoked constitutes the "critical period" referred to by Fiske. With this historian, as with most others, the poor rebels are

viewed as a senseless mob of fanatics for not submitting quietly to the wholesale confiscation without protest.

The war, like all wars, left the country devastated and impoverished and the distress was frightful in all the states. In Vermont "One-half the community was totally bankrupt; the other half was plunged in the depths of poverty. The year which had elapsed since the affair at Yorktown had not brought all the blessings that had been foretold." A large part of the country had been laid waste; commerce was all but suspended and Great Britain still maintained the policy of commercial antagonism toward her late colonies. "What wealth there was lay in the hands of a few score men. The disparity of condition between a laborer and a Charles Carroll or a George Washington was probably greater than exists today between a laborer and a Carnegie. Employment was scarce; the circulating medium fluctuated in value; the workman had no security for his pay, and was frequently defrauded. Wages were paid quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. If the workman bought goods on credit, the debtors' prison yawned for him; and, if he was imprisoned, his food and comforts had to be supplied by private charity."

Thousands were scarcely able to keep clothes on their backs or to provide their families with the most common necessities. The money was in the hands of the rich and high rates of interest made it impossible for the leatherbreeched mechanic or the debt-ridden farmer to borrow. The sheriffs were selling the poor farmers' property for debts and they endeavored to evade the seizures by hiding furniture or other goods, driving cattle to a neighbor's pasture, or making houses and small farms over to relatives. The debtors' prisons were glutted with victims. In New Hampshire "It was then the fashion, . . . as indeed it was everywhere, to lock men up in jail the moment they were so unfortunate as to owe their fellows a sixpence or a shilling. Had this law been rigorously ex-

Each colony came out of the Revolution as an independent state, its loyalty to congress being dependent on its own will. Under the Articles of Confederation, which had created the congress, the war had been fought to a successful issue. It had raised armies, contracted loans, and levied taxes, but it had no power to compel the affiliation or loyalty of the states. It was a product of military necessity hastily called into existence, yet in spite of its imperfections it had survived the stormy period of war. It had one legislative body, the congress, with no senate, supreme court, or president to veto its acts. After the war the states, controlled by property owners, proceeded with legislation regardless of their neighbors. Each regulated commerce and levied duties in its own interests. If one state had endeavored to close her ports to English goods all the others would profit by her sacrifice. British ports were still closed against American merchants unless they patronized English ships. Thirteen different forms of legislation, more or less conflicting, produced anarchy and division. The ruling classes were more or less divided in their scramble for spoils and their opposing jealousies and interests may be seen from the following:

"The commerce which Massachusetts found it to her interest to encourage, Virginia found it to her interest to restrict. New York would not protect the trade in indigo and pitch. South Carolina cared nothing for the success of the fur interests. New England derived great revenues from lumber, oil and potashes; Pennsylvania from corn and grain, and were in nowise concerned as to the prosperity of the trade of their neighbors. Articles which Connecticut and New Jersey excluded from their ports by heavy tonnage duties entered New York with scarcely any other charges than light money.""
All this is evidence of the eagerness of each section of the wealthy classes to profit out of existing conditions without any regard to the interests of their class as a whole. That this is not a biased judgment may be shown by competent authorities. "There was everywhere," says Wilson, "the same jealous spirit, the same striving for every petty advantage, the same alert and aggressive selfishness." Von Holst is even more positive. "The acquisitions of the war," he writes, "were looked upon as so much booty, of which each state endeavored to secure the lion's share, without the least regard for the well-being or honor of the whole. In several instances, those who were willing to sell even the honor of their own state showed a bolder front and grew noisier in the hope of increasing their own personal share of the booty and of seeing it turned as soon as possible into jingling gold."

But the necessity for unity and a strong centralized government in behalf of the wealthy classes was soon revealed to them by a specter that appeared in the midst of their petty jealousies and scrambles for spoils. The army was restless for its pay and the government's finances were at a low ebb. A number of companies were on the verge of mutiny; one drove congress out of Philadelphia and another threatened uprising of veterans required the influence of Washington to quell. In fact, by 1790 Great Britain had distributed about $16,000,000 among about 4,000 of her loyalists, which "seems to have been much more ample than that which the ragged soldiers of our Revolutionary army ever received from congress." But the real specter was the growing discontent of the poor farmers and laborers who failed to secure all the blessings the Revolution had promised. Their frightful poverty drove them to desperation. Their "inalienable right to life" was a sham; their "liberty" was imprisonment for debt; their "pursuit of happiness" a phantom.

From Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New

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Hampshire and other states, alarming news came of the growing restlessness among the poor. Mass meetings were being held, petitions circulated, and demands made of legislatures for measures of relief. Debts had been contracted in depreciated currency and the wealthy classes were demanding payment in gold. Naturally, the poor debtors demanded paper currency and just as naturally their exploiters opposed it. The more paper that was issued the more demoralized the currency became. Historians have gone into hysterics in denouncing this demand of debtors for cheap money, but the fact, which we have referred to before, that Washington and other land speculators bought up millions of this cheap paper and palmed it off on the government for great tracts of land, is generally passed over in silence or commended as an example of "farsighted thrift."  

In some states men were on the march to the seats of county or state governments, many of them armed and determined that the glorious promises should be in some measure fulfilled. Lawyers were hated and despised for their part in confiscating wealth in payment of debts. They were overwhelmed with cases and the courts could not try half of them. The debtors exercised considerable influence in a number of states and in Rhode Island half a million dollars in script were issued which began to depreciate. Prices rose rapidly. The city merchants were raising prices and poor farmers saw in this an effort to defeat paper money. A law was rushed through the legislature commanding everyone to accept paper as an equivalent of gold. Violations of the act were subject to a fine of $500 and loss of the right of suffrage. The city mer-

9 The following may be cited as an example: Prominent officers of the army organized the Ohio Company, a land speculating company, in 1786. "The money script of the confederation was bought up and used for the purchase of land in the new public domain. Subscriptions and systematic corporate action began to make the settlement an enterprise of forethought and associated effort, like the settlement of the first colonies themselves." Wilson, "History of the American People," Vol. III. p. 53. "Enterprise and forethought!" What tender discrimination in favor of the financial "jockeys" and speculators that Noah Webster declaimed against?  

chants closed their shops and the farmers decided not to send any produce to the cities. They tried to sell in Boston and New York, but met opposition in these cities. Their apples rotted and they burned corn for fuel. The farmers were threatened with force and town meetings were held in all parts of the state to consider the grave situation. Farmers became bankrupt, merchants left the state, and the only thing certain was universal uncertainty.

The drum sounded in New Hampshire and several hundred men armed with muskets, swords and staves entered Exeter where the general court was sitting. They demanded a release from taxes and an issue of paper money. The lower house wavered, but the senate standing firm, the rebels were routed the next day.

In Vermont demands were made that attorneys be expelled from the courts, that debts be cancelled and threats made that if relief measures were not passed force would be employed. Several hundred men were in the saddle and the courthouse at Rutland was surrounded with armed men led by Thomas Lee. He had fought with distinction in the Revolution, had risen to the rank of colonel, and on his arrival home had been thrown into prison for debt. Demands were made of the judges and after a few clashes with troops the rebels were dispersed.\textsuperscript{11}

But the most alarming rebellion took place in Massachusetts, a revolt that took six months to suppress and one that sobered the ruling classes in their scramble for wealth. The farmers were in dire distress for their corn rotted on the ground. Money was scarce and they were reduced to the expedient of barter. Thousands signed pledges to resist any court that attempted to take their property and to resist the public sale of goods that had been taken to pay debts. Courts were invaded by large bodies of armed men and forced to suspend. Daniel Shays, an officer in the Continental army, who had fought at Bunker Hill, was chosen leader and the revolt grew to

\textsuperscript{11} For an exhaustive account of these disturbances and "Shay's Rebellion," which follows, see McMaster, Vol. 1, Chap III, and Flske, "Critical Period of American History," Chap. V.
large proportions. The legislature was not in session; there were no funds to pay troops to put down the revolt, but "a number of wealthy gentlemen" advanced sufficient funds for the purpose." 12

The rebellion became so powerful and menacing that it attracted the attention of congress. That body gave a neat exhibition of "back stairs politics" that has become memorable in the secret history of the United States. Congress feared that the insurgents would capture the national arsenal at Springfield where there were at least 450 tons of military stores, including bayonets, cannon, powder, shot and shell. The arsenal was in the midst of the discontented population and Secretary of War Knox was directed by congress to go to Springfield and take such measures as he might deem necessary to protect it. Before he arrived the rebels had already confronted Major General Shepard's troops, "many of them men of much substance both in wealth and character." 13 Shays appeared at the time for assembling the court and a conference resulted in an agreement that both sides should disband. Knox was left in the dilemma of protecting the arsenal which was a difficult task, for the mere knowledge that the state was collecting troops would provoke an immediate attack from the rebels. On the other hand, Governor Bowdoin could not ask for federal forces and congress could not recruit them openly without warning the rebels. The insurgents, though not active, were masters of the situation.

Knox reported the situation to congress and the matter was referred to a committee. The committee recommended an increase in the army of 1,340 non-commissioned officers and privates. This would make the total force 2,040. The report, and resolutions accompanying it, was adopted. One would expect that the resolutions would refer to the troubles in Massachusetts, but instead of this they were filled with startling reports of alleged prepara-

The workers in American History.

...tions for war being made by several Indian nations. This report was intended for popular consumption and a shield to cover the real intentions of Congress.

The following day a secret report was presented by the same committee and adopted by Congress. This one dealt frankly with Shays' rebellion, mentioned the perilous position of the arsenal, stated that "particular circumstances" prevented the governor and council from asking for aid in a formal manner, that troops must be raised, but that the insurrection must not be mentioned as a reason for raising them and that the Indians would serve as a pretext.

Congress unanimously adopted a proposal of the treasury department that a requisition of $530,000 in specie be laid in due quotas on the states. "On the credit of this requisition a loan of $500,000, bearing interest at six per cent, might at once be opened." To stimulate subscriptions to the loan congress "warned the wealthy men of New England to contribute generously, unless they wished to see the new recruits mutiny for lack of pay and go over to the insurgents." General Lincoln personally solicited subscriptions from the wealthy men of Boston and other towns, "telling the contributors that it was simply a question of advancing a part of their property in order to save the rest!"

On October 22d, Knox notified Governor Bowdoin of the quota of troops required of Massachusetts and the governor, in transmitting the information to the general court, enlarged on the dangers of an Indian war. But the followers of Shays throughout the state suspected the troops were meant for them and not the Indians. As Gerry wrote to King: "Some of the country members laugh and say the Indian war is only a political one to obtain a standing army." However, the troops were secured by the money advanced by rich men, some of whom enlisted to crush the rebellion. Attacks and counter attacks were made extending over six months before the revolt was crushed. The
rebels had no funds or provisions and in the final rout some were frozen to death and others died of hunger and exposure. A price was placed on Shays' head and a large number arrested, of whom 300 were pardoned, 14 sentenced to death, eight of these being pardoned and the remainder reprieved conditionally. As a fitting climax to this historic drama the city of Boston, a few years ago, erected a memorial tablet in memory of Daniel Shays!

Just as in Bacon's Rebellion more than 100 years before, the followers of Shays were charged by the wealthy classes with being communists prompted with the desire to overthrow all authority and property. This recalls a brilliant passage in the "Communist Manifesto" of Marx and Engels. "Where is the party in opposition?" they ask, "that has not been decried as communist by its opponents in power? Where the opposition that has not hurled back the branding reproach of Communism, against the more advanced opposition parties, as well as against its reactionary adversaries?"

These rebellions taught the ruling classes that their supremacy was not secure and that a strong unified government was necessary to prevent the capture of the state governments by those of the debtor class who were still able to qualify for the suffrage. The Continental Congress was nearly dead and there appeared no legal method to secure the changes the ruling classes wanted. But just as the rulers in settlement times did not hesitate at fraud, force and confiscation to secure the natural resources, so the "Fathers" did not hesitate to employ the same means to attain their ends. Besides, they were confident that Shays had "intended, if possible, to seize the capital, take possession of the archives, and proclaim a provisional government." Nor was this the only danger that filled the wealthy "patriots" with dread, "For the progress of the insurrection in the autumn in Vermont, New Hampshire

14 For an account of the secret action of Congress see an article by Joseph Parker Warren in the "American Historical Review," Vol. XI. His article is based on the "Secret Journals of Congress" now being published by the United States government. Fiske also makes an incidental reference to this secret juggling.

and Massachusetts, as well as the troubles in Rhode Island," aroused the fear "that the insurgents in these states might join forces, and in some way kindle a flame that would run through the land." Sam Adams, who had led tar and feather parties in Boston, expressed the vengeance felt by the wealthy when, as president of the Massachusetts senate, he said: "The man who dares to rebel against the laws of a republic (!) ought to suffer death." In other words, it was glorious to oppose a foreign ruling class, but a crime to rebel against the domestic type.

All the leading authorities agree that these rebellions and particularly the one in Massachusetts had a great influence in driving the "Fathers" to the Constitutional convention which assembled in Philadelphia in 1787. This gathering had no more power to give a new constitution to the United States than an old maid's sewing circle had. For a long time there had been some dispute between Maryland and Virginia as to the regulation of trade on the Potomac river. In 1785 Washington "became president of a company for extending the navigation of the Potomac and James rivers." and commissioners of the two states who met in March at Alexandria, adjourned to Mount Vernon, Washington's home, at his request. Washington was not a delegate, but his corporation had pressed the navigation questions on the attention of the two states and he was admitted to the conference. Out of this meeting held in response to the corporation's activity, came a series of meetings to consider the commercial interests of the states.

James Madison then "steered" a resolution through the Virginia house which, when reported by the Committee on Commerce, urged all states to send commissioners to a convention in Philadelphia "to provide effectually for the commercial interests of the United States." The convention was endorsed by congress which, in a resolution adopted February 21, 1787, limited the convention's busi-

17 Ibid., p. 184.
ness to "the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation." It is well to remember these instructions and note how the men who accepted them observed them when they took up their work. Article 13 of the Articles provided that no alteration could be made unless "afterwards confirmed by the legislatures of every state." We shall note how the "Fathers" observed this provision also.

On assembling in Philadelphia in May the delegates closed the doors of the convention to the outside world, made it a secret body, and threw their instructions in the waste basket. "It was plain from the first days of the convention that a goodly number of the delegates—and among them many of the most distinguished men—would not limit themselves to a literal interpretation of their powers."20 Fiske regards this violation of instructions as a "fortunate circumstance,"21 as indeed it was, for only by such treachery could the delegates frame the scheme of government which they had in mind. They were there to establish a government that would suppress poor debtors' revolts and enthrone property more securely. Washington had already expressed his panic in a letter to Secretary of War Knox. "There are combustibles," he wrote, "in every state to which a spark might set fire."22 Violation of instructions was, therefore, preferable to the possibility of debtors' control of the states.

There were fifty-five delegates present, all of them distinguished for wealth or family. The convention was pledged to secrecy and the rules provided that no member should consult with the outside world or take any record from the official minutes without unanimous consent. For four months the delegates met and discussed, but the people, eagerly waiting to hear what was transpiring, could get no word of what was said or done. In fact, "just what was said and done in this secret conclave was not revealed until fifty years had passed, and the aged James Madison,

22 Von Holst, p. 46.
the last survivor who sat there, had been gathered to his fathers.”

The reason why the proceedings were not made public till a half century later is apparent. If the debt-ridden masses knew what the speakers had said behind closed doors it is more than probable that drums would have again called them forth to unseat the usurping aristocrats. So fearful were some that the official minutes might become public that the suggestion was made to destroy them! But this act of vandalism was averted by placing the proceedings in the hands of Washington, who presided over the convention, “subject to the order of congress, if ever formed under the constitution.”

Madison’s “Journal of the Constitutional Convention” is our chief source of information regarding the proceedings, and as he was aggressive in every move to eliminate the masses from any share in controlling the government, we may be sure that he endeavored to place himself and colleagues in as favorable light as possible. He informs his readers that he took notes because of the value he knew they would be to future generations. His “Journal” is filled with speeches expressing contempt for the aspirations of the masses and he reports himself uttering like sentiments.

The first thing that strikes us in his record is the fact that Randolph presented a plan of government that completely abolished the old Confederation and was in plain violation of instructions which limited the delegates to a revision of the Articles only. Attention was repeatedly called to this violation by Patterson of New Jersey, and others. The usual answer to this was to point to Shays’ Rebellion and the terror of working class rule. Those having some qualms of conscience were silenced by this dread and the secret conspiratory work went on.

The convention was far from being harmonious, as each interest fought hard for its “rights.” But one com-

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mon purpose was expressed by the overwhelming majority of the speakers. This was that the masses should be excluded as much as possible from any control of the government. Some of them spoke as though the workers did not exist at all. Madison, in reviewing the classes to be provided for, could only find the following: "The three principle classes into which our citizens are divisable were the landed, the commercial, and the manufacturing." Workingmen are not worth mentioning except as vandals for later he says: "In future time, a great majority of the people will not only be without landed but any other sort of property. These will combine, under the influence of their common situation—in which case the rights of property and the public liberty will not be secure in their hands."

Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, agrees with Madison that the workers are not worth considering, but enumerates the three worthy classes as the professional, the landed, and the commercial. Madison also warns his fellow aristocrats that "There will be, particularly, the distinction between rich and poor. . . . An increase in population will of necessity increase the proportion of those who will labor under all the hardships of life, and secretly sigh for a more equal distribution of its blessings." Therefore, we must have a government that will thwart these aspirations of the poor.

Dickenson, of Delaware, also considers property owners "as the best guardians of liberty; and the restriction of the right (of suffrage) to them as a necessary defense against the dangerous influence of those multitudes without property and without principle (!), with which our country, like all others, will in time abound." Pinckney advises that the qualification for president should be not less than $100,000, "half of that sum for the judges and in like proportion for congressmen." Gouverneur Mor-

ris, a descendant of Jacob Leisler, the New York rebel of the century, before, is opposed to paying senators. "They will pay themselves, if they can." (What a prophetic vision he had!) "If they cannot, they will be rich, and can do without it." (Aldrich and Guggenheim stand up!) "Of such the second branch ought to consist."31 (And it does, so rest in peace!)

Oliver Ellsworth, of Massachusetts, is a prophet also. He makes the following prediction regarding wage labor and chattel labor: "Let us not intermeddle. As population increases, poor laborers will be so plenty as to render slaves useless. Slavery, in time, will not be a speck in our country."32 What would this convention be without a representative of New England "democracy"? Alexander Hamilton, the god of the Republican Party and the source of all its wisdom, declaims "against the vices (mark you!) of democracy. . . . Let one branch of the legislature hold their places for life, or at least, during good behavior. Let the executive, also, be for life."33

But it would be tedious to dwell on the frank utterances of these men who spoke their sentiments in secret conclave well knowing their victims could not hear. During the four months' session only one man mentioned the workers as being worthy of having the franchise. The man who has this distinction is Benjamin Franklin, and his plea was listened to in silence and passed without comment. His extreme age and feebleness made it impossible for him to speak often and he frequently wrote his speeches and had one of his colleagues, Wilson, read them to the delegates. On August 7th he had listened for hours as speaker after speaker urged control of the government by property holders. He arose from his seat and without any preparation spoke in part as follows:

"It is of great consequence that we should not depress the virtue and public spirit of our common people; of which they displayed a great deal during the war, and which con-

tributed principally to the favorable issue of it. . . . He was persuaded, also, that such a restriction as was proposed would give great uneasiness in the populous states. The sons of a substantial farmer, not being themselves freeholders, would not be pleased at being disfranchised, and there are a great many persons of that description." Three days later he again listened to speeches urging control by property and again made his plea for the workers without property. Franklin's two speeches are the only pleas made in behalf of popular suffrage in the convention. Not one delegate endorsed his views.

It would seem that shame, even in the absence of a belief in the principle, would have prompted these "Fathers" to give some heed to the claims of the poor who, as Franklin said, "contributed principally to the favorable issue" of the war. But they were lost to all sense of shame or even gratitude. Even Wilson, a delegate from Franklin's state who held many popular views, was not willing to assist in battering down the property qualifications that existed in all the states, though eleven years had passed since it was declared that "all men are free and equal." There were many times when the discussions became heated; many times when the delegates seemed hopelessly divided; but on this one question of allowing the workers to remain excluded from the suffrage, they were unanimous.

The general plan of the delegates consisted of a repudiation of instructions, overthrow of the Articles of Confederation, and establishment of a stronger government by the aristocracy. This required the secrecy which they provided for. Their scheme of government was to have one legislative department elected direct by the qualified voters, to "inspire confidence" in the scheme, as one speaker expressed it, and a senate, executive and supreme court removed from popular control and having power to check the congress. To buttress this by making it almost impossible to amend the constitution, was their aim. Prof. J. Allen Smith asserts that "In 1900 one forty-fourth of the

population distributed so as to constitute a majority in the twelve smallest states could defeat any proposed amendment.”

It is interesting to note that the courts now exercising the power to set aside laws enacted by congress were denied this power even by these aristocrats. Madison and Wilson urged a clause giving this power to the supreme court and president as a council of revision and the suggestion was voted down four times. Yet the courts today exercise this power expressly withheld from them by this negative vote.

The constitution as finally agreed on was not a unanimous choice. A number refused to sign it for various reasons. Some signed reluctantly; others refused, holding that certain interests were not protected enough or that others received undue consideration. Section 3 of Article 4 contained a fugitive slave clause applying to white slaves as well as negroes. This clause is still seen in printed copies and reads as follows:

“No person held to service or labor in one state, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.”

This clause shows that the "Fathers" were willing to invade state rights in the function of slave catcher, but not to invade them in the matter of suffrage for the working people. This legalized hunt of whites and blacks, extending over several centuries and embodied in various legal codes, had been so ingrained in the philosophy of the aristocrats who gave us the constitution that they could not refrain from bequeathing it to the nineteenth century. Of course, their material interests were the urge behind them.

That our view of these men and the character of the government they organized is correct has been shown by the testimony of the framers themselves. No less an authority than Woodrow Wilson, the conservative presi-
dent of Princeton University, endorses this claim. "The
government had," he writes, "been originated and organ-
ized upon the initiative and primarily in the interest of the
mercantile and wealthy classes. Originally conceived as an
effort to accommodate commercial disputes between the
states, it had been urged to adoption by a minority, under
the concerted leadership of able men representing a ruling
class." This is quite in contrast with the assertion of
that great bluffer, Gladstone, who said "The American
Constitution is the most wonderful work ever struck off
at a given time by the brain and purpose of man." We can
only consider it wonderful in the sense that it is the most
remarkable instance in history of a document having all
the essentials of a charter of aristocracy, being viewed by
a gaping multitude as a guarantee of popular rule. But
the reception accorded this "wonderful document" by large
numbers of people was far from reassuring to the con-
spirators. Bitter criticism came from the dependent classes
though it found much favor with the wealthy. Hamilton,
Adison and others feared that their four months of
treachery would go for nothing. This in spite of the fact
that the Constitution was not to be submitted to the quali-
fied voters, but to state conventions which the aristocracy
would have good chances of controlling.

The constitution as submitted was a series of com-
promises and "bargains" agreed on between the different
sections of the wealthy classes. "The fear in which the lit-
tle states stood of the great secured the compromise giv-
ing representation to states. The hatred felt by the slave
states for the free caused the second compromise, giving
representation to slaves. The jealousy between states agri-
cultural and states commercial brought about the third
compromise on the slave trade and commerce." 37

The convention had violated its instructions; it "had
drafted nothing less than a new constitution—no mere
amendment or series of amendments to the Articles of

37 McMaster, "With The Fathers," p. 121. See also Fiske, "Criti-
Confederation; a radically new scheme of government and of union—which must stand or fall upon its own merits." Events which followed the submission of the constitution to the state conventions showed that its partisans had no intention whatever of allowing it to "stand or fall upon its own merits." On the contrary, knowing that its "merits" appealed only to the wealthy classes, trickery, bribery, force and deception were employed to secure its adoption and even then it was not carried by a majority vote. The wealthy classes had an advantage in the restricted franchise, but they added two more weapons to their armory. These were gerrymandering the districts against the poorer classes who could vote, and the publication of "The Federalist," employing in this all the arts of sophistry and deception to win converts for the constitution. In an illuminating chapter, entitled "The Political Depravity of the Fathers," Professor McMaster writes of the methods used to convince voters of the "merits" of public questions at that time. "A very little study of long forgotten politics," he says, "will suffice to show that in filibustering and gerrymandering, in stealing governorships and legislatures, in using force at the polls, in colonizing and in distributing patronage, ... in all the frauds and tricks that go to make up the worst form of politics, the men who founded our state and national governments were always our equals, and often our masters." The "worst form of politics" became a valuable asset in demonstrating the "merits" of the constitution. One or two examples will suffice. The Boston Gazette came out with one issue headed in large capitals charging "BRI-BERY AND CORRUPTION!!" It charged that large sums of money were brought from another state, contributed by the wealthy to buy support for the constitution. Fiske concedes that "there was probably a grain of truth in it." In Pennsylvania the opposition to the "New Roof," as the constitution was called, was very strong. The con-

vention met to consider it in November, 1787, and two young men, one a reporter for the Pennsylvania Herald, volunteered to take down the proceedings. The reporter’s account of the debate began to appear in the Herald while the other young man solicited subscriptions for a volume of the debates he intended to publish. The debate was apparently going very hard with the Federalists, who supported the constitution, and the Herald’s reports were reprinted in other states to the dismay of the conspirators. The Federalists then bought the paper and suppressed the reports. The other young man was bought and when his book appeared it contained but two speeches delivered by warm supporters of the constitution.41

“The Federalist,” on the other hand, appeared from time to time with well written essays by Madison, Hamilton and Jay which appeared in the New York Packet and other papers. In these essays the schemers changed front. In the secret convention they avow their contempt and fear of the masses and of popular rule. In “The Federalist” they appear as champions and defenders of both and offer the constitution as the best guarantee of popular liberty. It is amusing to note, in this connection, that these essays are drummed into the heads of guileless youths in American universities by the intellectual policemen who guard the “higher learning” of today.

There were 84 of these essays: 51 written by Hamilton, 29 by Madison and 5 by Jay. It was a scholarly publication and the authors presented the constitution in the most favorable light. They well knew that the official journals of the convention containing a record of their real sentiments were beyond the scrutiny of the eager multitudes. In the convention, as we have seen, they were born aristocrats speaking boldly in behalf of the wealthy; in the Federalist they are advocates of democracy. No one could confront the articles in the Federalist with the speeches delivered behind closed doors. Yet McMaster suspends all candid judgment when he says “That the work (of the Federalist) is a true statement of what the fram-
ers of that instrument meant it to be cannot be doubted."

A few extracts from this publication contrasted with the speeches delivered in the "Dark Conclave," as the constitutional convention came to be known, will satisfy any candid reader as to whether these men were honest in their appeals or were only political demagogues. Madison, who in the secret convention said that "the rights of property and the public liberty will not be secure in their (the workers') hands," now writes in the Federalist as follows:

"The first question that offers itself is, whether the general form and aspect of the government be strictly republican. It is evident that no other form would be reconcilable with the genius of the people of America; with the principles of the Revolution; or with the honorable (!) determination which animates every votary of freedom (!!) to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government." The answer to his own enquiry is that the constitution is everything that the "votaries of freedom" could wish or expect, and he elaborates on this assertion in 51 essays, drawing on the experience and history of ancient and modern republics, to convince his readers. The question is, was Madison lying in the Federalist or in the secret convention at Philadelphia?

Hamilton, who in the convention urged that the senate and president be elected for life and who repeatedly avowed his contempt for the "vices of democracy," now sends forth this appeal: "The fabric of American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of the consent of the people. The streams of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure original fountain of all legitimate authority!" Was Hamilton a convert to "vices" he hated or was he still the adroit adventurer and frank monarchist of the "Dark Conclave"?

Later on he becomes virtuously indignant at the charges made that the convention was a conspiracy and that he and others were not presenting their honest views.

43 The Federalist, No. 38.
44 The Federalist, No. 44.
In the closing number of the *Federalist* he writes: "The charge of a conspiracy against the liberties of the people, which has been indiscriminately brought against the advocates of the plan, has something in it too wanton and too malignant not to excite the indignation of every man who feels in his own bosom a refutation (!) of the calumny. . . . And the unwarrantable concealments (!!) and misrepresentations (!!!) which have been in various ways practiced to keep the truth (!!!!) from the public eye have been of a nature to demand the reprobation of all honest men."45

To this sophistry we may reply in the cutting words of Professor Smith: "The evidence now accessible to students of the American Constitution proves that the charges of 'concealments and misrepresentations' made with this show of righteous indignation against the opponents of the constitution might have justly been made against Hamilton himself. But knowing that the views expressed in the Federal Convention were not public property, he could safely give to the press this 'refutation of the calumny.'"46

However, the scholarly attainments of the treacherous pleaders and the ingenious arguments which they employed in defense of the constitution; the advantage which they possessed in the fact that the mass of the workers had no vote; together with the employment of force and bribery, all these had their effect in carrying the day for the usurping minority. These, and these alone, constituted the "merits" of the constitution.

Opponents of the document had a powerful argument in pointing out the important fact that the "votaries of freedom" had omitted any provisions for the freedom of the press, freedom of speech and assemblage, the right of petition, and the right of trial by jury. This had such effect that the Federalists made it known that if the constitution was adopted the first congress would submit amendments including these popular guarantees. This became also a powerful bid for support. The Federalists

45 The Federalist, No. 85.
were finally able to carry the constitution by small majorities in the state conventions. But even this was only a partial victory, for only six states adopted it without any qualifications, while the remaining seven in adopting it recommended amendments ranging from four by South Carolina to thirty-two by New York.

It was adopted by a minority vote. Many farmers' sons, wandering teachers and lawyers beginning practice, were fortunate if they could vote at the age of twenty-eight. "Of the mass of unskilled laborers—the men who dug ditches, carried loads, or in harvest time helped the farmer gather in his hay and grain—it is safe to say that very few, if any, ever in the course of their lives cast a vote." 47 In fact, "There were probably not more than 120,000 men who had the right to vote out of all the four million inhabitants enumerated in the first census (1790)." 48

The vote cast in the states shows the division between the wealthy class and those of moderate means; the former favoring, the latter opposing, the constitution. "All who possessed estates, who were engaged in traffic, or held any of the final settlements and depreciation certificates, felt safe." 49 On the other hand, the constitution "was opposed by the men who lived remote from the centers of population and the stronger currents of trade, . . . by men who were more likely to be debtors than to be creditors." 50

The Constitutional Convention was a conspiracy and the constitution was a new charter making more secure the position of the ruling class of that day. Both were a counter-revolution against poor debtors driven mad by the treatment they received after fighting the battles of the property-owning classes in the war. The constitution gave the ruling classes possession of a strong government and efficient police and military power to enact their interests into laws to be obeyed by all. It remains for us to also

50 Wilson, "History of the American People," Vol. III, pp. 79-80. See also his map showing clearly the distribution of the vote along these lines.
observe that at no time in our history has the Constitution of the United States been ratified by a majority vote of the people. It was, it is, and it will remain, until changed, the machinery by which an idle owning class makes all classes below it serve it as dependents.
The Aftermath

We have traced the development of class rule in America over three centuries and it remains for us to briefly consider the development which followed the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. The new government placed the privileged classes firmly in the saddle and the new century brought with it the first great awakening of labor. Attempts to organize and improve the conditions under which the workers had labored for centuries provoked retaliation from the master employers. The first struggle of the working class was to win the right to struggle—the right to organize unmolested and acquire by their own efforts some measure of freedom which the Revolution denied them.

The first section of the labor army to feel the blows of the capitalist "votaries of freedom" was the sailors in New York, in 1802. At this period the hours of labor were generally from sunrise to sunset. At Albany the wages were forty cents per day and in Pennsylvania six dollars per month in summer and five in winter. The average wages were about $65 per year, including board. Out of this sum the workers were expected to feed and clothe their families. The sailors at New York who were receiving $10 per month struck for fourteen. They marched through the city persuading others to join them when the constables were sent in pursuit, broke the strike, and jailed the leader.\(^1\) So ended the first strike in America.

The next struggle was at Philadelphia, in 1806, where the Cordwainers were indicted for conspiracy for attempting to raise their wages. It was the first of many trials of this kind extending over a period of forty years, and it is

interesting to note that the prosecutions were usually based on the common law of England which included the bloody legislation against the disinherited mentioned in our first chapter.

The Cordwainers were boot and shoemakers and the evidence brought out in the trial showed they had organized to protect themselves against the master employers who had organized to advance their common interests. Organizations of the masters, however, were never indicted for conspiracy. In this first conspiracy case the jury was composed almost entirely of small business men and shopkeepers as follows: three grocers, two innkeepers, a merchant, a tobacconist, a tavern-keeper, a hatter, a bottler, a watchmaker and a "taylor." A shoemaker was drawn as one of the jurors and rejected because of his occupation. The strikers were charged with unlawfully assembling to "unjustly and corruptly conspire, combine, confederate and agree together that none of them, the said conspirators, . . . would work for any master . . . who would employ any artificer, workman or journeyman . . . who should thereafter infringe or break" the unlawful rules and orders of the boot and shoemakers.

The most important testimony presented by the prosecution was that given by a member who secretly scabbed on the union while serving on the strike committee. During the progress of his testimony a disturbance is heard in the court room. A striker is brought forward and fined ten dollars for contempt of court. He had said, "A scab is shelter for lice." The offender pays the fine and "justice" is appeased.

A master employer is called to the witness stand. "Have the masters a society?" he is asked. Not at all. "... they may sometimes meet together, but they keep no accounts of their proceedings, they may meet as people meet before an election, to consult on the affairs of the moment, but nothing regular." Is there anything more innocent than this? Nothing more harmless. Their counsel argue that the masters are prompted by patriotic motives and regard for the public weal in prosecuting this unlawful
THE WORKERS IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

Conspiracy. The "public" sits in the jury box as "impartial" judges of the evidence.

Counsel for the defense riddles the patriotic claims of the prosecution. "We are told that this prosecution is brought forward from public motives," but "when you see a formidable band of masters attending on the trial of this cause; . . . and when you see further, that it is not taken up by any of their customers, it will require strong arguments to convince you it is done out of pure patriotic motives." He goes to the heart of the matter. "It is nothing more or less than this," he exclaims, "whether the wealthy master shoemakers . . . shall charge you and me what price they please for our boots and shoes, and at the same time have the privilege of fixing the wages of the poor journeymen they happen to employ." This sounds like a counter-charge of conspiracy, but its logic does not appeal to the "public." It is decidedly "unreasonable" and the real conspirators are the men who toil. The verdict reads: "We find the defendants guilty of a combination to raise their wages." They are fined eight dollars each with costs of the suit and are committed till paid. The convicted men opened a boot and shoe warehouse appealing to "public liberality to save themselves and families from abject poverty.""

In short, the Revolution had simply bequeathed to the workers, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the barbarous conspiracy code of England enacted a century or two before! And these prosecutions for conspiracy continued in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, and other states, and not till the first half of the century had passed into history did the workers establish the labor union as a legal institution of their class. What a commentary on the pretensions and glittering promises of the leading men of the Revolution!

While this repressive work was going on the federal

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and state governments were carefully nursing manufactures with tariffs, bounties, subsidies, land grants and other forms of legislation. The experiment of Samuel Slater in Rhode Island with machinery and child labor was soon followed in other states. Land jobbers and speculators were also pushing westward, buying acres by the millions or purchasing "whole townships as fast as the surveyors could locate, buying on trust and selling for wheat, for lumber, for whatever the land could yield or the settler give." The period between 1815 and 1830 witnessed a general employment of women and children in the factories and Hamilton's wish to exploit them was realized.

By 1831 some of the factories became torture chambers similar to those that gave British capitalists their blood-stained fortunes some decades before. "Women and children in the factories, . . ." says one writer, "were frequently beaten with cowhides and otherwise maltreated. An instance was shown of a deaf and dumb boy receiving a hundred lashes from his neck to his feet; and another of the breaking of the leg of an eleven-year-old girl by a club thrown at her by an employer."

Massachusetts "democracy," with its old trade mark, also appears with the rise of the factory system. Corporation boarding houses and corporation churches became adjuncts to the factories and employes could only get work by signing contracts that rigidly bound them to the sweaters of labor. The Lowell Manufacturing company's rules, 1830-1840, provided that all employes must board at the company house and observe its minute regulations; all must go to church and must work twelve months unless two weeks' notice of intention to quit is given. Other detail regulations are considered part of the contract.

During the same period the Cocheco Manufacturing company, at Dover, New Hampshire, has contracts with its "hands" by which the latter agree not to join any labor organization and if they do they forfeit the wages due

them; they agree to accept such wages "as the company may see fit to pay"; they are subject to fines; two cents per week are deducted for a sick fund; they agree not to leave the employ of the company without giving two weeks' notice, and if they do they forfeit two weeks' pay, and if discharged they are not entitled to their wages until two weeks after discharge. The employes of these factories were nearly all girls. Corporation paternalism became rampant. The girls not only slept in company houses, but patronized company stores. Some corporations maintained churches, paid the preacher's salary, collected pew rents from the operatives, and held out fixed sums from their wages for the welfare of their souls! Six and eight girls frequently occupied the same bed chamber and the hours of labor varied from twelve in summer to fourteen in winter.

Meantime the working class was organizing in spite of prosecutions for conspiracy. "The long hours of labor, the liability of imprisonment for debt, . . . the need of a lien law, the impossibility of educating their children in a land where education counted for so much, were to them grievances of a serious kind." They decided, many of them, to organize politically. The Workingman's Party of New York City was organized in 1829. The press that yawped and chanted the praises of the dominant class now served it like faithful lackeys. The new party became the "Infidel Ticket"; the "rights of property, religion and order" were in danger; the "mob" threatened the foundations of society. In short, it was a rehash of the panic-stricken cry of the plunderers during Bacon's Rebellion, in 1676, Shays' Rebellion following the Revolution, and the same is heard today, with some variations, hurled against the modern Socialist movement. The plunderer is always the first to hide behind religion, morality and property when his victims rise to redress past and present wrongs.

Some forty of fifty labor papers came into existence.

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6 Abbott, "Women in Industry," Appendices II and III.
7 Ibid. Chap. VII.
demanding economic, social and political changes in the established regime. These papers were on the whole more advanced and aggressive than the pitiful, conservative, apologizing, labor press of today. In some cities the independent political action of the workers showed surprising strength. In Albany, New York, in 1830, the workers carried four wards out of five and in Troy won another victory. In Philadelphia and other cities they also exercised considerable influence. Their official declarations contain demands that include every popular right and privilege won in the nineteenth century. The independent movement finally died because its active men were not sufficiently clear regarding the problems that faced them and were the prey of professional politicians, their promises and alliances. Yet the workers did great work while their descendants of today in the labor unions are allowing the courts to strip them of the weapons their fathers won. Courts now plunder union treasuries and the private purses of members; they have outlawed the boycott and legalized the blacklist; prohibited aid by sympathetic unions; jailed men for free speech, and in general, declared only such unions legal that contain spineless, unresisting men, who ask nothing, resent nothing and get nothing.

In the early forties a distinguished Englishman came to our shores and came in contact with the "Great Republic of the Western World." When he returned home he wrote of what he saw and instantly the journalistic police squirted their venom on the great man's head. The great heart of Dickens revolted when he contemplated "the miserable aristocracy spawned of a false republic" and the public opinion that "knotted the lash, heated the branding iron, loaded the rifle, and shielded the murderer" of the slave. The vulgar brawlers in congress, agents of planter or capitalist, filled him with disgust. Congress had "sat calmly by, and heard a man, one of themselves, with oaths which beggars in their drink reject, threaten to cut another's throat from ear to ear." And what of the Inalienable Rights of Man? Why, "there are many kinds of hunters engaged in the Pursuit of Happiness, and they go variously
armed. It is the Inalienable Right of some among them to take the field after their happiness equipped with cap and cartwhip, stocks and iron collar, and to shout their view halloa! (always in praise of Liberty) to the music of clanking chains and bloody stripes."

And what of the press of that day? It is a "monster of depravity; when any private excellence is safe from its attacks; when . . . any tie of social decency and honor is held in the least regard; when any man in that Free Country has freedom of opinion, and presumes to speak for himself, . . . without humble reference to a censorship which, for its rampant ignorance and base dishonesty he utterly loathes and despises in his heart; when those who most acutely feel its infamy, . . . dare to set their heels upon, and crush it openly, in the sight of all men; then I will believe . . . men are returning to their manly senses. But while that press has its evil eye in every house, and its black hand in every appointment in the state, . . . while, with ribald slander for its only stock in trade, it is the standard literature of an enormous class, . . . so long must the evil it works be plainly visible in the Republic."9

Dickens did not "understand the genius of American institutions" and to this day many exploiters find it impossible to forgive the great English author for the lashing he gave the ruling classes seventy years ago.

During the period we have been considering the division between capitalist North and planter South became more acute. Even in the First Congress the debates between the political servants of the planter and those of the capitalist showed the conflict between them. Both struggled to secure the executive, judicial and legislative powers as these, in turn, gave police and military power to enforce the rule of either the one or the other. Down to the Civil war the exploiters of blacks controlled nearly every president and congress, but the northern masters gathered strength with the development of machinery and

9 Dickens, "American Notes."
the factory system and the extension of both over a larger area.

The Civil war swept the slave system into oblivion and the northern capitalist had a free field to the Gulf for sweating wage labor. "While the war was waged for political purposes, ... it was in reality a great labor movement—not so intended, but so in result; for divested of all political significance, ... it was a war of economic forces, ... for the South had existed under a form of labor entirely antagonistic to that existing at the North. ..." The negro was merged with the white laborer into the one class of wage laborers both selling and having nothing to sell but their muscles, tissues and blood in order to live. The capitalist class has also come into possession of the greatest powers of wealth-production the world has ever known and these have been organized into powerful combines all more or less related to each other in interest and constituting one mighty ruling class of owners, controlling government and press, school and platform, and shaping all institutions to accord with their interests. Judges, legislators, presidents and governors represent, by class or family relationship or association, this all-powerful ruling class and do its will. Each state with its governing powers is the private domain of the controlling combines within its borders, while the naked and shameless debauchery of their political agents are revealed in every investigation of city and state.

The capitalist system of production has at the same time been developing the crisis that must sweep it out of existence like other historic forms of class rule. The ruling class is unable to prevent the breakdown of the colossal powers in its hands; the collapse comes every ten or fifteen years in the form of an industrial crisis, the last one always more terrible in the suffering and ruin it brings than the one preceding it. Millions are beggared for lack of opportunity to place bread and meat on their tables. Though millions suffer for lack of opportunity to operate

the machinery, the owners stand in the background possessing judge, policeman and soldier and with these command the laborers, "hands off!" Unable to manage industry itself the capitalist class will not permit the laborers to enter the factories and relieve their distress.

The opportunities of employment are not owned or managed with regard to human welfare. They are simply agencies for the enrichment of idle capitalists, most of whom never saw the factories they own. When the workers produce more than the owners can sell or the workers buy, the plants are closed and society becomes a stockade; the workers are penned within sight of the billions they produce; within reach of the machinery to produce billions more, and yet are barred from both.

Even during times of so-called "prosperity" capitalist society is, in the words of Professor Ely, "an imperfect social organism. It moves forward, creaking, and groaning and splashes the blood of its victims over us all. Our food, our clothing, our shelter, all our wealth, is covered with stains and clots of blood." The upstart parvenue rich, whose ancestors stole their original accumulations, draw the children of the workers within their factory hells and sweat gold from their tender, helpless little bodies. Their fathers and mothers also sell their labor power for a pittance. The waking hours of the worker are devoted to securing food for his family, and working under such conditions that often deprive him of the bodily vigor, leisure and comfort of the cave-man of the primitive world. Millions live in chronic pauperism and slowly rot and die because of lack of nourishment. Protests and strikes of laborers are met with clubs, jails and injunctions, or silenced with the soldier's bullet. All life, all progress, all institutions, are held and shaped to serve the wishes of a class that is no more necessary or useful to society today than the drivelng idiot who rules the unhappy people of Spain.

This is the civilization that four centuries of progress and achievement in America has given us, and just as our review of the past century has shown that the political
parties of that time never at any time mentioned the real issues that concerned the workers, so the dominant parties today have no message for them. The reason for this is apparent. These parties, past and present, are the parties of the ruling classes. Their appeals are based on "patriotism," "morality," "the flag," and other vapid claptrap. They are incapable of understanding that "Love and business and family and religion and art and patriotism are nothing but shadows of words when a man's starving."

They are bankrupt. They are worse. No one can say worse of them than many who have been with them, learned of their foul practices and witnessed their crimes. Every election they participate in is a disgrace to the human family. Every such occasion brings them into close alliance with the thug and the pimp, and the unfortunate, rotting degenerates clinging to the lowest layers of society. These come forth from their holes and cellars in every American city and are "rounded up" with funds provided by bankers, merchants, capitalists and other "pillars of society." Thuggery, "booze," and boodle are a necessary part of their work. S. S. McClure, of "McClure's Magazine," says that in American cities we have "government by criminals." Judge Ben B. Lindsey's story\(^\text{11}\) of the criminals ruling Denver and Colorado—composing both political parties, the business men, bankers, capitalists, and even some clergymen—of their destruction of boys and girls and other infamies that almost stagger belief, shows the degradation and debauchery of capitalist rule.

This is a natural legacy of the past. From the history of class rule in America nothing better could be expected. But the end is drawing near and the curtain is about to rise on a better and nobler stage of history. The development of the factory system and the concentration of industries draw large masses of workers into workshops working for the same masters, under the same rules and under the same common conditions of servitude. The machine enters the factory and under their very eyes absorbs their skill and throws hosts of them out of employ-

\(^{11}\) Lindsey and O'Higgins, "The Beast."
ment. Out of their common servitude comes a consciousness of unity and fellowship in the struggle for bread. This solidarity finds its first expression in the trades union where the workers unite to give battle to those who live on their sweat and blood. The workers are forced to unite or go down in defeat as a servile, cringing, degraded class. Pressure from above molds them into a closer unity and class consciousness is born of their contact with each other.

However, when they leave the factory on strike they find that the capitalist has summoned the judge to post an injunction on the factory gates; the mayor to provide him with clubs; the governor to provide him with bayonets and the president to give him Federal soldiers. All these officials obey his commands. The workers have united in the factory and divided at the polls, giving their ballots to one or the other of two parties controlled by the owners of the factory. The party in turn gives its owners the police and military powers necessary to beat the insurgent workers into submission. The class struggle, ever present in capitalist society, is revealed in all its brutality, and broken heads and weltering bodies attest its grim reality. Unity at the ballot box to secure possession of the legislative, judicial, police and military powers is also revealed and independent Socialist politics is born.

Socialism, having for its object the industrial and political unity of workingmen, will, when triumphant, restore the magnificent resources of America to the workers from whom they were stolen in the first place. It will transfer to the people all the mills, mines, factories, railways, and all the other powers of wealth-production and distribution to be publicly owned, operated and managed by all in the interest and for the common good of all. Capitalist ownership for capitalist enrichment will be replaced by common ownership in behalf of the useful wealth producers.

The machine and factory system are both the social achievements of all the workers of the past and present. Each generation has improved the wealth-productive powers of their time and passed them on to their children who performed a like service for the race. These powers in-
carnate the blood and tears and genius of all the workers that have gone before, and to allow a few idle capitalists and stock gamblers to possess them and juggle with the happiness of millions is a crime against the human race.

Class ownership must give way to the next Revolution, the revolution that will place the workers in possession of the governing and industrial powers of today. Co-operative labor in the factories must be supplemented with co-operative ownership and control. Capitalist society itself has developed the framework of the new Socialist society. We do not have to build, but transform. Co-operative social production is displacing individual hand methods in all fields of industry. The owners are simply gamblers on the toil of the workers. Owning sugar stock today they trade it for steel tomorrow; for railway stock the next day, and for other stock the next, and so on without end. They never know the plants the stocks represent, or the process of producing the given commodities within them. As gamblers or idle owners sailing the seas they perform no service of use to mankind. They must go the way of the baron of the crags and the Roman masters when they no longer serve society in a useful capacity.

The response the workers get for their demand is the response every ruling class in history has given to the demands of its victims. "You will overthrow morality. break up the family, destroy religion," and all the other institutions of today. Yet the capitalist class drags all these in the muck and mire and makes a wretched botch of everything it touches. The thinking worker laughs at these pretenses and adds to the number of those who prepare to topple over the vulgar parvenues and the servile parrots who sing their praises.

The modern Socialist can well stand erect knowing that the Socialist movement has gathered to itself the scholarship, learning, science and philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In no political gatherings outside of the Socialist movement are the writings of the great philosophers and scientists discussed and appreciated. This movement represents not only the next political, social and
industrial advance of mankind, but it also preserves the culture and learning of our time. What use have capitalist parties for the names or writings of Marx, Engels, Huxley, Darwin, Tolstoy, London, Buckle, Ibsen, and the host of others that have enriched the literature of the world? The Socialist movement will hand this rich legacy on to the people of the future while its enemies will only leave the memory of the evil they have done and merit the contempt of mankind.

The final fruition of the workers’ struggles in America is not hard to predict. Blunder as we may, go down in defeat as often as we will; betrayed by some, deserted by others, and our advance retarded by the timid and faltering, the hour will come when the working class with its new ideals—the greatest known in history—will stand on the summit of the modern world. They will clear the swamps and cesspools of society that remind us of the past and place the governing powers in the hands of all. Possession of these by all and for all will incarnate in all our institutions the fellowship that today is only found in its ripest form among the long-suffering, organized working class. They will transform every factory into a palace of art and every workshop into a studio where

"ALL WILL BE JOY-SMITHS AND THEIR TASK SHALL BE TO BEAT OUT LAUGHTER FROM THE RINGING ANVIL OF LIFE."