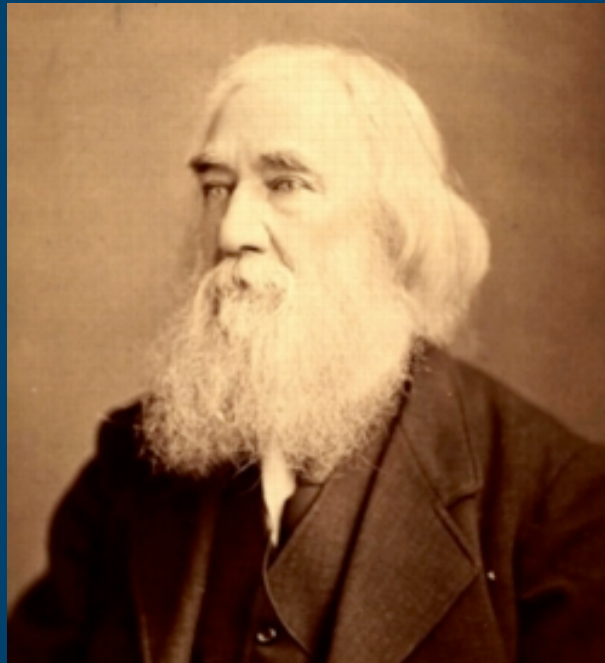


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SPOONER (1834-1886), IN 5 VOLS.  
VOL. 5 (1875-1886)



# LIBERTY

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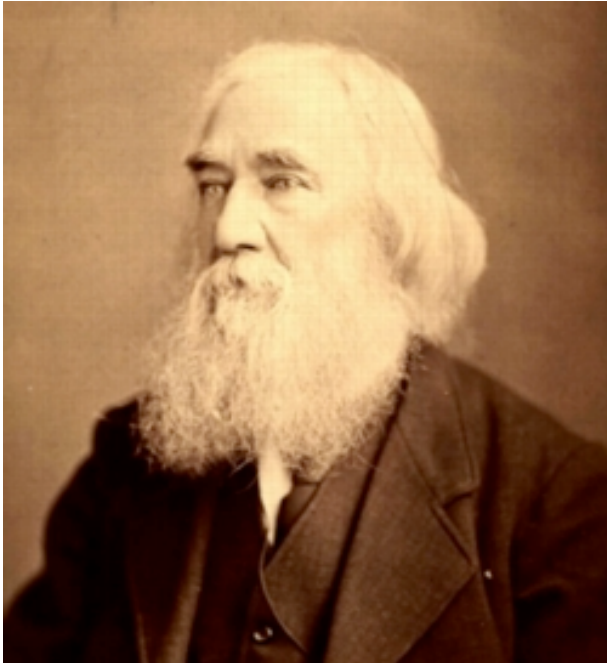
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lysander Spooner (1808-1887)

Lysander Spooner (1808-1887) was a legal theorist, abolitionist, and radical individualist who started his own mail company in order to challenge the monopoly held by the US government. He wrote on the constitutionality of slavery, natural law, trial by jury, intellectual property, paper currency, and banking.

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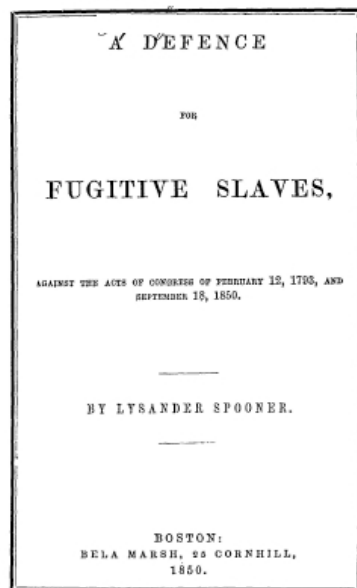
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No. 1.

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BY LISANDER SPOONER.

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26. A New Banking System: The Needful Capital for Rebuilding the Burnt District (Boston: A. Williams & Co., 1873).

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# A VINDICATION OF MORAL LIBERTY.

## VICES ARE NOT CRIMES.

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### I.

**V**ICES are those acts by which a man harms himself or his property.

*Crimes* are those acts by which one man harms the person or property of another.

*Vices* are simply the errors which a man makes in his search after his own happiness. Unlike crimes, they imply no malice toward others, and no interference with their persons or property.

In vices, the very essence of crime — that is, the design to injure the person or property of another — is wanting.

It is a maxim of the law that there can be no crime without a criminal intent; that is, without the intent to invade the person or property of another. But no one ever practises a vice with any such criminal intent. He practises his vice for his own happiness solely, and not from any malice toward others.

Unless this clear distinction between vices and crimes be made and recognized by the laws, there can be on earth no such thing as individual right, liberty, or property; no such things as the right of one man to the control of his own person and property, and the corresponding and co-equal rights of another man to the control of his own person and property.



For a government to declare a vice to be a crime, and to punish it as such, is an attempt to falsify the very nature of things. It is as absurd as it would be to declare truth to be falsehood, or falsehood truth.

## II.

**E**VERY voluntary act of a man's life is either virtuous or vicious. That is to say, it is either in accordance, or in conflict, with those natural laws of matter and mind, on which his physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being depend. In other words, every act of his life tends, on the whole, either to his happiness, or to his unhappiness. No single act in his whole existence is indifferent.

Furthermore, each human being differs in his physical, mental, and emotional constitution, and also in the circumstances by which he is surrounded, from every other human being. Many acts, therefore, that are virtuous, and tend to happiness, in the case of one person, are vicious, and tend to unhappiness, in the case of another person.

Many acts, also, that are virtuous, and tend to happiness, in the case of one man, at one time, and under one set of circumstances, are vicious, and tend to unhappiness, in the case of the same man, at another time, and under other circumstances.

## III.

**T**o know what actions are virtuous, and what vicious, — in other words, to know what actions tend, on the whole, to happiness, and what to unhappiness, — in the

case of each and every man, in each and all the conditions in which they may severally be placed, is the profoundest and most complex study to which the greatest human mind ever has been, or ever can be, directed. It is, nevertheless, the constant study to which each and every man — the humblest in intellect as well as the greatest — is *necessarily driven* by the desires and necessities of his own existence. It is also the study in which each and every person, from his cradle to his grave, must necessarily form his own conclusions ; because no one else knows or feels, or can know or feel, as he knows and feels, the desires and necessities, the hopes, and fears, and impulses of his own nature, or the pressure of his own circumstances.

#### IV.

IT is not often possible to say of those acts that are called vices, that they really are vices, *except in degree*. That is, it is difficult to say of any actions, or courses of action, that are called vices, that they really would have been vices, *if they had stopped short of a certain point*. The question of virtue or vice, therefore, in all such cases, is a question of quantity and degree, and not of the intrinsic character of any single act, by itself. This fact adds to the difficulty, not to say the impossibility, of any one's — except each individual for himself — drawing any accurate line, or anything like any accurate line, between virtue and vice ; that is, of telling where virtue ends, and vice begins. And this is another reason why this whole question of virtue and vice should be left for each person to settle for himself.

## V.

VICES are usually pleasurable, at least for the time being, and often do not disclose themselves as vices, by their effects, until after they have been practised for many years; perhaps for a lifetime. To many, perhaps most, of those who practise them, they do not disclose themselves as vices at all during life. Virtues, on the other hand, often appear so harsh and rugged, they require the sacrifice of so much present happiness, at least, and the results, which alone prove them to be virtues, are often so distant and obscure, in fact, so absolutely invisible to the minds of many, especially of the young, that, from the very nature of things, there can be no universal, or even general, knowledge that they are virtues. In truth, the studies of profound philosophers have been expended — if not wholly in vain, certainly with very small results — in efforts to draw the lines between the virtues and the vices.

If, then, it be so difficult, so nearly impossible, in most cases, to determine what is, and what is not, vice; and especially if it be so difficult, in nearly all cases, to determine where virtue ends, and vice begins; and if these questions, which no one can really and truly determine for anybody but himself, are not to be left free and open for experiment by all, each person is deprived of the highest of all his rights as a human being, to wit: his right to inquire, investigate, reason, try experiments, judge, and ascertain for himself, what is, *to him*, virtue, and what is, *to him*, vice; in other words, what, on the whole, conduces to *his* happiness, and what, on the whole, tends to *his* unhappiness. If this great right is not to be left free and open to all, then each man's whole right, as

a reasoning human being, to “liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” is denied him.

## VI.

WE all come into the world in ignorance of ourselves, and of everything around us. By a fundamental law of our natures we are all constantly impelled by the desire of happiness, and the fear of pain. But we have everything to learn, as to what will give us happiness, and save us from pain. No two of us are wholly alike, either physically, mentally, or emotionally; or, consequently, in our physical, mental, or emotional requirements for the acquisition of happiness, and the avoidance of unhappiness. No one of us, therefore, can learn this indispensable lesson of happiness and unhappiness, of virtue and vice, for another. Each must learn it for himself. To learn it, he must be at liberty to try all experiments that commend themselves to his judgment. Some of his experiments succeed, and, because they succeed, are called virtues; others fail, and, because they fail, are called vices. He gathers wisdom from his failures, as well as from his successes; from his so-called vices, as from his so-called virtues. He gathers wisdom *as much* from his failures as from his successes; from his so-called vices, as from his so-called virtues. Both are necessary to his acquisition of that knowledge — of his own nature, and of the world around him, and of their adaptations or non-adaptations to each other — which shall show him how happiness is acquired, and pain avoided. And, unless he can be permitted to try these experiments to his own satisfaction, he is restrained from the acquisition of knowledge, and, consequently, from pursuing the great purpose and duty of his life.

## VII.

A MAN is under no obligation to take anybody's word, or yield to anybody's authority, on a matter so vital to himself, and in regard to which no one else has, or can have, any such interest as he. He *cannot*, if he would, safely rely upon the opinions of other men, because he finds that the opinions of other men do not agree. Certain actions, or courses of action, have been practised by many millions of men, through successive generations, and have been held by them to be, on the whole, conducive to happiness, and therefore virtuous. Other men, in other ages or countries, or under other conditions, have held, as the result of their experience and observation, that these actions tended, on the whole, to unhappiness, and were therefore vicious. The question of virtue or vice, as already remarked in a previous section, has also been, in most minds, a question of degree; that is, of the extent to which certain actions should be carried; and not of the intrinsic character of any single act, by itself. The questions of virtue and vice have therefore been as various, and, in fact, as infinite, as the varieties of mind, body, and condition of the different individuals inhabiting the globe. And the experience of ages has left an infinite number of these questions unsettled. In fact, it can scarcely be said to have settled any of them.

## VIII.

IN the midst of this endless variety of opinion, what man, or what body of men, has the right to say, in regard to any particular action, or course of action, "*We*

have tried this experiment, and determined every question involved in it? *We* have determined it, not only for ourselves, but for all others? And, as to all those who are weaker than we, we will coerce them to act in obedience to our conclusion? *We* will suffer no further experiment or inquiry by any one, and, consequently, no further acquisition of knowledge by anybody?"

Who are the men who have the right to say this? Certainly there are none such. The men who really do say it, are either shameless impostors and tyrants, *who would stop the progress of knowledge*, and usurp absolute control over the minds and bodies of their fellow-men; and are therefore to be resisted instantly, and to the last extent; or they are themselves too ignorant of their own weaknesses, and of their true relations to other men, to be entitled to any other consideration than sheer pity or contempt.

We know, however, that there are such men as these in the world. Some of them attempt to exercise their power only within a small sphere, to wit, upon their children, their neighbors, their townsmen, and their countrymen. Others attempt to exercise it on a larger scale. For example, an old man at Rome, aided by a few subordinates, attempts to decide all questions of virtue and vice; that is, of truth or falsehood, especially in matters of religion. He claims to know and teach what religious ideas and practices are conducive, or fatal, to a man's happiness, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. He claims to be miraculously inspired for the performance of this work; thus virtually acknowledging, like a sensible man, that nothing short of miraculous inspiration would qualify him for it. This miraculous inspiration, however, has been ineffectual to enable him to settle more than a very few questions. The most important of these are, first, that the highest religious virtue

to which common mortals can attain, *is an implicit belief in his (the pope's) infallibility!* and, secondly, that the blackest vices of which they can be guilty are to believe and declare that he is only a man like the rest of them!

It required some fifteen or eighteen hundred years to enable him to reach definite conclusions on these two vital points. Yet it would seem that the first of these must necessarily be preliminary to his settlement of any other questions; because, until his own infallibility is determined, he can authoritatively decide nothing else. He has, however, heretofore attempted or pretended to settle a few others. And he may, perhaps, attempt or pretend to settle a few more in the future, if he shall continue to find anybody to listen to him. But his success, thus far, certainly does not encourage the belief that he will be able to settle all questions of virtue and vice, even in his peculiar department of religion, in time to meet the necessities of mankind. He, or his successors, will undoubtedly be compelled, at no distant day, to acknowledge that he has undertaken a task to which all his miraculous inspiration was inadequate; and that, of necessity, each human being must be left to settle all questions of this kind for himself. And it is not unreasonable to expect that all other popes, in other and lesser spheres, will some time have cause to come to the same conclusion. No one, certainly, not claiming supernatural inspiration, should undertake a task to which obviously nothing less than such inspiration is adequate. And, clearly, no one should surrender his own judgment to the teachings of others, unless he be first convinced that these others have something more than ordinary human knowledge on this subject.

If those persons, who fancy themselves gifted with both the power and the right to define and punish other men's vices, would but turn their thoughts inwardly, they would

probably find that they have a great work to do at home ; and that, when that shall have been completed, they will be little disposed to do more towards correcting the vices of others, than simply to give to others the results of their experience and observation. In this sphere their labors may possibly be useful ; but, in the sphere of infallibility and coercion, they will probably, for well-known reasons, meet with even less success in the future than such men have met with in the past.

## IX.

IT is now obvious, from the reasons already given, that government would be utterly impracticable, if it were to take cognizance of vices, and punish them as crimes. Every human being has his or her vices. Nearly all men have a great many. And they are of all kinds ; physiological, mental, emotional ; religious, social, commercial, industrial, economical, &c., &c. If government is to take cognizance of any of these vices, and punish them as crimes, then, to be consistent, it must take cognizance of all, and punish all impartially. The consequence would be, that everybody would be in prison for his or her vices. There would be no one left outside to lock the doors upon those within. In fact, courts enough could not be found to try the offenders, nor prisons enough built to hold them. All human industry in the acquisition of knowledge, and even in acquiring the means of subsistence, would be arrested ; for we should all be under constant trial or imprisonment for our vices. But even if it were possible to imprison all the vicious, our knowledge of human nature tells us that, as a general rule, they would be far more vicious in prison than they ever have been out of it.



## X.

A GOVERNMENT that shall punish all vices impartially is so obviously an impossibility, that nobody was ever found, or ever will be found, foolish enough to propose it. The most that any one proposes is, that government shall punish some one, or at most a few, of what he esteems the grossest of them. But this discrimination is an utterly absurd, illogical, and tyrannical one. What right has any body of men to say, "The vices of other men *we* will punish; but our own vices nobody shall punish? *We* will restrain other men from seeking their own happiness, according to their own notions of it; but nobody shall restrain *us* from seeking our own happiness, according to our own notions of it? *We* will restrain other men from acquiring any experimental knowledge of what is conducive or necessary to their own happiness; but nobody shall restrain *us* from acquiring an experimental knowledge of what is conducive or necessary to our own happiness?"

Nobody but knaves or blockheads ever thinks of making such absurd assumptions as these. And yet, evidently, it is only upon such assumptions that anybody can claim the right to punish the vices of others, and at the same time claim exemption from punishment for his own.

## XI.

SUCH a thing as a government, formed by voluntary association, would never have been thought of, if the object proposed had been the punishment of all vices, impartially; because nobody wants such an institution,

or would voluntarily submit to it. But a government, formed by voluntary association, for the punishment of all *crimes*, is a reasonable matter; because everybody wants protection for himself against all crimes by others, and also acknowledges the justice of his own punishment, if he commits a crime.

## XII.

IT is a natural impossibility that a government should have a right to punish men for their *vices*; because it is impossible that a government should have any rights, except such as the individuals composing it had previously had, *as individuals*. They could not delegate to a government any rights which they did not themselves possess. They could not *contribute* to the government any rights, except such as they themselves possessed as individuals. Now, nobody but a fool or an impostor pretends that he, *as an individual*, has a right to punish other men for their vices. But anybody and everybody have a natural right, *as individuals*, to punish other men for their crimes; for everybody has a natural right, not only to defend his own person and property against aggressors, but also to go to the assistance and defence of everybody else, whose person or property is invaded. The natural right of each individual to defend his own person and property against an aggressor, and to go to the assistance and defence of every one else whose person or property is invaded, is a right without which men could not exist on the earth. And government has no rightful existence, except in so far as it embodies, and is limited by, this natural right of individuals. But the idea that each man has a natural right to sit in judgment on all his neighbor's actions, and

decide what are virtues, and what are vices, — that is, what contribute to that neighbor's happiness, and what do not, — and to punish him for all that do not contribute to it, is what no one ever had the impudence or folly to assert. It is only those who claim that government has some rightful power, *which no individual or individuals ever did, or ever could, delegate to it*, that claim that government has any rightful power to punish vices.

It will do for a pope or a king — who claims to have received direct authority from Heaven, to rule over his fellow-men — to claim the right, as the vicegerent of God, to punish men for their vices; but it is a sheer and utter absurdity for any government, claiming to derive its power wholly from the grant of the governed, to claim any such power; because everybody knows that the governed never would grant it. For them to grant it would be an absurdity, because it would be granting away their own right to seek their own happiness; since to grant away their right to judge of what will be for their happiness, is to grant away all their right to pursue their own happiness.

### XIII.

WE can now see how simple, easy, and reasonable a matter is a government for the punishment of *crimes*, as compared with one for the punishment of *vices*. *Crimes* are few, and easily distinguished from all other acts; and mankind are generally agreed as to what acts are crimes. Whereas *vices* are innumerable; and no two persons are agreed, except in comparatively few cases, as to what are vices. Furthermore, everybody wishes to be protected, in his person and property, against the aggressions of other men. But nobody wishes

to be protected, either in his person or property, against himself; because it is contrary to the fundamental laws of human nature itself, that any one should wish to harm himself. He only wishes to promote his own happiness, and to be his own judge as to what will promote, and does promote, his own happiness. This is what every one wants, and has a right to, as a human being. And though we all make many mistakes, and necessarily must make them, from the imperfection of our knowledge, yet these mistakes are no argument against the right; because they all tend to give us the very knowledge we need, and are in pursuit of, and can get in no other way.

The object aimed at in the punishment of *crimes*, therefore, is not only wholly different from, but it is directly opposed to, that aimed at in the punishment of *vices*.

The object aimed at in the punishment of *crimes* is to *secure*, to each and every man alike, the fullest liberty he possibly can have — consistently with the equal rights of others — to pursue his own happiness, under the guidance of his own judgment, and by the use of his own property. On the other hand, the object aimed at in the punishment of *vices*, is to *deprive* every man of his natural right and liberty to pursue his own happiness, under the guidance of his own judgment, and by the use of his own property.

These two objects, then, are directly opposed to each other. They are as directly opposed to each other as are light and darkness, or as truth and falsehood, or as liberty and slavery. They are utterly incompatible with each other; and to suppose the two to be embraced in one and the same government, is an absurdity, an impossibility. It is to suppose the objects of a government to be to commit crimes, and to prevent crimes; to destroy individual liberty, and to secure individual liberty.

## XIV.

FINALLY, on this point of individual liberty: Every man *must necessarily* judge and determine for himself as to what is conducive and necessary to, and what is destructive of, his own well-being; because, if he omits to perform this task for himself, nobody else *can* perform it for him. And nobody else will even attempt to perform it for him, except in very few cases. Popes, and priests, and kings will assume to perform it for him, in certain cases, if permitted to do so. But they will, in general, perform it only in so far as they can minister to their own vices and crimes, by doing it. They will, in general, perform it only in so far as they can make him their fool and their slave. Parents, with better motives, no doubt, than the others, too often attempt the same work. But in so far as they practise coercion, or restrain a child from anything not really and seriously dangerous to himself, they do him a harm, rather than a good. It is a law of Nature that to get knowledge, and to incorporate that knowledge into his own being, each individual must get it for himself. Nobody, not even his parents, can tell him the nature of fire, so that he will really know it. He must himself experiment with it, *and be burnt by it*, before he can know it.

Nature knows, a thousand times better than any parent, what she designs each individual for, what knowledge he requires, and how he must get it. She knows that her own processes for communicating that knowledge are not only the best, but the only ones that can be effectual.

The attempts of parents to make their children virtuous are generally little else than attempts to keep them

in ignorance of vice. They are little else than attempts to teach their children to know and prefer truth, by keeping them in ignorance of falsehood. They are little else than attempts to make them seek and appreciate health, by keeping them in ignorance of disease, and of everything that will cause disease. They are little else than attempts to make their children love the light, by keeping them in ignorance of darkness. In short, they are little else than attempts to make their children happy, by keeping them in ignorance of everything that causes them unhappiness.

In so far as parents can really aid their children in the latter's search after happiness, by simply giving them the results of their (the parents') own reason and experience, it is all very well, and is a natural and appropriate duty. But to practise coercion in matters of which the children are reasonably competent to judge for themselves, is only an attempt to keep them in ignorance. And this is as much a tyranny, and as much a violation of the children's right to acquire knowledge for themselves, and such knowledge as they desire, as is the same coercion when practised upon older persons. Such coercion, practised upon children, is a denial of their right to develop the faculties that Nature has given them, and to be what Nature designs them to be. It is a denial of their right to themselves, and to the use of their own powers. It is a denial of their right to acquire the most valuable of all knowledge, to wit, the knowledge that Nature, the great teacher, stands ready to impart to them.

The results of such coercion are not to make the children wise or virtuous, but to make them ignorant, and consequently weak and vicious; and to perpetuate through them, from age to age, the ignorance, the superstitions, the vices, and the crimes of the parents. This is proved by every page of the world's history.

Those who hold opinions opposite to these, are those whose false and vicious theologies, or whose own vicious general ideas, have taught them that the human race are naturally given to evil, rather than good; to the false, rather than the true; that mankind do not naturally turn their eyes to the light; that they love darkness, rather than light; and that they find their happiness only in those things that tend to their misery.

## XV.

**B**UT these men, who claim that government shall use its power to prevent vice, will say, or are in the habit of saying, "We acknowledge the right of an individual to seek his own happiness in his own way, and consequently to be as vicious as he pleases; we only claim that government shall prohibit the *sale* to him of those articles by which he ministers to his vice."

The answer to this is, that the simple sale of any article whatever — independently of the use that is to be made of the article — is legally a perfectly innocent act. The quality of the act of sale depends wholly upon the quality of the use for which the thing is sold. If the use of anything is virtuous and lawful, then the sale of it, *for that use*, is virtuous and lawful. If the use is vicious, then the sale of it, *for that use*, is vicious. If the use is criminal, then the sale of it, *for that use*, is criminal. The seller is, at most, only an accomplice in the use that is to be made of the article sold, whether the use be virtuous, vicious, or criminal. Where the use is criminal, the seller is an accomplice in the crime, and punishable as such. But where the use is only vicious, the seller is only an accomplice in the vice, and is not punishable.

## XVI.

**B**UT it will be asked, "Is there no right, on the part of government, to arrest the progress of those who are bent on self-destruction?"

The answer is, that government has no rights whatever in the matter, so long as these so-called vicious persons remain sane, *compos mentis*, capable of exercising reasonable discretion and self-control; because, so long as they do remain sane, they must be allowed to judge and decide for themselves whether their so-called vices really are vices; whether they really are leading them to destruction; and whether, on the whole, they will go there or not. When they shall become insane, *non compos mentis*, incapable of reasonable discretion or self-control, their friends or neighbors, or the government, must take care of them, and protect them from harm, and against all persons who would do them harm, in the same way as if their insanity had come upon them from any other cause than their supposed vices.

But because a man is supposed, by his neighbors, to be on the way to self-destruction, from his vices, it does not, therefore, follow that he is insane, *non compos mentis*, incapable of reasonable discretion and self-control, within the legal meaning of those terms. Men and women may be addicted to very gross vices, and to a great many of them,—such as gluttony, drunkenness, prostitution, gambling, prize-fighting, tobacco-chewing, smoking, and snuffing, opium-eating, corset-wearing, idleness, waste of property, avarice, hypocrisy, &c., &c.,—and still be sane, *compos mentis*, capable of reasonable discretion and self-control, within the meaning of the law. And so long as they are sane, they must be permitted to control



themselves and their property, and to be their own judges as to where their vices will finally lead them. It may be hoped by the lookers-on, in each individual case, that the vicious person will see the end to which he is tending, and be induced to turn back. But, if he chooses to go on to what other men call destruction, he must be permitted to do so. And all that can be said of him, so far as this life is concerned, is, that he made a great mistake in his search after happiness, and that others will do well to take warning by his fate. As to what may be his condition in another life, that is a theological question with which the law, in this world, has no more to do than it has with any other theological question, touching men's condition in a future life.

If it be asked how the question of a vicious man's sanity or insanity is to be determined? the answer is, that it is to be determined by the same kinds of evidence as is the sanity or insanity of those who are called virtuous; and not otherwise. That is, by the same kinds of evidence by which the legal tribunals determine whether a man should be sent to an asylum for lunatics, or whether he is competent to make a will, or otherwise dispose of his property. Any doubt must weigh in favor of his sanity, as in all other cases, and not of his insanity.

If a person really does become insane, *non compos mentis*, incapable of reasonable discretion or self-control, it is then a crime, on the part of other men, to give to him or sell to him, the means of self-injury.\* And such a crime is to be punished like any other crime.

There are no crimes more easily punished, no cases in which juries would be more ready to convict, than those

\* To give an insane man a knife, or any other weapon, or thing, by which he is likely to injure himself, is a crime.

where a sane person should sell or give to an insane one any article with which the latter was likely to injure himself.

## XVII.

**B**UT it will be said that some men are made, by their vices, dangerous to other persons; that a drunkard, for example, is sometimes quarrelsome and dangerous toward his family or others. And it will be asked, "Has the law nothing to do in such a case?"

The answer is, that if, either from drunkenness or any other cause, a man be really dangerous, either to his family or to other persons, not only himself may be rightfully restrained, so far as the safety of other persons requires, but all other persons — who know or have reasonable grounds to believe him dangerous — may also be restrained from selling or giving to him anything that they have reason to suppose will make him dangerous.

But because one man becomes quarrelsome and dangerous after drinking spirituous liquors, and because it is a crime to give or sell liquor to such a man, it does not follow at all that it is a crime to sell liquors to the hundreds and thousands of other persons, who are not made quarrelsome or dangerous by drinking them. Before a man can be convicted of crime in selling liquor to a dangerous man, it must be shown that the *particular man*, to whom the liquor was sold, was dangerous; and also that the seller knew, or had reasonable grounds to suppose, that the man would be made dangerous by drinking it.

The presumption of law is, in all cases, that the sale is innocent; and the burden of proving it criminal, in any particular case, rests upon the government. *And that particular case must be proved criminal, independently of all others.*

Subject to these principles, there is no difficulty in convicting and punishing men for the sale or gift of any article to a man, who is made dangerous to others by the use of it.

## XVIII.

**B**UT it is often said that some vices are nuisances (public or private), and that nuisances can be abated and punished.

It is true that anything that is really and legally a nuisance (either public or private) can be abated and punished. But it is not true that the mere private vices of one man are, in any legal sense, nuisances to another man, or to the public.

No act of one person can be a nuisance to another, unless it in some way obstructs or interferes with that other's safe and quiet use or enjoyment of what is rightfully his own.

Whatever obstructs a public highway, is a nuisance, and may be abated and punished. But a hotel where liquors are sold, a liquor store, or even a grog-shop, so called, no more obstructs a public highway, than does a dry goods store, a jewelry store, or a butcher's shop.

Whatever poisons the air, or makes it either offensive or unhealthful, is a nuisance. But neither a hotel, nor a liquor store, nor a grog-shop poisons the air, or makes it offensive or unhealthful to outside persons.

Whatever obstructs the light, to which a man is legally entitled, is a nuisance. But neither a hotel, nor a liquor store, nor a grog-shop, obstructs anybody's light, except in cases where a church, a school-house, or a dwelling-house would have equally obstructed it. On this ground, therefore, the former are no more, and no less, nuisances than the latter would be.

Some persons are in the habit of saying that a liquor-shop is dangerous, in the same way that gunpowder is dangerous. But there is no analogy between the two cases. Gunpowder is liable to be exploded by accident, and especially by such fires as often occur in cities. For these reasons it is dangerous to persons and property in its immediate vicinity. But liquors are not liable to be thus exploded, and therefore are not dangerous nuisances, in any such sense as is gunpowder in cities.

But it is said, again, that drinking-places are frequently filled with noisy and boisterous men, who disturb the quiet of the neighborhood, and the sleep and rest of the neighbors.

This may be true occasionally, though not very frequently. But whenever, in any case, it is true, the nuisance may be abated by the punishment of the proprietor and his customers, and if need be, by shutting up the place. But an assembly of noisy drinkers is no more a nuisance than is any other noisy assembly. A jolly or hilarious drinker disturbs the quiet of a neighborhood no more, and no less, than does a shouting religious fanatic. An assembly of noisy drinkers is no more, and no less, a nuisance than is an assembly of shouting religious fanatics. Both of them are nuisances when they disturb the rest and sleep, or quiet, of neighbors. Even a dog that is given to barking, to the disturbance of the sleep or quiet of the neighborhood, is a nuisance.

## XIX.

**B**UT it is said, that for one person to entice another into a vice, is a crime.

This is preposterous. If any particular act is simply a vice, then a man who entices another to commit it, is

simply an accomplice in the *vice*. He evidently commits no *crime*, because the accomplice can certainly commit no greater offence than the principal.

Every person who is sane, *compos mentis*, possessed of reasonable discretion and self-control, is presumed to be mentally competent to judge for himself of all the arguments, *pro and con*, that may be addressed to him, to persuade him to do any particular act; *provided no fraud is employed to deceive him*. And if he is persuaded or induced to do the act, his act is then his own; and even though the act prove to be harmful to himself, he cannot complain that the persuasion or arguments, to which he yielded his assent, were crimes against himself.

When fraud is practised, the case is, of course, different. If, for example, I offer a man poison, assuring him that it is a safe and wholesome drink, and he, on the faith of my assertion, swallows it, my act is a crime.

*Volenti non fit injuria*, is a maxim of the law. *To the willing no injury is done*. That is, no *legal* wrong. And every person who is sane, *compos mentis*, capable of exercising reasonable discretion in judging of the truth or falsehood of the representations or persuasions to which he yields his assent, is "willing," in the view of the law; and takes upon himself the entire responsibility for his acts, when no intentional fraud has been practised upon him.

This principle, *that to the willing no injury is done*, has no limit, except in the case of frauds, or of persons not possessed of reasonable discretion for judging in the particular case. If a person possessed of reasonable discretion, and not deceived by fraud, consents to practise the grossest vice, and thereby brings upon himself the greatest moral, physical, or pecuniary sufferings or losses, he cannot allege that he has been *legally* wronged. To illustrate this principle, take the case of rape. To have

carnal knowledge of a woman, *against her will*, is the highest crime, next to murder, that can be committed against her. But to have carnal knowledge of her, *with her consent*, is no crime; but at most, a vice. And it is usually holden that a female child, of no more than *ten* years of age, has such reasonable discretion, that her consent, even though procured by rewards, or promises of reward, is sufficient to convert the act, which would otherwise be a high crime, into a simple act of vice.\*

We see the same principle in the case of prize-fighters. If I but lay one of my fingers upon another man's person, *against his will*, no matter how lightly, and no matter how little practical injury is done, the act is a crime. But if two men *agree* to go out and pound each other's faces to a jelly, it is no crime, but only a vice.

Even duels have not generally been considered crimes, because each man's life is his own, and the parties *agree* that each may take the other's life, if he can, by the use of such weapons as are agreed upon, and in conformity with certain rules that are also mutually assented to.

And this is a correct view of the matter, unless it can be said (as it probably cannot), that "anger is a madness" that so far deprives men of their reason as to make them incapable of reasonable discretion.

Gambling is another illustration of the principle that to the willing no injury is done. If I take but a single cent of a man's property, *without his consent*, the act is a crime. But if two men, who are *compos mentis*, possessed

\* The statute book of Massachusetts makes *ten years* the age at which a female child is supposed to have discretion enough to part with her virtue. But the same statute book holds that no person, man or woman, of any age, or any degree of wisdom or experience, has discretion enough to be trusted to buy and drink a glass of spirits, on his or her own judgment! What an illustration of the legislative wisdom of Massachusetts!

of reasonable discretion to judge of the nature and probable results of their act, sit down together, and each voluntarily stakes his money against the money of another, on the turn of a die, and one of them loses his whole estate (however large that may be), it is no crime, but only a vice.

It is not a crime, even, to assist a person to commit suicide, if he be in possession of his reason.

It is a somewhat common idea that suicide is, of itself, conclusive evidence of insanity. But, although it may ordinarily be very strong evidence of insanity, it is by no means conclusive in all cases. Many persons, in undoubted possession of their reason, have committed suicide, to escape the shame of a public exposure for their crimes, or to avoid some other great calamity. Suicide, in these cases, may not have been the highest wisdom, but it certainly was not proof of any lack of reasonable discretion.\* And being within the limits of reasonable discretion, it was no crime for other persons to aid it, either by furnishing the instrument or otherwise. And if, in such cases, it be no crime to aid a suicide, how absurd to say that it is a crime to aid him in some act that is really pleasurable, and which a large portion of mankind have believed to be useful?

\* Cato committed suicide to avoid falling into the hands of Cæsar. Who ever suspected that he was insane? Brutus did the same. Colt committed suicide only an hour or so before he was to be hanged. He did it to avoid bringing upon his name and his family the disgrace of having it said that he was hanged. This, whether a really wise act or not, was clearly an act within reasonable discretion. Does any one suppose that the person who furnished him with the necessary instrument was a criminal?

## XX.

**B**UT some persons are in the habit of saying that the use of spirituous liquors is *the* great source of crime ; that “ it fills our prisons with criminals ; ” and that this is reason enough for prohibiting the sale of them.

Those who say this, if they talk seriously, talk blindly and foolishly. They evidently mean to be understood as saying that a very large percentage of all the crimes that are committed among men, are committed by persons whose criminal passions are excited, *at the time*, by the use of liquors, and in consequence of the use of liquors.

This idea is utterly preposterous.

In the first place, the great crimes committed in the world are mostly prompted by avarice and ambition.

The greatest of all crimes are the wars that are carried on by governments, to plunder, enslave, and destroy mankind.

The next greatest crimes committed in the world are equally prompted by avarice and ambition ; and are committed, not on sudden passion, but by men of calculation, who keep their heads cool and clear, and who have no thought whatever of going to prison for them. They are committed, not so much by men who *violate* the laws, as by men who, either by themselves or by their instruments, *make* the laws ; by men who have combined to usurp arbitrary power, and to maintain it by force and fraud, and whose purpose in usurping and maintaining it is, by unjust and unequal legislation, to secure to themselves such advantages and monopolies as will enable them to control and extort the labor and properties of other men, and thus impoverish them, in order to minister to their own wealth and aggrandizement.\* The robberies and



wrongs thus committed by these men, *in conformity with the laws*, — that is, *their own laws*, — are as mountains to molehills, compared with the crimes committed by all other criminals, in *violation* of the laws.

But, thirdly, there are vast numbers of frauds, of various kinds, committed in the transactions of trade, whose perpetrators, by their coolness and sagacity, evade the operation of the laws. And it is only their cool and clear heads that enable them to do it. Men under the excitement of intoxicating drinks are little disposed, and utterly unequal, to the successful practice of these frauds. They are the most incautious, the least successful, the least efficient, and the least to be feared, of all the criminals with whom the laws have to deal.

Fourthly. The professed burglars, robbers, thieves, forgers, counterfeiters, and swindlers, who prey upon society, are anything but reckless drinkers. Their business is of too dangerous a character to admit of such risks as they would thus incur.

Fifthly. The crimes that can be said to be committed under the influence of intoxicating drinks are mostly assaults and batteries, not very numerous, and generally not very aggravated. Some other small crimes, as petty thefts, or other small trespasses upon property, are some-

\* An illustration of this fact is found in England, whose government, for a thousand years and more, has been little or nothing else than a band of robbers, who have conspired to monopolize the land, and, as far as possible, all other wealth. These conspirators, calling themselves kings, nobles, and freeholders, have, by force and fraud, taken to themselves all civil and military power; they keep themselves in power solely by force and fraud, and the corrupt use of their wealth; and they employ their power solely in robbing and enslaving the great body of their own people, and in plundering and enslaving other peoples. And the world has been, and now is, full of examples substantially similar. And the governments of our own country do not differ so widely from others, in this respect, as some of us imagine.

times committed, under the influence of drink, by feeble-minded persons, not generally addicted to crime. The persons who commit these two kinds of crime are but few. They cannot be said to "fill our prisons;" or, if they do, we are to be congratulated that we need so few prisons, and so small prisons, to hold them.

The State of Massachusetts, for example, has a million and a half of people. How many of these are now in prison for *crimes* — not for the vice of intoxication, but for *crimes* — committed against persons or property under the instigation of strong drink? I doubt if there be one in ten thousand, that is, one hundred and fifty in all; and the crimes for which these are in prison are mostly very small ones.

And I think it will be found that these few men are generally much more to be pitied than punished, for the reason that it was their poverty and misery, rather than any passion for liquor, or for crime, that led them to drink, and thus led them to commit their crimes under the influence of drink.

The sweeping charge that drink "fills our prisons with criminals" is made, I think, only by those men who know no better than to call a drunkard a criminal; and who have no better foundation for their charge than the shameful fact that we are such a brutal and senseless people, that we condemn and punish such weak and unfortunate persons as drunkards, as if they were criminals.

The legislators who authorize, and the judges who practise, such atrocities as these, are intrinsically criminals; unless their ignorance be such — as it probably is not — as to excuse them. And, if they were themselves to be punished as criminals, there would be more reason in our conduct.

A police judge in Boston once told me that he was in the habit of disposing of drunkards (by sending them to

prison for thirty days—I think that was the stereotyped sentence) *at the rate of one in three minutes!* and sometimes more rapidly even than that; thus condemning them as criminals, and sending them to prison, without mercy, and without inquiry into circumstances, for an infirmity that entitled them to compassion and protection, instead of punishment. The real criminals in these cases were not the men who went to prison, but the judge, and the men behind him, who sent them there.

I recommend to those persons, who are so distressed lest the prisons of Massachusetts be filled with criminals, that they employ some portion, at least, of their philanthropy in preventing our prisons being filled with persons who are *not* criminals. I do not remember to have heard that their sympathies have ever been very actively exercised in that direction. On the contrary, they seem to have such a passion for punishing criminals, that they care not to inquire particularly whether a candidate for punishment really be a criminal. Such a passion, let me assure them, is a much more dangerous one, and one entitled to far less charity, both morally and legally, than the passion for strong drink.

It seems to be much more consonant with the merciless character of these men to send an unfortunate man to prison for drunkenness, and thus crush, and degrade, and dishearten him, and ruin him for life, than it does for them to lift him out of the poverty and misery that caused him to become a drunkard.

It is only those persons who have either little capacity, or little disposition, to enlighten, encourage, or aid mankind, that are possessed of this violent passion for governing, commanding, and punishing them. If, instead of standing by, and giving their consent and sanction to all the laws by which the weak man is first plundered, oppressed, and disheartened, and then punished as a

criminal, they would turn their attention to the duty of defending his rights and improving his condition, and of thus strengthening him, and enabling him to stand on his own feet, and withstand the temptations that surround him, they would, I think, have little need to talk about laws and prisons for either rum-sellers or rum-drinkers, or even any other class of ordinary criminals. If, in short, these men, who are so anxious for the suppression of crime, would suspend, for a while, their calls upon the government for aid in suppressing the crimes of individuals, and would call upon the people for aid in suppressing the crimes of the government, they would show both their sincerity and good sense in a much stronger light than they do now. When the laws shall all be so just and equitable as to make it possible for all men and women to live honestly and virtuously, and to make themselves comfortable and happy, there will be much fewer occasions than now for charging them with living dishonestly and viciously.

## XXI.

**B**UT it will be said, again, that the use of spirituous liquors tends to poverty, and thus to make men paupers, and burdensome to the tax-payers; and that this is a sufficient reason why the sale of them should be prohibited.

There are various answers to this argument.

1. One answer is, that if the fact that the use of liquors tends to poverty and pauperism, be a sufficient reason for prohibiting the *sale* of them, it is equally a sufficient reason for prohibiting the *use* of them; for it is the *use*, and not the *sale*, that tends to poverty. The seller is, at

most, merely an accomplice of the drinker. And it is a rule of law, as well as of reason, that if the principal in any act is not punishable, the accomplice cannot be.

2. A second answer to the argument is, that if government has the right, and is bound, to prohibit any one act — *that is not criminal* — merely because it is supposed to tend to poverty, then, by the same rule, it has the right, and is bound, to prohibit any and every other act — *though not criminal* — which, in the opinion of the government, tends to poverty. And, on this principle, the government would not only have the right, *but would be bound*, to look into every man's private affairs, and every person's personal expenditures, and determine as to which of them did, and which of them did not, tend to poverty; and to prohibit and punish all of the former class. A man would have no right to expend a cent of his own property, according to his own pleasure or judgment, unless the legislature should be of the opinion that such expenditure would not tend to poverty.

3. A third answer to the same argument is, that if a man does bring himself to poverty, and even to beggary, — *either by his virtues or his vices*, — the government is under no obligation whatever to take care of him, unless it pleases to do so. It may let him perish in the street, or depend upon private charity, if it so pleases. It can carry out its own free will and discretion in the matter; for it is above all legal responsibility in such a case. It is not, *necessarily*, any part of a government's duty to provide for the poor. A government — that is, a legitimate government — is simply a voluntary association of individuals, who unite for such purposes, *and only for such purposes*, as suits them. If taking care of the poor — whether they be virtuous or vicious — be *not* one of those purposes, then the government, *as a government*, has no more right, and is no more bound, to take care of

them, than has or is a banking company, or a railroad company.

Whatever *moral* claims a poor man — whether he be virtuous or vicious — may have upon the charity of his fellow-men, he has no *legal* claims upon them. He must depend wholly upon their charity, if they so please. He cannot *demand*, as a *legal* right, that they either feed or clothe him. And he has no more *legal* or *moral* claims upon a government — which is but an association of individuals — than he has upon the same, or any other individuals, in their private capacity.

Inasmuch, then, as a poor man — whether virtuous or vicious — has no more or other claims, legal or moral, upon a government, for food or clothing, than he has upon private persons, a government has no more right than a private person to control or prohibit the expenditures or actions of an individual, on the ground that they tend to bring him to poverty.

Mr. A, *as an individual*, has clearly no right to prohibit any acts or expenditures of Mr. Z, through fear that such acts or expenditures may tend to bring him (Z) to poverty, and that he (Z) may, in consequence, at some future unknown time, come to him (A) in distress, and ask charity. And if A has no such right, *as an individual*, to prohibit any acts or expenditures on the part of Z, then government, which is a mere association of individuals, can have no such right.

Certainly no man, who is *compos mentis*, holds his right to the disposal and use of his own property, by any such worthless tenure as that which would authorize any or all of his neighbors, — whether calling themselves a government or not, — to interfere, and forbid him to make any expenditures, except such as *they* might think would *not* tend to poverty, and would *not* tend to ever bring him to them as a supplicant for their charity.

Whether a man, who is *compos mentis*, come to poverty, through his virtues or his vices, no man, nor body of men, can have any right to interfere with him, on the ground that their sympathy may some time be appealed to in his behalf; because, if it should be appealed to, they are at perfect liberty to act their own pleasure or discretion as to complying with his solicitations.

This right to refuse charity to the poor — whether the latter be virtuous or vicious — is one that governments always act upon. No government makes any more provision for the poor than it pleases. As a consequence, the poor are left, to a great extent, to depend upon private charity. In fact, they are often left to suffer sickness, and even death, because neither public nor private charity comes to their aid. How absurd, then, to say that government has a right to control a man's use of his own property, through fear that he may sometime come to poverty, and ask charity.

4. Still a fourth answer to the argument is, that the great and only incentive which each individual man has to labor, and to create wealth, is that he may dispose of it according to his own pleasure or discretion, and for the promotion of his own happiness, and the happiness of those whom he loves.\*

Although a man may often, from inexperience or want of judgment, expend some portion of the products of his labor injudiciously, and so as not to promote his highest welfare, yet he learns wisdom in this, as in all other matters, by experience; by his mistakes as well as by his successes. *And this is the only way in which he can learn wisdom.* When he becomes convinced that he has made one foolish expenditure, he learns thereby not to make

\* It is to this incentive alone that we are indebted for all the wealth that has ever been created by human labor, and accumulated for the benefit of mankind.

another like it. And he must be permitted to try his own experiments, and to try them to his own satisfaction, in this as in all other matters; for otherwise he has no motive to labor, or to create wealth at all.

Any man, who is a man, would rather be a savage, and be free, creating or procuring only such little wealth as he could control and consume from day to day, than to be a civilized man, knowing how to create and accumulate wealth indefinitely, and yet not permitted to use or dispose of it, except under the supervision, direction, and dictation of a set of meddling, superserviceable fools and tyrants, who, with no more knowledge than himself, and perhaps with not half so much, should assume to control him, on the ground that he had not the right, or the capacity, to determine for himself as to what he would do with the proceeds of his own labor.

5. A fifth answer to the argument is, that if it be the duty of government to watch over the expenditures of any one person, — who is *compos mentis*, and not criminal, — to see what ones tend to poverty, and what do not, and to prohibit and punish the former, then, by the same rule, it is bound to watch over the expenditures of all other persons, and prohibit and punish *all* that, in its judgment, tend to poverty.

If such a principle were carried out impartially, the result would be, that all mankind would be so occupied in watching each other's expenditures, and in testifying against, trying, and punishing such as tended to poverty, that they would have no time left to create wealth at all. Everybody capable of productive labor would either be in prison, or be acting as judge, juror, witness, or jailer. It would be impossible to create courts enough to try, or to build prisons enough to hold, the offenders. All productive labor would cease; and the fools that were so intent on preventing poverty, would not only all come to



poverty, imprisonment, and starvation themselves, but would bring everybody else to poverty, imprisonment, and starvation.

6. If it be said that a man may, at least, be rightfully compelled to support his family, and, consequently, to abstain from all expenditures that, in the opinion of the government, tend to disable him to perform that duty, various answers might be given. But this one is sufficient, viz.: that no man, unless a fool or a slave, would acknowledge any family to be his, if that acknowledgment were to be made an excuse, by the government, for depriving him, either of his personal liberty, or the control of his property.

When a man is allowed his natural liberty, and the control of his property, his family is usually, almost universally, the great paramount object of his pride and affection; and he will, not only voluntarily, but as his highest pleasure, employ his best powers of mind and body, not merely to provide for them the ordinary necessaries and comforts of life, but to lavish upon them all the luxuries and elegancies that his labor can procure.

A man enters into no moral or legal obligation with his wife or children to do anything for them, except what he can do consistently with his own personal freedom, and his natural right to control his own property at his own discretion.

If a government can step in and say to a man, — who is *compos mentis*, and who is doing his duty to his family, *as he sees his duty*, and according to *his* best judgment, however imperfect that may be, — “*We* (the government) suspect that you are not employing your labor to the best advantage for your family; *we* suspect that your expenditures, and your disposal of your property, are not so judicious as they might be, for the interest of your family; and therefore *we* (the govern-

ment) will take you and your property under our special surveillance, and prescribe to you what you may, and may not do, with yourself and your property; and your family shall hereafter look to *us* (the government), and not to you, for support" — if a government can do this, all a man's pride, ambition, and affection, relative to his family, would be crushed, so far as it would be possible for human tyranny to crush them; and he would either never have a family (whom he would publicly acknowledge to be his), or he would risk both his property and his life in overthrowing such an insulting, outrageous, and insufferable tyranny. And any woman who would wish her husband — he being *compos mentis* — to submit to such an unnatural insult and wrong, is utterly undeserving of his affection, or of anything but his disgust and contempt. And he would probably very soon cause her to understand that, if she chose to rely on the government, for the support of herself and her children, rather than on him, she must rely on the government alone.

## XXII.

STILL another and all-sufficient answer to the argument that the use of spirituous liquors tends to poverty, is that, *as a general rule*, it puts the effect before the cause. It assumes that it is the use of the liquors that causes the poverty, instead of its being the poverty that causes the use of the liquors.

Poverty is the natural parent of nearly all the ignorance, vice, crime, and misery there are in the world.\*

\* Except those great crimes, which the few, calling themselves governments, practise upon the many, by means of organized, systematic extortion and tyranny. And it is only the poverty, ignorance, and consequent weakness of the many, that enable the combined and organized few to acquire and maintain such arbitrary power over them.

Why is it that so large a portion of the laboring people of England are drunken and vicious? Certainly not because they are by nature any worse than other men. But it is because their extreme and hopeless poverty keeps them in ignorance and servitude, destroys their courage and self-respect, subjects them to such constant insults and wrongs, to such incessant and bitter miseries of every kind, and finally drives them to such despair, that the short respite that drink or other vice affords them, is, for the time being, a relief. This is the chief cause of the drunkenness and other vices that prevail among the laboring people of England.

If those laborers of England, who are now drunken and vicious, had had the same chances and surroundings in life as the more fortunate classes have had; if they had been reared in comfortable, and happy, and virtuous homes, instead of squalid, and wretched, and vicious ones; if they had had opportunities to acquire knowledge and property, and make themselves intelligent, comfortable, happy, independent, and respected, and to secure to themselves all the intellectual, social, and domestic enjoyments which honest and justly rewarded industry could enable them to secure, — if they could have had all this, instead of being born to a life of hopeless, unrewarded toil, with a certainty of death in the workhouse, they would have been as free from their present vices and weaknesses as those who reproach them now are.

It is of no use to say that drunkenness, or any other vice, only adds to their miseries; for such is human nature — the weakness of human nature, if you please — that men can endure but a certain amount of misery, before their hope and courage fail, and they yield to almost anything that promises present relief or mitigation; though at the cost of still greater misery in the future. To preach morality or temperance to such wretched per-

sons, instead of relieving their sufferings, or improving their conditions, is only insulting their wretchedness.

Will those who are in the habit of attributing men's poverty to their vices, instead of their vices to their poverty, — as if every poor person, or most poor persons, were specially vicious, — tell us whether all the poverty and want that, within the last year and a half,\* have been brought so suddenly — as it were in a moment — upon at least twenty millions of the people of the United States, were brought upon them as a natural consequence, either of their drunkenness, or of any other of their vices? Was it their drunkenness, or any other of their vices, that paralyzed, as by a stroke of lightning, all the industries by which they lived, and which had, but a few days before, been in such prosperous activity? Was it their vices that turned the adult portion of those twenty millions out of doors without employment, compelled them to consume their little accumulations, if they had any, and then to become beggars, — beggars for work, and, failing in this, beggars for bread? Was it their vices that, all at once, and without warning, filled the homes of so many of them with want, misery, sickness, and death? No. Clearly it was neither the drunkenness, nor any other vices, of these laboring people, that brought upon them all this ruin and wretchedness. And if it was not, *what was it?*

This is the problem that must be answered; for it is one that is repeatedly occurring, and constantly before us, and that cannot be put aside.

In fact, the poverty of the great body of mankind, the world over, is the great problem of the world. That such extreme and nearly universal poverty exists all over the world, and has existed through all past generations,

\* That is, from September 1, 1873, to March 1, 1875.

proves that it originates in causes which the common human nature of those who suffer from it, has not hitherto been strong enough to overcome. But these sufferers are, at least, beginning to see these causes, and are becoming resolute to remove them, let it cost what it may. And those who imagine that they have nothing to do but to go on attributing the poverty of the poor to their vices, and preaching to them against their vices, will ere long wake up to find that the day for all such talk is past. And the question will then be, not what are men's vices, but what are their rights?

# OUR FINANCIERS:

THEIR IGNORANCE, USURPATIONS,  
AND FRAUDS.

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## OUR FINANCIERS: THEIR IGNORANCE, USURPATIONS, AND FRAUDS.

### I.

THE great battle in Ohio for more money,—by which is here meant the political canvass for the year 1875,—in which the whole country participated, is still worthy of notice, not only because there is doubtless a widespread determination to fight it over again, but also because it affords a ludicrous, but much needed, illustration, as well as an irrefutable proof, of the prevailing ignorance on the subject of money.

That that violent, but ridiculous, contest may serve as a caution to the people against being drawn into the same, or any similar one, in future, is one purpose of this article. Its other purposes are to expose the usurpations and frauds by which the people are deprived of money, and to vindicate, as far as its limits will permit, the right of the people, by the use of their own property and credit, to supply themselves with such money as they can, and as much of it as they please, free of all dictation or interference from the government.

The question at issue in Ohio, in 1875, was the 3.65 interconvertible bond scheme; a scheme, of the practical operation of which the writers and speakers, on neither side, seemed to have the least real knowledge whatever. It would have had neither the good effects which its friends expected, nor the bad effects which its enemies predicted. That is to say, it would neither have provided "a currency equal to the wants of trade," as claimed by its friends, nor would it have flooded the country with a depreciated currency, as predicted by its opposers. As a system for furnishing a *permanent* currency, either good or bad, it would have fallen utterly dead. Worse than that, instead of furnishing a permanent currency in place of that we now have,



it would have deprived us of the one we now have, without furnishing any substitute at all.

That such would have been its effect is evident from these considerations, namely:—

It is a settled principle that a paper currency depends, for its true and natural market value, wholly upon the redemption that is provided for it. It has, and it can have, no more true or natural market value than the property with which it is to be redeemed. A paper currency, therefore, that has no other redemption than that of being convertible into interest-bearing bonds, can be worth no more in the market than are the bonds themselves, and, consequently, no more than it is worth *for conversion into the bonds*. And it is worth nothing for conversion into bonds, unless there are some one or more persons who wish thus to convert it. In other words, it is this demand for the *bonds, as investments*, that alone gives the *currency* any value in the market. A convertible note of this kind, therefore, circulates as money only because some one or more persons want it for conversion. *And it circulates only until it falls into the hands of such a person*. When it falls into his hands, he converts it, *and thus takes it out of circulation*.

The destiny, therefore, of all such convertible paper, *that is in circulation as money, is finally to be converted into bonds, and thus taken out of circulation*. And there is then an end of it, so far as its being currency is concerned.

We saw the operation of this principle so long as the greenbacks were convertible into bonds. The conversion went on so rapidly that we should soon have had no greenbacks at all in circulation, had not the conversion of them into bonds been stopped by law. And our greenbacks now remain in circulation only because they are *not* convertible into bonds.

For the reasons now given, if our whole national debt were to-day in circulation as currency, *having no other redemption than that of being convertible into 3.65 bonds*, it would be worth for circulation no more than it would be worth for such conversion; and, as a natural consequence, it would rapidly, though not instantly, be converted, *and thus taken out of circulation; and we should then have entirely lost it as a currency*. And, as the scheme

proposes to prohibit all other currency, we should then be left with no currency at all.

The 3.65 bond scheme, therefore, instead of being a scheme for providing the country with a currency, is perfectly suicidal, so far as furnishing a currency is concerned. It is simply a scheme for providing a paper currency for circulation *by withdrawing all such currency from circulation!* It is absurdity run mad.

## II.

But the advocates of the scheme will say that it provides that these bonds *may* be reconverted into currency. Yes, it does indeed provide that they *may*, but not that they *must*, be thus reconverted. *And it offers no inducements whatever for such re-conversion;* because, if reconverted, the currency will then be worth no more in the market than the bonds are worth as investments; since all that will give the currency any value at all in the market will then, as before, be the simple fact that it (the currency) is convertible back into the same bonds from which it has just been reconverted!

The bonds are to be holden by men who preferred the bonds to the currency, *when both had the same value in the market.* And now the scheme contemplates that the country will go without any currency at all, until these same bondholders shall change their minds, and prefer the currency to the bonds, *when both have still the same value in the market!* Who can tell when the bondholders will do that? The bonds are their estates, their investments, on which they rely for their daily bread. They are the estates which they have preferred to all others, as a means of living. To presume that they will reconvert them into currency, is just as absurd as it would be to presume that a man who has just bought a farm, and relies upon it for his living; will sell it for money that will enable him to do nothing else so good for himself as to buy back the same farm that he parts with.

## III.

But General Butler, who, I believe, claims to have been the author of this scheme, says that, "*in case of a scarcity of money,*"

"a demand for money by a high rate of interest will call forth these bonds."<sup>1</sup>

He means by this that, in times of "scarcity of money," "a high rate of interest"—that is, a higher rate than the bonds themselves bear—will induce a holder of these bonds to recon-vert them into legal tender notes, *in order to lend them!*

This is certainly furnishing "more money" with a vengeance. The real value of the notes corresponds precisely to the value of a 3.65 interest-bearing bond, and General Butler would allow the people to have no money at all, except in some rare emergency, when the "scarcity" is so great as to induce them to give a higher rate of interest than the money is really worth,—enough higher to induce the bondholder to surrender his investments, and become a money lender instead.

This is equivalent to saying that nobody shall be permitted to borrow money, except in those emergencies when he will submit to be fleeced for the sake of getting it!

And to make it impossible for any body to borrow money, except at this extortionate rate, he would "*prohibit by the severest penalties every other person, corporation, or institution from issuing any thing that might appear in the semblance of money!*"

And this proposition comes from a man who proposes to furnish the people with "more money," and thus save them from the extortions of the present money dealers!

However such an extortion might occasionally relieve an individual, who was so sorely pressed as to consent to be fleeced, it would do nothing towards supplying the people at large with money; because the money thus issued to an individual would not continue in circulation, unless it should constantly pass from hand to hand *at a price beyond its true value*; that is, at a price beyond its value for conversion. The result would be that the people could have no money at all, except upon the condition of their constantly giving more for the money than it was worth!

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<sup>1</sup> See his speech in New York, October 14, 1875, reported in the New York "Daily Graphic" of October 15.

## IV.

Another device of General Butler, by which he appears to think he could keep at least some of the currency in circulation, is this: He would make it "*the legal tender of the United States for all debts due to or by the government or individuals.*"

But this would add nothing at all to its real value; and it would have no appreciable, or certainly no important, effect in preventing the conversion of the currency into bonds; or, what is the same thing, in preventing a withdrawal of the currency from circulation; for the currency would still have no more real or true value for circulation than it would for conversion.

General Butler's plan, therefore, amounts practically to this: He would allow the people no money at all, except on rare occasions, when, as he thinks, the "scarcity" would be so severe as to induce them to pay an extortionate price for it!

But, under such a system, there would really be no such thing as a *rare and occasional* "scarcity;" *there would be nothing but constant, perpetual, and utter destitution.* At least such would be the case, so soon as all the notes should have been converted into bonds.

The idea of allowing the people no money at all, except occasionally in times of "scarcity," corresponds to one that should forbid the people to have any food at all, except occasionally in times of famine. Under such a system, it is plain there would never be a rare or occasional famine; but there would be, instead of it, a constant and perpetual one. So, under Butler's scheme, there would never be any rare or occasional "scarcity of money;" but there would be a constant and perpetual destitution of it.

Yet he calls it a scheme for providing the people with more money! In reality, it is merely a scheme for depriving them of money altogether.

## V.

Such being the real character of this 3.65 scheme, we are enabled to see the true character of the late battle in Ohio for and against it. And it is important to consider that, although the

battle was nominally fought in Ohio, the whole country took part in it. The whole country took part in it, because it was considered that the result in Ohio would very likely decide the result in the whole country.

Thus we had the ludicrous and humiliating spectacle of forty millions of people fighting a fierce and bitter contest for and against a scheme, *of the real nature of which neither party knew any thing!* One party thought it was a scheme for furnishing the money really needed for industry and trade. The other party thought it was a scheme for overwhelming the country with a depreciated currency. In reality, it was a scheme to deprive the country of money altogether!

If any body had any thing to *fear* from this system, it was the very party that advocated it; for they wanted *more* money and not less. And if any body had any thing to *hope* from the system, it was the party that opposed it; for they wanted *less* money and not more.

Here, then, were two opposing armies, each fighting with all fury against itself, under the belief that it was fighting its antagonist!

## VI.

The question now arises: If all the statesmen (so-called), all the financiers and bankers, all the editors, all the violent writers and speakers, who took part in this contest, know no more about finance than to take such parts as they did *either for or against* this ridiculous and absurd scheme, how much do they know about the system which the industry and prosperity of the country really require?

And if we shall conclude that they do not know any thing, perhaps we may conclude that they should not quite so arrogantly assume to dictate to us what, or how much, money we shall, or shall not, have; nor, consequently, to decide (as it is their purpose to do) what, or how much, money all other property shall be sold for.

Perhaps we may even conclude that men who have demonstrated their ignorance beyond all cavil or controversy, as they have, and who, by their ignorance, or something worse, have brought upon forty millions of people such ruin and misery as

they have, ought to be exceedingly modest for the rest of their lives, especially on the subject of money.

Perhaps we may conclude that to paralyze the industry of the country for four, five, or six years together, at a loss of three, four, or five thousand millions of dollars per annum,—say, twenty thousand millions in all,—under pretence that it is necessary in order to raise, by five, ten, or fifteen per cent., the market value of eight hundred millions,—that is, to raise their value, say, one hundred millions in all,—perhaps, I say, we may conclude that to thus impoverish a people to the extent of twenty thousand millions, under pretence of saving or giving to somebody one hundred millions, is neither good financiering, good morals, nor good government; and that it indicates that there is something a great deal worse than sheer ignorance at work in the plans of the government.

Perhaps we may conclude that a dollar, in order to be a standard of value, must have something like a fixed value itself, *which it will maintain against all competition*; that, if it has any thing like such a fixed value, then ten, a hundred, a thousand, or a million of dollars must necessarily have ten, a hundred, a thousand, or a million times more value than one dollar has; and to say that, by the prohibition of all other money, one dollar can be made to have as much “purchasing power” as ten, a hundred, a thousand, or a million dollars, is only to say that, by the prohibition of all other money, the holder of the one dollar will be enabled to extort, in exchange for it, ten, a hundred, a thousand, or a million times more of other men’s property than the money is worth.

Perhaps we may conclude that the holders of the present stock of money, whose cardinal financial principle is that, by the prohibition of all other money, any small amount becomes invested with a “purchasing power” indefinitely greater than its true and natural market value, and who openly avow that that is their reason for insisting that all money shall be suppressed, except that small amount which they themselves hold, thereby virtually proclaim their purpose to be to so use their money as to extort, in exchange for it, an indefinite amount more of other men’s property than the money is worth. And perhaps we may conclude that a government which, on this

ground, as avowed by its most conspicuous members and partisans, maintains a hard monopoly of money, thereby virtually acknowledges itself to be a mere instrument in the hands of these extortioners, for accomplishing the purposes they have in view.

Perhaps we may conclude that it is indispensable to all honest and equitable traffic that the money that is paid for any other property should have the same amount of true and natural market value as the property that is given in exchange for it; and that the moment this principle is acknowledged, all justification for the interference of the government ceases; since it is the sole right of the parties to contracts to decide for themselves, in each case, what money, and what amount of money, is, and is not, a *bona fide* equivalent for the property that is to be given in exchange for it.

Perhaps, also, we may conclude that the notes of private persons or private companies, who have property with which to pay their notes, and who can be sued and compelled to pay them, with interest and costs from the time of demand, are quite as likely to give us a specie-paying currency, and are quite as deserving of the name of "honest money," as are the notes of a government that has no property to pay with; that cannot be sued or compelled to pay; and that has no intention of paying, unless, or until, it can do so without relaxing the monopoly it is determined to maintain.

Perhaps we may conclude that a government, which, for ten years together, prohibits, by a ten per cent. tax, all specie-paying notes, and at the same time, by the grossest usurpation, makes its own irredeemable, depreciated, non-specie-paying notes a legal tender in payment of all private debts, cannot reasonably be credited (however loud may be its professions) with any burning desire either for "specie payments," or for "honest money."

Perhaps we may conclude that any privileged money whatever, whether issued by a government or by individuals, is necessarily a dishonest money; just as a privileged man is necessarily a dishonest man; and just as any other privileged thing is necessarily a dishonest thing. For this reason we may perhaps conclude that a government that constantly cries out for "honest money," when it all the while means and maintains, and insists

upon maintaining, a privileged money, acts the part only of a blockhead or a cheat.

Perhaps we may conclude that, when the fraudulent pretences by which the monopoly of money has been thus far maintained, and the fraudulent purposes for which it has been maintained, have been so fully demonstrated that they can no longer be concealed or denied, and after the effects of the monopoly have been to impoverish the country to an amount at least twenty times greater than the whole amount of the privileged money,—perhaps we may conclude that, after all these results, the responsibility of the authors of the monopoly is not to be evaded, nor their motives justified, by any such mock freedom in banking as is offered to us, provided we will use only government bonds as banking capital, and come under all such regulations and conditions as the government may prescribe, and thus give up all right to bank upon any portion of the thirty thousand millions of other property which we have (or once had, and may have again); at least twenty thousand millions of which are better banking capital than any government bonds can be; and which we have a perfect right to use as banking capital, without asking any permission of the government, or coming under any of its regulations or conditions.

Perhaps we may conclude that this attempt of the government to delude us into the idea that we can have perfect freedom in banking, while deprived of our right to use the twenty or thirty thousand millions of banking capital we already have, and while restricted to the contemptible amount of capital we can have, or can afford to have, under the system proposed by the government, is very much like a proposal to establish perfect freedom in farming by requiring men to give up all the farms they now have, and buy some of the government lands in Oregon or Alaska, and there come under all such regulations and conditions as the government may prescribe.

Perhaps we may conclude that the establishment of a monopoly of money is equivalent to the establishment of monopolies in all the businesses that are carried on by means of money,—to wit, all businesses that are carried on at all in civilized society; and that to establish such monopolies as these is equivalent to condemning all persons, except those holding the



monopolies, to the condition of tributaries, dependents, servants, paupers, beggars, or slaves. Perhaps we may conclude that the establishment of a monopoly of money is also equivalent to a prohibition upon all businesses, except such as the monopolists of money may choose to license. And perhaps we may conclude that, if government were to prohibit directly all businesses, except such as it should choose to license, and, by direct grants, were to make all these licensed businesses subjects of monopoly, its acts, in so doing, would be no more flagrant tyrannies, and no more flagrant violations of men's natural rights, than are its acts in establishing the single monopoly of money.

Perhaps, after we shall have been insulted and impoverished by a few more such cheats as the "specie payment" cheat, the "honest money" cheat, the "free banking" cheat, and all the other cheats to which the government has resorted, for the one sole purpose of maintaining that monopoly of money on which the last administration relied for its support, and which the present administration is evidently determined to maintain, we may conclude that it is time for the people to take the matter of money into their own hands, and assert their right to provide their own money, in their own way, free of all dictation or interference from the government.

Perhaps we may conclude that the right to live, and to provide ourselves with food, clothing, shelter, and all the other necessities and comforts of life, necessarily includes the right to provide ourselves with money; inasmuch as, in civilized life, money is the immediate and indispensable instrumentality for procuring all these things. Hence we may perhaps conclude that a people who surrender their natural right to provide themselves with money, practically surrender their right to provide for their own subsistence; and that a government that demands such a surrender, or attempts to take from them that right, and give it as a monopoly to a few, is as necessarily and as plainly the mere instrument of that few, as it would be if it were to require the people to surrender their right to follow their occupations as farmers, mechanics, and merchants, and give all these occupations as monopolies into the hands of the same few to whom it now gives the monopoly of money.

Perhaps we may conclude that we want no special laws whatever, either of license, prohibition, or regulation, on the subject of banking; that bankers, like other men, should be free to make their own contracts, and then, like other men, be compelled to fulfil them; and that their private property, like the private property of all other men, should be holden to pay their debts.

Perhaps we may conclude that it is the natural right of every man, who has a dollar's worth of property that can be taken by legal process and applied to the payment of a promissory note, to offer his note for that amount in the market; and that it is the natural right of every body that pleases, to accept that note in exchange for other property; and that it is also a natural right of every subsequent holder of that note to offer it again in the market, and exchange it for other property with whomsoever may choose to accept it.

And since, in this way, it is not only theoretically possible, but absolutely practicable, that, to say the least, a very large amount of the material property of the country should be represented by promissory notes, and thus made to aid in furnishing a solvent and legitimate currency; and since nobody can be required to accept such a currency unless he pleases; and since nobody who chooses to accept it can either say that he is wronged, or be said to wrong any body else, by accepting it,—perhaps we may conclude that such a currency as this—if the people, or any portion of them, prefer it to any other that is offered them—can not rightfully be prohibited.

Perhaps we may conclude that no considerable accumulations of coin are necessary to maintain specie payments; that, where banking is free, and the private property of the bankers is holden for the debts of the banks, the business of banking naturally and necessarily falls into the hands of men of known wealth, whose notes challenge the scrutiny, and command the confidence, of the whole community; that, as these men, if permitted to do it, are always ready to supply the market with the greatest amount of notes that can be kept in circulation, the public have no temptation to accept any doubtful notes, and doubtful notes can consequently get no circulation; that, when the public are thus satisfied of the solvency of the notes they hold, they prefer them to coin, and the bankers rarely have any occasion to redeem them other-

wise than by receiving them in payment of the notes they discount; that, as all the bank notes issued are wanted to pay the notes discounted, and are, at short intervals after their issue,—say in two, three, or four months, on an average,—returned to the banks in payment of notes discounted, the bankers, as a general rule, have no need to provide for any other redemption; and that, consequently, coin, unless in very small amounts, is merely dead capital, for which the bankers have no use whatever.

And, if the practicability or utility of this system should be doubted, perhaps we may refer the doubters to the example of Scotland, where, for eighty years,—from 1765 to 1845,—all the banks of Scotland, with two or three exceptions, stood upon the principle of the individual liability of their stockholders; enjoying perfect freedom in the issue of their notes, subject only to these restrictions, namely, that they should issue no notes below one pound, and none except those made payable on demand.<sup>1</sup> The result was that Scotland had the best system of banks, or at least the best association of banks, for solvency, stability, and utility, that was ever known in Europe.<sup>2</sup> During all that period of eighty years, while the banks of England were failing by the hundreds, and many of them proving utterly rotten, and while all that did not prove rotten repeatedly suspended specie payments,—at one time for more than twenty years,—*the banks of Scotland never suspended specie payments, and their notes were always equal to coin.* And, by introducing manufactures, they raised Scotland, within that period, from a miserable poverty-stricken condition (the effect of her cold climate and barren soil) to a condition of prosperity and wealth second to that of no other people in Europe. These facts, and others that cannot here be enumerated at length, demonstrate that, where banks rest upon the individual liability of stockholders, *or upon any other basis that gives to the public an absolute guarantee of the solvency of the banks,* banking may be made perfectly free, and the amount of currency as great as can be kept in circulation, *and yet that it will always be equal to coin.* And they prove also that all the

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<sup>1</sup> The first of these restrictions only impaired the usefulness of the banks, without adding any thing to their solvency.

<sup>2</sup> And better than any ever known in the United States, unless, possibly, those in Rhode Island and one or two other States.

arguments that are now used to justify restraints upon banking, and limitations upon the amount of currency, in order to maintain specie payments, proceed wholly from gross ignorance or fraud.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps we may conclude that money is simply property that is cut up, or divided, into such pieces or parcels as are convenient and acceptable to be given and received in exchange for other property; and that any man who has any property whatever that can be cut up, or divided, into such pieces or parcels, has a perfect legal and moral right thus to cut it up, and then freely offer it in the market, in competition with all other money, and in exchange for any other commodity, that may there be offered in competition with, or in exchange for, it. Perhaps we may conclude that the simple fact of these pieces or parcels being called money, or not called money,—of their bearing the stamp or license of the government, or not bearing it,—has nothing to do with his right to offer them in the market, or to sell them, or lend them, or exchange them, on such terms as the parties to the contracts may mutually agree upon; that the simple facts that they are property,—property that is naturally vendible,—and that they are *his* property, entitle him to sell them, or lend them, to whomsoever may wish to buy, or to borrow, them; and to do all this on such terms as the parties, free of all interference from the government, may agree upon. And perhaps we may conclude that these pieces or parcels may as rightfully be bought, sold, and exchanged (if the parties so agree) by means of contracts on paper—notes, checks, drafts, bills of exchange, or whatever else—promising to deliver them on demand, or at times agreed on, as by actual delivery of the parcels themselves, at the time of the contract.

Perhaps we may conclude that, instead of Congress having the right, in General Butler's phrase, to "prohibit, by the severest penalties, every other person, corporation, or institution [than the government itself, or those whom it licenses] from issuing any

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<sup>1</sup> We can have a much better system even than the Scotch; better than the system of promissory notes; one that will furnish more money (if more can be used), and be more easy and convenient for the bankers and better for the public. But freedom to make experiments with any and all systems that men may choose to experiment with is what is necessary to give assurance, at all times, that we have the best possible system.

thing that might appear in the semblance of money," it has no such right whatever, nor any semblance of such a right; that it has no color of right in the matter, beyond the simple "power to provide for the punishment of counterfeiting the securities and current coin of the United States;" that, so far from their having any such right, it is one of the first and most sacred of all the duties of any and every government (that has any duties at all) to protect every man in his natural right to offer in the market every vendible or loanable commodity he has to sell, or to lend; and to sell it, or lend it, to any and every man who wishes to buy it, or borrow it; and that it is the duty of the government to protect him in his liberty to do this by any and every possible form of contract—whether check, note, draft, bill of exchange, or whatever else—that is naturally and intrinsically just and obligatory.

Perhaps we may conclude that it is as much the duty of government to protect each and every man, who has any thing deserving the name of money, or that men may choose to call money, in his right to sell or lend it to any and every other man who may choose to accept it as money, as it is to protect him in his right to sell or lend any other property whatever, which he may wish to sell or lend, and which other men may wish to buy or borrow.

Perhaps we may conclude that the simple fact that men may, or may not, choose to call any particular commodity money, makes no difference whatever in the nature, character, quality, or value of the commodity itself; and therefore cannot affect the right of men to buy, or sell, or lend, or borrow it; or to give it in exchange for any other property, on such terms as the parties (without fraud) may mutually agree upon.

Perhaps we may conclude that all men, who are presumed competent to make reasonable and obligatory contracts, must also be presumed to be just as competent to judge of the value of any money that may be offered them, as the men who offer it are to judge of the value of the commodities they are to receive in exchange for it.

Perhaps, in short, we may conclude that it is one of the natural rights of men to sell their property for such money, and as

much of it, as is offered to them for it, and as they choose to accept.

Perhaps we may also conclude that the idea of providing the people with money by prohibiting all money except such as the government itself may specially provide or license, is just as absurd, preposterous, and tyrannical as would be the idea of providing the people with food, clothing, or shelter, by prohibiting all food, clothing, or shelter, except such as the government itself may specially provide or license.

Perhaps we may conclude that, as it is with all other commodities, so it is with money, namely, that free competition in producing it and offering it in the market is the sure, and only sure, way of guaranteeing to us the greatest supply, the best article, and on the best terms; that, inasmuch as banking is but a very recent invention,—but one on which all industry and all other inventions depend mainly for their efficiency,—it is just as absurd to suppose that we have already attained perfection in it, as it would be to suppose we had attained perfection in any or all the other arts by which industry is carried on; that it is, therefore, just as absurd and suicidal to prohibit all new experiments and inventions in banking, as it would be to prohibit all new experiments and inventions in agriculture, mechanics, or any of the other arts of life; and that, to be consistent, those who would prohibit all new experiments and inventions in banking ought also to insist that the patent office be closed, and that all new experiments and inventions in any and every art and science whatsoever be prohibited.

Perhaps we may conclude that, however much money, or however many kinds of money, may be offered in the market, there is no danger that the holders will give any more of it in exchange for other men's property or labor, than such property or labor is worth; and that, therefore, there is no danger that the prices of either property or labor will ever be too high; or, what is the same thing, that property or labor will ever bring any more money than it is worth.

Perhaps we may conclude that it is time that those men who claim that gold and silver coins, by the monopoly now given to them as money, are kept at a price far above their true and

natural value as metals, and who claim that they should still be kept at that price by restrictions upon all other money, were taught that all honest and equitable commerce requires that each and every commodity that may be sold at all—whether it be called money, or by any other name—should be sold only at the price it will bear in free and open market, and subject to the free competition of every other commodity that may there be offered in competition with, or in exchange for, it; that the free and open market is as much the true and only test of the true and natural market value of every thing that can be called money, as it is of the true and natural market value of every thing that is exchanged for money.

Perhaps we may conclude that, since industry is an animal, so to speak, that feeds and lives on money; since its strength, activity, and growth depend mainly upon the amount of money that is furnished to it; since we as yet know of no limits to its increase in power, except the limits set by the money that is supplied to it; since, when it is fully supplied with money, it will create two, five, ten, a hundred, often thousands, sometimes millions, and even hundreds and thousands of millions, of dollars of wealth, for every dollar that it consumes,<sup>1</sup> but, when stinted or deprived of money, necessarily languishes or dies; and since, when it languishes or dies, mankind languish or die with it,—perhaps, in view of these facts, we may conclude that to stint or deprive it of money is not merely bad economy, but fatuity and suicide.<sup>2</sup>

And, finally, perhaps we may conclude that a government

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<sup>1</sup>The estimate in the text is no extravagance. Suppose we could ascertain the precise number of dollars and cents, or of pounds, shillings, and pence, expended by such men as Watt, and Arkwright, and Stephenson, and Morse, and Whitney, and Fulton, and Woodworth, and Hoe, and McCormick, and so many others, in making and perfecting their inventions,—what proportion would those figures bear to those that should even attempt to measure the immeasurable value of the inventions themselves? And what must we think of the folly, absurdity, and tyranny of that dearth of money which our monopolists of money would have maintained if they could; which would have made these inventions impossible; and which now withholds them from four-fifths, perhaps from nine-tenths, of mankind?

<sup>2</sup>We have all heard of the bumpkin who tried an experiment to ascertain upon how little food his horse could be made to subsist. His experiment succeeded to his entire satisfaction, until, from some cause he could not understand, his horse happened to die. Stupid as he was, he may possibly have suspected that it was from a want of food; for we do not hear that he ever tried the experiment again. But our financial bumpkins (or something worse) persist in trying the same experiment over and over again. The industry upon which they try it invariably dies; but they learn no wisdom, or caution (or honesty) from the results.

that sacrifices a million of lives to maintain its power, and then uses that power to trample in the dust all the natural rights of the survivors, and to cheat, plunder, and starve them, for the mere profit of the holders of eight hundred millions of money, is not a government that should be tolerated for any great length of time.

LYSANDER SPOONER.



THE  
LAW OF PRICES:

A DEMONSTRATION OF

*THE NECESSITY FOR AN INDEFINITE  
INCREASE OF MONEY.*

BY

LYSANDER SPOONER.

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## THE LAW OF PRICES:

### A DEMONSTRATION OF THE NECESSITY FOR AN INDEFINITE INCREASE OF MONEY.

#### I.

THE writers on money seem never to have obtained the first glimpse of the fundamental *law* which governs prices, and which necessitates a constant and indefinite increase in the volume of money. That law may be illustrated in this manner:

Suppose an island cut off from all communication with the rest of the world, and inhabited by one hundred men. Suppose that these hundred men know no industry except the production of wheat; that they produce annually one thousand bushels, each man producing ten bushels, which is enough for his own consumption. Suppose further that these hundred men have money to the amount of five dollars each in gold, silver, and copper coins, and that these coins are valued by them as highly as similar coins are now by us. What will be the price of wheat among these men, compared with the coins? Plainly, it will bear no price at all. Each man producing for himself all he can eat, no one has any occasion to buy. Therefore none can be sold at any price.

But suppose that one after another of these hundred men leave wheat-growing and engage in the production of other commodities,—each producing a different commodity from all the others,—until there shall be a hundred different commodities produced; only one man being left to produce wheat. And suppose that this one man has increased his product from ten bushels to one thousand. There is now just as much wheat as there was when all were employed in producing it. The only differences are, first, that the whole amount is produced now by one man, where

before it was produced by a hundred men ; and, secondly, that the ninety-nine men have each engaged in the production of some commodity different from that produced by any other, but of which, we will suppose, all the others wish to purchase each his proportionate share for consumption.

There is now a hundred times as much wealth produced as when all produced wheat and nothing else. But each kind has only a single producer, while it finds a hundred consumers. And each man's product, we will suppose, has the same value with every other man's product.

What, now, will be the price of wheat among these hundred men, relatively to the coins? Doubtless a dollar a bushel. When the first man abandoned wheat-growing, and betook himself to some other occupation, he created a demand for ten bushels of wheat, which he still wanted for consumption as before. This demand for ten bushels would doubtless be sufficient to give wheat the price of one cent per bushel where it had no price before. When a second man of the hundred abandoned wheat-growing, he created a demand for ten bushels more ; making twenty bushels in all. This increased demand would doubtless be sufficient to raise the market price of wheat to two cents a bushel. When a third man of the hundred left wheat-growing for some other pursuit; his demand for ten bushels would raise the market price another cent ; and so on, until by the time the ninety-nine had left wheat-growing, the continually increasing demand would have raised the price to ninety-nine cents a bushel ; for convenience of round numbers, say a dollar a bushel.

Here, then, wheat has been raised from no price at all to a dollar a bushel, not because there is any less wheat produced, or any more consumed, than before, but solely because the whole thousand bushels are now produced by one man, instead of being produced, ten bushels each, by the hundred different men who were to consume it ; and because, further, each of the ninety-nine men who have left wheat-growing is able to purchase wheat, inasmuch as he has been producing some other commodity which brings him as good a price as the wheat brings to the man who still produces wheat.

Under this new state of things, then, the man who continues to produce wheat produces a thousand bushels, worth a dollar a

bushel ; that is, a thousand dollars' worth in all. Each of the other ninety-nine produces an equal amount of market value in some other commodity. The whole hundred men, then, produce wealth that has now a market value of one hundred thousand dollars, where originally they had produced nothing that had any *market* value at all.

This change in the price of wheat has been produced, then, solely by reason of the diversity of industry and production that has taken place among these hundred men. And the market prices of all the other ninety-nine commodities have been affected by the same law, and to the same extent, as has been the price of wheat.

Here, then, is a hundred thousand dollars' worth of commodities produced, each man producing a thousand dollars' worth.

As each man retains a hundredth part of his product—that is, ten dollars' worth—for his own consumption, he has nine hundred and ninety dollars' worth for sale. The whole hundred men, therefore, have one hundred times nine hundred and ninety dollars' worth for sale, which is equal to ninety-nine thousand dollars in all ; for convenience of round numbers, say one hundred thousand dollars.

The hundred men, having each five dollars in coins, have in the aggregate five hundred dollars. To make the purchases and sales of these hundred thousand dollars' worth of commodities will require each of these five hundred dollars to be exchanged for commodities, on an average, two hundred times. That is, in carrying on the commerce of these hundred men for a year, their whole stock of money must be exchanged, on an average, once in a little less than two days. Or if we reckon but three hundred business days in a year, we shall find that the whole stock of money must be exchanged, on an average, once in every day and a half.

Such rapidity of exchange would be practicable enough if the holders of the coins should all part with them readily at their true and natural value, instead of holding them back in the hope of getting for them more than they were really worth. But where there was so active a demand for the coins as to require that the whole stock be sold, on an average, once in every day and a half, it is natural to suppose that the holders of the coins

would hold them back, in order to get more for them than their true and natural value. And in so far as they should do so, they would obstruct trade, and by obstructing trade obstruct and discourage production, and thus obstruct the natural increase of wealth.

## II.

But suppose, now, that the number of men on this island be increased from one hundred to one thousand, and that they are all engaged in producing wheat only; each man producing ten bushels, which is all he wants for his own consumption. And suppose that each man has five dollars in gold, silver, and copper coins. What will be the price of wheat among these men, relatively to the coins? Clearly, it will have no *market* price at all, any more than it had when there were but a hundred men.

But suppose that nine hundred and ninety-nine of these thousand men leave wheat-growing, and engage each in the production of a commodity different from that produced by any one of the others. And suppose that the one who still continues to produce wheat is able, from his increased science, skill, and machinery, to produce ten thousand bushels—ten bushels for each of the thousand men—where before he produced only ten bushels for himself.

There is now just as much wheat produced as there was before. But it is now all produced by one man—nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of it being produced for sale—instead of being produced by a thousand men, each producing ten bushels for his own consumption.

What, now, will be the price of wheat among these thousand men? Why, being governed by the same law that has already been illustrated in the case of the hundred men, it will go on rising one cent at a time as each man leaves wheat-growing for some other pursuit, until, when nine hundred and ninety-nine shall have left wheat-growing, and shall have become purchasers of wheat, instead of producers, the price will be nine hundred and ninety-nine cents a bushel—for convenience of round numbers, say ten dollars a bushel—where before it bore no price at all.

In this state of things, then, the man who still continues to

produce wheat will produce ten thousand bushels ; worth, in the market, ten dollars a bushel, or a hundred thousand dollars in all.

Here, then, we have the price of a hundred thousand dollars for ten thousand bushels of wheat, which, when produced by a thousand different men, each producing ten bushels for his own consumption, had no *market* value at all. And the other nine hundred and ninety-nine men, we will suppose, produce each a different commodity from all the others ; the whole annual produce of each having the same market value as the wheat-grower's crop of wheat. The market value, then, of all the products of the whole thousand men will be one thousand times one hundred thousand dollars—that is, one hundred million dollars—where before, when they were all producing wheat and nothing else, their whole products had no *market* price at all.

When we consider that each producer retains for his own consumption but a thousandth part of his products (a hundred dollars' worth), and that, consequently, nine hundred and ninety-nine parts of all these products are not only to be sold, but to be sold *twice*, as they would now have to be,—that is, once by the producer to the merchant, and once by the merchant to the consumer,—we see that there will be sales to the amount of one hundred and ninety-nine million eight hundred thousand dollars—for convenience of round numbers, say two hundred million dollars—where before, when all were producing wheat, there was no such thing as a sale of a cent's worth of any thing.

These thousand men, we have supposed, had each five dollars in coins—making five thousand dollars in all—with which to make these purchases and sales of two hundred millions. How many times over will all these coins, on an average, have to be bought and sold, in order to effect these exchanges? Dividing two hundred millions by five thousand, we have the answer ; namely, *forty thousand times* ! Dividing this number by three hundred,—which we will suppose to be the number of business days in a year,—we find that, in order to make their exchanges, their whole stock of money must be bought and sold, on an average, *one hundred and thirty-three times every day* !

Thus we see that one thousand men, with such a diversity and amount of production as we have supposed, would have two thousand times as many purchases and sales to make as the one hun-

dred men. And in making these purchases and sales, we see that their whole stock of money would have to be bought and sold two hundred times oftener than would the whole stock of money of the one hundred men in making their purchases and sales of one hundred thousand dollars. We see, too, that, if we call eight hours a day,—that being the usual number of business hours,—their whole stock of money would have to be bought and sold, on an average, *sixteen times over every hour, or once in every four minutes*; whereas the whole stock of money of the one hundred men would have to be bought and sold only *once in a day and a half*; or—calling eight hours a day—*once in twelve hours*.

Such, let it be specially noticed, is the difference in the rapidity required in the purchase and sale of money in making the exchanges among a thousand men, on the one hand, and a hundred men, on the other, *altrough the thousand men have the same amount of money, man for man, as the hundred men*; the thousand men having five thousand dollars, and the hundred having but five hundred dollars.

This illustration gives some idea of the effect produced upon prices by the expansion of industry and the diversity of production. And yet the writers on money tell us that a large number of men need no more money, *man for man*, than a small number; that, if a hundred men need but five hundred dollars of money, a thousand men will, by the same rule, need but five thousand dollars.

In the case already supposed,—of the one thousand men,—how far would their five thousand dollars avail as money towards making their exchanges of two hundred million dollars? Plainly, they would avail nothing. The holders of them, seeing the necessities of the people for money, would hold back their coins, and demand so much more than their true and natural value as to put a stop substantially to all production, except of such few things as could be exchanged by barter, or as each one could produce for his own consumption.

The obvious truth is that, in order to carry on their commerce with money at its true and natural value, and consequently without obstruction or extortion from the money holders, it is necessary that these thousand men, with their increased diversity and



amount of production, should have two hundred times as much money, *man for man*,—and two thousand times as much in the aggregate,—as was necessary for the one hundred men, as before supposed.

In other words, the thousand men have two hundred million dollars of sales to make, where the hundred men had but one hundred thousand. Dividing two hundred million by one hundred thousand, we find that the thousand men, with such diversity and amount of production as we have supposed, have two thousand times as many sales to make as the one hundred had, and consequently that they require two thousand times as much money as did the one hundred.

### III.

But to show still further the ratio in which diversity of industry tends to increase the prices of commodities, *relatively to any fixed standard*, let us suppose that the number of men on this island be still further increased from one thousand to ten thousand. And suppose that all these ten thousand are engaged in producing wheat alone; each producing ten bushels for his own consumption, that being all he wants. And suppose they have each five dollars in gold, silver, and copper coins. What will be the price of wheat, relatively to the coins? Clearly, it will have no price at all, not even so much as one cent a bushel.

But suppose that all but one of these ten thousand men should leave wheat-growing, and engage in other industries; each one producing a different commodity from all the others. And suppose that the one who still continues wheat-growing has acquired such science, skill, and machinery, that he is now able to produce a hundred thousand bushels—that is, ten bushels each for ten thousand men—where before he only produced ten bushels for himself.

What will now be the price of wheat among these ten thousand men? Why, by the same law that has been already illustrated it will be ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents a bushel—for convenience of round numbers, say one hundred dollars a bushel—where before it had no *market* value at all.

And yet there is just as much wheat produced as there was

before, and every man gets just as much wheat to eat as he had before, when all were producing wheat.

In this state of things, the one hundred thousand bushels of wheat produced by one man at a hundred dollars a bushel—which will then be its market value—are worth one hundred thousand times one hundred dollars; that is, ten million dollars. And suppose that all the other nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine men are each engaged in an industry as profitable as that of the remaining wheat-grower. The aggregate production of the whole ten thousand men will now have a market value equal to ten thousand times ten million dollars; that is, one hundred thousand million dollars.

And if we suppose that all these commodities are to be sold <sup>1</sup> *three* times over,—that is, once by the producer to the wholesale dealer, once by the wholesale dealer to the retailer, and once by the retailer to the consumer,—we shall see that there are to be sales equal to three hundred thousand million dollars, where before, when all were producing wheat and nothing else, there was no sale of a cent's worth of any thing, and no *market* value at all for any thing.

Now suppose that the coins which these men had have remained fixed at the same value they had when the men were all producing wheat. How many times over, then, must they necessarily be bought and sold in the course of a year, in order to effect the purchase and sale of these three hundred thousand millions—or one hundred thousand millions three times over—of property that are to be exchanged?

There are ten thousand men, each having five dollars in coins; that is, fifty thousand dollars in all. Dividing three hundred thousand millions by fifty thousand, we find that the whole of these fifty thousand dollars in coins *must be bought and sold six million times!* Six million times annually, to effect the exchanges of the products of ten thousand men!

Dividing six million by three hundred (which we will suppose to be the number of business days in a year), we find that, on an average, their whole stock of money must be bought and sold

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<sup>1</sup> All but ten millions—a ten thousandth part of the whole—would have to be sold, since each man would retain for his own consumption only a ten thousandth part of what he produced; namely, one thousand dollars' worth.

*twenty thousand times over every day.* Or supposing the business day to be eight hours, the coins would all have to be bought and sold twenty-five hundred times over every hour; equal to forty-one and two-thirds times every minute.

And this happens, too, when the ten thousand men have the same amount of coin, *man for man*, as the one hundred and the one thousand men had in the cases before supposed.

Thus we see that, with such a diversity and amount of production as we have supposed, the exchanges of the ten thousand men would require that their whole stock of money should be bought and sold one hundred and fifty times oftener than the whole stock of the one thousand men, and thirty thousand times oftener than the whole stock of the one hundred men.

We also see that, in the cases supposed, the ten thousand men, having three hundred thousand millions of exchanges to make, have fifteen hundred times as many as the one thousand men, who had but two hundred millions; and that they have three million times as many exchanges to make as the one hundred men. Consequently the ten thousand men require fifteen hundred times as much money as the one thousand men, and three million times as much money as the one hundred men.

#### IV.

According to the foregoing calculations, the ratio of increase required in the volume of money is this: Supposing the diversity and amount of production to keep pace with the increase in the number of men, and supposing their commodities to be sold but *once*,—that is, directly from producer to consumer,—a hundred men would require a thousand times as much money as ten men; a thousand men would require a thousand times as much money as a hundred men; ten thousand men would require a thousand times as much money as a thousand men; and so on.

But inasmuch as, in the case of a thousand men, their commodities would have to be sold *twice*,—that is, once by the producer to the merchant, and once by the merchant to the consumer,—the thousand men would require *two* thousand times as much money as the hundred men. And inasmuch as, in the case of the ten thousand men, their commodities would have to be

sold *three times* over,—that is, once by the producer to the wholesale dealer, once by the wholesale dealer to the retailer, and once by the retailer to the consumer,—the amount of money required, instead of being either one thousand or two thousand times as much as in the case of the one thousand men (whose commodities were sold but twice), would be one and a half thousand times (as three sales are one and a half times as much as two)—that is, fifteen hundred times—as much as in the case of the one thousand men.

Stating the results of the preceding calculations in the simplest form, we find that different numbers of men, having a diversity and amount of production corresponding to their numbers, in making their exchanges with each other, require money in the following ratios, relatively to each other ; namely,—

10 men require	\$100
100 men require	100,000
1,000 men require	200,000,000
10,000 men require	300,000,000,000

But as the same money could be used many times over in the course of a year, they would not need an amount of money equal to the amount of their annual exchanges. If, then, we suppose the aggregate of their annual exchanges to be as above, and their whole stocks of money to be used three hundred times over in a year,—that is, once a day, calling three hundred the number of business days in a year,—we find that the stocks of money required would be as follows :—

10 men would require	\$ .33⅓
100 men would require	333.33⅓
1,000 men would require	666,666.33⅓
10,000 men would require	1,000,000,000.00

Or, to state the case in still another form, supposing their aggregate annual exchanges to be as above, and supposing their whole stocks of money to be bought and sold three hundred times over in the year, the money required, *per man*, would be as follows :—

10 men would require	\$ .03½ each.
100 men would require	3.33½ each.
1,000 men would require	666.66 each.
10,000 men would require	100,000.00 each.

If any body thinks he can dispute these figures, let him attempt it. If they cannot be disputed, they settle the law of prices.

## V.

The foregoing suppositions are, *first*, that the ten thousand men came finally to have ten thousand different *kinds* of commodities where they originally had but one,—namely, wheat; *secondly*, that they finally came to have ten thousand times as much wealth, *in quantity*, as they had originally, when all were producing wheat; *thirdly*, that wheat, which at its first sales brought only one cent a bushel, came afterwards to sell for ten thousand cents a bushel,—although the amount of wheat produced, and the supply of wheat for each individual, were the same in the one case as in the other; *fourthly*, that the same effect is produced upon the prices of all the rest of the ten thousand different kinds of commodities as upon the price of wheat; and, *fifthly*, that the annual sales made by the ten thousand men amounted finally to three hundred thousand million dollars, where their first sales had amounted to but ten cents,—the amount which the first man who left wheat-growing paid for his yearly supply of ten bushels.

It is not necessary to suppose that such a diversity and amount of production will ever be realized in actual life, although that is not impossible. It is sufficient that these figures give the *law* that governs prices, and consequently demonstrate that a constant and enormous increase of money must be necessary to keep pace with the increase of population, wealth, and trade, if we wish to give free scope to diversity and amount of production.

Unless money should be increased so as to keep pace with this increased demand, the result would be, *first*, obstruction to trade; *secondly*, obstruction to, and discouragement of, industry; and *thirdly*, a corresponding obstruction to the increase of wealth.

In fact, unless the amount of money were increased, these

hundred men, thousand men, and ten thousand men, instead of having a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand different *kinds* of commodities, would advance very little beyond the state they were in when all were producing wheat and nothing else. Some feeble attempts at other industries might possibly be made, but their money, like the shells and wampum of savages, would aid these attempts but slightly; and the men, unless they invented some other money, would either remain absolute savages, or attain only to a very low state of barbarism.

The practical question, then, is whether it is better that these ten thousand men should remain mere savages, scratching the earth with rude sticks and stones to produce each ten bushels of wheat, or whether it is better that they should all have the money—which stands in political economy for all the ingenuity, skill, science, machinery, and other capital which money can buy—that may be necessary to enable them to produce, in the greatest possible abundance, and of the greatest possible excellence, all the ten thousand commodities which will contribute to their happiness.

A full discussion of this subject would require much more space than can here be given to it. It may perhaps be continued at a future time, if that should be necessary. But enough has doubtless now been said to show the general *law* that governs prices, and consequently to show the necessity for an immense increase of money; an increase dependent upon the diversity and amount of production and the natural laws of trade applicable thereto; such an increase as no legislation can ascertain beforehand, or consequently prescribe.

LYSANDER SPOONER.

# GOLD AND SILVER

AS

## STANDARDS OF VALUE:

*THE FLAGRANT CHEAT IN REGARD  
TO THEM.*

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## GOLD AND SILVER AS STANDARDS OF VALUE:

### THE FLAGRANT CHEAT IN REGARD TO THEM.

**A**LL the usurpation, and tyranny, and extortion, and robbery, and fraud, that are involved in the monopoly of money are practised, and attempted to be justified, under the pretence of maintaining the standard of value. This pretence is intrinsically a false one throughout. And the whole motive for it is to afford some color of justification for such a monopoly of money as will enable the few holders of gold and silver coins (or of such other money as may be specially licensed and substituted for them) to extort, in exchange for them, more of other men's property than the coins (or their substitutes) are naturally and truly worth. That such is the fact, it is the purpose of this article to prove.

In order to be standards by which to measure the values of other things, it is plain that these coins must have a fixed and definite — or, at least, something like a fixed and definite — value of their own; just as a yard-stick, in order to be a standard by which to measure the length of other things, must necessarily have a fixed and definite length of its own; and just as a pound weight, in order to be a standard by which to measure the weight of other things, must necessarily have a fixed and definite weight of its own. It is only because a yard-stick has a fixed and definite length of its own that we are enabled to measure the length of other things by it. It is only because a pound weight has a fixed and definite weight of its own that we are enabled to measure the weight of other things by it. For a like reason, unless gold and silver coins have fixed and definite — or, at least, something like fixed and definite — values of their own, they can serve no purpose as standards by which to measure the values of other things.

The first question, then, to be settled is this, — namely, what is that fixed or definite value (or something like a fixed or definite value) which gold and silver coins have, and which enables them to be used as standards for measuring the values of other things ?

The answer is that the true and natural market value of gold and silver coins is that value, and only that value, which they have for use or consumption as metals, — that is, for plate, watches, jewelry, gilding, dentistry, and other ornamental and useful purposes. *This is the value at which they now stand in the markets of the world*, as is proved by the fact that doubtless not more than one-tenth, and very likely not more than one-twentieth, of all the gold and silver in the world (out of the mines) is in circulation as money. All the rest is in plate, watches, jewelry, and the like ; except that in some parts of the world, where property in general is unsafe, large amounts of gold and silver are hoarded and concealed to prevent their being taken by rapacious governments, or public enemies, or private robbers. Leaving these hoards out of account, doubtless nine-tenths, and very likely nineteen-twentieths, of all the gold and silver of the world are in other forms than coin.

And as fast as new gold and silver are taken out of the mines, they are first carried to the mints, and made into coins ; then they are carried all over the world by the operations of commerce, and given in exchange for other commodities. Then the goldsmiths and silversmiths, in every part of the world (unless among savages), are constantly taking these coins and converting them into such articles of plate, jewelry, and the like as they have call for. In this way the annual crops of gold and silver that are taken from the mines are worked up into articles for use as regularly as the annual crops of breadstuffs are consumed as food, or as the annual crops of iron, and cotton, and silk, and wool, and leather are worked up into articles for use.

And when the coins have thus been wrought into articles for use, they for ever remain so, unless these articles become unfashionable, or for some other reason undesirable. In that case, they are sent again to the mint, and converted again into coin ; then put into circulation again as money ; then taken out of circulation again by the goldsmiths and silversmiths, and wrought

again into plate, jewelry, and the like, for use. *They remain in circulation as money only while they are going from the mint to the goldsmiths and silversmiths.* And this route is a very short and quick one. An old coin is rarely seen, unless it has been hoarded.<sup>1</sup>

Unless new gold and silver were being constantly taken from the mines, and old and unfashionable plate and jewelry were being constantly recoined, these metals would soon disappear altogether as money.

All this proves that they have no true or natural value as money beyond their value for use or consumption as metals. *If they were worth more as money than they are for use or consumption as metals, they would, after being once coined, remain forever in circulation as money,* instead of being taken out of circulation and appropriated to these other uses.

In Asia, where these metals have been accumulating from time immemorial, and whither all the gold and silver of Europe and America — except so much as is caught up and converted into plate, watches, jewelry, etc., — is now going, and has been going for the last two thousand years,<sup>2</sup> very small amounts only are in circulation as money. Instead of using them as money, the people — or so many of them as are able — cover themselves with jewelry, fill their houses with plate, and their palaces and temples with gold and silver ornaments. Instead of investing their surplus wealth in fine houses, fine clothing, fine furniture, fine carriages, etc., as Europeans and Americans do, it is nearly all invested in gold, silver, and precious stones. In every thing else they are miserably poor. Even the rich are so poor that they cannot afford to indulge, as we do, in such luxuries as costly dwellings, clothing, furniture, and the like, which require frequent repairs, or quickly decay, or wear out with use. Hence their preference for ornaments of gold, silver, and precious stones, which never wear out, and retain their value for ever.

In China, which has at least a fourth, and perhaps a third, of all the population of the globe, gold and silver are not coined at

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<sup>1</sup> Old coins — those that are no more than twenty, thirty, or fifty years old — are so rare that they sell for high prices as curiosities.

<sup>2</sup> That is, from Europe for two thousand years, and from America from its first discovery by Europeans.

all by the Government. The only coin that is coined by the Government, and that is in circulation as money, is a small coin, of a base metal, worth no more than a fifth, sixth, or seventh of one of our cents. This coin is the common money of the people. And gold and silver are not in circulation at all as money, except some few foreign coins, and some plates, bars, or nuggets of gold and silver that pass by weight, and are generally weighed whenever they pass from one person to another.

In India, among two hundred millions of people, although the few rich have immense amounts of gold and silver plate and ornaments, very little gold and silver is in circulation as money. The mass of the people have either no money at all, — taking their pay for their labor in rice or other articles of food, — or have only certain shells, called cowries, of which it takes from fifty to a hundred to be worth one of our cents.<sup>1</sup>

In still other parts of Asia, gold and silver have little more circulation as money than in China and India. And yet Asia, I repeat, is the great and final market whither all the gold and silver of Europe and America — except what has been caught up and converted into plate, jewelry, and the like — is now going, and has been going for two thousand years, and whence they never return.

In Europe and America, the great increase of gold from the mines of California and Australia within the last thirty years has added only moderately to the amount of gold in circulation as money. But it has added very largely to the use of gold for plate, watches, jewelry, and the like. This greatly increased consumption of gold for ornamental purposes in England and America, and the increased flow of gold to Asia, to be there devoted to the same uses, account for the fact — which to many persons seems unaccountable — that the great amounts of gold taken from the mines have added so little to the amount in circulation as money.

And even though the amounts of gold and silver taken from the mines should hereafter be still greater — no matter how much greater — than they ever have been heretofore, they would all be disposed of in the same way; namely, first be converted

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<sup>1</sup> I believe the English have recently attempted to introduce a small copper coin, called an *anna*; but what is its precise value, or what the number in circulation, I do not know.

into coin and put into circulation as money, and then taken out of circulation and converted into plate, jewelry, and the like. *They would exist in the form of money only while they were performing their short and predestined journey from the mint to the goldsmiths and silversmiths.*

These facts — let it be emphatically repeated — prove beyond all color of doubt, or possibility of refutation, that the true and natural market value of gold and silver coins is that value, and only that value, which they have for use or consumption as metals. *Consequently it is at that value, and only at that value, that they have the least claim to be considered standards by which to measure the value of any thing else.* And any body who pretends to write about the value of money from any other basis than this is either an ignoramus or an impostor, — probably the latter.

II. But that gold and silver coins can have no true or natural market value as money beyond their value for use or consumption as metals will still more clearly appear when we consider why it is that they are in demand at all as money ; why it is that they have a market value ; and why it is that every man will accept them in exchange for any thing he has to sell.

The solution of these questions is that the original, primal source of all the demand for them as money — the essential and only reason why they have market value, and sell so readily in exchange for other commodities — is simply because they are wanted *to be taken out of circulation, and converted into plate, jewelry, and other articles of use.*

They are wanted for these purposes by all the people on the globe. Hence they are carried at once from the countries in which they are first obtained — the mining countries — to all the other countries of the world as articles of commerce, and given in exchange for such other commodities as the holders of them prefer for the gratification of their wants and desires.

If they were not wanted to be taken out of circulation and wrought into articles of use, they would have no market value as money, and could not circulate at all as money. No one would have any motive to buy them, and no one would give any thing of value in exchange for them.

The reason of this is that gold and silver, in the state of coin,

cannot be used.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, in the state of coin, they produce nothing to the owner. A man cannot afford to keep them as an investment, because that would be equivalent to losing the use of his capital. He must, therefore, either exchange them for something he can *use*—something that will be productive and yield an income; or else he must convert them into plate, jewelry, etc., in which form he can use them and get an income from them.

It is, therefore, only when gold and silver coins have been wrought up into plate, watches, jewelry, etc., that they can be said to be *invested*; because it is only in that form that they can be *used*, be productive, or yield an income.

The income which they yield *as investments*—that is, the income which they yield when *used* in the form of plate, jewelry, etc.—is yielded mostly in the shape of *a luxurious pleasure*—the pleasure of gratified fancy, vanity, or pride.

This pleasure is the same as that which is derived from the use of ornaments generally; such as feathers, and ribbons, and laces, and precious stones, and many other things that have no value at all as food, clothing, or shelter, yet bring great prices in the market simply for their uses as ornaments.

The amount of this income we will suppose to be six per cent. *per annum* on their whole value. That is to say, a person who is able, and has tastes in that direction, will give six dollars a year for the simple *pleasure* of *using* one hundred dollars' worth of plate, jewelry, etc.

This six dollars' worth of pleasure, then, or six dollars' worth of gratified fancy, vanity, or pride, is the annual income from an investment of one hundred dollars in gold and silver plate, jewelry, and the like.

This, be it noticed, is the *only income* that gold and silver are capable of yielding; because plate, jewelry, and the like are the only forms in which they can be used. So long as they remain

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<sup>1</sup> The sale of them as money is not a use of them any more than the sale of a horse is a use of the horse. For convenience in speech, we call the buying and selling of money a use of it, but it is no more a use of it than the buying and selling of any other merchandise is a use of such merchandise. When a man says he wants money to *use*, he means only that he wants to part with it,—that he wants either to pay a debt with it, or to give it in exchange for something that he can use or consume.

in coin, they cannot be used, and therefore cannot yield an income.

It is, then, only this six per cent. annual income, this six dollars' worth of pleasure, which gold and silver yield as ornaments, — that is, as investments, — that is really the cause of all the demand for them in the market, and consequently of their being bought and sold as money.

By this it is not meant that every man who takes a gold or silver coin as money takes it because he *himself* wants a piece of gold or silver plate or jewelry; nor because he *himself* intends or wishes to work it into plate or jewelry, — for such is not the case probably with one man in a thousand, or perhaps one man in ten thousand, of those who take the coin. Each man takes it as money simply because he can sell it again. But he can sell it again solely because some other man wants it, or because some other man will want it, in order to convert it into articles for use. He can sell it solely because the goldsmith, the silversmith, the dentist, the gilder, etc., will *sometime* come along and buy it, *take it out of circulation*, and work it up into some article for consumption, — that is, for use.

This final consumption or use, then, is the main-spring that sets the coins in circulation, and keeps them in circulation, as money.

It is solely the consumption or use of them, in other forms than coin, that creates any demand for them in the market as money.

It is, then, only the value which gold and silver have as productive investments in articles of use, — in plate, watches, jewelry, and the like, — that creates any demand for them, or enables them to circulate as money.

And since this value which the coins have for use or consumption as metals is the only value that enables them to circulate at all as money, *it is plain that it necessarily fixes and limits their true and natural value as money.* Consequently any body who gives more for them as money than they are worth for use or consumption as metals gives more for them than they are worth for any purpose whatever, — more, in short, than their true and natural market value.

We all can understand that, if wheat were to circulate as

money, it could have no more true or natural market value as money than it had for use or consumption as food ; since it would be its value for food alone that would induce anybody to accept it as money. All the wheat that should be in circulation as money would be destined to be taken out of circulation, and consumed as food ; and if anybody should give more for it as money than it was worth for food, he, or some subsequent owner, would have to submit to a loss, whenever the wheat should come to be consumed as food.

For these reasons, the wheat as money could be no true or natural equivalent for any commodity that had more true or natural market value for use or consumption than the wheat.

So anybody can understand that, if silk, wool, cotton, and flax were to circulate as money, they could have no more true or natural market value as money than they had for use or consumption for clothing, or other analogous purposes. Their value for these other purposes would alone give them their value as money. Of course, then, their true and natural market value as money would be fixed and limited by their value for these other uses. They could plainly have no greater value as money than they had for clothing and other articles of use. As they would all be destined to be taken out of circulation, and converted into clothing or other articles of use, it is plain that, if anybody should give more for them as money than they were worth for clothing and other articles of use, he, or some subsequent owner, would have to submit to a loss whenever they should come to be converted into clothing, or any other article of use.

The same reasons that would apply to wheat, and silk, and wool, and cotton, and flax, if they were to circulate as money, and that would fix and limit their value as money, apply equally to gold and silver coins, and fix and limit their value as money.

We are brought, therefore, to the same conclusion as before, — namely, that the value which the coins have for use or consumption as metals is their only true and natural value as money. Consequently, this value which they have as metals is the value, and the only value, *at which they can be said to be standards* by which to measure the value of any thing else.

III. Assuming it now to be established that the true and natural market value of gold and silver coins as money is absolutely



fixed and limited by their value for use or consumption as metals, and that their value for use or consumption as metals is the only value at which they can be called standards for measuring the values of other things, we come to another proposition, — namely, that the use or circulation of any possible amount of paper money has no tendency whatever to reduce the coins below their true and natural market value as metals, or, consequently, to diminish their value as standards.

Plainly the paper can have no such power or tendency, *because the paper does not come at all in competition with the coins for any of those uses which alone give them their value.* We cannot make a watch, a spoon, a necklace, or an ear-ring out of the paper, and, therefore, the paper cannot compete with the coins for those uses. *Consequently it cannot diminish their market value for those uses, or — what is the same thing — their value as standards.*

If the coins were never used at all as money, they would have the same true and natural market value that they have now. Their use or circulation as money adds nothing to their true and natural market value as metals, and their entire disuse as money would take nothing from their true and natural market value as metals. Consequently it would not diminish their value *as standards.* In other words, it would not reduce the coins below their true and natural value as standards.

Every dollar's worth of other vendible property in the world has precisely the same amount of true and natural market value as has a dollar in coin. And if every dollar's worth of other vendible property was bought and sold as money in competition with the coins, the true and natural market value of the coins would not be lessened thereby. They would still have their true and natural amount of market value, — that is, their value for plate, jewelry, and the like, — the same as though all this other property were *not* bought and sold in competition with them. The coins and all other property would be bought and sold as money only at their true and natural market values, respectively, *for their different uses.* One dollar's worth of any one kind of property would have the same amount of true and natural market value for its appropriate use that a coin, or any other dollar's worth of property, would have for its appropriate use. But none of them would have any additional value on account of their being bought and sold as money.

Now, all the other vendible property of the world cannot be actually cut up into pieces or parcels, each capable of being carried about in the pocket, and each having the same amount of true and natural market value as a dollar in coin. But it is not only theoretically possible, but actually practicable, that nearly or quite all this other vendible property should be represented by contracts on paper, — such as certificates, notes, checks, drafts, and bills of exchange, — and that these contracts shall not only have the same value with the coins in the market as money, but that, as money, they generally shall be preferred to the coins.

These contracts are preferred to the coins as money not only because they are more convenient, but also because we can have so many times more of them.<sup>1</sup>

Every *solvent* piece of paper that can circulate as money — whether it be a certificate, note, check, draft, bill of exchange, or whatever else — represents property existing *somewhere* that is legally holden for the redemption or payment of the paper, and that can either be itself delivered in redemption of it, or be otherwise made available for its payment. And if every dollar's worth of such property in the world could be represented in the market by a contract on paper promising to deliver it on demand, and if every dollar's worth could be delivered on demand in redemption of the paper that represented it, the world then could have an amount of money equal to its entire vendible property. And yet clearly every dollar of paper would be equal in value to a dollar of gold or silver. Clearly, also, all this paper would do nothing towards reducing gold and silver coins below their true and natural market values, — that is, their values for use or consumption *as metals*.

The gold and silver coins would be good standards — as good perhaps as any that can be had — by which to measure the values of all this other property. But a gold dollar, or a silver dollar, would have no more true or natural market value than would each and every other dollar's worth of property that was measured by it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We can have at least a hundred and fifty times as many paper dollars as we can gold and silver dollars. And yet every one of these paper dollars, if it represents a dollar's worth of actual property that can either be itself delivered in redemption of the paper, or can otherwise be made available for the redemption of the paper, will have the same value in the market as the coins.

<sup>2</sup> To say that a gold dollar, or a silver dollar, has any more true or natural market

Under such a system of currency as this, there could evidently be no inflation of prices, relatively to the true and natural market values of gold and silver. Such a currency would no more inflate the prices of one thing than of another. It would just as much inflate the prices of gold and silver themselves as of any thing else. Gold and silver would stand at their true and natural market values *as metals*; and all other things would also stand at their true and natural values for their respective uses.

No more of this currency could be kept in circulation than would be necessary or convenient for the purchase and sale of commodities at their true and natural market values, relatively to gold and silver; for if at any time the paper was not worth as much, or would not buy as much, in the market as gold or silver, it would be returned to the issuers for redemption in gold and silver, and thus be taken out of circulation.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we are brought again to the conclusion that it is only when gold and silver coins are suffered to stand at their true and natural values as metals—which are also their true and natural values as standards—that they can be said to measure truly the values of other things.

At their values as metals the coins serve as standards by which to measure the value of all other *money*, as well as of all other property. But at any other than their true and natural values as metals they will naturally and truly measure the value of nothing whatever,—neither of other money, nor of any thing else.

#### IV. We come now to still another proposition,—namely, that

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value than any other dollar's worth of vendible property is just as absurd as it would be to say that a yardstick has more length than a yard of cloth or a yard of any thing else; or as it would be to say that a pound weight has more weight than a pound of sugar or a pound of stone.

<sup>1</sup> The bankers have no motive to issue more of their notes than are needed for circulation at coin prices; because their only motive for issuing their notes at all is to get interest on them *while they are in circulation*. If they issue no more than are needed for circulation at coin prices, the notes, as a general rule, will remain in circulation until they come back to the bankers in payment of notes discounted; and the bankers will have no occasion to redeem them otherwise than by receiving them in payment of notes discounted. But if the bankers issue more notes than are needed for circulation at coin prices, the surplus notes will come back for redemption in coin before they have earned any interest. Thus the bankers will not only fail of getting any profit from their issues, but will subject themselves to the necessity and inconvenience of redeeming their notes with coin. They, therefore, have no chance of profit, but necessarily subject themselves to inconvenience, and perhaps loss, if they issue more notes than are wanted for circulation at coin prices.

no possible amount of paper money that can be put in circulation *in any one country* that is open to free commerce with the rest of the world can affect the true or natural market value of gold or silver coins *in that country*.

If the coins should be entirely excluded from circulation by the paper, they still would have the same true and natural market value as if they were the only money in circulation; for, in both cases alike, their true and natural market value *in that country* would be determined by their value *in the markets of the world*.

The coins can be carried from any one part of the world to any other part at so small an expense that they can have no appreciably greater market value in any one part than in any other. And their true and natural market value in all parts of the world depends upon the general consumption of them as metals, and not at all upon their circulation as money. They are everywhere simply merchandise in the market of the world, waiting for consumption, like any other merchandise.

This fact—that the disuse of the coins as money in any one country cannot reduce their value in that country below their value in the markets of the world—was fully tested in the United States for fourteen or fifteen years,—that is, from 1861, or 1862, to 1876. During the whole of that time gold and silver were wholly absent from general circulation as money. Yet they had the same value here as metals that they had in other parts of the world either as money or as metals. And they were as much used during that time for plate, watches, jewelry, and the like as they ever were.

The people of the United States comprise not more than a twenty-fifth—perhaps not more than a thirtieth—part of the population of the globe. And if they were to abandon the use of gold and silver entirely, not only for money, but for plate, watches, jewelry, and every other purpose whatever; *if they were even to banish the metals themselves from the country*,—they thereby would reduce their value in the markets of the world by not more than a twenty-fifth, or perhaps a thirtieth, of their present value. How absurd, then, to pretend that the simple disuse of them as money by one twenty-fifth, or one-thirtieth, part of the population of the globe can have any appreciable effect upon their market value the world over!

These facts prove that all restrictions imposed by law in any one country upon all other money than gold and silver coins, under pretence of maintaining the true standard of value in that country, are the merest farces, not to say the merest frauds; that they have no tendency of that kind whatever; that they only serve to derange the standard in that country by establishing a monopoly of money, and giving a monopoly and extortionate price to the coins in that country, instead of suffering them to stand at their true and natural value, both as metals and as standards, and also at the same value that they have in the markets of the world.

Furthermore, if any or all other nations have been wicked and tyrannical enough to give, or attempt to give, a monopoly and extortionate price to gold and silver coins by restrictions upon any or all other money, that is no reason why we should be guilty of the same crime. So far as such restrictions may have affected the price of the coins in the markets of the world, we may not be able to save either ourselves or the rest of mankind from the natural consequences of such a monopoly. But we are under no more obligation to follow the bad example of these nations in this matter than in any other. Because other nations enslave and impoverish their people by depriving them of all money and all credit by establishing a monopoly of money, that is no reason why we should do so. All our efforts in this direction do nothing towards making the coins better standards of value than they otherwise would be.

V. It is an utter absurdity to talk about gold and silver coins having any more true or natural value as money than they have for use or consumption as metals. To say that they have more true or natural market value as money than they have for use as metals is equivalent to saying that they have more true and natural value *for being bought and sold* than they have as commodities for use or consumption. And to say that they have more true or natural market value *for being bought and sold* than they have as commodities for use or consumption is just as absurd as it would be to say that houses, and lands, and cattle, and horses, and food, and clothing, have more true and natural market value *for being bought and sold* than they have as commodities for use

VI. Finally, the true and natural market value of any and every vendible thing whatever is that value, and only that value, which it will maintain in the market in competition with any and all other vendible things that can be brought into the market in competition with it. This is the only rule by which the true and natural market value of any vendible thing whatever can be ascertained; and this rule applies as much to gold and silver coins as to any other commodities whatever.

Tried by this rule, we know that the coins will bear no higher value in the market as money than they will for use or consumption as metals; because mankind have other money which they prefer to the coins, and which—if permitted to do so—they will always buy and sell as money rather than give more for the coins as money than they are worth for use or consumption as metals.

VII. To give color to the idea that *solvent* notes, promising to pay money on demand, tend to reduce the standard of value below that of the coins, the advocates of that idea are accustomed to say *that such notes cost nothing, and have no value in themselves*; and, consequently, that to suffer them to be bought and sold as money in the place of coin, and as if they were of equal value with coin, necessarily depreciates the market value of the coin at least for the time being; that, in other words, it reduces the standard of value for the time being.

The answer to this pretence is that nobody claims or supposes that a promissory note, *simply as so much paper*, has any value. But the contract written upon the paper—if the note be a solvent one—is in the nature of a lien upon so much material property of the maker of the note as is sufficient to pay the note, and as can be taken by legal process and sold for payment of the note.

Every *solvent* promissory note—whether it circulates as money, or not—is in the nature of a lien upon the property of the maker,—that is, upon the property that is legally holden for the payment of the note, and that can be taken by legal process, and applied to the payment of the note.

The value of the note, therefore, is not in the mere paper as paper, but in the property on which the contract written upon paper gives the holder a lien for the amount of the note.

In this respect, a banker's note, circulating as money, is just like any other man's note that is locked up in the desk or safe of the holder. The fact that it is bought and sold from hand to hand as money—that is, in exchange for other property—makes no change whatever in the character or value of the note.

In the case of a mortgage upon land, the value is not in the mere paper, as paper, upon which the mortgage is written, but in the land on which the mortgage gives the mortgagee a lien for the amount of his debt. So in the case of a note, if it be a *solvent* one, it is in the nature of a lien upon, or conditional title to, the property of the maker of the note,—property that is legally holden for the payment of the note, and that can be taken by legal process, and applied to the payment of the note.

To say that such a note has no value in itself is just as absurd as it would be to say that a mortgage on land has no value in itself. Everybody knows that neither the mortgage nor the note has any value as mere paper; that the value is in the land, or the property, that is holden, or liable to be taken, for the payment of the mortgage or note.

In every case where material property is represented by paper,—as in the case of a deed, mortgage, certificate of stock, certificate of deposit, check, note, draft, or whatever else,—the value is in the property represented, and not in the paper that represents it. The paper has no value, except as it contains the evidence of the right to the property represented by it. And this is as true in the case of what is called *paper money* as in all other cases where property is represented by paper. The value of the money is not in the paper as paper, but in the property represented by the paper, and to which, or on which, the contract written on the paper gives a title, claim, or lien. The property that is represented by the paper, and which constitutes the real money, is just as real substantial property as is gold, or silver, or any other money or property whatever. And it is really an incorrect and false use of the term to call such money *paper money*, as if the paper itself were the real money; or as if there were no money, and no value, outside of the paper. A dollar's worth of land, wheat, iron, wool, or leather, is just as much a dollar *in real value* as is a dollar of gold or silver; and when represented by paper, it is just as real money, so far as value is concerned, as is gold and silver.

Every *solvent* promissory note is a mere representative of, or lien upon, or conditional title to, material property in the hands of the maker; property that has an equal value with coin; that is legally holden for the payment of coin; and that can be taken by legal process, and sold for coin, which must be applied to the payment of the note. When, therefore, a man sells a *solvent* promissory note, he sells a legal title to, or claim to, or lien upon, so much actual property in the hands of the maker of the note as is necessary to pay the note; property which men have just as much right to buy and sell from hand to hand as money, if they so please, — that is, in exchange for other property, — as they have to buy and sell coin, or any other money that can be invented.

And it matters not how many of these notes are in circulation as money, provided they are all solvent; since, in that case, each note represents a separate piece of property from all the others; each separate piece of property being equal in value to coin, and capable of insuring the payment of coin. If, therefore, all the material wealth of a country were thus represented by paper, the paper, — that is, the property represented by the paper — would all have the same value as the same nominal amount of coin; and the circulation of all this paper as money would do nothing towards reducing the coins below their true and natural value *as metals*, or below their value in the markets of the world. Consequently, it would do nothing towards depreciating the true and natural standard of value. All this other money would have the same value, dollar for dollar, as the coin; and the true and natural value of the coins as standards of value would not be changed.

There certainly can be no question that a *solvent* promissory note that circulates from hand to hand as money — which everybody is willing to accept in payment for other property — is just as legitimate a piece of paper, and has just as much value as a lien, or as evidence of a lien, upon the property that is holden for its payment, as any other promissory note whatever. If such a note be not legitimate, if it have no value, then no promissory note whatever is legitimate, or has value. And if the issue of such notes for circulation as money — that is, among those who voluntarily give and receive them in exchange for other property — be illegitimate, and ought to be suppressed, then all promis-



sory notes whatsoever are equally illegitimate, and ought to be suppressed. But if any one such note, which any one man, or company of men, can make, be legitimate, then any and every other similar note, which any other man, or company of men, can make, is equally legitimate.

VIII. But to hide the deception that is attempted to be practised under pretence of maintaining the standard of value, it is said that there is but a small amount of coin in comparison with the notes that can be put in circulation as money; and that it is therefore impossible that any great number of notes, promising to pay coin *on demand*, can be solvent; that the property that is nominally holden to pay the notes cannot be made to bring any more coin than there really is; and that, therefore, the notes, if more numerous than the coins, must be spurious; that they promise to pay something which the makers do not possess, and which they consequently are unable to pay, no matter how much other property they may have.

One answer to this argument is that, on this principle, no promissory note whatever—whether issued for circulation or not—could ever be considered solvent, unless the maker kept constantly on hand an equivalent amount of coin with which to redeem it. Whereas we know that all notes are considered solvent, provided the makers have sufficient property to bring the coin *when it is likely to be called for*. And this is the principle on which all ordinary commercial credit rests.

Another answer to this argument is that, however valid it may be against notes that are either not solvent, or not known to be solvent,—that is, not issued on the credit of property sufficient to pay the notes,—it has no weight against notes that are solvent, and that are known to be solvent; because, first, if the notes are solvent, and are known to be solvent, the holders usually prefer them to coin, and therefore seldom present them for redemption in coin; and because, secondly, the notes issued for circulation are issued by discounting other solvent notes that are to be held by the bankers, and the circulating notes are, therefore, all wanted for paying the notes discounted, and, with rare exceptions, will all come back to the bankers in payment of the notes discounted; and it is, therefore, only rarely that any other redemption of the circulating notes is called for.

The bankers soon learn by experience how often coin will be called for, and how much, therefore, it is necessary for them to keep on hand for such contingencies. This amount a due regard for their own interests will induce them to keep on hand, because they cannot afford to be sued on their notes, or to have their credit injured by not meeting their notes when coin is demanded.<sup>1</sup>

The opposers of a *solvent* paper currency either ignorantly overlook, or craftily and dishonestly attempt to keep out of sight, the vital fact that, in all safe, legitimate, solvent, and prudent banking, all the notes issued for circulation will be wanted to pay the notes discounted, and will come back to the banks in payment of notes discounted; and that it is only rarely that any other redemption—redemption in coin—will be demanded or desired.

The pretence, therefore, that no more notes can be honestly issued for circulation than there is coin kept constantly on hand for their redemption is nothing but a pretence, since, however great the amount of notes issued,—provided they be solvent ones,—it is only a mere fraction of them—probably not so much even as one per cent.—that will ever have any call to be redeemed in coin.

IX. But it is often said that the panics which have usually occurred after any considerable increase of money by the issue of paper are proof that the paper was *not* equal in value, dollar for dollar, with coin. Those who say this claim that the panics are caused by the attempts of the holders of the notes to convert them into coin. These attempts have taken the form of runs upon the banks for the redemption of their notes in coin. And it is claimed that these runs upon the banks for coin are proof that the notes are *not* equal in value, dollar for dollar, with coin. And this proof, say they, is made complete by the fact that the banks, when thus run upon for coin, cannot redeem their notes in coin.

But these runs upon banks for coin by no means prove that

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<sup>1</sup> The principle named in the text of course applies only to *solvent* banks. It has nothing to do with insolvent ones, whose business is to swindle the public. As a general rule, only those banks can be relied on as solvent where the private property of the stockholders is holden for the notes of the company. Not that there *may not* be other solvent ones,—for undoubtedly there may be,—but experience thus far has been largely against all others.

*solvent* notes are not equal in value, dollar for dollar, with coin. They prove only that the holders of the notes have doubted the solvency of the banks. These runs have never occurred in countries where the banks were known to be solvent. They have occurred only in countries where the solvency of the banks was doubted, as in England and the United States. Thus, in Scotland there is no history (so far as I know or believe) of a single run upon the banks in a period of eighty years, — that is, from 1765 to 1845. There may have been runs in a few instances upon some particular bank, but none upon the banks generally. And why? Not at all because these banks kept on hand large amounts of coin, — for they really kept very little, — but solely because the public had a perfect assurance of the solvency of the banks; an assurance resulting from the facts that each of the banking companies had a very large number of stockholders, and that the private property (including the real estate) of all these stockholders was holden for the debts of the banks. The public, therefore, knew, or felt perfectly assured, not only that the notes of the banks were all solvent, but also that they would all speedily go back to the banks, and be redeemed by being accepted in payment of notes discounted. Under these circumstances, the public not only made no runs upon the banks for coin, but even preferred the notes to the coin.

In England, on the contrary, the runs upon the banks during the same period of eighty years were very frequent. And why? Because nobody had any abiding confidence in the solvency of the banks. The Government, for the sake of giving a valuable monopoly to the Bank of England, had virtually enacted that there should be no other solvent banks in England; or at least none that could be publicly known to be solvent. This enactment was that, with the exception of the Bank of England, no bank in England should consist of more than six partners. Rich men — those who had credit and wished to use it — could generally do better with it than to put it into a company where there were only six partners, and where the credit of the partnership could not be sufficiently known to be of much value, or to protect them against runs for coin. The result was that, with the exception of the Bank of England, all, or very nearly all, the banking business in England was in the hands of men who were not only

unworthy of credit, but really had no credit, except so long as they were ready to redeem their notes either in coin or Bank of England notes.<sup>1</sup>

In many or most of the United States, up to 1860, the solvency of the banks was rendered doubtful, or worse than doubtful, by legislation that authorized the banks to issue notes to two, three, or four times the amount of their capital; that authorized the stockholders themselves to borrow these notes of the banks, and then exempted the private property of the stockholders from all liability for the debts of the banks. Of course it often happened that no reliance could be placed on the solvency of such banks, and that runs, which they could not meet, would be made upon them for coin.

But clearly the runs upon such banks as these did nothing towards proving that the notes of banks, *known to be solvent*, were not equal in value, dollar for dollar, with coin.

But the panic of 1873, in the United States, did not proceed at all from any doubt as to the solvency of the banks, but wholly from the insufficiency in the amount of money. The destruction of the State banks by a ten per cent. tax on their issues; the limitation upon the issues of the national banks to the sum of three hundred and fifty-six million dollars; and the limitation upon the greenbacks to three hundred million dollars, — reduced the currency to six hundred and fifty-six million dollars. And these six hundred and fifty-six million dollars, being, for want of redemption, some fifteen per cent. below par of specie, reduced the actual amount of money to about five hundred and fifty-eight millions. The population of the country in 1873 was at least forty millions, and the property probably forty thousand millions. This lack of money, compared with population and property, compelled traffic of all kinds to be done on credit, instead of for cash. Every thing was bought on credit, and sold on credit. And the same commodity, in going from producer to consumer, was generally sold two,

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<sup>1</sup> One cause that made the English banking companies — companies consisting of not more than six partners — unworthy of credit was that, although the private property of the partners was holden for the partnership debts, yet the condition of land titles in England was such as to make land practically unavailable as a basis of credit. The credit of the bankers, therefore, rested only on their *personal* property. That is, the credit of each banking company rested, *at best*, only on the *personal* property of not more than six persons.

three, four, or more times over *on credit*. The consequence was that this private indebtedness among the people had become so enormous, in proportion to the money with which to cancel it, as to place the credit of the whole community at the mercy of a few holders of money, who had no motive but to extort the utmost possible from the necessities of the community. The result was the general collapse of substantially all credit.

Had there been freedom in banking, nothing of this kind would have occurred. The bankers would have been so numerous as to be able to furnish all the money that could have been kept in circulation. They would probably have supplied three, four, or five times the amount we actually had. Traffic between man and man would have been almost wholly done for cash, instead of on credit; and nothing in the form of a panic would have been known.

The panic of 1873, therefore, does nothing towards proving that *solvent* notes, issued for circulation as money, — no matter how great their amount, — are not equal in value, dollar for dollar, with coin.

X. But the argument that is offered perhaps with the most assurance as proof that any increase of money by means of paper reduces for the time being the gold or silver dollar below its true and natural market value is derived from the rise that takes place in the prices of commodities, relatively to gold and silver, whenever the currency is increased by the addition of paper.

This argument, if it be an honest one, implies an ignorance of two things; namely, first, an ignorance of the fact that the paper is employed as capital to diversify industry and increase production; and, secondly, an ignorance of the effect which a diversity of industry and increase of production have upon the prices of commodities, relatively to any fixed standard of value. This effect has been illustrated in a previous number of this Review, and need not be repeated here.<sup>1</sup>

The diversity of industry and increase of production that follow an increase of currency by paper, and the effect which that diversity and production have upon the prices of commodities,

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<sup>1</sup> See "The Law of Prices" in the "Radical Review" for August, 1877.

utterly destroy the argument that the rise in prices results from any depreciation in the value of coin below its true and natural value as a metal.

A second answer to the argument drawn from the rise in prices under an abundant paper currency is to be found in the theory of the very men who oppose such a currency. Their theory is that, by the prohibition of the paper, the coins can be made to have a "purchasing power as money" *indefinitely greater than their true and natural market value as metals*. They hold that the coins already have "a purchasing power" as money far greater than their true and natural value as metals.

Now, inasmuch as every dollar of *solvent* paper currency represents — by giving a lien upon — so much real property as is equal to the coin in true and natural market value, it necessarily follows, on their own theory, that the paper has no other effect than to bring the coins *down*, from their unnatural, fictitious, and monopoly price, or "purchasing power," to their true and natural value as metals; or, what is the same thing, to bring all other property *up* to its true and natural market value, relatively to the coins as metals.

XI. It will now be taken for granted that the following propositions have been established; namely, —

1. That the only true and natural market value of gold and silver coins is that value, and only that value, which they have for use or consumption as metals; that this is the value at which they now stand in the markets of the world; that it is the only value that has any stability; and that it is the only value at which they can be said to be standards for measuring the value of any other property whatever.

2. That inasmuch as paper money does not compete at all with gold and silver coins for any of those uses that give them their value, the true and natural market value of the coins cannot be reduced below their value as metals, or their value in the markets of the world, by any possible amount of paper money that can be kept in circulation; and that, consequently, the paper money, however great its amount, can do nothing towards reducing the coins as standards of value below their true and natural value as standards, — that is, their value as metals.

3. That the coins, standing at their true and natural value as metals, are as much standards by which to measure the value of all other *money* as of all other property; and, consequently, that all other money that has the same value in the market, dollar for dollar, with the coins, only increases the amount of money, without lowering the standard of value; and that, if all the other vendible property in the world were cut up into pieces or parcels, each of the same value with a dollar (or any given number of dollars) of coin, and each piece or parcel were represented by a promissory note, and all these notes were to be bought and sold as money in competition with the coins, the coins would not be thereby reduced below their true and natural market value as metals, nor, consequently, below their true and natural market value as standards.

4. That to say that the true and natural market value of the coins as standards of value is diminished by increasing the number of dollars, so long as the additional dollars are of the same value, dollar for dollar, with the standards, is equivalent to saying that the coins have no fixed—nor any thing like a fixed—value of their own; and that they are, consequently, unfit for, and incapable of being, standards of value; that to say that increasing the number of dollars, all of one and the same value, is diminishing the value of the dollar is just as absurd as it would be to say that increasing the number of yardsticks, all of one and the same length, diminishes the length of the yardstick; or as it would be to say that increasing the number of pound-weights, all of one and the same weight, diminishes the weight of the pound-weight.

XII. The four propositions in the last preceding section are so manifestly true that no one, I apprehend, will even attempt to controvert them otherwise than by asserting that the present market value of the coins does not rest wholly upon their value as metals, but, in part, upon these further facts,—namely, that the coins are money, and, secondly, that they are made a privileged money by the prohibitions or limitations imposed by law upon all other money.

If it should be said—as it constantly is said—that the fact of the coins being made money, and the further fact of prohibitions

or limitations being imposed upon all other money, have given the coins "a purchasing power" far above their true and natural value as metals, the answer is that such a "purchasing power" is an unjust and extortionate power—a mere power of robbery—arbitrarily granted to the holders of the coins, from no motive whatever but to enable them to get more for their coins than they are really worth; or, what is the same thing, to enable them to coerce all other persons into selling their property to the holders of the coins for less than it is worth. And this is really the only motive that was ever urged against the free purchase and sale of all other money in competition with the coins.

The frauds and extortions that are attempted to be practised by making the coins a privileged money, under cover of the pretence of maintaining the standard of value, may be illustrated in this way; namely,—

In some parts of Europe, there is said to be quite a trade in humming birds. While living, they are wanted, I suppose, as pets, the same as parrots, canaries, and some other birds. When dead, after passing through the hands of the taxidermists, they are wanted as ornaments.

Let us suppose there were such a trade in this country. And let us suppose the whole number of humming birds, already caught, in the country, to be ten thousand. And let us suppose their market value as pets and for ornaments to be ten dollars each. The market value of the whole ten thousand humming birds, then, would be one hundred thousand dollars.

And suppose these ten thousand humming birds to be owned by one hundred men, each man owning one hundred birds,—that is, one thousand dollars' worth.

But suppose further that, in consideration of humming birds being rare, beautiful, containing much value in small space, and incapable of being rapidly increased, the government should adopt and legalize them as money, *as standards of value*.

And suppose that, under pretence of maintaining this standard of value unimpaired, the government should prohibit all other money, and should also prohibit all substitutes and all contracts—such as notes, checks, drafts, bills of exchange, and the like—by which the necessity for buying and selling the humming birds themselves—the legalized money—should be avoided.



Suppose, in short, that, under pretence of maintaining this standard of value, the government should establish, in the hands of these hundred owners of the humming birds, an absolute monopoly of money, and of every thing that could serve the purposes of money.

What, now, would be the market price of the humming birds? And what would become of the standard of value? Why, we know that the one hundred owners of these ten thousand humming birds, having thus secured to themselves an absolute monopoly of all the money in the country, would demand for their birds as money, a hundred, a thousand, or a million times more than their true and natural value,—that is, more than they were worth simply as humming birds. By the monopoly of money, they would be put in possession of a substantially absolute power over all the property and labor of our forty-five millions of people. There would be but one holder of money for every four hundred and fifty thousand people. These four hundred and fifty thousand people could sell neither their labor nor their property to anybody except this single owner of humming birds. And they could sell to him only at such prices as he should choose to give. And he, knowing his power over their necessities, would not part with one of his birds, unless he should get in exchange for it a hundred, a thousand, or a million times more than it was really and truly worth. In this way this pretended standard of value would be made to measure—that is, to procure for its possessor—a hundred, a thousand, or a million times more than its own true and natural value.

Of course, everybody in the country, except these hundred men, would be robbed of all their property at once, unless there should chance to be some few so situated that they could contrive to live within themselves without selling either their property or their labor. And these hundred men would soon make themselves masters and owners of substantially all the property in the country. All the other people of the country would be at their mercy, and would be permitted to live, or suffered to die, as the pleasure of the one hundred men should dictate.

Such would be the effect of establishing a monopoly of money under pretence of establishing a standard of value.

But suppose, now, on the other hand, that all men were allowed

to exercise their natural right of buying and selling as money any thing and every thing which they should choose to buy and sell as money. What would be the result? Why, we know from experience that, instead of buying and selling the humming birds themselves, they would rarely buy one of them. On the contrary, they would buy and sell notes, checks, drafts, and the like, representing perhaps a large portion of the property of the country. These notes, checks, and drafts would be nominally and legally made payable in humming birds, and would be in the nature of liens upon the property of the makers. And any holder of one of them could, if he chose, not only demand humming birds in payment, but, if that were refused, could sue for, and recover judgment for, so many actual humming birds as the note promised. And the property of the maker of the note would be taken by legal process, and sold for humming birds, and nothing else; and these birds would then be paid over to the holder of the note.

But we know, at the same time, that the humming birds, when thus actually paid over to the holder of the note, would be worth no more in the market than the note was before he sued on it; that they would buy no more of any thing he wanted to buy than would the note; that nearly or quite everybody who had any thing to sell would rather have the note than the birds; and that, unless he wanted to keep the birds as pets or for ornaments, he would have made a bad bargain for himself; that even if he wanted the birds to keep, he could have bought them in the market with the note at the same price and with much less trouble to himself than it cost him to obtain them by his suit; and finally, that he had made a fool and a curmudgeon of himself by bringing a suit, and taking trouble upon himself, and giving trouble to the maker of the note, in order to get something that he did not want, and which it would be a trouble and loss to him to keep, and a trouble to get rid of; for all which he would get no profit or compensation whatever.

As sensible men would not be likely to go through such unprofitable operations as this, the result would be that men generally, instead of buying and selling the humming birds themselves as money, would seldom or never buy them, except when they had a special use for them as humming birds; but, in place

of them, would buy and sell such notes, checks, drafts, and the like as had an equal value in the market with the birds, and were more convenient to keep, handle, and transport than the birds. The birds themselves would continue to stand, in the market, at their true and natural value as humming birds, and, as such, would be very good standards of value by which to measure the value of all other money, as well as of all other property; and all traffic between man and man would be the exchange of one kind of property for another, each at its full, true, and natural value, with no extortion or coercion on either side.

This supposed case of the humming birds gives a fair illustration of the sense, motives, and honesty of all that class of men who are continually crying out for prohibitions or limitations upon all money except gold and silver coins, or some other privileged money, under pretence of maintaining the standard of value. They all have but one and the same motive,—namely, the monopoly of money, and the power which that monopoly gives them to rob everybody else.

LYSANDER SPOONER.

# UNIVERSAL WEALTH

SHOWN TO BE EASILY ATTAINABLE.

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PART FIRST.

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By LYSANDER SPOONER.

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# UNIVERSAL WEALTH.

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## SECTION I.

THE wealth of the world is proportionate to the number of different things mankind possess, rather than to the quantity of any one thing. Thus, if every human being had as much wheat as he could eat, and had no other wealth, all would still be poor. But if, in addition to all the wheat they desire, every human being has a thousand, ten thousand, or a hundred thousand other things—each, on an average, of equal value with the wheat—the wealth of each individual, and of the world, is multiplied a thousand, ten thousand, or a hundred thousand fold.

Individuals usually desire, for their own use or consumption, but a very limited amount of any one thing; but we as yet know no limit to the number of different things they desire. And we shall never know any such limit, until the ingenuity of the human race, in the invention of new commodities, shall have been exhausted.

The great problem of universal wealth, therefore, is comprised in these two, viz.: First, how shall we give to every person the greatest possible *variety* of commodities? and, secondly, how shall we give to each individual as much as he desires of each and all these various commodities?

Men are able to produce almost no wealth at all by their hands alone. Until they make discoveries in science, and inventions in implements and machinery, they remain savages, few in number, and living upon such wild fruits as they can gather, and such wild

animals as they can kill. But they have proved themselves capable of such discoveries in science, and such inventions in implements and machinery, as will, each of them, enable a man to produce a hundred, a thousand, some of them a million, or even a hundred or a thousand million times as much wealth as he could before create with his hands alone. What labor could Watt perform with his hands, compared with that performed by his steam engine? What labor could Arkwright perform with his hands alone, compared with that performed by his spinning machine? What labor could Stephenson perform, in the transportation of freight and passengers, compared with that performed by his locomotive? What could Morse do, on foot, in the transmission of intelligence, compared with what can be done with his telegraph? What could the Assyrian do, with his tablets of baked clay, in supplying the world with reading matter, compared with what can be done with a Hoe printing press? What could men do, with their hands alone, in tunnelling mountains, building suspension bridges, and laying deep sea cables, compared with what can be done by the machinery they have invented for those purposes?

These things should teach us that it is brains, and not hands, that must be relied on for the creation of wealth. And it would be well for us to realize, much more fully than we ever have done, that brain labor, no less than hand labor, must be paid for, if we would have the benefit of it.

The discoveries in science, the invention of implements and machinery, and the invention of new commodities for consumption, have already multiplied the wealth of *some portions* of the world by millions and thousands of millions of what it once was. And yet it is but recently that inventions have begun to add much to the wealth of the world. For thousands, and tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years, mankind remained savages, or at best barbarians, for the want of such inventions as are now just beginning to be made.

At the present time, the people of the United States are acknowledged to take the lead of the whole world, especially in mechanical inventions. And yet substantially all our inventions

have been made within a hundred years ; most of them within fifty years. We are now making from ten to fifteen thousand new inventions per annum. Some of these are of great, in fact of immeasurable, value. Many of them, although of less value, are nevertheless valuable. And yet we are probably not producing a tenth, perhaps not a hundredth, part so many inventions, in proportion to population, as we ought to do, and should do, if inventors were protected, as they ought to be, in a perpetual right to their inventions, and they and the public had the capital — that is, the money — necessary for producing inventions, and putting them into operation.

The people of the United States constitute not more than a twenty-fifth part of the population of the globe. In not more than a fourth, fifth, perhaps even a tenth, part of the world are any considerable number of inventions now being made. Not because the peoples of those other portions are naturally incapable of invention ; but because they have no protection for their property in their inventions, and no money, no capital, no opportunity to make inventions, or bring them into operation. Their poverty, ignorance, and servitude suppress all their efforts in this direction.

What will be the number and value of the inventions made, and what the variety and amount of wealth produced by means of them, when, if ever, all mankind shall be protected in their property in their inventions, and shall have all the money necessary to bring their inventions into successful operation, no one now can form any idea.

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## SECTION II.

**MONEY** is the great instrumentality — the indispensable capital — by means of which inventions are produced, machinery operated, and their products distributed to consumers.

The inventor must have *money*, with which to make his experiments, subsist while making them, perfect his inventions, demonstrate their utility, and bring them into practical operation. And to do all these often requires years of time, and large expenditures of money.



The operator of machinery must have *money*, with which to buy his machinery, his raw materials, and his means of subsistence while he is manufacturing his goods for the market. Then he must be able to sell his goods for *money*, in order to buy new materials, and subsist himself while manufacturing new goods.

The merchant must have *money*, with which to buy his goods; and he must be able to sell his goods for *money*, in order that he may buy new goods.

And, finally, the consumers of all these goods must have *money*, to buy and pay for all the goods that are to be manufactured.

Thus every man, who either makes inventions, operates machinery, or distributes or consumes the commodities produced, is constantly dependent upon *money*, for his means of production, distribution, and consumption.

And the amount of *money* that each one must have depends upon the market value of the commodities he has to buy, whether he buys them for production, distribution, or consumption; since the *money*, in each individual case, must, in order to make the contract an equitable one, be a *bona fide* equivalent of the commodity bought and sold.\*

What, then, will be the amount of money requisite to bring out fully the inventive faculties of all mankind; set in motion all the machinery invented; distribute all the products; and thus give to mankind, for final consumption, the full benefits of all the inventions that can be made?

To answer this vital question, it is necessary to consider that the market value of all commodities, relatively to any fixed

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\* It would be absurd to expect any rapid increase or equitable distribution of wealth, unless we abjure forever the theory, on which our own government and so many others now act, viz., that it is wholly unnecessary that money should be an equivalent of the property that is to be bought with it; that the money of a country should be restricted by law to a very small amount; that the right to issue this amount should be granted as a monopoly to a very few persons; that these few should thus be licensed to control all industry and traffic; to fix the prices of all property and labor; and thus to extort, in exchange for their money, many times more of all other men's property and labor than the money is really and truly worth. Such a monopoly has obviously no tendency or purpose but to obstruct production and exchange, and enable the few to secure to themselves the wealth produced by the many.

standard of value — or to such a standard as a gold dollar, for the want of a better, is assumed to be — *will depend wholly upon the variety and amount of commodities produced, distributed, and consumed. In other words, the market value of each man's particular product will depend wholly upon the variety and amount of commodities which other men produce, and are willing to give in exchange for it.*

To illustrate this principle, let us suppose that Mr. A is a hatter; and that he has acquired such science, skill, machinery, and money capital, that he is able, by himself alone, to manufacture ten thousand hats per annum. He manufactures these hats for sale, and not for his own consumption. Their value to himself, therefore, depends wholly upon the number and amount of other commodities which he desires, and which other persons can, and will, give him in exchange for hats. If there be no one who desires a hat, or who — though desiring one — has anything desirable that he can give in exchange for it, A's ten thousand hats are of no value to him; simply because he can get nothing desirable in exchange for them. But if there are ten thousand other men who desire hats, and who are producing each a different commodity from all the others — a commodity as much desired by A as one of his hats is desired by each of the others — then A will be able to sell one of his hats to each of these ten thousand men, and get in exchange for it, a commodity as desirable to himself as the hat is to each of these ten thousand men. He will thus get the full and true value of his ten thousand hats, where, but for the power of these other men to produce something desirable to give in exchange, he would have got nothing at all for them; and would have utterly lost the labor of producing them.

Thus it will be seen that the *market* value of each man's own product depends entirely upon the number and amount of desirable things which other men produce, and are willing to give him in exchange for his particular product.

Every man, therefore, who has the science, skill, machinery, and money capital that are necessary to enable him to produce, say, ten thousand hats per annum, has the highest interest that ten

thousand other men, who desire hats, shall have all the science, skill, machinery, and money capital that shall enable them to produce ten thousand other commodities that shall be as desirable to him as one of his hats is to each of these ten thousand men.

Suppose the publisher of the *New York Herald* has such science, skill, machinery, and money capital, that he is able to produce a hundred thousand copies of the *Herald* daily. And suppose there are a hundred thousand other men, and only a hundred thousand, who desire the *Herald*. The value of the *Herald* to its producer will depend, in this case, wholly upon the number and amount of other desirable things which these hundred thousand other men can, and will, give in exchange for the *Herald*. If they are so destitute of science, skill, machinery, and capital that they can produce nothing desirable that they can give in exchange for it, the *Herald* will have no value to its producer; and his labor in producing it will be thrown away. But if each one of these hundred thousand men has science, skill, machinery and capital equal to the publisher of the *Herald*, and is producing a commodity different from all the others—a commodity as desirable to the publisher of the *Herald* as the *Herald* is to him—he will then be able and willing to give, in exchange for the *Herald*, a commodity as desirable and intrinsically as valuable, as the *Herald* itself. And the publisher of the *Herald* will get the full value of, or a full equivalent for, his hundred thousand copies of the *Herald*.

Is it not, therefore, perfectly plain, in this case, that the publisher of the *Herald* has the highest interest that every man, who desires to buy the *Herald*, shall have all the science, skill, machinery, and capital, that may enable him to produce, and give in exchange for the *Herald*, something that is equally as desirable and valuable as is the *Herald* itself? Would it not be fatuity and suicide for the publisher of the *Herald* to advocate the tyranny and villainy of depriving all these hundred thousand men, who desire to buy the *Herald*, of all the science, skill, machinery, and capital, which alone can enable them to give, in exchange for it, something that is intrinsically as desirable and valuable as itself? Yet this is precisely what the *Herald*, and the press generally of

the country, have been doing in all past time, and are doing to-day.

Of course, we cannot know, beforehand, what varieties and amounts of commodities mankind will invent and produce in the future, when, if ever, they shall have all the facilities and inducements for invention, production, distribution, and consumption, which ample legal protection to the rights of inventors, and ample money capital, will give them. Nor can we know, beforehand, the amount of money that will be required to bring science, skill, invention, machinery, and production to their highest points, and to distribute to the consumers the commodities produced. But the following article, which has been previously published,\* on "THE LAW OF PRICES," will aid us in understanding how utterly and ludicrously inadequate, unworthy of consideration, how nearly useless in fact, are all such amounts of money as we have been accustomed to think of, as sufficient for these purposes.

In truth, nobody claims that our present amounts of money are at all adequate to the needs of industry and traffic, if the latter is to be carried on upon the principle that money should be a *bona fide* equivalent of the labor and property that are to be bought with it. All that those, who advocate restrictions upon money, can say in defence of them, is, that by coercing men into selling their labor and property for less than they are worth, a small amount of money can be made to have as much "purchasing power" as a larger one. This is only saying that, by establishing a monopoly of money, the few holders of that monopoly will be enabled to coerce all other men into selling their labor and property for less than they are worth. And this is the whole purpose of the monopoly. It is only a cunning species of robbery, which has hitherto been successful, solely because the victims did not understand the jugglery by which it was accomplished.

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## THE LAW OF PRICES:

## A DEMONSTRATION OF THE NECESSITY FOR AN INDEFINITE INCREASE OF MONEY.

## I.

THE writers on money seem never to have obtained the first glimpse of the fundamental *law* which governs prices, and which necessitates a constant and indefinite increase in the volume of money. That law may be illustrated in this manner:

Suppose an island cut off from all communication with the rest of the world, and inhabited by one hundred men. Suppose that these hundred men know no industry except the production of wheat; that they produce annually one thousand bushels, each man producing ten bushels, which is enough for his own consumption. Suppose further that these hundred men have money to the amount of five dollars each in gold, silver, and copper coins, and that these coins are valued by them as highly as similar coins are now by us. What will be the price of wheat among these men, compared with the coins? Plainly, it will bear no price at all. Each man producing for himself all he can eat, no one has any occasion to buy. Therefore none can be sold at any price.

But suppose that one after another of these hundred men leave wheat-growing, and engage in the production of other commodities,—each producing a different commodity from all the others,—until there shall be a hundred different commodities produced; only one man being left to produce wheat. And suppose that this one man has increased his product from ten bushels to one thousand. There is now just as much wheat as there was when all were employed in producing it. The only differences are, first, that the whole amount is produced now by one man, where before it was produced by a hundred men; and, secondly, that the ninety-nine men have each engaged in the production of some commodity, different from that produced by any other, but of which, we will suppose, all the others wish to purchase each his proportionate share for consumption.

There is now a hundred times as much wealth produced as when all produced wheat and nothing else. But each kind has only a single producer, while it finds a hundred consumers. And each man's product, we will suppose, has the same value with every other man's product.

What, now, will be the price of wheat among these hundred men relatively to the coins? Doubtless a dollar a bushel. When the first man abandoned wheat-growing, and betook himself to some other occupation, he created a demand for ten bushels of wheat, which he still wanted for consumption as before. This demand for ten bushels would doubtless be sufficient to give wheat the price of one cent per bushel, where it had no price before. When a second man of the hundred abandoned wheat-growing, he created a demand for ten bushels more; making twenty bushels in all. This increased demand would doubtless be sufficient to raise the market price of wheat to two cents a bushel.

When a third man of the hundred left wheat-growing for some other pursuit, his demand for ten bushels would raise the market price another cent; and so on, until by the time the ninety-nine had left wheat growing, the continually increasing demand would have raised the price to ninety-nine cents a bushel; for convenience of round numbers, say a dollar a bushel.

Here, then, wheat has been raised from no price at all to a dollar a bushel, not because there is any less wheat produced, or any more consumed, than before, but solely because the whole thousand bushels are now produced by one man, instead of being produced, ten bushels each, by the hundred different men who were to consume it; and because, further, each of the ninety-nine men, who have left wheat-growing, is able to purchase wheat, inasmuch as he has been producing some other commodity which brings him as good a price as the wheat brings to the man who still produces wheat.

Under this new state of things, then, the man who continues to produce wheat produces a thousand bushels, worth a dollar a bushel; that is, a thousand dollars' worth in all. Each of the other ninety-nine produces an equal amount of market value in some other commodity. The whole hundred men, then, produce wealth that has now a market value of one hundred thousand dollars, where originally they had produced nothing that had any *market* value at all.

This change in the price of wheat has been produced, then, solely by reason of the diversity of industry and production that has taken place among these hundred men. And the market prices of all the other ninety-nine commodities have been affected by the same law, and to the same extent, as has been the price of wheat.

Here, then, is a hundred thousand dollars' worth of commodities produced, each man producing a thousand dollars' worth.

As each man retains a hundredth part of his product—that is, ten dollars' worth—for his own consumption, he has nine hundred and ninety dollars' worth for sale. The whole hundred men, therefore, have one hundred times nine hundred and ninety dollars' worth for sale, which is equal to ninety-nine thousand dollars in all; for convenience of round numbers, say one hundred thousand dollars.

The hundred men, having each five dollars in coins, have in the aggregate five hundred dollars. To make the purchases and sales of these hundred thousand dollars' worth of commodities, will require each of these five hundred dollars to be exchanged for commodities, on an average, two hundred times. That is, in carrying on the commerce of these hundred men for a year, their whole stock of money must be exchanged, on an average, once in a little less than two days. Or if we reckon but three hundred business days in a year, we shall find that the whole stock of money must be exchanged, on an average, once in every day and a half.

Such rapidity of exchange would be practicable enough, if the holders of the coins should all part with them readily at their true and natural value, instead of holding them back in the hope of getting for them more than they were really worth. But where there was so active a demand for the coins as to require that the whole stock be sold, on an average, once in every day and a half, it is natural to suppose that the holders of the coins would hold them back, in

order to get more for them than their true and natural value. And in so far as they should do so, they would obstruct trade, and by obstructing trade obstruct and discourage production, and thus obstruct the natural increase of wealth.

## II.

But suppose, now, that the number of men on this island be increased from one hundred to one thousand, and that they are all engaged in producing wheat only; each man producing ten bushels, which is all he wants for his own consumption. And suppose that each man has five dollars in gold, silver, and copper coins. What will be the price of wheat among these men, relatively to the coins? Clearly, it will have no *market* price at all, any more than it had when there were but a hundred men.

But suppose that nine hundred and ninety-nine of these thousand men leave wheat-growing, and engage each in the production of a commodity different from that produced by any one of the others. And suppose that the one who still continues to produce wheat is able, from his increased science, skill, and machinery, to produce ten thousand bushels — ten bushels for each of the thousand men — where before he produced only ten bushels for himself.

There is now just as much wheat produced as there was before. But it is now all produced by one man — nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of it being produced for sale — instead of being produced by a thousand men, each producing ten bushels for his own consumption.

What, now, will be the price of wheat among these thousand men? Why, being governed by the same law that has already been illustrated in the case of the hundred men, it will go on rising one cent at a time, as each man leaves wheat-growing for some other pursuit, until, when nine hundred and ninety-nine shall have left wheat-growing, and shall have become purchasers of wheat, instead of producers, the price will be nine hundred and ninety-nine cents a bushel — for convenience of round numbers, say ten dollars a bushel — where before it bore no price at all.

In this state of things, then, the man who still continues to produce wheat, will produce ten thousand bushels; worth, in the market, ten dollars a bushel, or a hundred thousand dollars in all.

Here, then, we have the price of a hundred thousand dollars for ten thousand bushels of wheat, which, when produced by a thousand different men, each producing ten bushels for his own consumption, had no *market* value at all. And the other nine hundred and ninety-nine men, we will suppose, produce each a different commodity from all the others; the whole annual produce of each having the same market value as the wheat-growers crop of wheat. The market value, then, of all the products of the whole thousand men will be one thousand times one hundred thousand dollars — that is, one hundred million dollars — where before, when they were all producing wheat and nothing else, their whole products had no *market* price at all.

When we consider that each producer retains for his own consumption but a thousandth part of his products (a hundred dollars worth), and that, consequently, nine hundred and ninety-nine parts of all these products are not only

to be sold, but to be sold *twice*, as they would now have to be, — that is, once by the producer to the merchant, and once by the merchant to the consumer, — we see that there will be sales to the amount of one hundred and ninety-nine million eight hundred thousand dollars — for convenience of round numbers, say two hundred million dollars — where before, when all were producing wheat, there was no such thing as a sale of a cent's worth of any thing.

These thousand men, we have supposed, had each five dollars in coins — making five thousand dollars in all — with which to make these purchases and sales of two hundred millions. How many times over will all these coins, on an average, have to be bought and sold, in order to effect these exchanges? Dividing two hundred millions by five thousand, we have the answer; namely, *forty thousand times!* Dividing this number by three hundred, — which we will suppose to be the number of business days in a year, — we find that, in order to make their exchanges, their whole stock of money must be bought and sold, on an average, *one hundred and thirty-three times every day!*

Thus we see that one thousand men, with such a diversity and amount of production as we have supposed, would have two thousand times as many purchases and sales to make as the one hundred men. And in making these purchases and sales, we see that their whole stock of money would have to be bought and sold two hundred times oftener than would the whole stock of money of the one hundred men, in making their purchases and sales of one hundred thousand dollars. We see, too, that, if we call eight hours a day, — that being the usual number of business hours, — their whole stock of money would have to be bought and sold, on an average, *sixteen times over every hour, or once in every four minutes*; whereas the whole stock of money of the one hundred men would have to be bought and sold *only once in a day and a half*; or — calling eight hours a day — *once in twelve hours*.

Such, let it be specially noticed, is the difference in the rapidity required in the purchase and sale of money in making the exchanges among a thousand men, on the one hand, and a hundred men, on the other, *although the thousand men have the same amount of money, man for man, as the hundred men*; the thousand men having five thousand dollars, and the hundred having but five hundred dollars.

This illustration gives some idea of the effect produced upon prices by the expansion of industry and the diversity of production. And yet the writers on money tell us that a large number of men need no more money, *man for man*, than a small number; that, if a hundred men need but five hundred dollars of money, a thousand men will, by the same rule, need but five thousand dollars.

In the case already supposed, — of the one thousand men, — how far would their five thousand dollars avail as money toward making their exchanges of two hundred million dollars? Plainly, they would avail nothing. The holders of them, seeing the necessities of the people for money, would hold back their coins, and demand so much more than their true and natural value, as to put a stop substantially to all production, except of such few things as could be exchanged by barter, or as each one could produce for his own consumption.

The obvious truth is that, in order to carry on their commerce with money at its true and natural value, and consequently without obstruction or extortion



from the money holders, it is necessary that these thousand men, with their increased diversity and amount of production, should have two hundred times as much money, *man for man*,— and two thousand times as much in the aggregate,— as was necessary for the one hundred men, as before supposed.

In other words, the thousand men have two hundred million dollars of sales to make, where the hundred men had but one hundred thousand. Dividing two hundred million by one hundred thousand, we find that the thousand men, with such diversity and amount of production as we have supposed, have two thousand times as many sales to make as the one hundred had; and consequently that they require two thousand times as much money as did the one hundred.

### III.

But to show still further the ratio in which diversity of industry tends to increase the price of commodities, *relatively to any fixed standard*, let us suppose that the number of men on this island be still further increased from one thousand to ten thousand. And suppose that all these ten thousand are engaged in producing wheat alone; each producing ten bushels for his own consumption, that being all he wants. And suppose they have each five dollars in gold, silver, and copper coins. What will be the price of wheat, relatively to the coins? Clearly, it will have no price at all, not even so much as one cent a bushel.

But suppose that all but one of these ten thousand men should leave wheat-growing, and engage in other industries; each one producing a different commodity from all the others. And suppose that the one who still continues wheat-growing has acquired such science, skill, and machinery, that he is now able to produce a hundred thousand bushels—that is, ten bushels each for ten thousand men—where before he only produced ten bushels for himself.

What will now be the price of wheat among these ten thousand men? Why, by the same law that has been already illustrated, it will be ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents a bushel—for convenience of round numbers, say one hundred dollars a bushel—where before it had no *market* value at all.

And yet there is just as much wheat produced as there was before, and every man gets just as much wheat to eat as he had before, when all were producing wheat.

In this state of things, the one hundred thousand bushels of wheat, produced by one man, at a hundred dollars a bushel—which will then be its market value—are worth one hundred thousand times one hundred dollars; that is, ten million dollars. And suppose that all the other nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine men are each engaged in an industry as profitable as that of the remaining wheat grower. The aggregate production of the whole ten thousand men will now have a market value equal to ten thousand times ten million dollars; that is, one hundred thousand million dollars.

And if we suppose that all these commodities are to be sold \* *three* times

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\* All but ten millions—a ten thousandth part of the whole—would have to be sold, since each man would retain for his own consumption only a ten thousandth part of what he produced; namely, one thousand dollars' worth.

over, — that is, once by the producer to the wholesale dealer, once by the wholesale dealer to the retailer, and once by the retailer to the consumer, — we shall see that there are to be sales equal to three hundred thousand million dollars, where before, when all were producing wheat, and nothing else, there was no sale of a cent's worth of any thing, and no *market* value at all for any thing.

Now suppose that the coins, which these men had, have remained fixed at the same value they had when the men were all producing wheat. How many times over, then, must they necessarily be bought and sold, in the course of a year, in order to effect the purchase and sale of these three hundred thousand millions — or one hundred thousand millions three times over — of property that are to be exchanged ?

There are ten thousand men, each having five dollars in coins; that is, fifty thousand dollars in all. Dividing three hundred thousand millions by fifty thousand, we find that the whole of these fifty thousand dollars in coins *must be bought and sold six million times!* Six million times annually, to effect the exchanges of the products of ten thousand men!

Dividing six million by three hundred (which we will suppose to be the number of business days in a year), we find that, on an average, their whole stock of money must be bought and sold *twenty thousand times over every day.* Or supposing the business day to be eight hours, the coins would all have to be bought and sold twenty-five hundred times over every hour; equal to forty-one and two-thirds times every minute.

And this happens, too, when the ten thousand men have the same amount of coin, *man for man*, as the one hundred and the one thousand men had, in the cases before supposed.

Thus we see that, with such a diversity and amount of production as we have supposed, the exchanges of the ten thousand men would require that their whole stock of money should be bought and sold one hundred and fifty times oftener than the whole stock of the one thousand men, and thirty thousand times oftener than the whole stock of the one hundred men.

We also see that, in the cases supposed, the ten thousand men, having three hundred thousand millions of exchanges to make, have fifteen hundred times as many as the one thousand men, who had but two hundred millions; and that they have three million times as many exchanges to make as the one hundred men. Consequently the ten thousand men require fifteen hundred times as much money as the one thousand men, and three million times as much money as the one hundred men.

#### IV.

According to the foregoing calculations, the ratio of increase required in the volume of money is this: Supposing the diversity and amount of production to keep pace with the increase in the number of men, and supposing their commodities to be sold but *once*, — that is, directly from producer to consumer, — a hundred men would require a thousand times as much money as ten men; a thousand men would require a thousand times as much money as a hundred men; ten thousand men would require a thousand times as much money as a thousand men; and so on.

But inasmuch as, in the case of a thousand men, their commodities would have to be sold *twice*, — that is, once by the producer to the merchant, and once by the merchant to the consumer, — the thousand men would require *two* thousand times as much money as the hundred men. And inasmuch as, in the case of the ten thousand men, their commodities would have to be sold *three times* over, — that is, once by the producer to the wholesale dealer, once by the wholesale dealer to the retailer, and once by the retailer to the consumer, — the amount of money required, instead of being either one thousand or two thousand times as much as in the case of the one thousand men (whose commodities were sold but twice), would be one and a half thousand times (as three sales are one and a half times as much as two) — that is, fifteen hundred times — as much as in the case of the one thousand men.

Stating the results of the preceding calculations in the simplest form, we find that different numbers of men, having a diversity and amount of production corresponding to their numbers, in making their exchanges with each other, require money in the following ratios, relatively to each other; namely,—

10 men require	\$100
100 men require	100,000
1,000 men require	200,000,000
10,000 men require	300,000,000,000

But as the same money could be used many times over in the course of a year, they would not need an amount of money equal to the amount of their annual exchanges. If, then, we suppose the aggregate of their annual exchanges to be as above, and their whole stocks of money to be used three hundred times over in a year, — that is, once a day, calling three hundred the number of business days in a year, — we find that the stocks of money required would be as follows:

10 men would require	\$ .33‡
100 men would require	333.33‡
1,000 men would require	666,666.33‡
10,000 men would require	1,000,000,000

Or, to state the case in still another form, supposing their aggregate annual exchanges to be as above, and supposing their whole stocks of money to be bought and sold three hundred times over in the year, the money required, *per man*, would be as follows:—

10 men would require	\$ .03‡ each.
100 men would require	3.33‡ each.
1,000 men would require	666.66 each.
10,000 men would require	100,000 each.

If any body thinks he can dispute these figures, let him attempt it. If they cannot be disputed, they settle the law of prices.

## v.

The foregoing suppositions are, *first*, that the ten thousand men came finally to have ten thousand different *kinds* of commodities, where they originally had but one, — namely, wheat; *secondly*, that they finally came to have ten thousand times as much wealth, *in quantity*, as they had originally, when all were producing wheat; *thirdly*, that wheat, which at its first sales brought only one cent a bushel, came afterwards to sell for ten thousand cents a bushel, — although the amount of wheat produced, and the supply of wheat for each individual, were the same in the one case as in the other; *fourthly*, that the same effect is produced upon the prices of all the rest of the ten thousand different kinds of commodities as upon the price of wheat; and, *fifthly*, that the annual sales, made by the ten thousand men, amounted finally to three hundred thousand million dollars, where their first sales had amounted to but ten cents,—the amount which the first man who left wheat-growing paid for his yearly supply of ten bushels.

It is not necessary to suppose that such a diversity and amount of production will ever be realized in actual life, although that is not impossible. It is sufficient that these figures give the *law* that governs prices, and consequently demonstrate that a constant and enormous increase of money must be necessary to keep pace with the increase of population, wealth, and trade, if we wish to give free scope to diversity and amount of production.

Unless money should be increased so as to keep pace with this increased demand, the result would be, *first*, obstruction to trade; *secondly*, obstruction to, and discouragement of, industry; and *thirdly*, a corresponding obstruction to the increase of wealth.

In fact, unless the amount of money were increased, these hundred men, thousand men, and ten thousand men, instead of having a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand different *kinds* of commodities, would advance very little beyond the state they were in when all were producing wheat and nothing else. Some feeble attempts at other industries might possibly be made, but their money, like the shells and wampum of savages, would aid these attempts but slightly; and the men, unless they invented some other money, would either remain absolute savages, or attain only to a very low state of barbarism.

The practical question, then, is, whether it is better that these ten thousand men should remain mere savages, scratching the earth with rude sticks and stones to produce each ten bushels of wheat, or whether it is better that they should all have the money — which stands in political economy for all the ingenuity, skill, science, machinery, and other capital which money can buy — that may be necessary to enable them to produce, in the greatest possible abundance, and of the greatest possible excellence, all the ten thousand commodities that will contribute to their happiness.

A full discussion of this subject would require much more space than can here be given to it. It may perhaps be continued at a future time, if that should be necessary. But enough has doubtless now been said to show the general *law* that governs prices, and consequently to show the necessity for an immense increase of money; an increase dependent upon the diversity and amount of production, and the natural laws of trade applicable thereto; such an increase as no legislation can ascertain beforehand, or consequently prescribe.

## SECTION III.

It will now perhaps be said by some, in opposition to this theory of the rise in prices, that it is not sustained by the experience of mankind ; that, on the contrary, the introduction of machinery makes some things wonderfully cheap, which before, relatively to other commodities, were very dear. And as an illustration of this, perhaps we shall be pointed to the present cheapness of printed matter, as compared with the price of written matter before the discovery of the present modes of printing, and the present modes of making paper ; a man now being able, probably, to buy as much printed matter for one cent, as one could have bought of written matter, five hundred years ago, for five, or perhaps ten, dollars.

But the man who makes this objection, does not take into account all the facts upon which the rise in prices depends. He does not take into account the fact that the market price of any commodity, whether produced in less or greater quantity, or by less or more labor, depends only very slightly, if at all, upon the greater or less amount of labor it costs the producer, *but mainly, if not wholly — as has already been explained — upon the power and disposition of other men to buy it, and give him something equally desirable in exchange for it.* The producer of any particular commodity, however desirable a one it may be, can get no just compensation for it, except from those who are themselves producing something equally desirable, which they are willing to give in exchange.

If, for example — to repeat an illustration already given — a hundred thousand copies of the *New York Herald* were printed in a country containing only a hundred thousand men, who desired it, and these men were producing nothing that they could spare, or give in exchange, the *Herald* would plainly bring no price at all, however much these hundred thousand men might desire it. But if these hundred thousand men should become producers of such commodities as they could spare, and give in exchange for the *Herald*, the *market* price of the *Herald* would rise just in proportion to the value of these other commodities. And if these hundred thousand men should finally, through the aid of invention, science, skill, machinery, and capital, become producers of a

hundred thousand different commodities — each man producing a different commodity from all the others — and each man should be willing to give, in exchange for the *Herald*, such a portion of his own particular product as would be as desirable for the producer of the *Herald*, as a copy of the *Herald* was to him, the *Herald*, which before brought no price at all, will now obtain for its producer a hundred thousand different commodities, each of which will be as valuable to him, as a copy of the *Herald* will be to each of these hundred thousand purchasers. And the price of the *Herald*, relatively to any fixed standard of value, will have risen — in accordance with the “*Law of Prices*” already given — from nothing, to a price corresponding to the value of these hundred thousand different commodities that will be given in exchange for it.

The reason why printed matter has become so cheap, in comparison with many or most other commodities, is not at all that the knowledge conveyed by it has become less desirable or valuable than it was before the art of printing was discovered — for both the desire for knowledge, and the value of the knowledge conveyed, have been constantly increasing ever since that time — but it is because invention and production in paper-making and printing have altogether outrun invention and production in *most* other directions ; and mankind are consequently unable, except in comparatively few cases, to give real equivalents for printed matter. *Printed matter, therefore, has now to be sold for only what the producers of other commodities are able to pay.* But if invention and production, in other directions than paper-making and printing, should go on increasing to such a degree that all other men will be able to offer, in exchange for printed matter, commodities as desirable as the printed matter itself, the prices of printed matter will then rise to their true level.

And what is true of printed matter, is equally true of certain other commodities, in whose production science and invention have outrun the science and invention that are employed in ordinary pursuits. These commodities now command no equitable price in the market, solely because mankind in general, for the want of invention, science, skill, machinery, and capital, are

unable to produce commodities of equal value, to be given in exchange.

From all this, it will be seen that the *market* value of each man's product depends, not at all, or at best very slightly, upon the greater or less labor it costs him to produce it — for when all labor is performed by machinery, and men are required only to tend the machinery, it can hardly be said that anything costs *human* labor ; *but it depends mainly, if not wholly, upon the number of other men who can buy it, and give him something desirable in exchange for it.*

At present no such diversity or amount of production exists, as we shall sometime see ; and, consequently, prices have never risen to any such height as they sometime will. But as surely as the diversity and amount of production go on increasing, just so surely will the rise of prices, relatively to any fixed standard of value, also go on increasing in the ratio, and according to the rule, that have now been explained. And the amount of money required for the exchanges of property will of course go on increasing in like ratio. And any attempt to keep down prices, by limiting the amount of money, will only result in suppressing invention, science, skill, machinery, and production, and in the inequitable distribution of the little wealth that is permitted to be produced.

But this theory will be more fully confirmed in subsequent papers.

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#### SECTION IV.

It will now be seen how clearly — as a general rule — it is the interest of all that each and every individual shall have all the capital — that is, all the money — that may be necessary to enable them to produce the greatest variety and amount of wealth ; to make the most discoveries in science, the most inventions in implements and machinery ; to produce the greatest number of new commodities for direct consumption ; and also to enable all those who are neither discoverers nor inventors, to engage in the greatest variety of industries — that is, in the production of all new commodities, as fast as they shall be invented.

We need have no fear that machinery will ever prove an enemy of human labor, if we only have money enough to enable a sufficient number of persons to go into the production of new commodities as fast as they shall be invented. Men driven out of one employment, by machinery, will then be enabled to go into another more lucrative; because every new industry raises the value of all others, and, as a general rule, takes its place on a level with all others. The lack of money to enable men to go into new industries, is the only reason why—at least in recent times—machinery has been regarded as the enemy of the laborer.

The greater the variety of commodities produced, the less the competition in the production of each, and the higher the prices of all; for the price of each rises just in proportion to the number of others for which it can be exchanged, and the amounts of each of these others for which it can be exchanged.

As a general rule, everybody who engages in the production of a new commodity relieves somebody of a competitor, and, to the extent of his own production, becomes a purchaser of the products of others.

Especially ought we to realize how important it is that every facility and inducement that is reasonably possible—both in money and in legal protection—be afforded to all discoveries in science, and all mechanical inventions. These discoveries and inventions are the great, the permanent wealth of the world. The material wealth which we accumulate by means of them, is mostly temporary, and much of it ephemeral. It is quickly consumed, or goes quickly to decay. It could do almost nothing for mankind, were it not for the scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions by which it can be constantly reproduced to meet our daily wants. These discoveries and inventions are, also, not solely the wealth of the particular times or localities in which they are made; but are to become the property of the whole world, and of all future time. It is true that many, or most, of them are being quickly superseded by others that do the same work better; but the inventions and discoveries of each year, or generation, prepare the way for those of the next; and thus, by this succession of inventions and discoveries, the whole world is to be enriched



through all the ages. And we should not grudge the wealth which a perpetual property in them would give to their authors ; for, at best, it will probably, on an average, be not more than one per centum of the wealth created by means of them. And if this one per centum should prove large, for the time being, in proportion to the earnings of other men, it will only stimulate the production of other discoveries and inventions, of which the world will get the benefit, at a like cost of one per centum of the wealth produced by means of them.

Short-sighted men, oppressed by poverty and toil, object to an inventor's having such a property in the products of his labor as other men have in the products of theirs ; because, say they, it would be wrong that he should receive so much for his labor, when we receive so little for ours. But such men should understand that a man's right to the products of his labor does not depend at all upon the value of those products. Whether more or less valuable, they are equally his, solely because he produced them. Labor is worth nothing of itself. Its value depends wholly upon what it produces. If it produces much, it is worth much ; if it produces little, it is worth little ; if it produces nothing, it is worth nothing. Nearly all the world over, the great body of the people are borne down by the heaviest toil ; yet, for the want of science, implements, machinery, and capital, they produce very little ; and that little brings them either a very small price, or absolutely nothing, in exchange, because so few have any thing that they can give in exchange. And this fate, that has so crushed, impoverished, and enslaved mankind for thousands of years in the past, will assuredly continue to crush, impoverish, and enslave them for thousands of years in the future, unless, by means of science, implements, machinery, and capital, they make their industry more productive than it heretofore has been. These men should also understand that the inventor has always been ready and eager to relieve them of their poverty and toil, by giving them machinery that should do their work for them ; and do for them a thousand times more work than they can do for themselves ; and that the only reasons why he has not done so, hundreds and thousands of years ago, have been, first, that he has

been without the necessary means for producing his inventions, and has been denied all just compensation — until quite recently all compensation — for them ; and, secondly, that the mass of men have also been without the necessary means — that is, the necessary money — for utilizing his inventions after he has produced them. Whenever the right of the inventor to the products of his labor shall be acknowledged, and the people shall be permitted to have all the money that shall be necessary to enable them to utilize his inventions, all their present complaints of poverty and toil will rapidly disappear. It is, therefore, not only gross injustice, but the worst of policies, to deny to scientists and inventors their right of property in their discoveries and inventions.

It is manifest that the mass of mankind can lift themselves out of their present poverty and servitude only through the aid of science, invention, machinery and money. It is manifest, too, that we can set no limits either to the variety or amount of wealth that mankind are capable of producing, if only full scope be given to science, invention, machinery, and money. It is also obvious that the greater the diversity and amount of production, the more equally and equitably will wealth be distributed ; since every separate industry gives a support to a separate body of producers ; and when all industries are free, the tendency of all — especially of all such as must occupy the great body of the people — is to come to one common standard of compensation.

**No. 1.**

# REVOLUTION:

THE ONLY REMEDY FOR THE OPPRESSED CLASSES OF  
IRELAND, ENGLAND, AND OTHER PARTS OF THE  
BRITISH EMPIRE.

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A REPLY TO "DUNRAVEN."

(SECOND EDITION.)

## A REPLY TO "DUNRAVEN."

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TO THE MAN IN IRELAND, WHOSE NAME IS BELIEVED TO BE  
QUINN, BUT WHO SIGNS HIMSELF "DUNRAVEN."

SIR,—Your letter of Jan. 1, 1880, addressed to the *Editor of the New York Herald*, and published in the *Herald* of Jan. 7, deserves an answer, for the reason that it undoubtedly expresses not only your own sentiments, but also those of the class to which you belong. It virtually announces, and was evidently intended to announce, to the Irish people, both in Ireland and America, and to all other persons interested, that the landlords of Ireland, —backed, as you claim that they are, by the whole power of "the British Empire" — are determined to drive what you consider the surplus population of Ireland out of the country by starvation. You virtually say that all this feeding the starving Irish in their own country, is merely money and mercy thrown away; that as nothing but starvation will ever induce them to go, the sooner they are left to see that they have no other alternative, the better it will be for them, and for everybody else.

If you had, in so many words, threatened to drive them out by the bayonet, you could hardly have been more explicit. This makes it necessary that not only the Irish people, but that everybody else who feels any interest in such a matter, should inquire by what right you propose to do all this; and also whether you really have the physical power necessary to do it.

The following address to them, and this letter to yourself, are intended to show not only that you have neither the right, nor the power, to drive them out, but that they, and others similarly situated, have both the right and the power to drive you, and all

your abettors, out of both Ireland and England ; and also, if need be, from off the face of the earth.

If you, and others like you, in England and Ireland, are prepared to meet this issue, we think that other men — men who believe that human beings have rights in this world, and that such a government as that of “the British Empire” has no rights at all — will, at no distant day, be ready, in sufficient numbers, to try conclusions with you.

The whole force of your letter, as a defence of Irish landlords, rests upon the assumption that they are the real and true owners of the lands they now hold. But this assumption is a false one. These lands, largely or mostly, were originally taken by the sword, and have ever since been held by the sword. Neither the original robbers, nor any subsequent holders, have ever had any other than a robber’s title to them. And robbery gives no better title to lands than it does to any other property.

No lapse of time can cure this defect in the original title. Every successive holder not only indorses all the robberies of all his predecessors, but he commits a new one himself by withholding the lands, either from the original and true owners, or from those who, but for those robberies, would have been their legitimate heirs and assigns.

And what is true of the lands in Ireland is equally true of the lands in England. The lands in England, largely or mostly, were originally taken by the sword, and have ever since been held by the sword ; and the present holders have no better titles to them than simple, naked robbery has given them.

If the present holders, or any of their predecessors, in either Ireland or England, have ever purchased any of these lands, they have either purchased only a robber’s title to them, or they have purchased them only with the profits or proceeds of previous robberies. They have, therefore, never had, and have not now, any real titles to them.

For these reasons, the present holders of lands generally, in either England or Ireland — whether they hold them by inherit-

ance or purchase—have no whit better title to them, than the highwayman has to the purse he has taken from the traveller, or than the pirate has to the ships and cargoes he has captured on the ocean.

It cannot be supposed that you are so stupid as to be ignorant of all this; and you seem to be conscious of it—and also of the fact that these lands are to be holden, if at all, only by the sword, in the future, as they have been in the past—when you say that—

“The liability [of the actual cultivator] to pay rent can be evaded only by overturning the whole social structure of the United Kingdom,”

Your opinion on this point is doubtless correct. But what does “the whole social structure of the United Kingdom” amount to? To this only: That the original robbers and holders of these lands (in both England and Ireland), with such accomplices as they have, from time to time, induced to join them, have now, for many hundreds of years, constituted a conspiracy—that is, have organized themselves into what they call a government—for the purpose of sustaining each other in the possession of all the lands they have seized; and also for the purpose of plundering and enslaving all the descendants of those from whom the lands were originally taken; and for the still further purpose of plundering and enslaving, as far as possible, all other peoples in other parts of the world. This conspiracy has existed in an organized form,—that is, in the form of both State and Church,—for many hundreds of years. And it is this conspiracy, and nothing else, which you attempt to dignify by the name of “the whole social structure of the United Kingdom.”

Do you really think that an “overturning” of such a “whole social structure” as this would be any great calamity, either to the “United Kingdom,” or to the world at large? Would it not rather be the opening of a day of freedom for more than two hundred millions of enslaved people, “British subjects,” so-called;

to say nothing of its influence on other "social structures," of like character, in other parts of the world?

But you evidently consider such an "overturning" impracticable, for you say, —

"It is not likely that the Irish, in and out of Ireland, will combine to wage war upon the British Empire; neither is it very probable that they would be successful."

By this you mean that this confederacy of robbers and tyrants — small in numbers, but constituting the only real ruling force of what you call "the British Empire" — is too well organized, too compact, too rich, and too powerful, and has too much at stake, to be successfully resisted, or, as you say, "overturned."

But in this you may be mistaken. Less than a century ago, "the whole social structure" of France was "overturned," notwithstanding all, or nearly all, the other "social structures" of Europe combined to sustain it. Do you imagine that the other "social structures" of Europe will ever combine to sustain "the whole social structure of the United Kingdom," as they once combined to sustain that of France? You know that nothing of that kind will ever take place. You know that, henceforth, each of "the social structures" of Europe must take care of itself as best it may; and that already most of them are tottering to their fall. You know that all European combinations, in the future, are to be combinations to "overturn" existing "social structures," and not to sustain them.

How, then, do you think that that confederacy of robbers and villains, whom you call, and who imagine themselves to be, "the British Empire," will fare, when the trial comes? And how far off do you imagine that trial to be?

Do not deceive yourselves in this matter. You are really few in number, and easily distinguished from the great body of those whom you and your predecessors have plundered and enslaved. The very wealth in which you so pride yourselves, and on which you rely as a means of safety, is really an element of weakness. It is not yours. It is all stolen property. It consists only of the

spoils that have been accumulated through centuries of robbery and extortion. If those, and the descendants of those, from whom all this wealth has been taken, shall combine to take it from you, it will be only an act of just and lawful reprisal and retribution. And it now offers itself to them as the richest prize, of this kind, that was ever offered to men on earth. Do you not think they will take it?

The fact that the direct descendants of the original holders of these lands cannot now be individually traced, and reinstated in the property of their ancestors, cannot screen the present holders from their just liability; since the original robbery of the lands, and the entailing them in the families of the original robbers, have not only deprived the direct descendants of the original holders of their rights, but have also deprived all other persons of their natural rights to buy these lands. These other persons, therefore, as well as the direct descendants of the original holders, have a wrong to be redressed. And these two classes, as they cannot now be distinguished from each other, should make common cause.

In addition to all this, these conspirators have, *as a government*, oppressed, robbed, enslaved, and made war upon, everybody, indiscriminately — in England, Ireland, and throughout what you call “the British Empire” — whom they could oppress, plunder, or subdue. *In this way*, then, as well as through the original robberies of the lands, they have incurred a liability to everybody, who has, *in any way*, suffered at their hands. Whenever, then, the day of settlement comes, there will be some two hundred and fifty millions of people, who will be entitled to satisfaction for the wrongs you have inflicted upon them.

And do not imagine that the present landholders alone are to be finally held liable. All who have been voluntary accomplices with them — and all who have voluntarily aided in upholding the British government, have been accomplices with them — have justly incurred the same penalty as the landholders themselves. Among these accomplices have been your great manufacturers, merchants, bankers, ship-owners, money-lenders (lenders of money to the government) — everybody, in fact, high or low, who has voluntarily been part and parcel of the British government — have been accomplices in the thousand crimes by which the people at large,



throughout the Empire, have been plundered and enslaved. And having been such accomplices, their property may as rightfully be seized for purposes of reparation, as may the lands of the landholders themselves; for every member of a conspiracy shares in the guilt of all the others; and is equally liable with them to be coerced into making restitution and compensation.

Sir, From the ancient time, criminals of a certain class have been designated as *hostes humani generis: enemies of the human race*. They received this designation because their crimes were committed, not from any special malice towards particular victims, but solely from motives of plunder; and they were wholly indifferent as to the name or nation of the persons to be plundered. They as willingly robbed, and, if need were, murdered, the people of any one country, as of any other. It being their practice to plunder, to the extent of their ability, all mankind indiscriminately, they naturally and justly came to be regarded as enemies of the whole human race. And from this fact it necessarily followed that they might justly and rightfully be killed, whenever and wherever they could be found, and by whomsoever could kill them.

This designation — enemies of the human race — has more generally been applied to pirates; to men who committed their crimes upon the sea. But there have been other *hostes humani generis*; men devoted to plunder, who committed their crimes upon the land; and who were equally indifferent, with pirates on the sea, as to the persons on whom their crimes were committed. The ruling classes in England, from the time the Anglo-Saxons first came there, have been *hostes humani generis: enemies of the human race*. They have had only one motive, viz.: plunder. And so long as this motive was gratified, they have cared not whom they plundered, enslaved, or murdered.

The Anglo-Saxons were robbers and pirates in their own country, two thousand years ago; robbers on land, and pirates at sea. Such was their sole business. The men performed no useful labor. Their useful labor was all performed by their women and their slaves. They themselves, as history tells us, scorned to labor for anything they could take by force. They came into England on their usual errand. They seized the country by military power,

and reduced the native Britons to slavery. And they have maintained this character ever since. The Normans were equally robbers. The real government of England, the actual ruling power, for more than a thousand years, has been a mere band of robbers; a mere confederacy of villains. And it is nothing else to-day. They have not only plundered and enslaved the great body of the people of England and Ireland, but, as far as possible, the peoples of all other parts of the globe. They have their chains to-day upon more than two hundred millions of people; and their whole purpose is to extort from them everything that oppression, in every form, is capable of extorting.

Do you imagine that when this band of villains — these enemies of the human race — come to receive their dues, at the hands of two hundred and fifty millions of their victims, justice or mercy will have anything to offer in their behalf?

Sir, To the plundered and starving population of Ireland, you say, in effect, and nearly in these words:

“We, the landlords, have no use for you; we have nothing for you to do; we will not feed you; and you cannot feed yourselves. Why, then, do you stay here? Your only salvation is in emigration; and the sooner you go, the better it will be for yourselves, and for us.”

And you conclude your letter with these words, which are among the vilest that were ever written by human hands:

“Why such people [as those Irish, who dream that they can ever again become the owners of Ireland] are permitted to exist, is a marvel. It is best to try and be philosophical, and reflect that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable, and past finding out; and that possibly they may fulfil some use in the economy of nature so obscure as not to be discernible to mortal eye.”

All this is equivalent to your saying: —

“We have taken from you your country, and all your means of living in it. You have nothing more that we can take; and we therefore wish to have nothing more to do with you. By remaining here, you give us no end of trouble, and bring upon us no end of disgrace. You accuse us of starving you to death, and yet you stay with us. If you do not like us, why will you not go, and leave us alone? We want nothing of you; we hate the very sight of you, and wish to get rid of you. It is “inscrutable” to us why the Almighty “permits people to exist,” who are of no use

to us, whose presence is offensive to us, who are forever accusing us of having robbed them of everything they had, and who nevertheless persist in staying with us against our will."

Sir, It is to be hoped that "the ways of the Lord" may soon be made more intelligible to you; that you may be made to know "why such people" as the Irish "are permitted to exist"; what "use in the economy of nature" they "fulfil"; and even why they are permitted to make you so uncomfortable. Perhaps you may come to know that this world and all its inhabitants were not created with a sole view to your pleasure; that for some good reason, in which neither your ease, your pride, your avarice, nor your ambition was consulted, the Almighty saw fit to create other men, and give them rights equal to your own; that their happiness is quite as important as yours; and that these men, whom you now trample upon with such scorn, may yet be strong enough to teach you, in a rough way, such lessons of humility and justice, as have sometimes been taught to tyrants before, and such as will be very bitter to a man like you. You may, however, have this one consolation—that should you ever have all this knowledge forced upon you, it will assuredly make you a much wiser and better man than you are now. And this knowledge, that will be so beneficial to yourself, will be equally useful to your associates, the queens, princes, dukes, earls, and the like, who now feel and reason as you do.

It is also to be hoped that the time is not distant, when somebody will be glad to emigrate from both England and Ireland. But who are to be the emigrants? This is the vital question. You will remember that, in similar circumstances, in a neighboring nation, the class who, one day, ruled all France, thought they owned all France, and felt that they, and they alone, were France, the next day found it convenient to emigrate; leaving everything behind them, to become the property of those, whom, up to that time, they had trampled under foot. May we not see the same thing in England and Ireland?

Sir, the plundered people of England and Ireland need neither emigration, legislation, mitigation, nor modification. They need, and if they do their duty to themselves and to you, they will have,

**REVOLUTION, RETRIBUTION, RESTITUTION, AND, AS FAR  
AS POSSIBLE, COMPENSATION.**

TO ALL THE OPPRESSED CLASSES IN ENGLAND, IRELAND,  
AND THROUGHOUT THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

The foregoing letter, to the so-called Earl of Dunraven, attempts to show you your true relations to the ruling classes of the British Empire; and also the true and only remedy for the wrongs which their ancestors practiced upon your ancestors, and which they themselves are now practicing upon you. Do not imagine that the Parliaments and Courts of oppressors will ever right the wrongs of the oppressed. They exist for no such purpose. Such a thing has never happened, and never will. Take the redress of your own wrongs into your own hands, as you are abundantly able to do, if you are only united, determined, and have clear ideas of your rights, and of what is needful to secure them. Your numbers are so great, in comparison with those of your oppressors, as to put their lives and their property wholly in your power, if you so will it. They have no thought of doing you justice. They have no purpose but to keep so many of you in poverty and servitude as they can make serviceable to themselves, and drive the rest of you out of the country by starvation. And they will do this, as they have heretofore done it, unless you yourselves put an end to their power. Wipe out, then, these feudal robbers—the whole race of kings, and queens, and nobles, and all their accomplices in every grade of life, and take possession of all the spoils which they and their predecessors have wrung from you and your ancestors. Put an end to their Parliaments and Courts. Blot out forever their statute books. They contain little or nothing else than the records of their villainies. Free England and Ireland, and thus all the rest of the empire, of the tyrants and robbers that are plundering, enslaving, and crushing, and starving you.

# NATURAL LAW;

OR

## THE SCIENCE OF JUSTICE:

A TREATISE ON NATURAL LAW, NATURAL JUSTICE,  
NATURAL RIGHTS, NATURAL LIBERTY, AND  
NATURAL SOCIETY; SHOWING THAT  
ALL LEGISLATION WHATSOEVER IS AN ABSURDITY,  
A USURPATION, AND A CRIME.

### PART FIRST.

By LYSANDER SPOONER.

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# NATURAL LAW.

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## PART FIRST.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE SCIENCE OF JUSTICE.

##### SECTION I.

The science of mine and thine — the science of justice — is the science of all human rights ; of all a man's rights of person and property ; of all his rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is the science which alone can tell any man what he can, and cannot, do ; what he can, and cannot, have ; what he can, and cannot, say, without infringing the rights of any other person.

It is the science of peace ; and the only science of peace ; since it is the science which alone can tell us on what conditions mankind can live in peace, or ought to live in peace, with each other.

These conditions are simply these: viz., first, that each man shall do, towards every other, all that justice requires him to do ; as, for example, that he shall pay his debts, that he shall return borrowed or stolen property to its owner, and that he shall make reparation for any injury he may have done to the person or property of another.

The second condition is, that each man shall abstain from doing, to another, anything which justice forbids him to do ; as,

for example, that he shall abstain from committing theft, robbery, arson, murder, or any other crime against the person or property of another.

So long as these conditions are fulfilled, men are at peace, and ought to remain at peace, with each other. But when either of these conditions is violated, men are at war. And they must necessarily remain at war until justice is re-established.

Through all time, so far as history informs us, wherever mankind have attempted to live in peace with each other, both the natural instincts, and the collective wisdom of the human race, have acknowledged and prescribed, as an indispensable condition, obedience to this one only universal obligation: viz., *that each should live honestly towards every other.*

The ancient maxim makes the sum of a man's *legal* duty to his fellow men to be simply this: "*To live honestly, to hurt no one, to give to every one his due.*"

This entire maxim is really expressed in the single words, *to live honestly*; since to live honestly is to hurt no one, and give to every one his due.

## SECTION II.

Man, no doubt, owes many other *moral* duties to his fellow men; such as to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the sick, protect the defenceless, assist the weak, and enlighten the ignorant. But these are simply *moral* duties, of which each man must be his own judge, in each particular case, as to whether, and how, and how far, he can, or will, perform them. But of his *legal* duty — that is, of his duty to live honestly towards his fellow men — his fellow men not only *may* judge, but, for their own protection, *must* judge. And, if need be, they may rightfully *compel* him to perform it. They may do this, acting singly, or in concert. They may do it on the instant, as the necessity arises, or deliberately and systematically, if they prefer to do so, and the exigency will admit of it.



## SECTION III.

Although it is the right of anybody and everybody — of any one man, or set of men, no less than another — to repel injustice, and compel justice, for themselves, and for all who may be wronged, yet to avoid the errors that are liable to result from haste and passion, and that everybody, who desires it, may rest secure in the assurance of protection, without a resort to force, it is evidently desirable that men should associate, so far as they freely and voluntarily can do so, for the maintenance of justice among themselves, and for mutual protection against other wrong-doers. It is also in the highest degree desirable that they should agree upon some plan or system of judicial proceedings, which, in the trial of causes, should secure caution, deliberation, thorough investigation, and, as far as possible, freedom from every influence but the simple desire to do justice.

Yet such associations can be rightful and desirable only in so far as they are purely voluntary. No man can rightfully be coerced into joining one, or supporting one, against his will. His own interest, his own judgment, and his own conscience alone must determine whether he will join this association, or that; or whether he will join any. If he chooses to depend, for the protection of his own rights, solely upon himself, and upon such voluntary assistance as other persons may freely offer to him when the necessity for it arises, he has a perfect right to do so. And this course would be a reasonably safe one for him to follow, so long as he himself should manifest the ordinary readiness of mankind, in like cases, to go to the assistance and defence of injured persons; and should also himself "live honestly, hurt no one, and give to every one his due." For such a man is reasonably sure of always having friends and defenders enough in case of need, whether he shall have joined any association, or not.

Certainly no man can rightfully be required to join, or support, an association whose protection he does not desire. Nor can any man be reasonably or rightfully expected to join, or support, any association whose plans, or method of proceeding, he does not

approve, as likely to accomplish its professed purpose of maintaining justice, and at the same time itself avoid doing injustice. To join, or support, one that would, in his opinion, be inefficient, would be absurd. To join or support one that, in his opinion, would itself do injustice, would be criminal. He must, therefore, be left at the same liberty to join, or not to join, an association for this purpose, as for any other, according as his own interest, discretion, or conscience shall dictate.

An association for mutual protection against injustice is like an association for mutual protection against fire or shipwreck. And there is no more right or reason in *compelling* any man to join or support one of these associations, against his will, his judgment, or his conscience, than there is in compelling him to join or support any other, whose benefits (if it offer any) he does not want, or whose purposes or methods he does not approve.

#### SECTION IV.

No objection can be made to these voluntary associations upon the ground that they would lack that knowledge of justice, as a science, which would be necessary to enable them to maintain justice, and themselves avoid doing injustice. Honesty, justice, natural law, is usually a very plain and simple matter, easily understood by common minds. Those who desire to know what it is, in any particular case, seldom have to go far to find it. It is true, it must be learned, like any other science. But it is also true that it is very easily learned. Although as illimitable in its applications as the infinite relations and dealings of men with each other, it is, nevertheless, made up of a few simple elementary principles, of the truth and justice of which every ordinary mind has an almost intuitive perception. And almost all men have the same perceptions of what constitutes justice, or of what justice requires, when they understand alike the facts from which their inferences are to be drawn.

Men living in contact with each other, and having intercourse together, *cannot avoid* learning natural law, to a very great extent,

even if they would. The dealings of men with men, their separate possessions and their individual wants, and the disposition of every man to demand, and insist upon, whatever he believes to be his due, and to resent and resist all invasions of what he believes to be his rights, are continually forcing upon their minds the questions, Is this act just? or is it unjust? Is this thing mine? or is it his? And these are questions of natural law; questions which, in regard to the great mass of cases, are answered alike by the human mind everywhere.\*

Children learn the fundamental principles of natural law at a very early age. Thus they very early understand that one child must not, without just cause, strike, or otherwise hurt, another; that one child must not assume any arbitrary control or domination over another; that one child must not, either by force, deceit, or stealth, obtain possession of anything that belongs to another; that if one child commits any of these wrongs against another, it is not only the right of the injured child to resist, and, if need be, punish the wrongdoer, and compel him to make reparation, but that it is also the right, and the moral duty, of all other children, and all other persons, to assist the injured party in defending his rights, and redressing his wrongs. These are fundamental principles of natural law, which govern the most important transactions of man with man. Yet children learn them earlier than they learn that three and three are six, or five and five ten. Their childish plays, even, could not be carried on without a constant regard to them; and it is equally impossible for persons of any age to live together in peace on any other conditions.

\* Sir William Jones, an English judge in India, and one of the most learned judges that ever lived, learned in Asiatic as well as European law, says: "It is pleasing to remark the similarity, or, rather, the identity, of those conclusions which pure, unbiassed reason, in all ages and nations, seldom fails to draw, in such juridical inquiries as are not fettered and manacled by positive institutions."—*Jones on Bailments*, 133.

He means here to say that, when no law has been made in violation of justice, judicial tribunals, "in all ages and nations," have "seldom" failed to agree as to what justice is.

It would be no extravagance to say that, in most cases, if not in all, mankind at large, young and old, learn this natural law long before they have learned the meanings of the words by which we describe it. In truth, it would be impossible to make them understand the real meanings of the words, if they did not first understand the nature of the thing itself. To make them understand the meanings of the words justice and injustice, before knowing the nature of the things themselves, would be as impossible as it would be to make them understand the meanings of the words heat and cold, wet and dry, light and darkness, white and black, one and two, before knowing the nature of the things themselves. Men necessarily must know sentiments and ideas, no less than material things, before they can know the meanings of the words by which we describe them.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SCIENCE OF JUSTICE (CONTINUED)

## SECTION I.

If justice be not a natural principle, it is no principle at all. If it be not a natural principle, there is no such thing as justice. If it be not a natural principle, all that men have ever said or written about it, from time immemorial, has been said and written about that which had no existence. If it be not a natural principle, all the appeals for justice that have ever been heard, and all the struggles for justice that have ever been witnessed, have been appeals and struggles for a mere fantasy, a vagary of the imagination, and not for a reality.

If justice be not a natural principle, then there is no such thing as injustice; and all the crimes of which the world has been the scene, have been no crimes at all; but only simple events, like the falling of the rain, or the setting of the sun; events of which the victims had no more reason to complain than they had to complain of the running of the streams, or the growth of vegetation.

If justice be not a natural principle, governments (so-called) have no more right or reason to take cognizance of it, or to pretend or profess to take cognizance of it, than they have to take cognizance, or to pretend or profess to take cognizance, of any other nonentity; and all their professions of establishing justice, or of maintaining justice, or of regarding justice, are simply the mere gibberish of fools, or the frauds of imposters.

But if justice be a natural principle, then it is necessarily an immutable one; and can no more be changed — by any power inferior to that which established it — than can the law of gravitation, the laws of light, the principles of mathematics, or any other natural law or principle whatever; and all attempts or assumptions, on the part of any man or body of men — whether calling themselves governments, or by any other name — to set up their

own commands, wills, pleasure, or discretion, in the place of justice, as a rule of conduct for any human being, are as much an absurdity, an usurpation, and a tyranny, as would be their attempts to set up their own commands, wills, pleasure, or discretion in the place of any and all the physical, mental, and moral laws of the universe.

## SECTION II.

If there be any such principle as justice, it is, of necessity, a natural principle ; and, as such, it is a matter of science, to be learned and applied like any other science. And to talk of either adding to, or taking from, it, by legislation, is just as false, absurd, and ridiculous as it would be to talk of adding to, or taking from, mathematics, chemistry, or any other science, by legislation.

## SECTION III.

If there be in nature such a principle as justice, nothing can be added to, or taken from, its supreme authority by all the legislation of which the entire human race united are capable. And all the attempts of the human race, or of any portion of it, to add to, or take from, the supreme authority of justice, in any case whatever, is of no more obligation upon any single human being than is the idle wind.

## SECTION IV.

If there be such a principle as justice, or natural law, it is the principle, or law, that tells us what rights were given to every human being at his birth ; what rights are, therefore, inherent in him as a human being, necessarily remain with him during life ; and, however capable of being trampled upon, are incapable of being blotted out, extinguished, annihilated, or separated or eliminated from his nature as a human being, or deprived of their inherent authority or obligation.

On the other hand, if there be no such principle as justice, or natural law, then every human being came into the world utterly destitute of rights ; and coming into the world destitute of rights, he must necessarily forever remain so. For if no one brings any rights with him into the world, clearly no one can ever have any rights of his own, or give any to another. And the consequence would be that mankind could never have any rights ; and for them to talk of any such things as their rights, would be to talk of things that never had, never will have, and never can have an existence.

#### SECTION V.

If there be such a natural principle as justice, it is necessarily the highest, and consequently the only and universal, law for all those matters to which it is naturally applicable. And, consequently, all human legislation is simply and always an assumption of authority and dominion, where no right of authority or dominion exists. It is, therefore, simply and always an intrusion, an absurdity, an usurpation, and a crime.

On the other hand, if there be no such natural principle as justice, there can be no such thing as injustice. If there be no such natural principle as honesty, there can be no such thing as dishonesty ; and no possible act of either force or fraud, committed by one man against the person or property of another, can be said to be unjust or dishonest ; or be complained of, or prohibited, or punished as such. In short, if there be no such principle as justice, there can be no such acts as crimes ; and all the professions of governments, so called, that they exist, either in whole or in part, for the punishment or prevention of crimes, are professions that they exist for the punishment or prevention of what never existed, nor ever can exist. Such professions are therefore confessions that, so far as crimes are concerned, governments have no occasion to exist ; that there is nothing for them to do, and that there is nothing that they can do. They are confessions that the governments exist for the punishment and prevention of acts that are, in their nature, simple impossibilities.

## SECTION VI.

If there be in nature such a principle as justice, such a principle as honesty, such principles as we describe by the words mine and thine, such principles as men's natural rights of person and property, then we have an immutable and universal law; a law that we can learn, as we learn any other science; a law that is paramount to, and excludes, every thing that conflicts with it; a law that tells us what is just and what is unjust, what is honest and what is dishonest, what things are mine and what things are thine, what are my rights of person and property and what are your rights of person and property, and where is the boundary between each and all of my rights of person and property and each and all of your rights of person and property. And this law is the paramount law, and the same law, over all the world, at all times, and for all peoples; and will be the same paramount and only law, at all times, and for all peoples, so long as man shall live upon the earth.

But if, on the other hand, there be in nature no such principle as justice, no such principle as honesty, no such principle as men's natural rights of person or property, then all such words as justice and injustice, honesty and dishonesty, all such words as mine and thine, all words that signify that one thing is one man's property and that another thing is another man's property, all words that are used to describe men's natural rights of person or property, all such words as are used to describe injuries and crimes, should be struck out of all human languages as having no meanings; and it should be declared, at once and forever, that the greatest force and the greatest frauds, for the time being, are the supreme and only laws for governing the relations of men with each other; and that, from henceforth, all persons and combinations of persons — those that call themselves governments, as well as all others — are to be left free to practice upon each other all the force, and all the fraud, of which they are capable.



## SECTION VII.

If there be no such science as justice, there can be no science of government ; and all the rapacity and violence, by which, in all ages and nations, a few confederated villains have obtained the mastery over the rest of mankind, reduced them to poverty and slavery, and established what they called governments to keep them in subjection, have been as legitimate examples of government as any that the world is ever to see.

## SECTION VIII.

If there be in nature such a principle as justice, it is necessarily the only *political* principle there ever was, or ever will be. All the other so-called political principles, which men are in the habit of inventing, are not principles at all. They are either the mere conceits of simpletons, who imagine they have discovered something better than truth, and justice, and universal law ; or they are mere devices and pretences, to which selfish and knavish men resort as means to get fame, and power, and money.

## CHAPTER III.

## NATURAL LAW CONTRASTED WITH LEGISLATION.

## SECTION I.

Natural law, natural justice, being a principle that is naturally applicable and adequate to the rightful settlement of every possible controversy that can arise among men ; being, too, the only standard by which any controversy whatever, between man and man, can be rightfully settled ; being a principle whose protection every man demands for himself, whether he is willing to accord it to others, or not ; being also an immutable principle, one that is always and everywhere the same, in all ages and nations ; being self-evidently necessary in all times and places ; being so entirely impartial and equitable towards all ; so indispensable to the peace of mankind everywhere ; so vital to the safety and welfare of every human being ; being, too, so easily learned, so generally known, and so easily maintained by such voluntary associations as all honest men can readily and rightfully form for that purpose — being such a principle as this, these questions arise, viz. : Why is it that it does not universally, or well nigh universally, prevail ? Why is it that it has not, ages ago, been established throughout the world as the one only law that any man, or all men, could rightfully be compelled to obey ? Why is it that any human being ever conceived that anything so self-evidently superfluous, false, absurd, and atrocious as all legislation necessarily must be, could be of any use to mankind, or have any place in human affairs ?

## SECTION II.

The answer is, that through all historic times, wherever any people have advanced beyond the savage state, and have learned to increase their means of subsistence by the cultivation of the soil, a greater or less number of them have associated and organized themselves as robbers, to plunder and enslave all others,

who had either accumulated any property that could be seized, or had shown, by their labor, that they could be made to contribute to the support or pleasure of those who should enslave them.

These bands of robbers, small in number at first, have increased their power by uniting with each other, inventing warlike weapons, disciplining themselves, and perfecting their organizations as military forces, and dividing their plunder (including their captives) among themselves, either in such proportions as have been previously agreed on, or in such as their leaders (always desirous to increase the number of their followers) should prescribe.

The success of these bands of robbers was an easy thing, for the reason that those whom they plundered and enslaved were comparatively defenceless; being scattered thinly over the country; engaged wholly in trying, by rude implements and heavy labor, to extort a subsistence from the soil; having no weapons of war, other than sticks and stones; having no military discipline or organization, and no means of concentrating their forces, or acting in concert, when suddenly attacked. Under these circumstances, the only alternative left them for saving even their lives, or the lives of their families, was to yield up not only the crops they had gathered, and the lands they had cultivated, but themselves and their families also as slaves.

Thenceforth their fate was, as slaves, to cultivate for others the lands they had before cultivated for themselves. Being driven constantly to their labor, wealth slowly increased; but all went into the hands of their tyrants.

These tyrants, living solely on plunder, and on the labor of their slaves, and applying all their energies to the seizure of still more plunder, and the enslavement of still other defenceless persons; increasing, too, their numbers, perfecting their organizations, and multiplying their weapons of war, they extend their conquests until, in order to hold what they have already got, it becomes necessary for them to act systematically, and co operate with each other in holding their slaves in subjection.

But all this they can do only by establishing what they call a government, and making what they call laws.

All the great governments of the world—those now existing, as well as those that have passed away—have been of this character. They have been mere bands of robbers, who have associated for purposes of plunder, conquest, and the enslavement of their fellow men. And their laws, as they have called them, have been only such agreements as they have found it necessary to enter into, in order to maintain their organizations, and act together in plundering and enslaving others, and in securing to each his agreed share of the spoils.

All these laws have had no more real obligation than have the agreements which brigands, bandits, and pirates find it necessary to enter into with each other, for the more successful accomplishment of their crimes, and the more peaceable division of their spoils.

Thus substantially all the legislation of the world has had its origin in the desires of one class of persons to plunder and enslave others, *and hold them as property.*

### SECTION III.

In process of time, the robber, or slave holding, class—who had seized all the lands, and held all the means of creating wealth—began to discover that the easiest mode of managing their slaves, and making them profitable, was *not* for each slaveholder to hold his specified number of slaves, as he had done before, and as he would hold so many cattle, but to give them so much liberty as would throw upon themselves (the slaves) the responsibility of their own subsistence, and yet compel them to sell their labor to the land-holding class—their former owners—for just what the latter might choose to give them.

Of course, these liberated slaves, as some have erroneously called them, having no lands, or other property, and no means of obtaining an independent subsistence, had no alternative—but to save themselves from starvation—but to sell their labor to the landholders, in exchange only for the coarsest necessities of life; not always for so much even as that.

These liberated slaves, as they were called, were now scarcely less slaves than they were before. Their means of subsistence were perhaps even more precarious than when each had his own owner, who had an interest to preserve his life. They were liable, at the caprice or interest of the land-holders, to be thrown out of home, employment, and the opportunity of even earning a subsistence by their labor. They were, therefore, in large numbers, driven to the necessity of begging, stealing, or starving; and became, of course, dangerous to the property and quiet of their late masters.

The consequence was, that these late owners found it necessary, for their own safety and the safety of their property, to organize themselves more perfectly as a government, *and make laws for keeping these dangerous people in subjection*; that is, laws fixing the prices at which they should be compelled to labor, and also prescribing fearful punishments, even death itself, for such thefts and trespasses as they were driven to commit, as their only means of saving themselves from starvation.

These laws have continued in force for hundreds, and, in some countries, for thousands of years; and are in force to-day, in greater or less severity, in nearly all the countries on the globe.

The purpose and effect of these laws have been to maintain, in the hands of the robber, or slave holding class, a monopoly of all lands, and, as far as possible, of all other means of creating wealth; and thus to keep the great body of laborers in such a state of poverty and dependence, as would compel them to sell their labor to their tyrants for the lowest prices at which life could be sustained.

The result of all this is, that the little wealth there is in the world is all in the hands of a few — that is, in the hands of the law-making, slave-holding class; who are now as much slave-holders in spirit as they ever were, but who accomplish their purposes by means of *the laws they make* for keeping the laborers in subjection and dependence, instead of each one's owning his individual slaves as so many chattels.

Thus the whole business of legislation, which has now grown to such gigantic proportions, had its origin in the conspiracies, which have always existed among the few, for the purpose of holding the many in subjection, and extorting from them their labor, and all the profits of their labor.

And the real motives and spirit which lie at the foundation of all legislation — notwithstanding all the pretences and disguises by which they attempt to hide themselves — are the same to-day as they always have been. The whole purpose of this legislation is simply to keep one class of men in subordination and servitude to another.

#### SECTION IV.

What, then, is legislation? It is an assumption by one man, or body of men, of absolute, irresponsible dominion over all other men whom they can subject to their power. It is the assumption by one man, or body of men, of a right to subject all other men to their will and their service. It is the assumption by one man, or body of men, of a right to abolish outright all the natural rights, all the natural liberty of all other men; to make all other men their slaves; to arbitrarily dictate to all other men what they may, and may not, do; what they may, and may not, have; what they may, and may not, be. It is, in short, the assumption of a right to banish the principle of human rights, the principle of justice itself, from off the earth, and set up their own personal will, pleasure, and interest in its place. All this, and nothing less, is involved in the very idea that there can be any such thing as human legislation that is obligatory upon those upon whom it is imposed.

# A LETTER

TO

THOMAS F. BAYARD:

CHALLENGING HIS RIGHT—AND THAT OF ALL THE  
OTHER SO-CALLED SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS—

TO EXERCISE ANY LEGISLATIVE POWER WHATEVER  
OVER THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

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BY LYSANDER SPOONER.

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BOSTON, MASS.:  
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.  
1862.





# LETTER

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*To Thomas F. Bayard, of Delaware :*

SIR,—I have read your letter to Rev. Lyman Abbott, in which you express the opinion that it is at least possible for a man to be a legislator, (under the Constitution of the United States,) and yet be an honest man.

This proposition implies that you hold it to be at least possible that some four hundred men should, by some process or other, become invested with the right *to make laws of their own*—that is, *laws wholly of their own device*, and therefore necessarily distinct from the law of nature, or the principles of natural justice; and that these laws of their own making shall be really and truly obligatory upon the people of the United States; and that, therefore, the people may rightfully be compelled to obey them.

All this implies that you are of the opinion that the Congress of the United States, of which you are a member, has, by some process or other, become possessed of some right of *arbitrary dominion* over the people of the United States; which right of arbitrary dominion is not given by, and is, therefore, necessarily in conflict with, the law of nature, the principles of natural justice, and the natural rights of men, as individuals. All this is necessarily implied in the idea that the Congress now possesses any right whatever to make any laws whatever, *of its own device*—that is, any laws that shall be either more, less, or other than that natural law, which it can neither make, unmake, nor alter—and cause them to be enforced upon the people of the United States, or any of them, against their will.

You assume that the right of arbitrary dominion—that is,

the right of making laws of their own device, and compelling obedience to them—is a “trust” that has been delegated to those who now exercise that power. You call it “*the trust of public power.*”

But, Sir, you are mistaken in supposing that any such power has ever been delegated, or ever can be delegated, by any body, to any body.

Any such delegation of power is naturally impossible, for these reasons, viz:—

1. No man can delegate, or give to another, any right of arbitrary dominion over himself; for that would be giving himself away as a slave. And this no one can do. Any contract to do so is necessarily an absurd one, and has no validity. To call such a contract a “Constitution,” or by any other high-sounding name, does not alter its character as an absurd and void contract.

2. No man can delegate, or give to another, any right of arbitrary dominion over a third person; for that would imply a right in the first person, not only to make the third person his slave, but also a right to dispose of him as a slave to still other persons. Any contract to do this is necessarily a criminal one, and therefore invalid. To call such a contract a “Constitution” does not at all lessen its criminality, or add to its validity.

These facts, that no man can delegate, or give away, his own natural right to liberty, nor any other man's natural right to liberty, prove that he can delegate no right of arbitrary dominion whatever—or, what is the same thing, no legislative power whatever—over himself or any body else, to any man, or body of men.

This impossibility of any man's delegating any legislative power whatever necessarily results from the fact, that the law of nature has drawn the line, and the only line—and that, too,

a line that can never be effaced nor removed—between each man's own inherent and inalienable rights of person and property, and each and every other man's inherent and inalienable rights of person and property. It, therefore, necessarily fixes the unalterable limits, within which every man may rightfully seek his own happiness, in his own way, free from all responsibility to, or interference by, his fellow men, or any of them.

All this pretended delegation of legislative power—that is, of a power, on the part of the legislators, so-called, to make any laws of their own device, distinct from the law of nature—is therefore an entire falsehood; a falsehood, whose only purpose is to cover and hide a pure usurpation, by one body of men, of arbitrary dominion over other men.

That this legislative power, or power of arbitrary dominion, is a pure usurpation, on the part of those who now exercise it, and not “a trust” delegated to them, is still further proved by the fact that the only delegation of power, that is even professed or pretended to be made, is made *secretly*—that is, *by secret ballot*—and not in any open and authentic manner; and therefore not by any men, or body of men, who make themselves personally responsible, as principals, for the acts of those to whom they profess to delegate the power.

All this pretended delegation of power having been made secretly—that is, only by secret ballot—not a single one of all the legislators, so-called, who profess to be exercising only a delegated power, has himself any legal knowledge, or can offer any legal proof, as to who the particular individuals were, who delegated it to him. And having no power to identify the individuals who professed to delegate the power to him, he cannot show any legal proof that any body ever even attempted or pretended to delegate it to him.

Plainly a man, who exercises any arbitrary dominion over other men, and who claims to be exercising only a delegated power, but cannot show who his principals are, nor, conse-

quently, prove that he has any principals, must be presumed, both in law and reason, to have no principals; and therefore to be exercising no power but his own. And having, of right, no such power of his own, he is, both in law and reason, a naked usurper.

Sir, a secret ballot makes a secret government; and a secret government is a government by conspiracy; in which the people at large can have no rights. And that is the only government we now have. It is the government of which you are a voluntary member, and supporter, and yet you claim to be an honest man. If you are an honest man, is not your honesty that of a thoughtless, ignorant man, who merely drifts with the current, instead of exercising any judgment of his own?

For still another reason, all legislators, so-called, under the Constitution of the United States, are exercising simply an arbitrary and irresponsible dominion of their own; and not any authority that has been delegated, or pretended to have been delegated, to them. And that reason is, that the Constitution itself (Art. 1, Sec. 6) prescribes that:—

“For any speech or debate [or vote] in either house, they [the Senators and Representatives] shall not be questioned [held to any legal responsibility] in any other place.”

This provision makes the legislators constitutionally irresponsible to anybody; either to those on whom they exercise their power, or to those who may have, either openly or secretly, attempted or pretended to delegate power to them. And men, who are legally responsible to nobody for their acts, cannot truly be said to be the agents of any body, or to be exercising any power but their own: for all real agents are necessarily responsible both to those *on* whom they act, and to those *for* whom they act.

To say that the people of this country ever have bound, or ever could bind, themselves by any contract whatever—the

Constitution, or any other—to thus give away all their natural rights of property, liberty, and life, into the hands of a few men—a mere conclave—and that they should make it a part of the contract itself that these few men should be held legally irresponsible for the disposal they should make of those rights, is an utter absurdity. It is to say that they have bound themselves, and that they could bind themselves, by an utterly idiotic and suicidal contract.

If such a contract had ever been made by one private individual to another, and had been signed, sealed, witnessed, acknowledged, and delivered, with all possible legal formalities, no decent court on earth—certainly none in this country—would have regarded it, for a moment, as conveying any right, or delegating any power, or as having the slightest legal validity, or obligation.

For all the reasons now given, and for still others that might be given, the legislative power now exercised by Congress, is, in both law and reason, a purely personal, arbitrary, irresponsible, usurped dominion on the part of the legislators themselves, and not a power delegated to them by anybody.

Yet under the pretence that this instrument gives them the right of an arbitrary and irresponsible dominion over the whole people of the United States, Congress has now gone on, for ninety years and more, filling great volumes with laws of their own device, which the people at large have never read, nor even seen, nor ever will read or see; and of whose legal meanings it is morally impossible that they should ever know any thing. Congress has never dared to require the people even to read these laws. Had it done so, the oppression would have been an intolerable one; and the people, rather than endure it, would have either rebelled, and overthrown the government, or would have fled the country. Yet these laws, which Congress has not dared to require the people even to read, it has compelled them, at the point of the bayonet, to obey.

And this moral, and legal, and political monstrosity is the kind of government which Congress claims that the Constitution authorizes it to impose upon the people.

Sir, can you say that such an arbitrary and irresponsible dominion as this, over the properties, liberties, and lives of fifty millions of people — or even over the property, liberty, or life of any one of those fifty millions — can be justified on any reason whatever? If not, with what color of truth can you say that you yourself, or anybody else, can act as a legislator, under the Constitution of the United States, and yet be an honest man?

To say that the arbitrary and irresponsible dominion, that is exercised by Congress, has been delegated to it by the Constitution, *and not solely by the secret ballots of the voters for the time being*, is the height of absurdity; for what is the Constitution? It is, at best, a writing that was drawn up more than ninety years ago; was assented to at the time only by a small number of men; generally those few white male adults who had prescribed amounts of property; probably not more than two hundred thousand in all; or one in twenty of the whole population.

Those men have been long since dead. They never had any right of arbitrary dominion over even their contemporaries; and they never had any over us. Their wills or wishes have no more rightful authority over us, than have the wills or wishes of men who lived before the flood. They never personally signed, sealed, acknowledged, or delivered, or dared to sign, seal, acknowledge, or deliver, the instrument which they imposed upon the country as law. They never, in any open and authentic manner, bound even themselves to obey it, or made themselves personally responsible for the acts of their so-called agents under it. They had no natural right to impose it, as law, upon a single human being. The whole proceeding was a pure usurpation.

In practice, the Constitution has been an utter fraud from the beginning. Professing to have been "ordained and established" by "*We, the people of the United States,*" it has never been submitted to them, as individuals, for their voluntary acceptance or rejection. They have never been asked to sign, seal, acknowledge, or deliver it, as their free act and deed. They have never signed, sealed, acknowledged, or delivered it, or promised, or laid themselves under any kind of obligation, to obey it. Very few of them have ever read, or even seen it; or ever will read or see it. Of its legal meaning (if it can be said to have any) they really know nothing; and never did, nor ever will, know any thing.

Why is it, Sir, that such an instrument as the Constitution, for which nobody has been responsible, and of which few persons have ever known any thing, has been suffered to stand, for the last ninety years, and to be used for such audacious and criminal purposes? It is solely because it has been sustained by the same kind of conspiracy as that by which it was established; that is, by the wealth and the power of those few who were to profit by the arbitrary dominion it was assumed to give them over others. While the poor, the weak, and the ignorant, who were to be cheated, plundered, and enslaved by it, have been told, and some of them doubtless made to believe, that it is a sacred instrument, designed for the preservation of their rights.

These cheated, plundered, and enslaved persons have been made to feel, if not to believe, that the Constitution had such miraculous power, that it could authorize the majority (or even a plurality) of the male adults, for the time being — a majority numbering at this time, say, five millions in all — to exercise, through their agents, secretly appointed, an arbitrary and irresponsible dominion over the properties, liberties, and lives of the whole fifty millions; and that these fifty millions have no rightful alternative but to submit all their rights to this arbi-

trary dominion, or suffer such confiscation, imprisonment, or death as this secretly appointed, irresponsible cabal, of so-called legislators, should see fit to resort to for the maintenance of its power.

As might have been expected, and as was, to a large degree, at least, intended, this Constitution has been used from the beginning by ambitious, rapacious, and unprincipled men, to enable them to maintain, at the point of the bayonet, an arbitrary and irresponsible dominion over those who were too ignorant and too weak to protect themselves against the conspirators who had thus combined to deceive, plunder, and enslave them.

Do you really think, Sir, that such a constitution as this can avail to justify those who, like yourself, are engaged in enforcing it? Is it not plain, rather, that the members of Congress, as a legislative body, whether they are conscious of it, or not, are, in reality, a mere cabal of swindlers, usurpers, tyrants, and robbers? Is it not plain that they are stupendous blockheads, if they imagine that they are anything else than such a cabal? or that their so-called laws impose the least obligation upon anybody?

If you have never before looked at this matter in this light, I ask you to do so now. And in the hope to aid you in doing so candidly, and to some useful purpose, I take the liberty to mail for you a pamphlet entitled :

*"NATURAL LAW; OR THE SCIENCE OF JUSTICE; a Treatise on Natural Law, Natural Justice, Natural Rights, Natural Liberty, and Natural Society; Showing That All Legislation Whatsoever Is an Absurdity, A Usurpation, and a Crime. Part I.*

In this pamphlet, I have endeavored to controvert distinctly the proposition that, by any possible process whatever, any man, or body of men, can become possessed of any right of arbitrary dominion over other men, or other men's property;



or, consequently, any right whatever to make any law whatever, *of their own*—distinct from the law of nature—and compel any other men to obey it.

I trust I need not suspect you, as a legislator under the Constitution, and claiming to be an honest man, of any desire to evade the issue presented in this pamphlet. If you shall see fit to meet it, I hope you will excuse me for suggesting that—to avoid verbiage, and everything indefinite—you give at least a single specimen of a law that either heretofore has been made, or that you conceive it possible for legislators to make—that is, some law of their own device—that either has been, or shall be, really and truly obligatory upon other persons, and which such other persons have been, or may be, rightfully compelled to obey.

If you can either find or devise any such law, I trust you will make it known, that it may be examined, and the question of its obligation be fairly settled in the popular mind.

But if it should happen that you can neither find such a law in the existing statute books of the United States, nor, in your own mind, conceive of such a law as possible under the Constitution, I give you leave to find it, if that be possible, in the constitution or statute book of any other people that now exist, or ever have existed, on the earth.

If, finally, you shall find no such law, anywhere, nor be able to conceive of any such law yourself, I take the liberty to suggest that it is your imperative duty to submit the question to your associate legislators; and, if they can give no light on the subject, that you call upon them to burn all the existing statute books of the United States, and then to go home and content themselves with the exercise of only such rights and powers as nature has given to them in common with the rest of mankind.

LYSANDER SPOONER.

Boston, May 27, 1862.

A LETTER  
TO  
SCIENTISTS  
AND  
INVENTORS,  
ON  
THE SCIENCE OF JUSTICE, AND THEIR RIGHT OF  
PERPETUAL PROPERTY IN THEIR DISCOV-  
ERIES AND INVENTIONS.

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BY LYSANDER SPOONER.

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# LETTER.

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## SECTION I.

### *To Scientists and Inventors:*

YOU are the great producers and diffusers of knowledge and wealth. Your scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions are the great, almost the only, instrumentalities by which the world at large is enlightened or enriched. You, Scientists, explore Nature for her facts and laws, which, violated through ignorance or design, bring upon mankind want, disease, misery, and death; but which, known and accepted as guides, bring to them not only great material wealth, but also life, health, and strength of both body and mind. And you, Inventors, devise and explain to us the application of mechanical forces, by which men's powers of providing for, and satisfying, their wants and desires, are multiplied a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand fold.

Your discoveries and inventions, the value of which no man can measure, are not, like our material wealth, consumed, or worn out, by use, nor do they decay by time. They are not, like our material wealth, local and limited in their nature; but each and all of them can be diffused all over the globe, and be utilized by all peoples, not only without conflict, but with mutual and universal benefit.

For the want of your discoveries and inventions, mankind, through many thousands of years, have remained savage, barbarous, or, if in any degree civilized, still poverty-stricken, short-lived, feeble, ignorant, superstitious, enslaved in both body and mind. And such is the condition of more than a thousand millions of the world's people to-day. And such it will remain for

thousands of years to come, unless they can have the benefit of such discoveries and inventions as you are making, and offering to them ; and such as they would accept and utilize, if their governments did not deprive them of all power to do so.

In spite of all the obstacles which these governments have constantly placed in their way, these discoveries and inventions have, of late years, and in some portions of the world, made progress. And nobody knows so well as yourselves, how much greater this progress would be, if all men of scientific and inventive minds, all over the world, had all the inducements and means that they might have, and ought to have, for prosecuting their investigations and experiments.

Your own rights and interests, and the rights and interests of mankind at large, are identical in this matter. It is your own right, and for your own interest, that you should have all the inducements and means that you honestly can have, for prosecuting your investigations and experiments, and producing all the discoveries and inventions that you are capable of. It is also the right, and for the interests, of mankind at large, that you should have all those inducements and means, because it is only through the greatest number of discoveries and inventions, that mankind are to be most highly enlightened and enriched.

What, then, are these inducements and means, which you need, and have a right to, and which it is the right, and for the interests, of mankind at large, that you should have? They are these :

1. The same right of *perpetual* property in the products of your brains, that all other men are justly entitled to have in the products of their hands.

2. The same protection, by both civil and criminal law, for the products of your brain labor, that other men are justly entitled to have for the products of their hand labor.

3. The same right of *perpetual* property in your discoveries and inventions, in all the other countries of the world, as in your own.

4. It is the right, and for the interests, of all past discoverers and inventors, and of their heirs, to recover their natural right of *perpetual* property in their discoveries and inventions, which has

hitherto been denied or withheld by the ignorant and tyrannical governments that have heretofore existed, and now exist, in the world.

5. It is also the right, *and for the interests, of mankind at large*, that the right of perpetual property, in their discoveries and inventions, should be restored to all past discoverers and inventors, *and to their heirs*, so far as they can now be ascertained.

6. It is your right to have all the money you need, and honestly can have — that is, all the money that freedom in banking would give you — not only for making your discoveries and inventions, but also for carrying them all over the world, and putting them into actual operation.

7. It is your right, and for your interests, as well as their own, that all mankind, all over the world, should have all the money they need, and honestly can have — that is, all the money that freedom in banking would give them — to enable them to utilize your discoveries and inventions as fast as they are made, and to distribute to consumers all the wealth that your discoveries and inventions will enable them to create.

How are all these propositions to be realized? In other words, *how are they all to be established as law*, in all the different countries of the world?

The general answer to this question is, that these propositions are all to be established as law, all over the world, by showing their truth and justice to all peoples; and also by showing, not only their adaptation, but their necessity, for promoting the highest enlightenment, and the greatest enrichment, of all the peoples of the earth.

But a more particular answer is needed. And it will now be given, by showing not only the truth and justice of the several propositions themselves, and their adaptation and necessity to produce all that is now claimed for them, *but also by showing that scientists and inventors have it in their own power, while promoting their own highest interests, to accomplish the whole work.*

## SECTION II.

Before proceeding to the consideration of the preceding propositions, it is your right, and for your interests, to have this one question decided, viz. : Whether your scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, by which, incomparably beyond all other men, you are enlightening and enriching mankind, are, *in their nature*, an equally legitimate property, and entitled to the same legal protection, as are the products of men's manual labor? Or whether that mere pittance of protection, which is allowed to them in a few countries, and not at all in others, is all the reward to which your labors are entitled?

When this question shall be rightly answered, all the other questions must necessarily be rightly answered, too. *And this question is really and finally answered by the single fact that knowledge is property.*

That knowledge is wealth — and wealth, too, of the greatest value — no man of sense will deny. Why, then, is it not property? And subject to all the laws of property?

Knowledge is property. It is a property that is really acquired only by labor of mind, or body, or both; oftentimes only by great labor of both body and mind. It is also a property that is extensively bought and sold, like other property, in the market.

It is true that a vast amount of knowledge — knowledge, too, of great intrinsic value — is so common, from having been acquired by each one's own experience and observation, that it bears no price in the market; but that does not affect the principle, that all knowledge, that will bring a price in free and open market, is as legitimate a subject of bargain and sale as is any material commodity whatever.

Even so common and simple a knowledge as that of the alphabet has its market value, and is rightfully bought and sold. The young girl, who knows the alphabet, is rightfully paid for imparting that knowledge to those younger, or less enlightened than herself.

On the other hand, the highest kinds of knowledge — or, at least, what passes for such in this ignorant world — is constantly and openly bought and sold, oftentimes at enormous prices.

Thus legislators, judges, lawyers, editors, teachers of all kinds, physicians, priests, and soldiers, are continually selling their knowledge — and, perhaps, quite as frequently their ignorance and falsehoods — for money.

Legislators are continually selling such knowledge — or, rather, such ignorance and falsehoods — as these, viz. : That they themselves are rightfully invested with absolute and irresponsible dominion over the property, liberty, and lives of their fellow men ; that their discretion, in the exercise of this power, can rightfully be restrained by no natural principles of justice ; that their commands are authoritative and final, and the only imperative rule of action for all whom they call their subjects ; that resistance to their laws, as they call them, is the greatest of crimes, and may rightfully, and must necessarily, be punished with confiscation, imprisonment, and death. In all ages, the mass of mankind have been compelled to pay, with their property, liberty, and, in vast numbers of cases, with their lives, for such knowledge—or, rather, for such monstrosities, absurdities, and falsehoods — as these.

Under the name of knowledge, judges, lawyers, and editors are constantly affirming, repeating, and reiterating these monstrosities, absurdities, and falsehoods of the legislators ; and are taking their pay for so doing, as if they were really selling the most valuable commodities.

Surely it does not lie in the mouths of these legislators, judges, lawyers and editors, who live and flourish by selling such falsehoods as these, to say that the scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, which are every day demonstrating their power to enlighten, enrich, and liberate all mankind, are not legitimate property, that may rightfully be bought and sold.

The knowledge of the soldier — such as it is — is in great demand. To him who knows how to kill the greatest number of men, in the shortest time, and for the most frivolous or unjust causes, his knowledge is his fortune. Legislators are so constantly dependent upon it for their very existence as legislators, that they pay enormous sums for it — but always out of other people's money.



Physicians, in all ages, have been freely selling their knowledge — or, more commonly, their ignorance and falsehoods ; and the purchasers have been paying for them with their property, their health, and their lives.

Does it lie in the mouths of these physicians to deny that scientific truths and mechanical inventions are legitimate subjects of property?

Priests have for ages been selling, under the name of knowledge, absurd dogmas and creeds, which they described as sure to carry the believer in them to a future world of eternal and indescribable happiness, and as equally sure to carry all unbelievers in them to a future world of eternal and indescribable woe. And they, in conspiracy with legislators who needed their aid, have compelled the mass of mankind to pay for this so-called knowledge, under the alternatives of imprisonment, torture, and death. But they have never demonstrated the truth of their dogmas. No one of their number has ever gone to the future world, and brought back the information that their so-called knowledge was anything other than ignorance and falsehood.

Does it lie in the mouths of these priests to say that scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, whose truth and utility are being constantly demonstrated before all the world, are not legitimate subjects of property? or, consequently, of free bargain and sale?

Will the people themselves, whose ancestors, for thousands of years, have been swindled out of their common sense, their property, health, liberty, and lives, by these venders of ignorance and falsehood, under the name of knowledge—and who are now being swindled in the same way themselves — will they deny that such veritable realities as scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions — discoveries and inventions that have demonstrated their power to fill the earth with knowledge, and health, and wealth, and liberty— are legitimate subjects of property, that may freely and rightfully be bought and sold? Will they choose to pay — as they and their ancestors hitherto have done — with their property, health, liberty, and lives, for such ignorance, falsehood, oppression, robbery, and ruin, as have hitherto been dealt out to them, rather

than for such health, wealth, truth, justice, and liberty as scientists and inventors offer them ?

And, finally, will not scientists and inventors themselves, while establishing their own rights to their own property, give themselves to the work of establishing justice, *as a science*, in place of the absurdities, the falsehoods, the chicanery, the usurpations, and the arbitrary, irresponsible power of the ambitious, rapacious, and unprincipled men, by whom the world is now ruled, and who make mankind their dupes and their prey ?

If they will but do this, the work will soon be accomplished.



### SECTION III.

Assuming it now to be settled that your discoveries and inventions are, *in their nature*, a legitimate property, the first of the propositions before mentioned to be established is this, viz. : That, in truth and justice, scientists and inventors have the same right of *perpetual* property in the products of their brain labor, that other men have in the products of their hand labor.

This proposition is established by the simple facts that knowledge is property, and is, in its nature, durable, vendible, and transferable ; for all property, in things durable, vendible, and transferable, is, in its very nature, perpetual, and a legitimate subject of devise and inheritance. And no formal will or testament is necessary to convey a man's property, at his decease, to his so-called natural heirs — such as his wife and children — or, in the absence of such, to his nearest blood relations. The facts that, during his life, his moral duty and natural affection prompt him to acquire wealth, and expend it for the support and happiness of these so-called natural heirs, rather than for others whom he does not know, or, knowing, does not love, furnishes a sufficient proof, or at least a sufficient presumption, that, at his death, he desires them to possess the property he leaves behind him ; and nothing but the clearest proof to the contrary is allowed to defeat that presumption. And for a government to confiscate, after his death,

this property, which he had produced or accumulated for their support or benefit, would be as gross and cruel an act of tyranny and robbery, as it would be to confiscate it during his lifetime. And the common sentiments of mankind have concurred in this opinion. And this principle is plainly as applicable to intellectual, as to material, property. And the fact that this principle has heretofore been wholly, or partially, disregarded in its application to intellectual property, is only a proof of the ignorance, or villainy, of the governments that have ruled the world.

But let us look further into this right of perpetual property.

When a man digs into the earth, and finds, and takes possession of, a diamond, he thereby acquires a supreme right of property in it, against all the world; and this right of property becomes perpetual in his heirs and assigns.

So, also, when a man dives into the sea, and brings up a pearl, he thereby acquires a supreme right of property in it, against all the world; and this right of property becomes perpetual in his heirs and assigns.

This right of perpetual property is the reward that nature offers to those who take upon themselves the labor of discovering her secret wealth, and making it available for man's use.

By the same rule, when the scientist, in his laboratory, discovers that, in nature, there exists a substance, or a law, that was before unknown, but that may be useful to mankind, he thereby acquires a supreme right of property in that knowledge, against all the world; and he may either use it himself, or sell it, or lend it to others for use, the same as he might rightfully do with any material property. This is the reward that nature offers him for his labor.

And this right of property is as much a perpetual one, as is the right of property in the case of the diamond, or the pearl.

And to deprive him of this right of property after a given number of years, is as much an act of pure usurpation and robbery, as it would be to take from the diamond digger and the pearl diver, the products of their labor, after a given number of years.

So, too, the inventor, who acquires a knowledge of mechanical forces, and then applies and combines them in a manner before

unknown, and so as to produce a machine that will perform the labor of a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand men, thereby acquires a supreme right of property in his invention, and may rightfully hold it against all the world. He may either use it himself, or sell it, or lend it to others for use, at his pleasure. This right of property is, in its nature, a perpetual one in himself, his heirs, and assigns ; and to deprive him of it, after a given number of years, is as much an act of usurpation and robbery, as it would be to rob the diamond digger, or the pearl diver, of his property, after a given number of years.

It is for the highest interests of all mankind, that this right of perpetual property, in the scientist and inventor, should be acknowledged and maintained.

It is for the highest interests of all mankind, that each and every man should have a right of perpetual property in the products of his own labor ; because it is this right alone that can stimulate every man to the highest exercise of his wealth-producing faculties of both body and mind. And the more a man produces for himself, the more he produces for all other men ; for in that division of labor which science and invention give rise to, each man usually consumes but a very small portion of the particular wealth he produces. The surplus he gives to other men in exchange for the various kinds of wealth they produce respectively. The more, therefore, each one produces, the more all finally receive for their own consumption.

How many diamonds would ever have been digged from the earth, or how many pearls would ever have been taken from the sea, if they had all been confiscated in a few years after they had been obtained ? How much gold, or silver, or copper, or iron, or any other metal, would ever have been taken out of the earth, for the benefit of mankind, if they had all been confiscated in a few years after they had been mined ? How many farms would have ever been reclaimed from the forest, and brought under cultivation, and made to produce food for man, if they had all been confiscated in a few years after they had been made productive ? How many comfortable dwellings would ever have been built, if they had all been confiscated soon after they had been made fit for habitation ?

How many factories would ever have been built, and filled with machinery, for the production of a thousand, or ten thousand, different kinds of wealth, if they had all been confiscated soon after they were fitted for the uses for which they were designed.

The same arguments, both of justice and expediency, which are applicable in favor of the right of perpetual property in material things, are applicable in favor of the same right of perpetual property in all the scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions that the human mind is capable of producing. And it is because no such — nor indeed any other special — right of property has, until recently, been acknowledged, that the world has heretofore been, and, for the most part, still is, so nearly destitute of all the sciences and inventions by which it would otherwise have been enlightened and enriched.

Even in those small portions of the earth in which *some* encouragement has, of late years, been given to science and invention, we doubtless have very little, almost no, conception of what would be the increased number of discoveries and inventions, if the right of perpetual property in them were acknowledged and protected, in the same manner as is the right of property in material things.

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#### SECTION IV.

The second proposition to be established is this, viz. : That scientists and inventors are justly entitled to have the same protection, by both civil and criminal law, for the products of their brain labor, that other men are justly entitled to have for the products of their hand labor.

The truth and justice of this proposition are too nearly self-evident to need much argument in their support.

If a man's scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions are as truly his property as are his houses or lands, then it is plain that any trespass upon them is as clearly a crime as is a trespass upon his houses or lands. And there is the same practical neces-

sity for punishing criminally trespasses against a man's intellectual property, as there is for punishing criminally trespasses against his material property.

What security could any man have for the quiet possession of his house or his farm, if every other man, who coveted them, but had no color of right to them, could be permitted to take possession of, and use them, and make it necessary for the owner to carry on an expensive and protracted civil suit against each one of these trespassers? It is plain that it would cost him more to defend his house and farm than they were worth; and that his right of property in them would be practically destroyed. This argument is just as strong in favor of punishing criminally trespasses upon intellectual property, as it is for punishing criminally trespasses upon material property.



## SECTION V.

The third proposition to be established is this: That scientists and inventors should have the same right of perpetual property in their discoveries and inventions, in all the other countries of the world, as in their own.

This proposition, like the preceding one, is too nearly self-evident to need much argument in its support.

The natural, and only real, right of property is the same throughout the world; and it is only the ignorance and tyranny of the different governments of the world, that make the practical right of property different in different countries.

When justice, *as a science*, shall be established, as the one only law, in all the countries in the world, the right of property in scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, as well as in material things, will be one and the same all over the world.

## SECTION VI.

The fourth proposition to be established is this, viz : That it is the right, and for the interests, of all past discoverers and inventors (where their patents have expired), and of their heirs, to *recover* their natural right of perpetual property in their discoveries and inventions, which has hitherto been denied or withheld by the ignorant and tyrannical governments that have hitherto existed, and now exist, in the world.

This proposition, too, like the preceding ones, is too nearly self-evident to require much argument.

Plainly, scientists and inventors have never voluntarily parted with their natural right of property in their discoveries and inventions. They have never forfeited their right to them by crime. Those who have had the benefit of them, and are now using them, have never bought them, or paid for them, or made any kind of contract with the owners for the use of them. The only reason why the authors of them (or their heirs or assigns) are not now in the full enjoyment of their right of property in them, is that governments, in their ignorance or villainy, have refused either to acknowledge or protect the right at all, or to protect it beyond a limited time ; and have thus practically licensed all trespassers to make free plunder of what was the rightful private property of the discoverers and inventors.

To this free plunder of their property, the discoverers and inventors have been obliged to submit, for the time being. But their true and natural right of property has not been lost, or affected, thereby. They have the same true and natural right of property in their discoveries and inventions that they ever had. And they have now the same right to demand the recognition and protection of their rights, that other men have to demand the recognition and protection of their rights to their material property.

Where the discoverers and inventors have died, their descendants have the same natural right of inheritance in their discoveries and inventions, as other men's descendants have in the material property of their ancestors.

That the immense value of their discoveries and inventions should now unite all scientists and inventors, (whose patents have expired,) and their heirs, in the effort to recover their rights to them, is too plain to need argument.



## SECTION VII.

The fifth proposition to be established is this, viz.: That it is the right, *and for the interests, of mankind at large*, that the right of perpetual property, in their discoveries and inventions, should be restored to all past discoverers and inventors, and to their heirs, so far as they can now be ascertained.

The truth of this proposition rests, in the first place, upon this basis, viz.: That it is only when all men are protected in their natural right of property in the products of their labor, that all men are stimulated to the production of the greatest amount of wealth they are capable of producing, and each and every man is consequently enabled to give the greatest amount of wealth in exchange for the wealth produced by others. It is, therefore, the right, and for the interests, of every man, who produces any kind of wealth *for sale*, that all other men, who are to buy his wealth, should be enabled to produce as much as possible themselves, and thus be enabled to give as much as possible in exchange for his.

Every man, who believes in men's natural right of property in the products of their labor, will acknowledge the truth of this principle, *as applicable to the future*. But perhaps some will be so unwise, as well as dishonest, as to dispute the principle *in its application to the past*; and will say that the world having once got possession of a vast amount of intellectual property for nothing, it would now be foolish to give it back to its true owners.

There is some difficulty in reasoning with men who do not believe that honesty is the best policy in all cases whatsoever; men who believe in theft and robbery, whenever they are strong enough to practice them with impunity. But inasmuch as there are a great many such men in the world, and inasmuch as they are



now, and always have been, the ruling powers of the world — that is, the chief governors of the world — and inasmuch as they are the class who will most powerfully oppose the rights of all scientists and inventors, both past and future, it becomes necessary to show to others, if not to themselves, that this policy is as shortsighted as it is dishonest.

It has always been the policy of these bands of robbers, who have called themselves governments — in fact, it has in reality been the sole objects of their organizations, as governments — to rob all the producers of wealth, whether intellectual or manual laborers, of all the products of their labor, as fast as they were produced; leaving nothing in the hands of the producers that would enable them to produce more, or that would even enable them to produce their daily food, except as the servants, and by the permission, of these tyrants. And this is the reason — and not the want of scientific and inventive faculties — why, after so many thousands of years, there is so little of either science or invention in the world to-day; and why there is so little of any thing, for the mass of mankind, except poverty, ignorance, and slavery.

It is only within a very recent time — say a single century, or a little more — that any governments have secured to either scientists or inventors any really valuable rewards for their labors. And even within that time, they have only offered such mere temporary, and even trivial, rewards, as were thought sufficient to inspire their hopes, and induce them to produce something valuable, *of which they could be robbed*. And as soon almost as they have produced anything valuable, they have been robbed of it. Such is to-day the state of the laws under those few governments that alone profess to secure to scientists and inventors any rewards at all for their discoveries and inventions. And this state of things is likely to continue, and is almost certain to continue, until scientists and inventors themselves undertake the work of vindicating and establishing their own natural rights of property in their discoveries and inventions.

But the scientists and inventors themselves will see at once that they cannot consistently advocate their own rights to the

products of their own labor, *in the future*, unless they acknowledge and maintain the same rights for all past scientists and inventors, *and their heirs*, so far as they can now be ascertained. Every admission on their part, that all *past* scientists and inventors, *or their heirs*, may rightfully be robbed of their property, would be a practical confession that all *future* scientists and inventors may also be rightfully robbed of theirs. No *future* scientist or inventor, therefore, can consistently claim any rights of property for himself, except such as he is willing to accord to all *past* scientists and inventors.

But, secondly, it would be very bad policy for either present or future scientists or inventors to make any compromise with their enemies, or to attempt to secure any rights, or purchase any favors, for themselves, by repudiating the rights of any past scientists or inventors, *or their heirs*. In order to establish their own rights, they will need all the influence, *and all the financial capital*, they can enlist in the enterprise. And the pecuniary value of past discoveries and inventions is so immense, that its power can hardly be overrated.

Estimate—if that be possible—what would be the actual market value of all the scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions now extant (whose paternity can now be established), *if the right of property in them was made perpetual, all over the world!*

Can any present or future scientist or inventor be so idiotic as to imagine that he is to gain anything for his particular discovery or invention, by denying, or conceding away, the rights of the real owners of all this vast property in past discoveries and inventions? Or that he can vindicate or establish his own rights more easily, without enlisting the aid of all this capital, than he can by making common cause with it?

A scientist or inventor who should seek to curry favor for his own discovery or invention, by consenting to the confiscation of all other men's discoveries and inventions, would justly be regarded as the criminal confederate of the robbers and tyrants who now confiscate the discoveries and inventions of all other

men, whose labors and products are as worthy of protection as his own.

But perhaps these remarks are unnecessary. It is certainly to be hoped, and, I think, reasonably to be expected, that there can be few so foolish, or so unjust, as to consent to the robbery of all past scientists and inventors, as a condition of having their own rights acknowledged.

The study of science tends to make men not only truthful and just, but also far-seeing; and to lift them above all temptation to practice the meannesses and crimes of those who now rule the world by laws designed to rob one class of men for the benefit of another. And scientists and inventors have now such power, and such inducements, as men never had before, to crush out all the petty, temporary, local, selfish, and criminal schemes that now occupy existing governments; and to establish the reign of justice in their stead.

But we are taking too narrow a view of this subject.

It is not true that mankind at large — or more than one third, or perhaps even a fourth, of all mankind — are in *practical possession* of the scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions that have been made, and are now in use, in the most enlightened parts of the world — say, Western Europe and the United States. What practical knowledge of these discoveries and inventions have the seven or eight hundred millions of Asia, the two hundred millions of Africa, or the fifty or one hundred millions scattered elsewhere on the globe? *Or what practical knowledge will they ever have of them, unless the discoveries and inventions themselves are carried to them, and put in use among them, by persons from outside of these destitute countries? And who has any sufficient motive to carry them into, and put them in operation in, these destitute countries, unless it be the owners of the discoveries and inventions themselves?*

The peoples of these destitute countries have, therefore, substantially the same motives for paying for the use of all these *past* discoveries and inventions, as they have for paying for those that are to be made in the future. That motive is to get the practical use of the discoveries and inventions, and to get it at the earliest

possible time. Of what importance is the small amount they will have to pay for the use of them, compared with the benefits to be derived from them? \*

But, furthermore. The sooner these past discoveries and inventions are carried into the destitute portions of the world, and the better the use of them is paid for there, the sooner the peoples of those countries will be enabled and stimulated to produce discoveries and inventions themselves; and their discoveries and inventions will come back to us, and add to our wealth, in the same way, and, with an immaterial difference, to the same degree, as if made by ourselves.

*Now*, these vast countries, containing a thousand millions of people, contribute, almost literally, *nothing* to our wealth, or we to theirs. They are constantly so near to starvation themselves, that they have scarcely anything they can give in exchange for anything we have to offer to them. They do indeed spare us a little tea, rice, indigo, opium, jute, etc., etc. But if they were to give us one really useful invention, it would be worth more to us than all these articles together. And if they were enlightened and enriched — as they would be by our carrying our discoveries and inventions to them, and putting them in practical operation — they would then become scientists and inventors themselves; and the commerce between us, in discoveries and inventions, would be worth millions of times more, both to them and to us, than the present petty commerce in material things.

Still further. The sooner this vast foreign field is opened to our scientists and inventors, the sooner they will be enabled and stimulated to the production of the greatest possible amount of discoveries and inventions for use at home.

And since this foreign field is not at all likely to be soon opened for our scientists and inventors, unless they open it themselves, it would be as impolitic, as it would be dishonest, to deprive all past scientists and inventors, and their heirs, of all motive and

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\* The probability is, I think, that if the right of property in all scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, past and future, were made perpetual, all over the world, the discoverers and inventors themselves, and their heirs and assigns, would get not more than one per cent. of all the wealth created by means of them.

all power to carry their discoveries and inventions into the destitute countries, that are perishing for the want of them.

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## SECTION VIII.

A few words, now, as to the prospective increase of scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, if their authors' right of perpetual property in them should be established.

As fast as mankind at large shall become enlightened and enriched by science and invention, and by a knowledge of justice as a science, the oppressions and wars—by which, in all past time, a few men have plundered, starved, enslaved, and butchered so large a portion of their fellow men, and made all progress in knowledge and wealth impossible—will necessarily cease; because the many being enlightened and enriched, the few will then be no longer able to deceive, conspire against, and overpower them, as they hitherto have done. Mankind will, therefore, not only live out their days, and enjoy the fruits of their labor, but they will also have much greater health and strength of both body and mind, and be capable of much greater physical and mental labor than they are now. Each successive generation will also have the benefit of all the scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, that shall have preceded them, and they will, of course, produce a correspondingly greater number of such discoveries and inventions themselves.

Experience shows that each new discovery and invention generally gives rise to several, oftentimes to many, others. Thus discoveries and inventions will forever go on increasing in geometrical ratio.

But even this is not all. The earth, when cultivated with the aid of such science, implements, and machinery as men are capable of producing, can probably be made to sustain a hundred times its present population. And the increase of population will naturally go on, as men increase their means of subsistence, and

cease to starve and destroy each other. And this increase of population will, *of itself*, naturally bring a corresponding increase of scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions. Who, then, can set any limit to the future progress of mankind in knowledge and wealth?

Under the stimulus of this principle of property, mankind will soon become a very different, an almost wholly different, race of beings from what they now are. They will learn — what so few of them seem now to understand — not only that they have brains, but also what their brains were designed for, and are capable of. When these lessons shall have been learned, the knowledge that will be accumulated in consequence will become the great wealth of the world.



## SECTION IX.

It is plainly to be seen, by those who choose to see, that science and invention are bringing, and are destined to bring, all the peoples of the earth together, and show them their power to promote each others' welfare, and their duty to live together in peace.

The only obstacle this great movement has now to meet, is that presented by ignorant, hostile, and tyrannical governments. It is plain that if all mankind are to live together in peace, and contribute their utmost to each other's welfare, they must get rid of their existing governments, and all live under one and the same, and only one and the same, law. That one law is the law of justice. This is the one only law the world needs, or can endure. Whatever other laws (so called) are either more, less, or other than justice itself, are necessarily unjust, and are therefore to be resisted and abolished.

Whenever, in any case whatever, this one law of justice is repudiated, violence and fraud are necessarily licensed in its stead.

# A LETTER

TO

GROVER CLEVELAND,

ON

HIS FALSE INAUGURAL ADDRESS, THE USURPATIONS AND  
CRIMES OF LAWMAKERS AND JUDGES, AND THE  
CONSEQUENT POVERTY, IGNORANCE, AND  
SERVITUDE OF THE PEOPLE.

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BY

LYSANDER SPOONER.

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# A LETTER TO GROVER CLEVELAND.

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## SECTION I.

*To Grover Cleveland:*

SIR,—Your inaugural address is probably as honest, sensible, and consistent a one as that of any president within the last fifty years, or, perhaps, as any since the foundation of the government. If, therefore, it is false, absurd, self-contradictory, and ridiculous, it is not (as I think) because you are personally less honest, sensible, or consistent than your predecessors, but because the government itself—according to your own description of it, and according to the practical administration of it for nearly a hundred years—is an utterly and palpably false, absurd, and criminal one. Such praises as you bestow upon it are, therefore, necessarily false, absurd, and ridiculous.

Thus you describe it as “a government pledged to do equal and exact justice to all men.”

Did you stop to think what that means? Evidently you did not; for nearly, or quite, all the rest of your address is in direct contradiction to it.

Let me then remind you that justice is an immutable, natural principle; and not anything that can be made, unmade, or altered by any human power.

It is also a subject of science, and is to be learned, like mathematics, or any other science. It does not derive its authority from the commands, will, pleasure, or discretion of any possible combination of men, whether calling themselves a government, or by any other name.

It is also, at all times, and in all places, the supreme law. And being everywhere and always the supreme law, it is necessarily everywhere and always the only law.

Lawmakers, as they call themselves, can add nothing to it, nor take anything from it. Therefore all their laws, as they call them,—that is, all the laws of their own making,—have no color of authority or obligation. It is a falsehood to call them laws; for there is nothing in them that either creates men’s duties or rights, or enlightens them as to their duties or rights. There is consequently nothing binding or obligatory about them. And nobody is bound to take the least notice

of them, unless it be to trample them under foot, as usurpations. If they command men to do justice, they add nothing to men's obligation to do it, or to any man's right to enforce it. They are therefore mere idle wind, such as would be commands to consider the day as day, and the night as night. If they command or license any man to do injustice, they are criminal on their face. If they command any man to do anything which justice does not require him to do, they are simple, naked usurpations and tyrannies. If they forbid any man to do anything, which justice would permit him to do, they are criminal invasions of his natural and rightful liberty. In whatever light, therefore, they are viewed, they are utterly destitute of everything like authority or obligation. They are all necessarily either the impudent, fraudulent, and criminal usurpations of tyrants, robbers, and murderers, or the senseless work of ignorant or thoughtless men, who do not know, or certainly do not realize, what they are doing.

This science of justice, or natural law, is the only science that tells us what are, and what are not, each man's natural, inherent, inalienable, *individual* rights, as against any and all other men. And to say that any, or all, other men may rightfully compel him to obey any or all such other laws as they may see fit to *make*, is to say that he has no rights of his own, but is their subject, their property, and their slave.

For the reasons now given, the simple maintenance of justice, or natural law, is plainly the one only purpose for which any coercive power—or anything bearing the name of government—has a right to exist.

It is intrinsically just as false, absurd, ludicrous, and ridiculous to say that lawmakers, so-called, can invent and make any laws, *of their own*, authoritatively fixing, or declaring, the rights of individuals, or that shall be in any manner authoritative or obligatory upon individuals, or that individuals may rightfully be compelled to obey, as it would be to say that they can invent and make such mathematics, chemistry, physiology, or other sciences, as they see fit, and rightfully compel individuals to conform all their actions to them, instead of conforming them to the mathematics, chemistry, physiology, or other sciences of nature.

Lawmakers, as they call themselves, might just as well claim the right to abolish, by statute, the natural law of gravitation, the natural laws of light, heat, and electricity, and all the other natural laws of matter and mind, and institute laws of their own in the place of them, and compel conformity to them, as to claim the right to set aside the natural law of justice, and compel obedience to such other laws as they may see fit to manufacture, and set up in its stead.

Let me now ask you how you imagine that your so-called lawmakers can "do equal and exact justice to all men," by any so-called laws of their own making. If their laws command anything but justice, or forbid anything but injustice, they are themselves unjust and criminal. If they simply command justice, and forbid injustice, they add nothing to the natural authority of justice, or to men's obliga-

tion to obey it. It is, therefore, a simple impertinence, and sheer impudence, on their part, to assume that *their* commands, *as such*, are of any authority whatever. It is also sheer impudence, on their part, to assume that their commands are at all necessary to teach other men what is, and what is not, justice. The science of justice is as open to be learned by all other men, as by themselves; and it is, in general, so simple and easy to be learned, that there is no need of, and no place for, any man, or body of men, to teach it, declare it, or command it, on their own authority.

For one, or another, of these reasons, therefore, each and every law, so-called, that forty-eight different congresses have presumed to make, within the last ninety-six years, have been utterly destitute of all legitimate authority. That is to say, they have either been criminal, as commanding or licensing men to do what justice forbade them to do, or as forbidding them to do what justice would have permitted them to do; or else they have been superfluous, as adding nothing to men's knowledge of justice, or to their obligation to do justice, or abstain from injustice.

What excuse, then, have you for attempting to enforce upon the people that great mass of superfluous or criminal laws (so-called) which ignorant and foolish, or impudent and criminal, men have, for so many years, been manufacturing, and promulgating, and enforcing, in violation of justice, and of all men's natural, inherent, and inalienable rights?

## SECTION II.

Perhaps you will say that there is no such science as that of justice. If you do say this, by what right, or on what reason, do you proclaim your intention "to do equal and exact justice to all men"? If there is no science of justice, how do you know that there is any such principle as justice? Or how do you know what is, and what is not, justice? If there is no science of justice,—such as the people can learn and understand for themselves,—why do you say anything about justice *to them*? Or why do you promise *them* any such thing as "equal and exact justice," if they do not know, and are incapable of learning, what justice is? Do you use this phrase to deceive those whom you look upon as being so ignorant, so destitute of reason, as to be deceived by idle, unmeaning words? If you do not, you are plainly bound to let us all know what you do mean, by doing "equal and exact justice to all men."

I can assure you, sir, that a very large portion of the people of this country do not believe that the government is doing "equal and exact justice to all men." And some persons are earnestly promulgating the idea that the government is not attempting to do, and has no intention of doing, anything like "equal and exact justice to all men"; that, on the contrary, it is knowingly, deliberately, and wilfully doing an incalculable amount of injustice; that it has always been doing this in the past, and that it has no intention of doing anything else in the future; that

it is a mere tool in the hands of a few ambitious, rapacious, and unprincipled men; that its purpose, in doing all this injustice, is to keep—so far as they can without driving the people to rebellion—all wealth, and all political power, in as few hands as possible; and that this injustice is the direct cause of all the widespread poverty, ignorance, and servitude among the great body of the people.

Now, Sir, I wish I could hope that you would do something to show that you are not a party to any such scheme as that; something to show that you are neither corrupt enough, nor blind enough, nor coward enough, to be made use of for any such purpose as that; something to show that when you profess your intention “to do equal and exact justice to all men,” you attach some real and definite meaning to your words. Until you do that, is it not plain that the people have a right to consider you a tyrant, and the confederate and tool of tyrants, and to get rid of you as unceremoniously as they would of any other tyrant?

### SECTION III.

Sir, if any government is to be a rational, consistent, and honest one, it must evidently be based on some fundamental, immutable, eternal principle; such as every man may reasonably agree to, and such as every man may rightfully be compelled to abide by, and obey. And the whole power of the government must be limited to the maintenance of that single principle. And that one principle is justice. There is no other principle that any man can rightfully enforce upon others, or ought to consent to have enforced against himself. Every man claims the protection of this principle for himself, whether he is willing to accord it to others, or not. Yet such is the inconsistency of human nature, that some men—in fact, many men—who will risk their lives for this principle, when their own liberty or property is at stake, will violate it in the most flagrant manner, if they can thereby obtain arbitrary power over the persons or property of others. We have seen this fact illustrated in this country, through its whole history—especially during the last hundred years—and in the case of many of the most conspicuous persons. And their example and influence have been employed to pervert the whole character of the government. It is against such men, that all others, who desire nothing but justice for themselves, and are willing to unite to secure it for all others, must combine, if we are ever to have justice established for any.

### SECTION IV.

It is self-evident that no number of men, by conspiring, and calling themselves a government, can acquire any rights whatever over other men, or other men's property, which they had not before, as individuals. And whenever any number

of men, calling themselves a government, do anything to another man, or to his property, which they had no right to do as individuals, they thereby declare themselves trespassers, robbers, or murderers, according to the nature of their acts.

Men, as *individuals*, may rightfully *compel* each other to obey this one law of justice. And it is the only law which any man can rightfully be compelled, by his *fellow men*, to obey. All other laws, it is optional with each man to obey, or not, as he may choose. But this one law of justice he may rightfully be compelled to obey; and all the force that is reasonably necessary to compel him, may rightfully be used against him.

But the right of every man to do anything, and everything, *which justice does not forbid him to do*, is a natural, inherent, inalienable right. It is his right, as against any and all other men, whether they be many, or few. It is a right indispensable to every man's highest happiness; and to every man's power of judging and determining for himself what will, and what will not, promote his happiness. Any restriction upon the exercise of this right is a restriction upon his rightful power of providing for, and accomplishing, his own well-being.

Sir, these natural, inherent, inalienable, *individual* rights are sacred things. *They are the only human rights.* They are the only rights by which any man can protect his own property, liberty, or life against any one who may be disposed to take it away. Consequently they are not things that any set of either blockheads or villains, calling themselves a government, can rightfully take into their own hands, and dispose of at their pleasure, as they have been accustomed to do in this, and in nearly or quite all other countries.

#### SECTION V.

Sir, I repeat that individual rights are the only human rights. *Legally speaking*, there are no such things as "*public rights*," as distinguished from individual rights. *Legally speaking*, there is no such creature or thing as "*the public*." The term "*the public*" is an utterly vague and indefinite one, applied arbitrarily and at random to a greater or less number of individuals, each and every one of whom have their own separate, individual rights, and *none others*. And the protection of these separate, *individual* rights is the one only legitimate purpose, for which anything in the nature of a governing, or coercive, power has a right to exist. And these separate, individual rights all rest upon, and can be ascertained only by, the one science of justice.

*Legally speaking*, the term "*public rights*" is as vague and indefinite as are the terms "*public health*," "*public good*," "*public welfare*," and the like. It has no legal meaning, except when used to describe the separate, private, *individual* rights of a greater or less number of individuals.

In so far as the separate, private, natural rights of *individuals* are secured, in

just so far, and no farther, are the "public rights" secured. In so far as the separate, private, natural rights of *individuals* are disregarded or violated, in just so far are "public rights" disregarded or violated. Therefore all the pretences of so-called lawmakers, that they are protecting "public rights," by violating private rights, are sheer and utter contradictions and frauds. They are just as false and absurd as it would be to say that they are protecting the public *health*, by arbitrarily poisoning and destroying the health of single individuals.

The pretence of the lawmakers, that they are promoting the "public good," by violating individual "*rights*," is just as false and absurd as is the pretence that they are protecting "public *rights*" by violating "private rights." Sir, the greatest "public good," of which any coercive power, calling itself a government, or by any other name, is capable, is the protection of each and every individual in the quiet and peaceful enjoyment and exercise of *all* his own natural, inherent, inalienable, *individual* "rights." This is a "good" that comes home to each and every individual, of whom "the public" is composed. It is also a "good," which each and every one of these individuals, composing "the public," can appreciate. It is a "good," for the loss of which governments can make no compensation whatever. *It is a universal and impartial "good,"* of the highest importance to each and every human being; and not any such vague, false, and criminal thing as the lawmakers — when violating private rights — tell us they are trying to accomplish, under the name of "the public good." It is also the only "equal and exact justice," which you, or anybody else, are capable of securing, or have any occasion to secure, to any human being. Let but this "equal and exact justice" be secured "to all men," and they will then be abundantly able to take care of themselves, and secure their own highest "good." Or if any one should ever chance to need anything more than this, he may safely trust to the voluntary kindness of his fellow men to supply it.

It is one of those things not easily accounted for, that men who would scorn to do an injustice to a fellow man, in a private transaction, — who would scorn to usurp any arbitrary dominion over him, or his property, — who would be in the highest degree indignant, if charged with any private injustice, — and who, at a moment's warning, would take their lives in their hands, to defend their own rights, and redress their own wrongs, — will, the moment they become members of what they call a government, assume that they are absolved from all principles and all obligations that were imperative upon them, as individuals; will assume that they are invested with a right of arbitrary and irresponsible dominion over other men, and other men's property. Yet they are doing this continually. And all the laws they *make* are based upon the assumption that they have now become invested with rights that are more than human, and that those, on whom their laws are to operate, have lost even their human rights. They seem to be utterly blind to the fact, that the only reason there can be for their existence as a government, is that

they may protect those very "rights," which they before scrupulously respected, but which they now unscrupulously trample upon.

SECTION VI.

But you evidently believe nothing of what I have now been saying. You evidently believe that justice is no law at all, unless in cases where the lawmakers may chance to prefer it to any law which they themselves can invent.

You evidently believe that a certain paper, called the constitution, which nobody ever signed, which few persons ever read, which the great body of the people never saw, and as to the meaning of which no two persons were ever agreed, is the supreme law of this land, anything in the law of nature—anything in the natural, inherent, inalienable, *individual* rights of fifty millions of people—to the contrary notwithstanding.

Did folly, falsehood, absurdity, assumption, or criminality ever reach a higher point than that?

You evidently believe that those great volumes of statutes, which the people at large have never read, nor even seen, and never will read, nor see, but which such men as you and your lawmakers have been manufacturing for nearly a hundred years, to restrain them of their liberty, and deprive them of their natural rights, were all made for their benefit, by men wiser than they—wiser even than justice itself—and having only their welfare at heart!

You evidently believe that the men who made those laws were duly authorized to make them; and that you yourself have been duly authorized to enforce them. But in this you are utterly mistaken. You have not so much as the honest, responsible scratch of one single pen, to justify you in the exercise of the power you have taken upon yourself to exercise. For example, you have no such evidence of your right to take any man's property for the support of your government, as would be required of you, if you were to claim pay for a single day's honest labor.

It was once said, in this country, that taxation without consent was robbery. And a seven years' war was fought to maintain that principle. But if that principle were a true one in behalf of three millions of men, it is an equally true one in behalf of three men, or of one man.

Who are ever taxed? Individuals only. Who have property that can be taxed? Individuals only. Who can give their consent to be taxed? Individuals only. Who are ever taxed without their consent? Individuals only. Who, then, are robbed, if taxed without their consent? Individuals only.

If taxation without consent is robbery, the United States government has never had, has not now, and is never likely to have, a single honest dollar in its treasury.

If taxation without consent is *not* robbery, then any band of robbers have only to declare themselves a government, and all their robberies are legalized.

If any man's money can be taken by a so-called government, without his own personal consent, all his other rights are taken with it; for with his money the government can, and will, hire soldiers to stand over him, compel him to submit to its arbitrary will, and kill him if he resists.

That your whole claim of a right to any man's money for the support of your government, without his consent, is the merest farce and fraud, is proved by the fact that you have no such evidence of your right to take it, as would be required of you, by one of your own courts, to prove a debt of five dollars, that might be honestly due you.

You and your lawmakers have no such evidence of your right of dominion over the people of this country, as would be required to prove your right to any material property, that you might have purchased.

When a man parts with any considerable amount of such material property as he has a natural right to part with,—as, for example, houses, or lands, or food, or clothing, or anything else of much value,—he usually gives, and the purchaser usually demands, some *written* acknowledgment, receipt, bill of sale, or other evidence, that will prove that he voluntarily parted with it, and that the purchaser is now the real and true owner of it. But you hold that fifty millions of people have voluntarily parted, not only with their natural right of dominion over all their material property, but also with all their natural right of dominion over their own souls and bodies; when not one of them has ever given you a scrap of writing, or even “made his mark,” to that effect.

You have not so much as the honest signature of a single human being, granting to you or your lawmakers any right of dominion whatever over him or his property.

You hold your place only by a title, which, on no just principle of law or reason, is worth a straw. And all who are associated with you in the government—whether they be called senators, representatives, judges, executive officers, or what not—all hold their places, directly or indirectly, only by the same worthless title. That title is nothing more nor less than votes given in secret (by secret ballot), by not more than one-fifth of the whole population. These votes were given in secret solely because those who gave them did not dare to make themselves personally responsible, either for their own acts, or the acts of their agents, the lawmakers, judges, etc.

These voters, having given their votes in secret (by secret ballot), have put it out of your power—and out of the power of all others associated with you in the government—to designate your principals *individually*. That is to say, you have no legal knowledge as to who voted for you, or who voted against you. And being unable to designate your principals *individually*, you have no right to say that you



have any principals. And having no right to say that you have any principals, you are bound, on every just principle of law or reason, to confess that you are mere usurpers, making laws, and enforcing them, upon your own authority alone.

A secret ballot makes a secret government; and a secret government is nothing else than a government by conspiracy. And a government by conspiracy is the only government we now have.

You say that "*every voter exercises a public trust.*"

Who appointed him to that trust? Nobody. He simply usurped the power; he never accepted the trust. And because he usurped the power, he dares exercise it only in secret. Not one of all the ten millions of voters, who helped to place you in power, would have dared to do so, if he had known that he was to be held personally responsible, before any just tribunal, for the acts of those for whom he voted.

Inasmuch as all the votes, given for you and your lawmakers, were given in secret, all that you and they can say, in support of your authority as rulers, is that you venture upon your acts as lawmakers, etc., not because you have any open, authentic, written, legitimate authority granted you by any human being,—for you can show nothing of the kind,—but only because, from certain reports made to you of votes given in secret, you have reason to believe that you have at your backs a secret association strong enough to sustain you by force, in case your authority should be resisted.

Is there a government on earth that rests upon a more false, absurd, or tyrannical basis than that?

#### SECTION VII.

But the falsehood and absurdity of your whole system of government do not result solely from the fact that it rests wholly upon votes given in secret, or by men who take care to avoid all personal responsibility for their own acts, or the acts of their agents. On the contrary, if every man, woman, and child in the United States had openly signed, sealed, and delivered to you and your associates, a written document, purporting to invest you with all the legislative, judicial, and executive powers that you now exercise, they would not thereby have given you the slightest legitimate authority. Such a contract, purporting to surrender into your hands all their natural rights of person and property, to be disposed of at your pleasure or discretion, would have been simply an absurd and void contract, giving you no real authority whatever.

It is a natural impossibility for any man to make a *binding* contract, by which he shall surrender to others a single one of what are commonly called his "natural, inherent, *inalienable* rights."

It is a natural impossibility for any man to make a *binding* contract, that shall invest others with any right whatever of arbitrary, irresponsible dominion over him.

The right of arbitrary, irresponsible dominion is the right of property; and the right of property is the right of arbitrary, irresponsible dominion. The two are identical. There is no difference between them. Neither can exist without the other. If, therefore, our so-called lawmakers really have that right of arbitrary, irresponsible dominion over us, which they claim to have, and which they habitually exercise, it must be because they own us as property. If they own us as property, it must be because nature made us their property; for, as no man can sell himself as a slave, we could never make a binding contract that should make us their property—or, what is the same thing, give them any right of arbitrary, irresponsible dominion over us.

As a lawyer, you certainly ought to know that all this is true.

#### SECTION VIII.

Sir, consider, for a moment, what an utterly false, absurd, ridiculous, and criminal government we now have.

It all rests upon the false, ridiculous, and utterly groundless assumption, that fifty millions of people not only could voluntarily surrender, but actually have voluntarily surrendered, all their natural rights, as human beings, into the custody of some four hundred men, called lawmakers, judges, etc., who are to be held utterly irresponsible for the disposal they may make of them.\*

The only right, which any individual is supposed to retain, or possess, under the government, is a *purely fictitious one*,—one that nature never gave him,—to wit, his right (so-called), as one of some ten millions of male adults, to give away, by his vote, not only all his own natural, inherent, inalienable, human rights, but also all the natural, inherent, inalienable, human rights of forty millions of other human beings—that is, women and children.

To suppose that any one of all these ten millions of male adults would voluntarily surrender a single one of all his natural, inherent, inalienable, human rights into the hands of irresponsible men, is an absurdity; because, first, he has no

\*The irresponsibility of the senators and representatives is guaranteed to them in this wise:

For any speech or debate [or vote] in either house, they [the senators and representatives] shall not be questioned [held to any legal responsibility] in any other place.—*Constitution, Art. 1, Sec. 6.*

The judicial and executive officers are all equally guaranteed against all responsibility to the people. They are made responsible only to the senators and representatives, whose laws they are to administer and execute. So long as they sanction and execute all these laws, to the satisfaction of the lawmakers, they are safe against all responsibility. *In no case can the people, whose rights they are continually denying and trampling upon, hold them to any accountability whatever.*

Thus it will be seen that all departments of the government, legislative, judicial, and executive, are placed entirely beyond any responsibility to the people, whose agents they profess to be, and whose rights they assume to dispose of at pleasure.

Was a more absolute, irresponsible government than that ever invented?

power to do so, any contract he may make for that purpose being absurd, and necessarily void; and, secondly, because he can have no rational motive for doing so. To suppose him to do so, is to suppose him to be an idiot, incapable of making any rational and obligatory contract. It is to suppose he would voluntarily give away everything in life that was of value to himself, and get nothing in return. To suppose that he would attempt to give away all the natural rights of *other persons*—that is, the women and children—as well as his own, is to suppose him to attempt to do something that he has no right, or power, to do. It is to suppose him to be both a villain and a fool.

And yet this government now rests wholly upon the assumption that some ten millions of male adults—men supposed to be *compos mentis*—have not only attempted to do, but have actually succeeded in doing, these absurd and impossible things.

It cannot be said that men put all their rights into the hands of the government, in order to have them protected; because there can be no such thing as a man's being protected in his rights, *any longer than he is allowed to retain them in his own possession*. The only possible way, in which any man can be protected in his rights, is to protect him in his own actual possession and exercise of them. And yet our government is absurd enough to assume that a man can be protected in his rights, after he has surrendered them altogether into other hands than his own.

This is just as absurd as it would be to assume that a man had given himself away as a slave, in order to be protected in the enjoyment of his liberty.

A man wants his rights protected, solely that he himself may possess and use them, and have the full benefit of them. But if he is compelled to give them up to somebody else,—to a government, so-called, or to any body else,—he ceases to have any rights of his own to be protected.

To say, as the advocates of our government do, that a man must give up *some* of his natural rights, to a government, in order to have the rest of them protected—the government being all the while the sole and irresponsible judge as to what rights he does give up, and what he retains, and what are to be protected—is to say that he gives up all the rights that the government chooses, *at any time*, to assume that he has given up; and that he retains none, and is to be protected in none, except such as the government shall, *at all times*, see fit to protect, and to permit him to retain. This is to suppose that he has retained no rights at all, that he can, *at any time*, claim as his own, *as against the government*. It is to say that he has really given up every right, and reserved none.

For a still further reason, it is absurd to say that a man must give up *some* of his rights to a government, in order that government may protect him in the rest. That reason is, that every right he gives up diminishes his own power of self-protection, and makes it so much more difficult for the government to protect him. And yet our government says a man must give up *all* his rights, in order that it

may protect him. It might just as well be said that a man must consent to be bound hand and foot, in order to enable a government, or his friends, to protect him against an enemy. Leave him in full possession of his limbs, and of all his powers, and he will do more for his own protection than he otherwise could, and will have less need of protection from a government, or any other source.

Finally, if a man, who is *compos mentis*, wants any outside protection for his rights, he is perfectly competent to make his own bargain for such as he desires; and other persons have no occasion to thrust their protection upon him, against his will; or to insist, as they now do, that he shall give up all, or any, of his rights to them, in consideration of such protection, and only such protection, as they may afterwards choose to give him.

It is especially noticeable that those persons, who are so impatient to protect other men in their rights that they cannot wait until they are requested to do so, have a somewhat inveterate habit of killing all who do not voluntarily accept their protection; or do not consent to give up to them all their rights in exchange for it.

If A were to go to B, a merchant, and say to him, "Sir, I am a night-watchman, and I insist upon your employing me as such in protecting your property against burglars; and to enable me to do so more effectually, I insist upon your letting me tie your own hands and feet, so that you cannot interfere with me; and also upon your delivering up to me all your keys to your store, your safe, and to all your valuables; and that you authorize me to act solely and fully according to my own will, pleasure, and discretion in the matter; and I demand still further, that you shall give me an absolute guaranty that you will not hold me to any accountability whatever for anything I may do, or for anything that may happen to your goods while they are under my protection; and unless you comply with this proposal, I will now kill you on the spot,"—if A were to say all this to B, B would naturally conclude that A himself was the most impudent and dangerous burglar that he (B) had to fear; and that if he (B) wished to secure his property against burglars, his best way would be to kill A in the first place, and then take his chances against all such other burglars as might come afterwards.

Our government constantly acts the part that is here supposed to be acted by A. And it is just as impudent a scoundrel as A is here supposed to be. It insists that every man shall give up all his rights unreservedly into its custody, and then hold it wholly irresponsible for any disposal it may make of them. And it gives him no alternative but death.

If by putting a bayonet to a man's breast, and giving him his choice, to die, or be "protected in his rights," it secures his consent to the latter alternative, it then proclaims itself a free government,—a government resting on consent!

You yourself describe such a government as "the best government ever vouchsafed to man."

Can you tell me of one that is worse in principle?

But perhaps you will say that ours is not so bad, in principle, as the others, for the reason that here, once in two, four, or six years, each male adult is permitted to have one vote in ten millions, in choosing the public protectors. Well, if you think that that materially alters the case, I wish you joy of your remarkable discernment.

## SECTION IX.

Sir, if a government is to "do equal and exact justice to all men," *it must do simply that, and nothing more.* If it does more than that to any,—that is, if it gives monopolies, privileges, exemptions, bounties, or favors to any,—it can do so only by doing injustice to more or less others. *It can give to one only what it takes from others; for it has nothing of its own to give to any one.* The best that it can do for all, and the only honest thing it can do for any, is simply to secure to each and every one his own rights,—the rights that nature gave him,—his rights of person, and his rights of property; leaving him, then, to pursue his own interests, and secure his own welfare, by the free and full exercise of his own powers of body and mind; so long as he trespasses upon the equal rights of no other person.

If he desires any favors from any body, he must, I repeat, depend upon the voluntary kindness of such of his fellow men as may be willing to grant them. No government can have any right to grant them; because no government can have a right to take from one man any thing that is his, and give it to another.

If this be the only true idea of an honest government, it is plain that it can have nothing to do with men's "interests," "welfare," or "prosperity," *as distinguished from their "rights."* Being secured in their rights, each and all must take the sole charge of, and have the sole responsibility for, their own "interests," "welfare," and "prosperity."

By simply protecting every man in his rights, a government necessarily keeps open to every one the widest possible field, that he honestly can have, for such industry as he may choose to follow. It also insures him the widest possible field for obtaining such capital as he needs for his industry, and the widest possible markets for the products of his labor. With the possession of these rights, he must be content.

No honest government can go into business with any individuals, be they many, or few. It cannot furnish capital to any, nor prohibit the loaning of capital to any. It can give to no one any special aid to competition; nor protect any one from competition. It must adhere inflexibly to the principle of entire freedom for all honest industry, and all honest traffic. It can do to no one any favor, nor render to any one any assistance, which it withholds from another. It must hold the scales impartially between them; taking no cognizance of any man's "interests," "welfare," or "prosperity," otherwise than by simply protecting him in his "rights."

In opposition to this view, lawmakers profess to have weighty duties laid upon

them, to promote men's "interests," "welfare," and "prosperity," *as distinguished from their "rights."* They seldom have any thing to say about men's "rights." On the contrary, they take it for granted that they are charged with the duty of promoting, superintending, directing, and controlling the "business" of the country. In the performance of this supposed duty, all ideas of individual "rights" are cast aside. Not knowing any way—because there is no way—in which they can impartially promote all men's "interests," "welfare," and "prosperity," *otherwise than by protecting impartially all men's rights,* they boldly proclaim that "*individual rights must not be permitted to stand in the way of the public good, the public welfare, and the business interests of the country.*"

Substantially all their lawmaking proceeds upon this theory; for there is no other theory, on which they can find any justification whatever for any lawmaking at all. So they proceed to give monopolies, privileges, bounties, grants, loans, etc., etc., to particular persons, or classes of persons; justifying themselves by saying that these privileged persons will "give employment" to the unprivileged; and that this employment, given by the privileged to the unprivileged, will compensate the latter for the loss of their "rights." And they carry on their lawmaking of this kind to the greatest extent they think is possible, without causing rebellion and revolution, on the part of the injured classes.

Sir, I am sorry to see that you adopt this lawmaking theory to its fullest extent; that although, for once only, and in a dozen words only, — and then merely incidentally, — you describe the government as "a government pledged to do equal and exact justice to all men," you show, throughout the rest of your address, that you have no thought of abiding by that principle; that you are either utterly ignorant, or utterly regardless, of what that principle requires of you; that the government, so far as your influence goes, is to be given up to the business of lawmaking, — that is, to the business of abolishing justice, and establishing injustice in its place; that you hold it to be the proper duty and function of the government to be constantly looking after men's "interests," "welfare," "prosperity," etc., etc., *as distinguished from their rights;* that it must consider men's "rights" as no guide to the promotion of their "interests"; that it must give favors to some, and withhold the same favors from others; that in order to give these favors to some, it must take from others their *rights;* that, in reality, it must traffic in both men's interests and their rights; that it must keep open shop, and sell men's interests and rights to the highest bidders; and that this is your only plan for promoting "the general welfare," "the common interest," etc., etc.

That such is your idea of the constitutional duties and functions of the government, is shown by different parts of your address: but more fully, perhaps, by this:

*The large variety of diverse and competing interests subject to federal control, persistently seeking recognition of their claims, need give us no fear that the greatest good of the great-*

est number will fail to be accomplished, if, *in the halls of national legislation*, that spirit of amity and mutual concession shall prevail, in which the constitution had its birth. If this involves the *surrender or postponement of private interests*, and the *abandonment of local advantages*, compensation will be found in the assurance that thus the *common interest* is subserved, and the *general welfare* advanced.

What is all this but saying that the government is not at all an institution for "doing equal and exact justice to all men," or for the impartial protection of all men's *rights*; but that it is its proper business to take sides, for and against, a "large variety of diverse and *competing interests*"; that it has this "large variety of diverse and *competing interests*" under its arbitrary "*control*"; that it can, at its pleasure, make such laws as will give success to some of them, and insure the defeat of others; that these "various, diverse, and *competing interests*" will be "*persistently seeking recognition of their claims . . . in the halls of national legislation*,"—that is, will be "persistently" clamoring for laws to be made in their favor; that, in fact, "the halls of national legislation" are to be mere arenas, into which the government actually invites the advocates and representatives of all the selfish schemes of avarice and ambition that unprincipled men can devise; that these schemes will there be free to "*compete*" with each other in their corrupt offers for government favor and support; and that it is to be the proper and ordinary business of the lawmakers to listen to all these schemes; to adopt some of them, and sustain them with all the money and power of the government; and to "postpone," "abandon," oppose, and defeat all others; it being well known, all the while, that the lawmakers will, *individually*, favor, or oppose, these various schemes, according to their own irresponsible will, pleasure, and discretion,—that is, according as they can better serve their own personal interests and ambitions by doing the one or the other.

Was a more thorough scheme of national villainy ever invented?

Sir, do you not know that in this conflict, between these "various, diverse, and *competing interests*," all ideas of individual "*rights*"—all ideas of "equal and exact justice to all men"—will be cast to the winds; that the boldest, the strongest, the most fraudulent, the most rapacious, and the most corrupt, men will have control of the government, and make it a mere instrument for plundering the great body of the people?

Your idea of the real character of the government is plainly this: The lawmakers are to assume absolute and irresponsible "*control*" of all the financial resources, all the legislative, judicial, and executive powers, of the government, and employ them all for the promotion of such schemes of plunder and ambition as they may select from all those that may be submitted to them for their approval; that they are to keep "the halls of national legislation" wide open for the admission of all persons having such schemes to offer; and that they are to grant monopolies, privileges, loans, and bounties to all such of these schemes as they can make

subserve their own individual interests and ambitions, and reject or "postpone" all others. And that there is to be no limit to their operations of this kind, except their fear of exciting rebellion and resistance on the part of the plundered classes.

And you are just fool enough to tell us that such a government as this may be relied on to "accomplish the greatest good to the greatest number," "to subserve the common interest," and "advance the general welfare," "if," only, "in the halls of national legislation, that spirit of amity and mutual concession shall prevail, in which the constitution had its birth."

You here assume that "the general welfare" is to depend, not upon the free and untrammelled enterprise and industry of the whole people, acting individually, and each enjoying and exercising all his natural rights; but wholly or principally upon the success of such particular schemes as the government may take under its special "control." And this means that "the general welfare" is to depend, wholly or principally, upon such privileges, monopolies, loans, and bounties as the government may grant to more or less of that "large variety of diverse and competing interests"—that is, schemes—that may be "persistently" pressed upon its attention.

But as you impliedly acknowledge that the government cannot take all these "interests" (schemes) under its "control," and bestow its favors upon all alike, you concede that some of them must be "surrendered," "postponed," or "abandoned"; and that, consequently, the government cannot get on at all, unless, "in the halls of national legislation, that spirit of amity and mutual concession shall prevail, in which the constitution had its birth."

This "spirit of amity and mutual concession in the halls of legislation," you explain to mean this: a disposition, on the part of the lawmakers respectively—whose various schemes of plunder cannot all be accomplished, by reason of their being beyond the financial resources of the government, or the endurance of the people—to "surrender" some of them, "postpone" others, and "abandon" others, in order that the general business of robbery may go on to the greatest extent possible, and that each one of the lawmakers may succeed with as many of the schemes he is specially intrusted with, as he can carry through by means of such bargains, for mutual help, as he may be able to make with his fellow lawmakers.

Such is the plan of government, to which you say that you "consecrate" yourself, and "engage your every faculty and effort."

Was a more shameless avowal ever made?

You cannot claim to be ignorant of what crimes such a government will commit. You have had abundant opportunity to know—and if you have kept your eyes open, you do know—what these schemes of robbery have been in the past; and from these you can judge what they will be in the future.

You know that under such a system, every senator and representative—probably without an exception—will come to the congress as the champion of the dominant scoundrelisms of his own State or district; that he will be elected solely to serve



those "interests," as you call them; that in offering himself as a candidate, he will announce the robbery, or robberies, to which all his efforts will be directed; that he will call these robberies his "policy"; or if he be lost to all decency, he will call them his "principles"; that they will always be such as he thinks will best subserve his own interests, or ambitions; that he will go to "the halls of national legislation" with his head full of plans for making bargains with other lawmakers—as corrupt as himself—for mutual help in carrying their respective schemes.

Such has been the character of our congresses nearly, or quite, from the beginning. It can scarcely be said that there has ever been an honest man in one of them. A man has sometimes gained a reputation for honesty, in his own State or district, by opposing some one or more of the robberies that were proposed by members from other portions of the country. But such a man has seldom, or never, deserved his reputation; for he has, generally, if not always, been the advocate of some one or more schemes of robbery, by which more or less of his own constituents were to profit, and which he knew it would be indispensable that he should advocate, in order to give him votes at home.

If there have ever been any members, who were consistently honest throughout,—who were really in favor of "doing equal and exact justice to all men,"—and, of course, nothing more than that to any,—their numbers have been few; so few as to have left no mark upon the general legislation. They have but constituted the exceptions that proved the rule. If you were now required to name such a lawmaker, I think you would search our history in vain to find him.

That this is no exaggerated description of our national lawmaking, the following facts will prove.

For the first seventy years of the government, one portion of the lawmakers would be satisfied with nothing less than permission to rob one-sixth, or one-seventh, of the whole population, not only of their labor, but even of their right to their own persons. In 1860, this class of lawmakers comprised all the senators and representatives from fifteen, of the then thirty-three, States.\*

This body of lawmakers, standing always firmly together, and capable of turning the scale for, or against, any scheme of robbery, in which northern men were interested, but on which northern men were divided,—such as navigation acts, tariffs, bounties, grants, war, peace, etc.,—could purchase immunity for their own crime, by supporting such, and so many, northern crimes—second only to their own in atrocity—as could be mutually agreed on.

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\*In the Senate they stood thirty to thirty-six, in the house ninety to one hundred and forty-seven, in the two branches united one hundred and twenty to one hundred and eighty-three, relatively to the non-slaveholding members.

From the foundation of the government—without a single interval, I think—the lawmakers from the slaveholding States had been, *relatively*, as strong, or stronger, than in 1860.

In this way the slaveholders bargained for, and secured, protection for slavery and the slave trade, by consenting to such navigation acts as some of the northern States desired, and to such tariffs on imports—such as iron, coal, wool, woollen goods, etc.,—as should enable the home producers of similar articles to make fortunes by robbing everybody else in the prices of their goods.

Another class of lawmakers have been satisfied with nothing less than such a monopoly of money, as should enable the holders of it to suppress, as far as possible, all industry and traffic, except such as they themselves should control; such a monopoly of money as would put it wholly out of the power of the great body of wealth-producers to hire the capital needed for their industries; and thus compel them—especially the mechanical portions of them—by the alternative of starvation—to sell their labor to the monopolists of money, for just such prices as these latter should choose to pay. This monopoly of money has also given, to the holders of it, a control, so nearly absolute, of all industry—agricultural as well as mechanical—and all traffic, as has enabled them to plunder all the producing classes in the prices of their labor, or the products of their labor.

Have you been blind, all these years, to the existence, or the effects, of this monopoly of money?

Still another class of lawmakers have demanded unequal taxation on the various kinds of home property, that are subject to taxation; such unequal taxation as would throw heavy burdens upon some kinds of property, and very light burdens, or no burdens at all, upon other kinds.

And yet another class of lawmakers have demanded great appropriations, or loans, of money, or grants of lands, to enterprises intended to give great wealth to a few, at the expense of everybody else.

These are some of the schemes of downright and outright robbery, which you mildly describe as “the large variety of diverse and competing interests, *subject to federal control*, persistently seeking recognition of their claims . . . . in the halls of national legislation”; and each having its champions and representatives among the lawmakers.

You know that all, or very nearly all, the legislation of congress is devoted to these various schemes of robbery; and that little, or no, legislation goes through, except by means of such bargains as these lawmakers may enter into with each other, for mutual support of their respective robberies. And yet you have the mendacity, or the stupidity, to tell us that so much of this legislation as does go through, may be relied on to “accomplish the greatest good to the greatest number,” to “subserve the common interest,” and “advance the general welfare.”

And when these schemes of robbery become so numerous, atrocious, and unendurable that they can no longer be reconciled “in the halls of national legislation,” by “surrendering” some of them, “postponing” others, and “abandoning” others, you assume—for such has been the prevailing opinion, and you say nothing to

the contrary—that it is the right of the strongest party, or parties, to murder a half million of men, if that be necessary,—and as we once did,—not to secure liberty or justice to any body,—but to compel the weaker of these would-be robbers to submit to all such robberies as the stronger ones may choose to practise upon them.

## SECTION X.

Sir, your idea of the true character of our government is plainly this: you assume that all the natural, inherent, inalienable, individual, *human* rights of fifty millions of people—all their individual rights to preserve their own lives, and promote their own happiness—have been thrown into one common heap,—into hotchpotch, as the lawyers say: and that this hotchpotch has been given into the hands of some four hundred champion robbers, each of whom has pledged himself to carry off as large a portion of it as possible, to be divided among those men—well known to himself, but who—to save themselves from all responsibility for his acts—have secretly (by secret ballot) appointed him to be their champion.

Sir, if you had assumed that all the people of this country had thrown all their wealth, all their rights, all their means of living, into hotchpotch; and that this hotchpotch had been given over to four hundred ferocious hounds; and that each of these hounds had been selected and trained to bring to his masters so much of this common plunder as he, in the general fight, or scramble, could get off with, you would scarcely have drawn a more vivid picture of the true character of the government of the United States, than you have done in your inaugural address.

No wonder that you are obliged to confess that such a government can be carried on only “amid the din of party strife”; that it will be influenced—you should have said *directed*—by “purely partisan zeal”; and that it will be attended by “the animosities of political strife, the bitterness of partisan defeat, and the exultation of partisan triumph.”

What gang of robbers, quarrelling over the division of their plunder, could exhibit a more shameful picture than you thus acknowledge to be shown by the government of the United States?

Sir, nothing of all this “din,” and “strife,” and “animosity,” and “bitterness,” is caused by any attempt, on the part of the government, to simply “do equal and exact justice to all men,”—to simply protect every man impartially in all his natural rights to life, liberty, and property. It is all caused simply and solely by the government’s violation of some men’s “*rights*,” to promote other men’s “*interests*.” If you do not know this, you are mentally an object of pity.

Sir, men’s “*rights*” are always harmonious. That is to say, each man’s “*rights*” are always consistent and harmonious with each and every other man’s “*rights*.” But their “*interests*,” as you estimate them, constantly clash; especially such

"interests" as depend on government grants of monopolies, privileges, loans, and bounties. And these "interests," like the interests of other gamblers, clash with a fury proportioned to the amounts at stake. It is these clashing "*interests*," and not any clashing "*rights*," that give rise to all the strife you have here depicted, and to all this necessity for "that spirit of amity and mutual concession," which you hold to be indispensable to the accomplishment of such legislation as you say is necessary to the welfare of the country.

Each and every man's "*rights*" being consistent and harmonious with each and every other man's "*rights*"; and all men's rights being immutably fixed, and easily ascertained, by a science that is open to be learned and known by all; a government that does nothing but "equal and exact justice to all men"—that simply gives to every man his own, and nothing more to any—has no cause and no occasion for any "political *parties*." What are these "political parties" but standing armies of robbers, each trying to rob the other, and to prevent being itself robbed by the other? A government that seeks only to "do equal and exact justice to all men," has no cause and no occasion to enlist all the fighting men in the nation in two hostile ranks; to keep them always in battle array, and burning with hatred towards each other. It has no cause and no occasion for any "political *warfare*," any "political *hostility*," any "political *campaigns*," any "political *contests*," any "political *fights*," any "political *defeats*," or any "political *triumphs*." It has no cause and no occasion for any of those "political *leaders*," so called, whose whole business is to invent new schemes of robbery, and organize the people into opposing bands of robbers; all for their own aggrandizement alone. It has no cause and no occasion for the toleration, or the existence, of that vile horde of political bullies, and swindlers, and blackguards, who enlist on one side or the other, and fight for pay; who, year in and year out, employ their lungs and their ink in spreading lies among ignorant people, to excite their hopes of gain, or their fears of loss, and thus obtain their votes. In short, it has no cause and no occasion for all this "din of party strife," for all this "purely partisan zeal," for all "the bitterness of partisan defeat," for all "the exultation of partisan triumph," nor, worst of all, for any of "that spirit of amity and mutual concession [by which you evidently mean that readiness, "in the halls of national legislation," to sacrifice some men's "rights" to promote other men's "interests"] in which [you say] the constitution had its birth."

If the constitution does really, or naturally, give rise to all this "strife," and require all this "spirit of amity and mutual concession,"—and I do not care now to deny that it does,—so much the worse for the constitution. And so much the worse for all those men who, like yourself, swear to "preserve, protect, and defend it."

And yet you have the face to make no end of professions, or pretences, that the impelling power, the real motive, in all this robbery and strife, is nothing else

than "the service of the people," "their interests," "the promotion of their welfare," "good government," "government by the people," "the popular will," "the general weal," "the achievements of our national destiny," "the benefits which our happy form of government can bestow," "the lasting welfare of the country," "the priceless benefits of the constitution," "the greatest good to the greatest number," "the common interest," "the general welfare," "the people's will," "the mission of the American people," "our civil policy," "the genius of our institutions," "the needs of our people in their home life," "the settlement and development of the resources of our vast territory," "the prosperity of our republic," "the interests and prosperity of all the people," "the safety and confidence of business interests," "making the wage of labor sure and steady," "a due regard to the interests of capital invested and workingmen employed in American industries," "reform in the administration of the government," "the application of business principles to public affairs," "the constant and ever varying wants of an active and enterprising population," "a firm determination to secure to all the people of the land the full benefits of the best form of government ever vouchsafed to man," "the blessings of our national life," etc., etc.

Sir, what is the use of such a deluge of unmeaning words, unless it be to gloss over, and, if possible, hide, the true character of the acts of the government?

Such "generalities" as these do not even "glitter." They are only the stale phrases of the demagogue, who wishes to appear to promise everything, but commits himself to nothing. Or else they are the senseless talk of a mere political parrot, who repeats words he has been taught to utter, without knowing their meaning. At best, they are the mere gibberish of a man destitute of all political ideas, but who imagines that "good government," "the general welfare," "the common interest," "the best form of government ever vouchsafed to man," etc., etc., must be very good things, if anybody can ever find out what they are. There is nothing definite, nothing real, nothing tangible, nothing honest, about them. Yet they constitute your entire stock in trade. In resorting to them—in holding them up to public gaze as comprising your political creed—you assume that they have a meaning; that they are matters of overruling importance; that they require the action of an omnipotent, irresponsible, lawmaking government; that all these "interests" must be represented, and can be secured, only "in the halls of national legislation"; and by such political hounds as have been selected and trained, and sent there, solely that they may bring off, to their respective masters, as much as possible of the public plunder they hold in their hands; that is, as much as possible of the earnings of all the honest wealth-producers of the country.

And when these masters count up the spoils that their hounds have thus brought home to them, they set up a corresponding shout that "the public prosperity," "the common interest," and "the general welfare" have been "advanced." And the scoundrels by whom the work has been accomplished, "in the halls of national

legislation," are trumpeted to the world as "great statesmen." And you are just stupid enough to be deceived into the belief, or just knave enough to pretend to be deceived into the belief, that all this is really the truth.

One would infer from your address that you think the people of this country incapable of doing anything for themselves, *individually*; that they would all perish, but for the employment given them by that "large variety of diverse and competing interests"—that is, such purely selfish schemes—as may be "persistently seeking recognition of their claims . . . . in the halls of national legislation," and secure for themselves such monopolies and advantages as congress may see fit to grant them.

Instead of your recognizing the right of each and every individual to judge of, and provide for, his own well-being, according to the dictates of his own judgment, and by the free exercise of his own powers of body and mind,—so long as he infringes the equal rights of no other person,—you assume that fifty millions of people, who never saw you, and never will see you, who know almost nothing about you, and care very little about you, are all so weak, ignorant, and degraded as to be humbly and beseechingly looking to you—and to a few more lawmakers (so called) whom they never saw, and never will see, and of whom they know almost nothing—to enlighten, direct, and "control" them in their daily labors to supply their own wants, and promote their own happiness!

You thus assume that these fifty millions of people are so debased, mentally and morally, that they look upon you and your associate lawmakers as their earthly gods, holding their destinies in your hands, and anxiously studying their welfare; instead of looking upon you—as most of you certainly ought to be looked upon—as a mere cabal of ignorant, selfish, ambitious, rapacious, and unprincipled men, who know very little, and care to know very little, except how you can get fame, and power, and money, by trampling upon other men's rights, and robbing them of the fruits of their labor.

Assuming yourself to be the greatest of these gods, charged with the "welfare" of fifty millions of people, you enter upon the mighty task with all the mock solemnity, and ridiculous grandiloquence, of a man ignorant enough to imagine that he is really performing a solemn duty, and doing an immense public service, instead of simply making a fool of himself. Thus you say:

Fellow citizens: In the presence of this vast assemblage of my countrymen, I am about to supplement and seal, by the oath which I shall take, the manifestation of the will of a great and free people. In the exercise of their power and right of self-government, they have committed to one of their fellow citizens a supreme and sacred trust, and he here consecrates himself to their service. This impressive ceremony adds little to the solemn sense of responsibility with which I contemplate the duty I owe to all the people of the land. Nothing can relieve me from anxiety lest by any act of mine their *interests* [not their *rights*] may suffer, and nothing is needed to strengthen my resolution to engage every faculty and effort in the

promotion of their *welfare*. [Not in "doing equal and exact justice to all men." After having once described the government as one "pledged to do equal and exact justice to all men," you drop that subject entirely, and wander off into "interests," and "welfare," and an astonishing number of other equally unmeaning things.]

Sir, you would have no occasion to take all this tremendous labor and responsibility upon yourself, if you and your lawmakers would but keep your hands off the "rights" of your "countrymen." Your "countrymen" would be perfectly competent to take care of their own "interests," and provide for their own "welfare," if their hands were not tied, and their powers crippled, by such fetters as men like you and your lawmakers have fastened upon them.

Do you know so little of your "countrymen," that you need to be told that their own strength and skill must be their sole reliance for their own well-being? Or that they are abundantly able, and willing, and anxious above all other things, to supply their own "needs in their home life," and secure their own "welfare"? Or that they would do it, not only without jar or friction, but as their highest duty and pleasure, if their powers were not manacled by the absurd and villainous laws you propose to execute upon them? Are you so stupid as to imagine that putting chains on men's hands, and fetters on their feet, and insurmountable obstacles in their paths, is the way to supply their "needs," and promote their "welfare"? Do you think your "countrymen" need to be told, either by yourself, or by any such gang of ignorant or unprincipled men as all lawmakers are, what to do, and what not to do, to supply their own "needs in their home life"? Do they not know how to grow their own food, make their own clothing, build their own houses, print their own books, acquire all the knowledge, and create all the wealth, they desire, without being domineered over, and thwarted in all their efforts, by any set of either fools or villains, who may call themselves their lawmakers? And do you think they will never get their eyes open to see what blockheads, or impostors, you and your lawmakers are? Do they not now—at least so far as you will permit them to do it—grow their own food, build their own houses, make their own clothing, print their own books? Do they not make all the scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, by which all wealth is created? *Or are all these things done by "the government"?* Are you an idiot, that you can talk as you do, about what you and your lawmakers are doing to provide for the real wants, and promote the real "welfare," of fifty millions of people?

#### SECTION XI.

But perhaps the most brilliant idea in your whole address, is this :

*Every citizen owes the country a vigilant watch and close scrutiny of its public servants, and a fair and reasonable estimate of their fidelity and usefulness. Thus is the people's will*

impressed upon the whole framework of our civil policy, municipal, State, and federal; and *this is the price of our liberty*, and the inspiration of our faith in the republic.

The essential parts of this declaration are these :

*"Every citizen owes the country a vigilant watch and close scrutiny of its public servants, . . . . and this is the price of our liberty."*

Who are these "public servants," that need all this watching? Evidently they are the lawmakers, and the lawmakers only. They are not only the *chief* "public servants," but they are absolute masters of all the other "public servants." These other "public servants," judicial and executive,—the courts, the army, the navy, the collectors of taxes, etc., etc.,—have no function whatever, except that of simple obedience to the lawmakers. They are appointed, paid, and have their duties prescribed to them, by the lawmakers; and are made responsible only to the lawmakers. They are mere puppets in the hands of the lawmakers. Clearly, then, the lawmakers are the only ones we have any occasion to watch.

Your declaration, therefore, amounts, practically, to this, and this only :

*Every citizen owes the country a vigilant watch and close scrutiny of ITS LAWMAKERS, . . . . and this is the price of our liberty.*

Sir, your declaration is so far true, as that all the danger to "our liberty" *comes solely from the lawmakers.*

And why are the lawmakers dangerous to "our liberty"? Because it is a natural impossibility that they can *make* any law—that is, any law of their own invention—that does *not* violate "our liberty."

*The law of justice is the one only law that does not violate "our liberty."* And that is not a law that was made by the lawmakers. It existed before they were born, and will exist after they are dead. It derives not one particle of its authority from any commands of theirs. It is, therefore, in no sense, one of *their* laws. Only laws of their own invention are *their* laws. And as it is naturally impossible that they can invent any law of their own, that shall not conflict with the law of justice, it is naturally impossible that they can *make* a law—that is, a law of their own invention—that shall *not* violate "our liberty."

The law of justice is the precise measure, and the only precise measure, of the rightful "liberty" of each and every human being. Any law—made by lawmakers—that should give to any man more liberty than is given him by the law of justice, would be a license to commit an injustice upon one or more other persons. On the other hand, any law—made by lawmakers—that should take from any human being any "liberty" that is given him by the law of justice, would be taking from him a part of his own rightful "liberty."

Inasmuch, then, as every possible law, that can be made by lawmakers, must either give to some one or more persons more "liberty" than the law of nature—or the law of justice—gives them, and more "liberty" than is consistent with the natural and equal "liberty" of all other persons; or else must take from some one



or more persons some portion of that "liberty" which the law of nature—or the law of justice—gives to every human being, it is inevitable that every law, that can be made by lawmakers, must be a violation of the natural and rightful "liberty" of some one or more persons.

Therefore the very idea of a *lawmaking* government—a government that is to make laws of its own invention—is necessarily in direct and inevitable conflict with "our liberty." In fact, the whole, sole, and only real purpose of any *lawmaking* government whatever is to take from some one or more persons their "liberty." Consequently the only way in which all men can preserve their "liberty," is not to have any *lawmaking* government at all.

We have been told, time out of mind, that "*Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.*" But this admonition, by reason of its indefiniteness, has heretofore fallen dead upon the popular mind. It, in reality, tells us nothing that we need to know, to enable us to preserve "our liberty." It does not even tell us what "our liberty" is, or how, or when, or through whom, it is endangered, or destroyed.

1. It does not tell us that *individual* liberty is the only *human* liberty. It does not tell us that "national liberty," "political liberty," "republican liberty," "democratic liberty," "constitutional liberty," "liberty under law," and all the other kinds of liberty that men have ever invented, and with which tyrants, as well as demagogues, have amused and cheated the ignorant, are not liberty at all, unless in so far as they may, under certain circumstances, have chanced to contribute something to, or given some impulse toward, *individual* liberty.

2. It does not tell us that *individual* liberty means freedom from all compulsion to do anything whatever, except what justice requires us to do, and freedom to do everything whatever that justice permits us to do. It does not tell us that *individual* liberty means freedom from all human restraint or coercion whatsoever, so long as we "live honestly, hurt nobody, and give to every one his due."

3. It does not tell us that there is any *science of liberty*; any science, which every man may learn, and by which every man may know, what is, and what is not, his own, and every other man's, rightful "liberty."

4. It does not tell us that this right of *individual* liberty rests upon an immutable, natural principle, which no human power can make, unmake, or alter; nor that all human authority, that claims to set it aside, or modify it, is nothing but falsehood, absurdity, usurpation, tyranny, and crime.

5. It does not tell us that this right of *individual* liberty is a *natural, inherent, inalienable right*; that therefore no man can part with it, or delegate it to another, if he would; and that, consequently, all the claims that have ever been made, by governments, priests, or any other powers, that individuals have voluntarily surrendered, or "delegated," their liberty to others, are all impostures and frauds.

6. It does not tell us that all human laws, so called, and all human lawmaking, —all commands, either by one man, or any number of men, calling themselves a

government, or by any other name—requiring any individual to do this, or forbidding him to do that—so long as he “lives honestly, hurts no one, and gives to every one his due”—are all false and tyrannical assumptions of a right of authority and dominion over him; are all violations of his natural, inherent, inalienable, rightful, individual liberty; and, as such, are to be resented and resisted to the utmost, by every one who does not choose to be a slave.

7. And, finally, it does not tell us that all *lawmaking* governments whatsoever—whether called monarchies, aristocracies, republics, democracies, or by any other name—are all alike violations of men’s natural and rightful liberty.

We can now see why lawmakers are the only enemies, from whom “our liberty” has anything to fear, or whom we have any occasion to watch. They are to be watched, because they claim the right to abolish justice, and establish injustice in its stead; because they claim the right to command us to do things which justice does not require us to do, and to forbid us to do things which justice permits us to do; because they deny our right to be, *individually, and absolutely*, our own masters and owners, so long as we obey the one law of justice towards all other persons; because they claim to be our masters, and that *their* commands, *as such*, are authoritative and binding upon us as law; and that they may rightfully compel us to obey them.

“Our liberty” is in danger only from the lawmakers, because it is only through the agency of lawmakers, that anybody pretends to be able to take away “our liberty.” It is only the lawmakers that claim to be above all responsibility for taking away “our liberty.” Lawmakers are the only ones who are impudent enough to assert for themselves the right to take away “our liberty.” They are the only ones who are impudent enough to tell us that we have voluntarily surrendered “our liberty” into their hands. They are the only ones who have the insolent condescension to tell us that, in consideration of our having surrendered into their hands “our liberty,” and all our natural, inherent, inalienable rights as human beings, they are disposed to give us, in return, “good government,” “the best form of government ever vouchsafed to man”; to “protect” us, to provide for our “welfare,” to promote our “interests,” etc., etc.

And yet you are just blockhead enough to tell us that if “Every citizen”—fifty millions and more of them—will but keep “a vigilant watch and close scrutiny” upon these lawmakers, “our liberty” may be preserved!

Don’t you think, sir, that you are really the wisest man that ever told “a great and free people” how they could preserve “their liberty”?

To be entirely candid, don’t you think, sir, that a surer way of preserving “our liberty” would be to have no lawmakers at all?

## SECTION XII.

But, in spite of all I have said, or, perhaps, can say, you will probably persist in your idea that the world needs a great deal of lawmaking; that mankind in general are not entitled to have any will, choice, judgment, or conscience of their own; that, if not very wicked, they are at least very ignorant and stupid; that they know very little of what is for their own good, or how to promote their own "interests," "welfare," or "prosperity"; that it is therefore necessary that they should be put under guardianship to lawmakers; that these lawmakers, being a very superior race of beings,—wise beyond the rest of their species,—and entirely free from all those selfish passions which tempt common mortals to do wrong,—must be intrusted with absolute and irresponsible dominion over the less favored of their kind; must prescribe to the latter, authoritatively, what they may, and may not, do; and, in general, manage the affairs of this world according to their discretion, free of all accountability to any human tribunals.

And you seem to be perfectly confident that, under this absolute and irresponsible dominion of the lawmakers, the affairs of this world will be rightly managed; that the "interests," "welfare," and "prosperity" of "a great and free people" will be properly attended to; that "the greatest good of the greatest number" will be accomplished, etc., etc.

And yet you hold that all this lawmaking, and all this subjection of the great body of the people to the arbitrary, irresponsible dominion of the lawmakers, will not interfere at all with "our liberty," if only "every citizen" will but keep "a vigilant watch and close scrutiny" of the lawmakers.

Well, perhaps this is all so; although this subjection to the arbitrary will of any man, or body of men, whatever, and under any pretence whatever, seems, on the face of it, to be much more like slavery, than it does like "liberty."

If, therefore, you really intend to continue this system of lawmaking, it seems indispensable that you should explain to us what you mean by the term "our liberty."

So far as your address gives us any light on the subject, you evidently mean, by the term "our liberty," just such, and only such, "liberty," as the lawmakers may see fit to allow us to have.

You seem to have no conception of any other "liberty" whatever.

You give us no idea of any other "liberty" that we can secure to ourselves, even though "every citizen"—fifty millions and more of them—shall all keep "a vigilant watch and close scrutiny" upon the lawmakers.

Now, inasmuch as the human race always have had all the "liberty" their lawmakers have seen fit to permit them to have; and inasmuch as, under your system of lawmaking, they always will have as much "liberty" as their lawmakers shall see fit to give them; and inasmuch as you apparently concede the right, which the

lawmakers have always claimed, of killing all those who are not content with so much "liberty" as their lawmakers have seen fit to allow them,—it seems very plain that you have not added anything to our stock of knowledge on the subject of "our liberty."

Leaving us thus, as you do, in as great darkness as we ever were, on this all-important subject of "our liberty," I think you ought to submit patiently to a little questioning on the part of those of us, who feel that all this lawmaking—each and every separate particle of it—is a violation of "our liberty."

Will you, therefore, please tell us whether any, and, if any, how much, of that *natural* liberty—of that natural, inherent, inalienable, *individual* right to liberty—with which it has generally been supposed that God, or Nature, has endowed every human being, will be left to us, if the lawmakers are to continue, as you would have them do, the exercise of their arbitrary, irresponsible dominion over us?

Are you prepared to answer that question?

No. You appear to have never given a thought to any such question as that.

I will therefore answer it for you.

And my answer is, that from the moment it is conceded that any man, or body of men, whatever, under any pretence whatever, have the right to *make laws of their own invention*, and compel other men to obey them, every vestige of man's *natural* and rightful liberty is denied him.

That this is so is proved by the fact that *all* a man's *natural* rights stand upon one and the same basis, *viz.*, that they are the gift of God, or Nature, to him, as an *individual*, for his own uses, and for his own happiness. If any one of these natural rights may be arbitrarily taken from him by other men, *all* of them may be taken from him on the same reason. No one of these rights is any more sacred or inviolable in its nature, than are all the others. The denial of any one of these rights is therefore equivalent to a denial of all the others. The violation of any one of these rights, by lawmakers, is equivalent to the assertion of a right to violate all of them.

Plainly, unless *all* a man's natural rights are inviolable by lawmakers, *none* of them are. It is an absurdity to say that a man has any rights *of his own*, if other men, whether calling themselves a government, or by any other name, have the right to take them from him, without his consent. Therefore the very idea of a lawmaking government necessarily implies a denial of all such things as individual liberty, or individual rights.

From this statement it does not follow that every lawmaking government will, in practice, take from every man *all* his natural rights. It will do as it pleases about it. It will take some, leaving him to enjoy others, just as its own pleasure or discretion shall dictate at the time. It would defeat its own ends, if it were wantonly to take away *all* his natural rights,—as, for example, his right to live, and to breathe,—for then he would be dead, and the government could then get

nothing more out of him. The most tyrannical government will, therefore, if it have any sense, leave its victims enough liberty to enable them to provide for their own subsistence, to pay their taxes, and to render such military or other service as the government may have need of. *But it will do this for its own good, and not for theirs.* In allowing them this liberty, it does not at all recognize their right to it, but only consults its own interests.

Now, sir, this is the real character of the government of the United States, as it is of all other *lawmaking* governments. There is not a single human right, which the government of the United States recognizes as inviolable. It tramples upon any and every individual right, whenever its own will, pleasure, or discretion shall so dictate. It takes men's property, liberty, and lives whenever it can serve its own purposes by doing so.

All these things prove that the government does not exist at all for the protection of men's *rights*; but that it absolutely denies to the people any rights, or any liberty, whatever, except such as it shall see fit to permit them to have for the time being. It virtually declares that it does not itself exist at all for the good of the people, but that the people exist solely for the use of the government.

All these things prove that the government is not one voluntarily established and sustained by the people, for the protection of their natural, inherent, individual rights, but that it is merely a government of usurpers, robbers, and tyrants, who claim to own the people as their slaves, and claim the right to dispose of them, and their property, at their (the usurpers') pleasure or discretion.

Now, sir, since you may be disposed to deny that such is the real character of the government, I propose to prove it, by evidences so numerous and conclusive that you cannot dispute them.

My proposition, then, is, that there is not a single *natural*, human right, that the government of the United States recognizes as inviolable; that there is not a single *natural*, human right, that it hesitates to trample under foot, whenever it thinks it can promote its own interests by doing so.

The proofs of this proposition are so numerous, that only a few of the most important can here be enumerated.

1. The government does not even recognize a man's natural right to his own life. If it have need of him, for the maintenance of its power, it takes him, against his will (conscripts him), and puts him before the cannon's mouth, to be blown in pieces, as if he were a mere senseless thing, having no more *rights* than if he were a shell, a canister, or a torpedo. It considers him simply as so much senseless war material, to be consumed, expended, and destroyed for the maintenance of its power. It no more recognizes his right to have anything to say in the matter, than if he were but so much weight of powder or ball. It does not recognize him at all as a human being, having any rights whatever of his own, but only as an instrument, a weapon, or a machine, to be used in killing other men.

2. The government not only denies a man's right, as a moral human being, to have any will, any judgment, or any conscience of his own, as to whether he himself will be killed in battle, but it equally denies his right to have any will, any judgment, or any conscience of his own, as a moral human being, as to whether he shall be used as a mere weapon for killing other men. If he refuses to kill any, or all, other men, whom it commands him to kill, it takes his own life, as unceremoniously as if he were but a dog.

Is it possible to conceive of a more complete denial of all a man's *natural, human* rights, than is the denial of his right to have any will, judgment, or conscience of his own, either as to his being killed himself, or as to his being used as a mere weapon for killing other men?

3. But in still another way, than by its conscriptions, the government denies a man's right to any will, choice, judgment, or conscience of his own, in regard either to being killed himself, or used as a weapon in its hands for killing other people.

If, in private life, a man enters into a perfectly voluntary agreement to work for another, at some innocent and useful labor, for a day, a week, a month, or a year, he cannot lawfully be compelled to fulfil that contract; because such compulsion would be an acknowledgment of his right to sell his own liberty. And this is what no one can do.

This right of personal liberty is inalienable. No man can sell it, or transfer it to another; or give to another any right of arbitrary dominion over him. All contracts for such a purpose are absurd and void contracts, that no man can rightfully be compelled to fulfil.

But when a deluded or ignorant young man has once been enticed into a contract to kill others, and to take his chances of being killed himself, in the service of the government, for any given number of years, the government holds that such a contract to sell his liberty, his judgment, his conscience, and his life, is a valid and binding contract; and that if he fails to fulfil it, he may rightfully be shot.

All these things prove that the government recognizes no right of the individual, to his own life, or liberty, or to the exercise of his own will, judgment, or conscience, in regard to his killing his fellow-men, or to being killed himself, if the government sees fit to use him as mere war material, in maintaining its arbitrary dominion over other human beings.

4. The government recognizes no such thing as any *natural* right of property, on the part of individuals.

This is proved by the fact that it takes, for its own uses, any and every man's property—when it pleases, and as much of it as it pleases—without obtaining, or even asking, his consent.

This taking of a man's property, without his consent, is a denial of his right of property; for the right of property is the right of supreme, absolute, and irresponsible dominion over anything that is naturally a subject of property,—that is, of

ownership. *It is a right against all the world.* And this right of property—this right of supreme, absolute, and irresponsible dominion over anything that is naturally a subject of ownership—is subject only to this qualification, *viz.*, that each man must so use his own, as not to injure another.

If A uses his own property so as to injure the person or property of B, his own property may rightfully be taken to any extent that is necessary to make reparation for the wrong he has done.

This is the only qualification to which the *natural* right of property is subject.

When, therefore, a government takes a man's property, for its own support, or for its own uses, without his consent, it practically denies his right of property altogether; for it practically asserts that *its* right of dominion is superior to his.

No man can be said to have any right of property at all, in any thing—that is, any right of supreme, absolute, and irresponsible dominion over any thing—of which any other men may rightfully deprive him at their pleasure.

Now, the government of the United States, in asserting its right to take at pleasure the property of individuals, without their consent, virtually denies their right of property altogether, because it asserts that *its* right of dominion over it, is superior to theirs.

5. The government denies the *natural* right of human beings to live on this planet. This it does by denying their *natural* right to those things that are indispensable to the maintenance of life. It says that, for every thing necessary to the maintenance of life, they must have a special permit from the government; and that the government cannot be required to grant them any other means of living than it chooses to grant them.

All this is shown as follows, *viz.*:

The government denies the *natural* right of individuals to take possession of wilderness land, and hold and cultivate it for their own subsistence.

It asserts that wilderness land is the property of the government; and that individuals have no right to take possession of, or cultivate, it, unless by special grant of the government. And if an individual attempts to exercise this natural right, the government punishes him as a trespasser and a criminal.

The government has no more right to claim the ownership of wilderness lands, than it has to claim the ownership of the sunshine, the water, or the atmosphere. And it has no more right to punish a man for taking possession of wilderness land, and cultivating it, without the consent of the government, than it has to punish him for breathing the air, drinking the water, or enjoying the sunshine, without a special grant from the government.

In thus asserting the government's right of property in wilderness land, and in denying men's right to take possession of and cultivate it, except on first obtaining a grant from the government,—which grant the government may withhold if it pleases,—the government plainly denies the *natural* right of men to live on this

planet, by denying their *natural* right to the means that are indispensable to their procuring the food that is necessary for supporting life.

In asserting its right of arbitrary dominion over that natural wealth that is indispensable to the support of human life, it asserts its right to withhold that wealth from those whose lives are dependent upon it. In this way it denies the *natural* right of human beings to live on the planet. It asserts that government owns the planet, and that men have no right to live on it, except by first getting a permit from the government.

This denial of men's *natural* right to take possession of and cultivate wilderness land is not altered at all by the fact that the government consents to sell as much land as it thinks it expedient or profitable to sell; nor by the fact that, in certain cases, it gives outright certain lands to certain persons. Notwithstanding these sales and gifts, the fact remains that the government claims the original ownership of the lands; and thus denies the *natural* right of individuals to take possession of and cultivate them. In denying this *natural* right of individuals, it denies their *natural* right to live on the earth; and asserts that they have no other right to life than the government, by its own mere will, pleasure, and discretion, may see fit to grant them.

In thus denying man's *natural* right to life, it of course denies every other *natural* right of human beings; and asserts that they have no *natural* right to anything; but that, for all other things, as well as for life itself, they must depend wholly upon the good pleasure and discretion of the government.

### SECTION XIII.

In still another way, the government denies men's *natural* right to life. And that is by denying their *natural* right to make any of those contracts with each other, for buying and selling, borrowing and lending, giving and receiving, property, which are necessary, if men are to exist in any considerable numbers on the earth.

Even the few savages, who contrive to live, mostly or wholly, by hunting, fishing, and gathering wild fruits, without cultivating the earth, and almost wholly without the use of tools or machinery, are yet, *at times*, necessitated to buy and sell, borrow and lend, give and receive, articles of food, if no others, as their only means of preserving their lives. But, in civilized life, where but a small portion of men's labor is necessary for the production of food, and they employ themselves in an almost infinite variety of industries, and in the production of an almost infinite variety of commodities, it would be impossible for them to live, if they were wholly prohibited from buying and selling, borrowing and lending, giving and receiving, the products of each other's labor.

Yet the government of the United States—either acting separately, or jointly



with the State governments—has heretofore constantly denied, and still constantly denies, the *natural* right of the people, *as individuals*, to make their own contracts, for such buying and selling, borrowing and lending, and giving and receiving, such commodities as they produce for each other's uses.

I repeat that both the national and State governments have constantly denied the *natural* right of individuals to make their own contracts. They have done this, sometimes by arbitrarily forbidding them to make particular contracts, and sometimes by arbitrarily qualifying the obligations of particular contracts, when the contracts themselves were naturally and intrinsically as just and lawful as any others that men ever enter into; and were, consequently, such as men have as perfect a *natural* right to make, as they have to make any of those contracts which they are permitted to make.

The laws arbitrarily prohibiting, or arbitrarily qualifying, certain contracts, that are naturally and intrinsically just and lawful, are so numerous, and so well known, that they need not all be enumerated here. But any and all such prohibitions, or qualifications, are a denial of men's *natural* right to make their own contracts. They are a denial of men's right to make any contracts whatever, except such as the governments shall see fit to permit them to make.

It is the *natural* right of any and all human beings, who are mentally competent to make reasonable contracts, to make any and every possible contract, that is naturally and intrinsically just and honest, for buying and selling, borrowing and lending, giving and receiving, any and all possible commodities, that are naturally vendible, loanable, and transferable, and that any two or more individuals may, at any time, without force or fraud, choose to buy and sell, borrow and lend, give and receive, of and to each other.

And it is plainly only by the untrammelled exercise of this *natural* right, that all the loanable capital, that is required by men's industries, can be lent and borrowed, or that all the money can be supplied for the purchase and sale of that almost infinite diversity and amount of commodities, that men are capable of producing, and that are to be transferred from the hands of the producers to those of the consumers.

But the government of the United States—and also the governments of the States—utterly deny the *natural* right of any individuals whatever to make any contracts whatever, for buying and selling, borrowing and lending, giving and receiving, any and all such commodities, as are naturally vendible, loanable, and transferable, and as the producers and consumers of such commodities may wish to buy and sell, borrow and lend, give and receive, of and to each other.

These governments (State and national) deny this *natural* right of buying and selling, etc., by arbitrarily prohibiting, or qualifying, all such, and so many, of these contracts, as they choose to prohibit, or qualify.

The prohibition, or qualification, of *any one* of these contracts—that are intrin-

sically just and lawful—is a denial of all individual *natural* right to make any of them. For the right to make any and all of them stands on the same grounds of *natural* law, natural justice, and men's natural rights. If a government has the right to prohibit, or qualify, any one of these contracts, it has the same right to prohibit, or qualify, all of them. Therefore the assertion, by the government, of a right to prohibit, or qualify, any one of them, is equivalent to a denial of all *natural* right, on the part of individuals, to make any of them.

The power that has been thus usurped by governments, to arbitrarily prohibit or qualify all contracts that are naturally and intrinsically just and lawful, has been the great, perhaps the greatest, of all the instrumentalities, by which, in this, as in other countries, nearly all the wealth, accumulated by the labor of the many, has been, and is now, transferred into the pockets of the few.

*It is by this arbitrary power over contracts, that the monopoly of money is sustained.* Few people have any real perception of the power, which this monopoly gives to the holders of it, over the industry and traffic of all other persons. And the one only purpose of the monopoly is to enable the holders of it to rob everybody else in the prices of their labor, and the products of their labor.

The theory, on which the advocates of this monopoly attempt to justify it, is simply this: *That it is not at all necessary that money should be a bona fide equivalent of the labor or property that is to be bought with it; that if the government will but specially license a small amount of money, and prohibit all other money, the holders of the licensed money will then be able to buy with it the labor and property of all other persons for a half, a tenth, a hundredth, a thousandth, or a millionth, of what such labor and property are really and truly worth.*

David A. Wells, one of the most prominent—perhaps at this time, the most prominent—advocate of the monopoly, in this country, states the theory thus:

A three-cent piece, if it could be divided into a sufficient number of pieces, with each piece capable of being handled, would undoubtedly suffice for doing all the business of the country in the way of facilitating exchanges, if no other better instrumentality was available. —*New York Herald, February 13, 1875.*

He means here to say, that “a three-cent piece” contains *as much real, true, and natural market value*, as it would be necessary that all the money of the country should have, *if the government would but prohibit all other money; that is, if the government, by its arbitrary legislative power, would but make all other and better money unavailable.*

And this is the theory, on which John Locke, David Hume, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, J. R. McCulloch, and John Stuart Mill, in England, and Amasa Walker, Charles H. Carroll, Hugh McCulloch, in this country, and all the other conspicuous advocates of the monopoly, both in this country and in England, have attempted to justify it. They have all held that it was not necessary that money should be

a *bona fide* equivalent of the labor or property to be bought with it; but that, by the prohibition of all other money, the holders of a comparatively worthless amount of licensed money would be enabled to buy, at their own prices, the labor and property of all other men.

And this is the theory on which the governments of England and the United States have always, with immaterial exceptions, acted, in prohibiting all but such small amounts of money as they (the governments) should specially license. *And it is the theory upon which they act now.* And it is so manifestly a theory of pure robbery, that scarce a word can be necessary to make it more evidently so than it now is.

But inasmuch as your mind seems to be filled with the wildest visions of the excellency of this government, and to be strangely ignorant of its wrongs; and inasmuch as this monopoly of money is, in its practical operation, one of the greatest—possibly the greatest—of all these wrongs, and the one that is most relied upon for robbing the great body of the people, and keeping them in poverty and servitude, it is plainly important that you should have your eyes opened on the subject. I therefore submit, for your consideration, the following self-evident propositions:

1. That to make all traffic just and equal, it is indispensable that, in each separate purchase and sale, the money paid should be a *bona fide* equivalent of the labor or property bought with it.

Dare you, or any other man, of common sense and common honesty, dispute the truth of that proposition? If not, let us consider that principle established. It will then serve as one of the necessary and infallible guides to the true settlement of all the other questions that remain to be settled.

2. That so long as no force or fraud is practised by either party, the parties themselves, to each separate contract, have the sole, absolute, and unqualified right to decide for themselves, *what money, and how much of it*, shall be considered a *bona fide* equivalent of the labor or property that is to be exchanged for it. All this is necessarily implied in the *natural* right of men to make their own contracts, for buying and selling their respective commodities.

Will you dispute the truth of that proposition?

3. That any one man, who has an honest dollar, of any kind whatsoever, has as perfect a right, as any other man can have, to offer it in the market, in competition with any and all other dollars, in exchange for such labor or property as may be in the market for sale.

Will you dispute the truth of that proposition?

4. That where no fraud is practised, every person, who is mentally competent to make reasonable contracts, must be presumed to be as competent to judge of the value of the money that is offered in the market, as he is to judge of the value of all the other commodities that are bought and sold for money.

Will you dispute the truth of that proposition ?

5. That the free and open market, in which all honest money and all honest commodities are free to be given and received in exchange for each other, is the true, final, absolute, and only test of the true and natural market value of all money, as of all the other commodities that are bought and sold for money.

Will you dispute the truth of that proposition ?

6. That any prohibition, by a government, of any such kind or amount of money—provided it be honest in itself—as the parties to contracts may voluntarily agree to give and receive in exchange for labor or property, is a palpable violation of their natural right to make their own contracts, and to buy and sell their labor and property on such terms as they may find to be necessary for the supply of their wants, or may think most beneficial to their interests.

Will you dispute the truth of that proposition ?

7. That any government, that licenses a small amount of an article of such universal necessity as money, and that gives the control of it into a few hands, selected by itself, and then prohibits any and all other money—that is intrinsically honest and valuable—palpably violates all other men's natural right to make their own contracts, and infallibly proves its purpose to be to enable the few holders of the licensed money to rob all other persons in the prices of their labor and property.

Will you dispute the truth of that proposition ?

Are not all these propositions so self-evident, or so easily demonstrated, that they cannot, with any reason, be disputed ?

If you feel competent to show the falsehood of any one of them, I hope you will attempt the task.

#### SECTION XIV.

If, now, you wish to form some rational opinion of the extent of the robbery practised in this country, by the holders of this monopoly of money, you have only to look at the following facts.

There are, in this country, I think, at least twenty-five millions of persons, male and female, sixteen years old, and upwards, mentally and physically capable of running machinery, producing wealth, and supplying their own needs for an independent and comfortable subsistence.

To make their industry most effective, and to enable them, *individually*, to put into their own pockets as large a portion as possible of their own earnings, they need, *on an average*, one thousand dollars each of *money capital*. Some need one, two, three, or five hundred dollars, others one, two, three, or five thousand. These persons, then, need, *in the aggregate*, twenty-five thousand millions of dollars (\$25,000,000,000), of money capital.

They need all this *money capital* to enable them to buy the raw materials upon which to bestow their labor, the implements and machinery with which to labor, and their means of subsistence while producing their goods for the market.

Unless they can get this capital, they must all either work at a disadvantage, or not work at all. A very large portion of them, to save themselves from starvation, have no alternative but to sell their labor to others, at just such prices as these others choose to pay. And these others choose to pay only such prices as are far below what the laborers could produce, if they themselves had the necessary capital to work with.

But this needed capital your lawmakers arbitrarily forbid them to have; and for no other reason than to reduce them to the condition of servants; and subject them to all such extortions as their employers—the holders of the privileged money—may choose to practise upon them.

If, now, you ask me where these twenty-five thousand millions of dollars of money capital, which these laborers need, are to come from, I answer:

*Theoretically* there are, in this country, fifty thousand millions of dollars of money capital (\$50,000,000,000)—or twice as much as I have supposed these laborers to need—NOW LYING IDLE! *And it is lying idle, solely because the circulation of it, as money, is prohibited by the lawmakers.*

If you ask how this can be, I will tell you.

*Theoretically*, every dollar's worth of material property, that is capable of being taken by law, and applied to the payment of the owner's debts, is capable of being represented by a promissory note, that shall circulate as money.

But taking all this material property at *only half* its actual value, it is still capable of supplying the twenty-five thousand millions of dollars—or one thousand dollars each—which these laborers need.

Now, we know—because experience has taught us—that *solvent* promissory notes, made payable in coin on demand, are the best money that mankind have ever had; (although probably not the best they ever will have).

To make a note solvent, and suitable for circulation as money, it is only necessary that it should be made payable in coin on demand, and be issued by a person, or persons, who are known to have in their hands abundant material property, that can be taken by law, and applied to the payment of the note, with all costs and damages for non-payment on demand.

*Theoretically*, I repeat, all the material property in the country, that can be taken by law, and applied to the payment of debts, can be used as banking capital; and be represented by promissory notes, made payable in coin on demand. And, *practically*, so much of it can be used as banking capital as may be required for supplying all the notes that can be kept in circulation as money.

Although these notes are made legally payable in coin on demand, it is seldom that such payment is demanded, *if only it be publicly known that the notes are solvent:*

that is, if it be publicly known that they are issued by persons who have so much material property, that can be taken by law, and sold, as may be necessary to bring the coin that is needed to pay the notes. In such cases, the notes are preferred to the coin, because they are so much more safe and convenient for handling, counting, and transportation, than is the coin; and also because we can have so many times more of them.

These notes are also a legal tender, to the banks that issue them, in payment of the notes discounted; that is, in payment of the notes given by the borrowers to the banks. And, in the ordinary course of things, *all* the notes, issued by the banks for circulation, are wanted, and come back to the banks, in payment of the notes discounted; thus saving all necessity for redeeming them with coin, except in rare cases. For meeting these rare cases, the banks find it necessary to keep on hand small amounts of coin; probably not more than one per cent. of the amount of notes in circulation.

As the notes discounted have usually but a short time to run,—say three months on an average,—the bank notes issued for circulation will *all* come back, *on an average*, once in three months, and be redeemed by the bankers, by being accepted in payment of the notes discounted.

Then the bank notes will be re-issued, by discounting new notes, and will go into circulation again; to be again brought back, at the end of another three months, and redeemed, by being accepted in payment of the new notes discounted.

In this way the bank notes will be continually re-issued, and redeemed, in the greatest amounts that can be kept in circulation long enough to earn such an amount of interest as will make it an object for the bankers to issue them.

Each of these notes, issued for circulation, if known to be solvent, will always have the same value in the market, as the same nominal amount of coin. And this value is a just one, because the notes are in the nature of a lien, or mortgage, upon so much property of the bankers as is necessary to pay the notes, and as can be taken by law, and sold, and the proceeds applied to their payment.

There is no danger that any more of these notes will be issued than will be wanted for buying and selling property at its true and natural market value, relatively to coin; for as the notes are all made legally payable in coin on demand, if they should ever fall below the value of coin in the market, the holders of them will at once return them to the banks, and demand coin for them; *and thus take them out of circulation.*

The bankers, therefore, have no motive for issuing more of them than will remain long enough in circulation, to earn so much interest as will make it an object to issue them; the only motive for issuing them being to draw interest on them while they are in circulation.

The bankers readily find how many are wanted for circulation, by the time those issued remain in circulation, before coming back for redemption. If they

come back immediately, or very quickly, after being issued, the bankers know that they have over-issued, and that they must therefore pay in coin—to their inconvenience, and perhaps loss—notes that would otherwise have remained in circulation long enough to earn so much interest as would have paid for issuing them; and would then have come back to them in payment of notes discounted, instead of coming back on a demand for redemption in coin.

Now, the best of all possible banking capital is real estate. It is the best, because it is visible, immovable, and indestructible. It cannot, like coin, be removed, concealed, or carried out of the country. And its aggregate value, in all civilized countries, is probably a hundred times greater than the amount of coin in circulation. It is therefore capable of furnishing a hundred times as much money as we can have in coin.

The owners of this real estate have the greatest inducements to use it as banking capital, because all the banking profit, over and above expenses, is a clear profit; inasmuch as the use of the real estate as banking capital does not interfere at all with its use for other purposes.

Farmers have a double, and much more than a double, inducement to use their lands as banking capital; because they not only get a direct profit from the loan of their notes, but, by loaning them, they furnish the necessary capital for the greatest variety of manufacturing purposes. They thus induce a much larger portion of the people, than otherwise would, to leave agriculture, and engage in mechanical employments; and thus become purchasers, instead of producers, of agricultural commodities. They thus get much higher prices for their agricultural products, and also a much greater variety and amount of manufactured commodities in exchange.

The amount of money, capable of being furnished by this system, is so great that every man, woman, and child, who is worthy of credit, could get it, and do business for himself, or herself—either singly, or in partnerships—and be under no necessity to act as a servant, or sell his or her labor to others. All the great establishments, of every kind, now in the hands of a few proprietors, but employing a great number of wage laborers, would be broken up; for few, or no persons, who could hire capital, and do business for themselves, would consent to labor for wages for another.

The credit furnished by this system would always be stable; for the system is probably capable of furnishing, *at all times*, all the credit, and all the money, that can be needed. It would also introduce a substantially universal system of cash payments. Everybody, who could get credit at all, would be able to get it at bank, *in money*. With the money, he would buy everything he needed for cash. He would also sell everything for cash; for when everybody buys for cash, everybody sells for cash; since buying for cash, and selling for cash, are necessarily one and the same thing.

We should, therefore, never have another crisis, panic, revulsion of credit, stagnation of industry, or fall of prices; for these are all caused by the lack of money, and the consequent necessity of buying and selling on credit; whereby the amount of indebtedness becomes so great, so enormous, in fact, in proportion to the amount of money extant, with which to meet it, that the whole system of credit breaks down; to the ruin of everybody, except the few holders of the monopoly of money, who reap a harvest in the fall of prices, and the consequent bankruptcy of everybody who is dependent on credit for his means of doing business.

It would be inadmissible for me, in this letter, to occupy the space that would be necessary, to expose all the false, absurd, and ridiculous pretences, by which the advocates of the monopoly of money have attempted to justify it. The only real argument they ever employed has been that, by means of the monopoly, the few holders of it were enabled to rob everybody else in the prices of their labor and property.

And our governments, State and national, have hitherto acted together in maintaining this monopoly, in flagrant violation of men's natural right to make their own contracts, and in flagrant violation of the self-evident truth, that, to make all traffic just and equal, it is indispensable that the money paid should be, in all cases, a *bona fide* equivalent of the labor or property that is bought with it.

The holders of this monopoly now rule and rob this nation; and the government, in all its branches, is simply their tool. And being their tool for this gigantic robbery, it is equally their tool for all the lesser robberies, to which it is supposed that the people at large can be made to submit.

#### SECTION XV.

But although the monopoly of money is one of the most glaring violations of men's natural right to make their own contracts, and one of the most effective—perhaps *the* most effective—for enabling a few men to rob everybody else, and for keeping the great body of the people in poverty and servitude, it is not the only one that our government practises, nor the only one that has the same robbery in view.

The so-called taxes or duties, which the government levies upon imports, are a practical violation both of men's natural right of property, and of their natural right to make their own contracts.

A man has the same *natural* right to traffic with another, who lives on the opposite side of the globe, as he has to traffic with his next-door neighbor. And any obstruction, price, or penalty, interposed by the government, to the exercise of that right, is a practical violation of the right itself.

The ten, twenty, or fifty per cent. of a man's property, which is taken from him, for the reason that he purchased it in a foreign country, must be considered either



as the price he is required to pay for the *privilege* of buying property in that country, or else as a penalty for having exercised his *natural right* of buying it in that country. Whether it be considered as a price paid for a privilege, or a penalty for having exercised a natural right, it is a violation both of his natural right of property, and of his natural right to make a contract in that country.

In short, it is nothing but downright robbery.

And when a man seeks to avoid this robbery, by evading the government robbers who are lying in wait for him,—that is, the so-called revenue officers,—whom he has as perfect a right to evade, as he has to evade any other robbers, who may be lying in wait for him,—the seizure of his whole property,—instead of the ten, twenty, or fifty per cent. that would otherwise have been taken from him,—is not merely adding so much to the robbery itself, but is adding insult to the robbery. It is punishing a man as a criminal, for simply trying to save his property from robbers.

But it will be said that these taxes or duties are laid to raise revenue for the support of the government.

Be it so, for the sake of the argument. All taxes, levied upon a man's property for the support of government, without his consent, are mere robbery; a violation of his natural right of property. And when a government takes ten, twenty, or fifty per cent. of a man's property, for the reason that he bought it in a foreign country, such taking is as much a violation of his natural right of property, or of his natural right to purchase property, as is the taking of property which he has himself produced, or which he has bought in his own village.

A man's natural right of property, in a commodity he has bought in a foreign country, is intrinsically as sacred and inviolable as it is in a commodity produced at home. The foreign commodity is bought with the commodity produced at home; and therefore stands on the same footing as the commodity produced at home. And it is a plain violation of one's right, for a government to make any distinction between them.

Government assumes to exist for the impartial protection of all rights of property. If it really exists for that purpose, it is plainly bound to make each kind of property pay its proper proportion, and only its proper proportion, of the cost of protecting all kinds. To levy upon a few kinds the cost of protecting all, is a naked robbery of the holders of those few kinds, for the benefit of the holders of all other kinds.

But the pretence that heavy taxes are levied upon imports, solely, or mainly, for the support of government, while light taxes, or no taxes at all, are levied upon property at home, is an utterly false pretence. They are levied upon the imported commodity, mainly, if not solely, for the purpose of enabling the producers of competing home commodities to extort from consumers a higher price than the home commodities would bring in free and open market. And this additional

price is sheer robbery, and is known to be so. And the amount of this robbery—which goes into the pockets of the home producers—is five, ten, twenty, or fifty times greater than the amount that goes into the treasury, for the support of the government, according as the amount of the home commodities is five, ten, twenty, or fifty times greater than the amount of the imported competing commodities.

Thus the amounts that go to the support of the government, and also the amounts that go into the pockets of the home producers, in the higher prices they get for their goods, are all sheer robberies; and nothing else.

But it will be said that the heavy taxes are levied upon the foreign commodity, not to put great wealth into a few pockets, but “*to protect the home laborer against the competition of the pauper labor of other countries.*”

This is the great argument that is relied on to justify the robbery.

This argument must have originated with the employers of home labor, and not with the home laborers themselves.

The home laborers themselves could never have originated it, because they must have seen that, so far as they were concerned, the object of the “protection,” so-called, was, *at best*, only to benefit them, by robbing others who were as poor as themselves, and who had as good a right as themselves to live by their labor. That is, they must have seen that the object of the “protection” was to rob the foreign laborers, in whole, or in part, of the pittance on which they were already necessitated to live; and, secondly, to rob consumers at home,—in the increased prices of the protected commodities,—when many or most of these home consumers were also laborers as poor as themselves.

Even if any class of laborers would have been so selfish and dishonest as to wish to thus benefit themselves by injuring others, as poor as themselves, they could have had no hope of carrying through such a scheme, if they alone were to profit by it; because they could have had no such influence with governments, as would be necessary to enable them to carry it through, in opposition to the rights and interests of consumers, both rich and poor, and much more numerous than themselves.

For these reasons it is plain that the argument originated with the employers of home labor, and not with the home laborers themselves.

And why do the employers of home labor advocate this robbery? Certainly not because they have such an intense compassion for their own laborers, that they are willing to rob everybody else, rich and poor, for their benefit. Nobody will suspect them of being influenced by any such compassion as that. But they advocate it solely because they put into their own pockets a very large portion certainly—probably three-fourths, I should judge—of the increased prices their commodities are thus made to bring in the market. The home laborers themselves probably get not more than one-fourth of these increased prices.

Thus the argument for “protection” is really an argument for robbing foreign

laborers—as poor as our own—of their equal and rightful chances in our markets; and also for robbing all the home consumers of the protected article—the poor as well as the rich—in the prices they are made to pay for it. And all this is done at the instigation, and principally for the benefit, of the employers of home labor, and not for the benefit of the home laborers themselves.

Having now seen that this argument—of “protecting our home laborers against the competition of the pauper labor of other countries”—is, of itself, an utterly dishonest argument; that it is dishonest towards foreign laborers and home consumers; that it must have originated with the employers of home labor, and not with the home laborers themselves; and that the employers of home labor, and not the home laborers themselves, are to receive the principal profits of the robbery, let us now see how utterly false is the argument itself.

1. The pauper laborers (if there are any such) of other countries have just as good a right to live by their labor, and have an equal chance in our own markets, and in all the markets of the world, as have the pauper laborers, or any other laborers, of our own country.

Every human being has the same natural right to buy and sell, of and to, any and all other people in the world, as he has to buy and sell, of and to, the people of his own country. And none but tyrants and robbers deny that right. And they deny it for their own benefit solely, and not for the benefit of their laborers.

And if a man, in our own country—either from motives of profit to himself, or from motives of pity towards the pauper laborers of other countries—*chooses* to buy the products of the foreign pauper labor, rather than the products of the laborers of his own country, he has a perfect legal right to do so. And for any government to forbid him to do so, or to obstruct his doing so, or to punish him for doing so, is a violation of his natural right of purchasing property of whom he pleases, and from such motives as he pleases.

2. To forbid our own people to buy in the best markets, is equivalent to forbidding them to sell the products of their own labor in the best markets; for they can buy the products of foreign labor, only by giving the products of their own labor in exchange. Therefore to deny our right to buy in foreign markets, is to forbid us to sell in foreign markets. And this is a plain violation of men's natural rights.

If, when a producer of cotton, tobacco, grain, beef, pork, butter, cheese, or any other commodity, in our own country, has carried it abroad, and exchanged it for iron or woolen goods, and has brought these latter home, the government seizes one-half of them, because they were manufactured abroad, the robbery committed upon the owner is the same as if the government had seized one-half of his cotton, tobacco, or other commodity, before he exported it; because the iron or woolen goods, which he purchased abroad with the products of his own home labor, are as much his own property, as was the commodity with which he purchased them.

Therefore the tax laid upon foreign commodities, that have been bought with the products of our home labor, is as much a robbery of the home laborer, as the same tax would have been, if laid directly upon the products of our home labor. It is, at best, only a robbery of one home laborer—the producer of cotton, tobacco, grain, beef, pork, butter, or cheese—for the benefit of another home laborer—the producer of iron or woollen goods.

3. But this whole argument is a false one, for the further reason that our home laborers do not have to compete with “*the pauper labor*” of any country on earth; since the *actual paupers* of no country on earth are engaged in producing commodities for export to any other country. They produce few, or no, other commodities than those they themselves consume; and ordinarily not even those.

There are a great many millions of *actual paupers* in the world. In some of the large provinces of British India, for example, it is said that nearly half the population are paupers. But I think that the commodities they are producing for export to other countries than their own, have never been heard of.

The term, “pauper labor,” is therefore a false one. And when these robbers—the employers of home labor—talk of protecting their laborers against the competition of “*the pauper labor*” of other countries, they do not mean that they are protecting them against the competition of *actual paupers*; but only against the competition of that immense body of laborers, in all parts of the world, *who are kept constantly on the verge of pauperism, or starvation*; who have little, or no, means of subsistence, except such as their employers see fit to give them,—which means are usually barely enough to keep them in a condition to labor.

These are the only “pauper laborers,” from whose competition our own laborers are sought to be protected. They are quite as badly off as our own laborers; and are in equal need of “protection.”

What, then, is to be done? This policy of excluding foreign commodities from our markets, is a game that all other governments can play at, as well as our own. And if it is the duty of our government to “protect” our laborers against the competition of “the pauper labor,” so-called, of all other countries, it is equally the duty of every other government to “protect” its laborers against the competition of the so-called “pauper labor” of all other countries. So that, according to this theory, each nation must either shut out entirely from its markets the products of all other countries; or, at least, lay such heavy duties upon them, as will, *in some measure*, “protect” its own laborers from the competition of the “pauper labor” of all other countries.

This theory, then, is that, instead of permitting all mankind to supply each other’s wants, by freely exchanging their respective products with each other, the government of each nation should rob the people of every other, by imposing heavy duties upon all commodities imported from them.

The natural effect of this scheme is to pit the so-called “pauper labor” of each

country against the so-called "pauper labor" of every other country; and all for the benefit of their employers. And as it holds that so-called "pauper labor" is cheaper than free labor, it gives the employers in each country a constant motive for reducing their own laborers to the lowest condition of poverty, consistent with their ability to labor at all. In other words, the theory is, that the smaller the portion of the products of labor, that is given to the laborers, the larger will be the portion that will go into the pockets of the employers.

Now, it is not a very honorable proceeding for any government to pit its own so-called "pauper laborers"—or laborers that are on the verge of pauperism—against similar laborers in all other countries: and all for the sake of putting the principal proceeds of their labor into the pockets of a few employers.

To set two bodies of "pauper laborers"—or of laborers on the verge of pauperism—to robbing each other, for the profit of their employers, is the next thing, in point of atrocity, to setting them to killing each other, as governments have heretofore been in the habit of doing, for the benefit of their rulers.

The laborers, who are paupers, or on the verge of pauperism—who are destitute, or on the verge of destitution—comprise (with their families) doubtless nine-tenths, probably nineteen-twentieths, of all the people on the globe. They are not all wage laborers. Some of them are savages, living only as savages do. Others are barbarians, living only as barbarians do. But an immense number are mere wage laborers. Much the larger portion of these have been reduced to the condition of wage laborers, by the monopoly of land, which mere bands of robbers have succeeded in securing for themselves by military power: This is the condition of nearly all the Asiatics, and of probably one-half the Europeans. But in those portions of Europe and the United States, where manufactures have been most extensively introduced, and where, by science and machinery, great wealth has been created, the laborers have been kept in the condition of wage laborers, principally, if not wholly, by the monopoly of money. This monopoly, established in all these manufacturing countries, has made it impossible for the manufacturing laborers to hire the money capital that was necessary to enable them to do business for themselves; and has consequently compelled them to sell their labor to the monopolists of money, for just such prices as these latter should choose to give.

It is, then, by the monopoly of land, and the monopoly of money, that more than a thousand millions of the earth's inhabitants—as savages, barbarians, and wage laborers—are kept in a state of destitution, or on the verge of destitution. Hundreds of millions of them are receiving, for their labor, not more than three, five, or, at most, ten cents a day.

In western Europe, and in the United States, where, within the last hundred and fifty years, machinery has been introduced, and where alone any considerable wealth is now created, the wage laborers, although they get so small a portion of the wealth they create, are nevertheless in a vastly better condition than are the laboring classes in other parts of the world.

If, now, the employers of wage labor, in this country,—who are also the monopolists of money,—and who are ostensibly so distressed lest their own wage laborers should suffer from the competition of the pauper labor of other countries,—have really any of that humanity, of which they make such profession, they have before them a much wider field for the display of it, than they seem to desire. That is to say, they have it in their power, not only to elevate immensely the condition of the laboring classes in this country, but also to set an example that will be very rapidly followed in all other countries; and the result will be the elevation of all oppressed laborers throughout the world. This they can do, by simply abolishing the monopoly of money. The real producers of wealth, with few or no exceptions, will then be able to hire all the capital they need for their industries, and will do business for themselves. They will also be able to hire their capital at very low rates of interest; and will then put into their own pockets all the proceeds of their labor, except what they pay as interest on their capital. And this amount will be too small to obstruct materially their rise to independence and wealth.

#### SECTION XVI.

But will the monopolists of money give up their monopoly? Certainly not voluntarily. They will do it only upon compulsion. They will hold on to it as long as they own and control governments as they do now. And why will they do so? Because to give up their monopoly would be to give up their control of those great armies of servants—the wage laborers—from whom all their wealth is derived, and whom they can now coerce by the alternative of starvation, to labor for them at just such prices as they (the monopolists of money) shall choose to pay.

Now these monopolists of money have no plans whatever for making their “capital,” as they call it—that is, their money capital—their *privileged money capital*—profitable to themselves, *otherwise than by using it to employ other men's labor*. And they can keep control of other men's labor only by depriving the laborers themselves of all other means of subsistence. And they can deprive them of all other means of subsistence only by putting it out of their power to hire the money that is necessary to enable them to do business for themselves. And they can put it out of their power to hire money, only by forbidding all other men to lend them their credit, in the shape of promissory notes, to be circulated as money.

If the twenty-five or fifty thousand millions of loanable capital—promissory notes—which, *in this country*, are now lying idle, were permitted to be loaned, these wage laborers would hire it, and do business for themselves, instead of laboring as servants for others; and would of course retain in their own hands all the wealth they should create, except what they should pay as interest for their capital.

And what is true of this country, is true of every other where civilization exists; for wherever civilization exists, land has value, and can be used as banking capi-

tal, and be made to furnish all the money that is necessary to enable the producers of wealth to hire the capital necessary for their industries, and thus relieve them from their present servitude to the few holders of privileged money.

Thus it is that the monopoly of money is the one great obstacle to the liberation of the laboring classes all over the world, and to their indefinite progress in wealth.

But we are now to show, more definitely, what relation this monopoly of money is made to bear to the freedom of international trade; and why it is that the holders of this monopoly, *in this country*, demand heavy tariffs on imports, on the lying pretence of protecting our home labor against the competition of the so-called pauper labor of other countries.

The explanation of the whole matter is as follows.

1. The holders of the monopoly of money, in each country,—more especially in the manufacturing countries like England, the United States, and some others,—assume that the present condition of poverty, for the great mass of mankind, all over the world, is to be perpetuated forever; or at least for an indefinite period. From this assumption they infer that, if free trade between all countries is to be allowed, the so-called pauper labor of each country is to be forever pitted against the so-called pauper labor of every other country. Hence they infer that it is the duty of each government—or certainly of our government—to protect the so-called pauper labor of our own country—that is, the class of laborers who are constantly on the verge of pauperism—against the competition of the so-called pauper labor of all other countries, by such duties on imports as will secure to our own laborers a monopoly of our own home market.

This is, on the face of it, the most plausible argument—and almost, if not really, the only argument—by which they now attempt to sustain their restrictions upon international trade.

If this argument is a false one, their whole case falls to the ground. That it is a false one, will be shown hereafter.

2. These monopolists of money assume that pauper labor, so-called, is the cheapest labor in the world; and that therefore each nation, in order to compete with the pauper labor of all other nations, must itself have “cheap labor.” In fact, “cheap labor” is, with them, the great *sine qua non* of all national industry. To compete with “cheap labor,” say they, we must have “cheap labor.” This is, with them, a self-evident proposition. And this demand for “cheap labor” means, of course, that the laboring classes, in this country, must be kept, as nearly as possible, on a level with the so-called pauper labor of all other countries.

Thus their whole scheme of national industry is made to depend upon “cheap labor.” And to secure “cheap labor,” they hold it to be indispensable that the laborers shall be kept constantly either in actual pauperism, or on the verge of pauperism. And, in this country, they know of no way of keeping the laborers on the

verge of pauperism, but by retaining in their (the monopolists') own hands such a monopoly of money as will put it out of the power of the laborers to hire money, and do business for themselves; and thus compel them, by the alternative of starvation, to sell their labor to the monopolists of money at such prices as will enable them (the monopolists) to manufacture goods in competition with the so-called pauper laborers of all other countries.

Let it be repeated—as a vital proposition—that the whole industrial programme of these monopolists rests upon, and implies, such a degree of poverty, on the part of the laboring classes, as will put their labor in direct competition with the so-called pauper labor of all other countries. So long as they (the monopolists) can perpetuate this extreme poverty of the laboring classes, in this country, they feel safe against all foreign competition; for, in all other things than “cheap labor,” we have advantages equal to those of any other nation.

Furthermore, this extreme poverty, in which the laborers are to be kept, necessarily implies that they are to receive no larger share of the proceeds of their own labor, than is necessary to keep them in a condition to labor. It implies that their industry—which is really the national industry—is not to be carried on at all for their own benefit, but only for the benefit of their employers, the monopolists of money. It implies that the laborers are to be mere tools and machines in the hands of their employers; that they are to be kept simply in running order, like other machinery; but that, beyond this, they are to have no more rights, and no more interests, in the products of their labor, than have the wheels, spindles, and other machinery, with which the work is done.

In short, this whole programme implies that the laborers—the real producers of wealth—are not to be considered at all as human beings, having rights and interests of their own; but only as tools and machines, to be owned, used, and consumed in producing such wealth as their employers—the monopolists of money—may desire for their own subsistence and pleasure.

What, then, is the remedy? Plainly it is to abolish the monopoly of money. Liberate all this loanable capital—promissory notes—that is now lying idle, and we liberate all labor, and furnish to all laborers all the capital they need for their industries. We shall then have no longer, all over the earth, the competition of pauper labor with pauper labor, but only the competition of free labor with free labor. And from this competition of free labor with free labor, no people on earth have anything to fear, but all peoples have everything to hope.

And why have all peoples everything to hope from the competition of free labor with free labor? Because when every human being, who labors at all, has, as nearly as possible, all the fruits of his labor, and all the capital that is necessary to make his labor most effective, he has all needed inducements to the best use of both his brains and his muscles, his head and his hands. He applies both his head and his hands to his work. He not only acquires, as far as possible, for his own use, all the



scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, that are made by others, but he himself makes scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions. He thus multiplies indefinitely his powers of production. And the more each one produces of his own particular commodity, the more he can buy of every other man's products, and the more he can pay for them.

With freedom in money, the scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, made in each country, will not only be used to the utmost in that country, but will be carried into all other countries. And these discoveries and inventions, given by each country to every other, and received by each country from every other, will be of infinitely more value than all the material commodities that will be exchanged between these countries.

In this way each country contributes to the wealth of every other, and the whole human race are enriched by the increased power and stimulus given to each man's labor of body and mind.

But it is to be kept constantly in mind, that there can be no such thing as free labor, unless there be freedom in money; that is, unless everybody, who can furnish money, shall be at liberty to do so. Plainly labor cannot be free, unless the laborers are free to hire all the money capital that is necessary for their industries. And they cannot be free to hire all this money capital, unless all who can lend it to them, shall be at liberty to do so.

In short, labor cannot be free, unless each laborer is free to hire all the capital—money capital, as well as all other capital—that he honestly can hire; free to buy, wherever he can buy, all the raw material he needs for his labor; and free to sell, wherever he can sell, all the products of his labor. Therefore labor cannot be free, unless we have freedom in money, and free trade with all mankind.

We can now understand the situation. In the most civilized nations—such as Western Europe and the United States—labor is utterly crippled, robbed, and enslaved by the monopoly of money; and also, in some of these countries, by the monopoly of land. In nearly or quite all the other countries of the world, labor is not only robbed and enslaved, but to a great extent paralyzed, by the monopoly of land, and by what may properly be called the utter absence of money. There is, consequently, in these latter countries, almost literally, no diversity of industry, no science, no skill, no invention, no machinery, no manufactures, no production, and no wealth; but everywhere miserable poverty, ignorance, servitude, and wretchedness.

In this country, and in Western Europe, where the uses of money are known, there is no excuse to be offered for the monopoly of money. It is maintained, in each of these countries, by a small knot of tyrants and robbers, who have got control of the governments, and use their power principally to maintain this monopoly; understanding, as they do, that this one monopoly of money gives them a substantially absolute control of all other men's property and labor.

But not satisfied with this substantially absolute control of all other men's pro-

erty and labor, the monopolists of money, *in this country*, — feigning great pity for their laborers, but really seeking only to make their monopoly more profitable to themselves, — cry out for protection against the competition of the pauper labor of all other countries; when they alone, *and such as they*, are the direct cause of all the pauper labor in the world. But for them, and others like them, there would be neither poverty, ignorance, nor servitude on the face of the earth.

But to all that has now been said, the advocates of the monopoly of money will say that, if all the material property of the country were permitted to be represented by promissory notes, and these promissory notes were permitted to be lent, bought, and sold as money, the laborers would not be able to hire them, for the reason that they could not give the necessary security for repayment.

But let those who would say this, tell us why it is that, in order to prevent men from loaning their promissory notes, for circulation as money, it has always been necessary for governments to prohibit it, either by penal enactments, or prohibitory taxation. These penal enactments and prohibitory taxation are acknowledgments that, but for them, the notes would be loaned to any extent that would be profitable to the lenders. What this extent would be, nothing but experience of freedom can determine. But freedom would doubtless give us ten, twenty, most likely fifty, times as much money as we have now, if so much could be kept in circulation. And laborers would at least have ten, twenty, or fifty times better chances for hiring capital, than they have now. And, furthermore, all labor and property would have ten, twenty, or fifty times better chances of bringing their full value in the market, than they have now.

But in the space that is allowable in this letter, it is impossible to say all, or nearly all, of what might be said, to show the justice, the utility, or the necessity, for perfect freedom in the matters of money and international trade. To pursue these topics further would exclude other matters of great importance, as showing how the government acts the part of robber and tyrant in all its legislation on contracts; and that the whole purpose of all its acts is that the earnings of the many may be put into the pockets of the few.

#### SECTION XVII.

Although, as has already been said, the constitution is a paper that nobody ever signed, that few persons have ever read, and that the great body of the people never saw; and that has, consequently, no more claim to be the supreme law of the land, or to have any authority whatever, than has any other paper, that nobody ever signed, that few persons ever read, and that the great body of the people never saw; and although it purports to authorize a government, in which the lawmakers, judges, and executive officers are all to be secured against any responsibility whatever *to the people*, whose liberty and rights are at stake; and although

this government is kept in operation only by votes given in secret (by secret ballot), and in a way to save the voters from all personal responsibility for the acts of their agents,—the lawmakers, judges, etc.; and although the whole affair is so audacious a fraud and usurpation, that no people could be expected to agree to it, or ought to submit to it, for a moment; yet, inasmuch as the constitution declares itself to have been ordained and established by the people of the United States, for the maintenance of liberty and justice for themselves and their posterity; and inasmuch as all its supporters—that is, the voters, lawmakers, judges, etc.—profess to derive all their authority from it; and inasmuch as all lawmakers, and all judicial and executive officers, both national and State, swear to support it; and inasmuch as they claim the right to kill, and are evidently determined to kill, and esteem it the highest glory to kill, all who do not submit to its authority; we might reasonably expect that, from motives of common decency, if from no other, those who profess to administer it, would pay some deference to its commands, *at least in those particular cases where it explicitly forbids any violation of the natural rights of the people.*

Especially might we expect that the judiciary—whose courts claim to be courts of justice—and who profess to be authorized and sworn to expose and condemn all such violations of individual rights as the constitution itself expressly forbids—would, in spite of all their official dependence on, and responsibility to, the lawmakers, have sufficient respect for their personal characters, and the opinions of the world, to induce them to pay some regard to all those parts of the constitution that expressly require any rights of the people to be held inviolable.

If the judicial tribunals cannot be expected to do justice, even in those cases where the constitution expressly commands them to do it, and where they have solemnly sworn to do it, it is plain that they have sunk to the lowest depths of servility and corruption, and can be expected to do nothing but serve the purposes of robbers and tyrants.

But how futile have been all expectations of justice from the judiciary, may be seen in the conduct of the courts—and especially in that of the so-called Supreme Court of the United States—in regard to men's natural right to make their own contracts.

Although the State lawmakers have, more frequently than the national lawmakers, made laws in violation of men's natural right to make their own contracts, yet all laws, State and national, having for their object the destruction of that right, have always, without a single exception, I think, received the sanction of the Supreme Court of the United States. And having been sanctioned by that court, they have been, as a matter of course, sanctioned by all the other courts, State and national. And this work has gone on, until, if these courts are to be believed, nothing at all is left of men's natural right to make their own contracts.

That such is the truth, I now propose to prove.

And, first, as to the State governments.

The constitution of the United States (*Art. 1, Sec. 10*) declares that :

No State shall pass any law impairing the obligation of contracts.

This provision does not designate what contracts have, and what have not, an "obligation." But it clearly presupposes, implies, assumes, and asserts that there *are* contracts that *have* an "obligation." Any State law, therefore, which declares that such contracts shall have *no obligation*, is plainly in conflict with this provision of the constitution of the United States.

This provision, also, by implying that there *are* contracts, that *have* an "obligation," *necessarily implies that men have a right to enter into them*; for if men had no right to enter into the contracts, the contracts themselves could have no "obligation."

This provision, then, of the constitution of the United States, not only implies that there are contracts that *have* an obligation, *but it also implies that the people have the right to enter into all such contracts, and have the benefit of them.* And "any" State "law," conflicting with either of these implications, is necessarily unconstitutional and void.

Furthermore, the language of this provision of the constitution, to wit, "the obligation [singular] of contracts" [plural], implies *that there is one and the same "obligation" to all "contracts" whatsoever, that have any legal obligation at all.* And there obviously must be some one principle, that gives validity to all contracts alike, that have any validity.

The law, then, of this whole country, as established by the constitution of the United States, is, that all contracts whatsoever, in which this one principle of validity, or "obligation," is found, shall be held valid; and that the States shall impose no restraint whatever upon the people's entering into all such contracts.

All, therefore, that courts have to do, in order to determine whether any particular contract, or class of contracts, are valid, *and whether the people have a right to enter into them*, is simply to determine whether the contracts themselves have, or have not, this one principle of validity, or "obligation," which the constitution of the United States declares shall not be impaired.

State legislation can obviously have nothing to do with the solution of this question. It can neither create, nor destroy, that "obligation of contracts," which the constitution forbids it to impair. It can neither give, nor take away, the right to enter into any contract whatever, that has that "obligation."

On the supposition, then, that the constitution of the United States is, what it declares itself to be, *viz.*, "the supreme law of the land, . . . anything in the constitutions or laws of the States to the contrary notwithstanding," this provision against "any" State "law impairing the obligation of contracts," is so explicit, and so authoritative, that the legislatures and courts of the States have no color of au-

thority for violating it. And the Supreme Court of the United States has had no color of authority or justification for suffering it to be violated.

This provision is certainly one of the most important—perhaps *the* most important—of all the provisions of the constitution of the United States, *as protective of the natural rights of the people to make their own contracts, or provide for their own welfare.*

Yet it has been constantly trampled under foot, by the State legislatures, by all manner of laws, declaring who may, and who may not, make certain contracts; and what shall, and what shall not, be “the obligation” of particular contracts; thus setting at defiance all ideas of justice, of natural rights, and equal rights; conferring monopolies and privileges upon particular individuals, and imposing the most arbitrary and destructive restraints and penalties upon others; all with a view of putting, as far as possible, all wealth into the hands of the few, and imposing poverty and servitude upon the great body of the people.

And yet all these enormities have gone on for nearly a hundred years, and have been sanctioned, not only by all the State courts, but also by the Supreme Court of the United States.

And what color of excuse have any of these courts offered for thus upholding all these violations of justice, of men’s natural rights, and even of that constitution which they had all sworn to support?

They have offered only this: *They have all said they did not know what “the obligation of contracts” was!*

Well, suppose, for the sake of the argument, that they have not known what “the obligation of contracts” was, what, then, was their duty? Plainly this, to neither enforce, nor annul, any contract whatever, until they should have discovered what “the obligation of contracts” was.

Clearly they could have no right to either enforce, or annul, any contract whatever, until they should have ascertained whether it had any “obligation,” and, if any, what that “obligation” was.

If these courts really do not know—as perhaps they do not—what “the obligation of contracts” is, they deserve nothing but contempt for their ignorance. If they *do* know what “the obligation of contracts” is, and yet sanction the almost literally innumerable laws that violate it, they deserve nothing but detestation for their villainy.

And until they shall suspend all their judgments for either enforcing, or annulling, contracts, or, on the other hand, shall ascertain what “the obligation of contracts” is, and sweep away all State laws that impair it, they will deserve both contempt for their ignorance, and detestation for their crimes.

Individual Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States have, at least in one instance, in 1827 (*Ogden vs. Saunders*, 12 Wheaton 213), attempted to give a definition of “the obligation of contracts.” But there was great disagreement

among them; and no one definition secured the assent of the whole court, or even of a majority. Since then, so far as I know, that court has never attempted to give a definition. And, so far as the opinion of that court is concerned, the question is as unsettled now, as it was sixty years ago. And the opinions of the Supreme Courts of the States are equally unsettled with those of the Supreme Court of the United States. The consequence is, that "the obligation of contracts"—the principle on which the real validity, or invalidity, of all contracts whatsoever depends—is practically unknown, or at least unrecognized, by a single court, either of the States, or of the United States. And, as a result, every species of absurd, corrupt, and robber legislation goes on unrestrained, as it always has done.

What, now, is the reason why not one of these courts has ever so far given its attention to the subject as to have discovered what "the obligation of contracts" is? What that principle is, I repeat, which they have all sworn to sustain, and on which the real validity, or invalidity, of every contract on which they ever adjudicate, depends? Why is it that they have all gone on sanctioning and enforcing all the nakedly iniquitous laws, by which men's natural right to make their own contracts has been trampled under foot?

Surely it is not because they do not know that all men have a natural right to make their own contracts; for they know *that*, as well as they know that all men have a natural right to live, to breathe, to move, to speak, to hear, to see, or to do anything whatever for the support of their lives, or the promotion of their happiness.

Why, then, is it, that they strike down this right, without ceremony, and without compunction, whenever they are commanded to do so by the lawmakers? It is because, and solely because, they are so servile, slavish, degraded, and corrupt, as to act habitually on the principle, that justice and men's natural rights are matters of no importance, in comparison with the commands of the impudent and tyrannical lawmakers, on whom they are dependent for their offices and their salaries. It is because, and solely because, they, like the judges under all other irresponsible and tyrannical governments, are part and parcel of a conspiracy for robbing and enslaving the great body of the people, to gratify the luxury and pride of a few. It is because, and solely because, they do not recognize our governments, State or national, as institutions designed simply to maintain justice, or to protect all men in the enjoyment of all their natural rights; but only as institutions designed to accomplish such objects as irresponsible cabals of lawmakers may agree upon.

In proof of all this, I give the following.

Previous to 1824, two cases had come up from the State courts, to the Supreme Court of the United States, involving the question whether a State law, *invalidating some particular contract*, came within the constitutional prohibition of "any law impairing the obligation of contracts."

One of these cases was that of *Fletcher vs. Peck*, (6 *Cranch* 87), in the year 1810. In this case the court held simply that a grant of land, once made by the legislature of Georgia, could not be rescinded by a subsequent legislature.

But no general definition of "the obligation of contracts" was given.

Again, in the year 1819, in the case of *Dartmouth College vs. Woodward* (4 *Wheaton* 518), the court held that a charter, granted to Dartmouth College, by the king of England, before the Revolution, was a contract; and that a law of New Hampshire, annulling, or materially altering, the charter, without the consent of the trustees, was a "law impairing the obligation" of that contract.

But, in this case, as in that of *Fletcher vs. Peck*, the court gave no general definition of "the obligation of contracts."

But in the year 1824, and again in 1827, in the case of *Ogden vs. Saunders* (12 *Wheaton* 213) the question was, whether an insolvent law of the State of New York, which discharged a debtor from a debt, *contracted after the passage of the law*, or, as the courts would say, "*contracted under the law*"—on his giving up his property to be distributed among his creditors—was a "law impairing the obligation of contracts?"

To the correct decision of this case, it seemed indispensable that the court should give a comprehensive, precise, and *universal* definition of "the obligation of contracts"; one by which it might forever after be known what was, and what was not, that "obligation of contracts," which the State governments were forbidden to "impair" by "*any law*" whatever.

The cause was heard at two terms, that of 1824, and that of 1827.

It was argued by Webster, Wheaton, Wirt, Clay, Livingston, Ogden, Jones, Sampson, and Haines; nine in all. Their arguments were so voluminous that they could not be reported at length. Only summaries of them are given. But these summaries occupy thirty-eight pages in the reports.

The judges, at that time, were seven, *viz.*, Marshall, Washington, Johnson, Duval, Story, Thompson, and Trimble.

The judges gave five different opinions; occupying one hundred pages of the reports.

But no one definition of "the obligation of contracts" could be agreed on; *not even by a majority*.

Here, then, sixteen lawyers and judges—many of them among the most eminent the country has ever had—were called upon to give their opinions upon a question of the highest importance to all men's natural rights, to all the interests of civilized society, and to the very existence of civilization itself; a question, upon the answer to which depended the real validity, or invalidity, of every contract that ever was made, or ever will be made, between man and man. And yet, by their disagreements, they all virtually acknowledged that they did not know what "the obligation of contracts" was!

But this was not all. Although they could not agree as to what "the obligation of contracts" was, they did all agree that it could be nothing which the State lawmakers could not prohibit and abolish, *by laws passed before the contracts were made*. That is to say, they all agreed that the State lawmakers had absolute power to prohibit all contracts whatsoever, for buying and selling, borrowing and lending, giving and receiving, property; and that, whenever they did prohibit any particular contract, or class of contracts, *all such contracts, thereafter made, could have no "obligation"!*

They said this, be it noted, not of contracts that were naturally and intrinsically criminal and void, but of contracts that were naturally and intrinsically as just, and lawful, and useful, and necessary, as any that men ever enter into; and that had as perfect a natural, intrinsic, inherent "obligation," as any of those contracts, by which the traffic of society is carried on, or by which men ever buy and sell, borrow and lend, give and receive, property, of and to each other.

Not one of these sixteen lawyers and judges took the ground that the constitution, in forbidding any State to "pass any law impairing the obligation of contracts," intended to protect, against the arbitrary legislation of the States, the only true, real, and natural "obligation of contracts," or the right of the people to enter into all really just, and naturally obligatory contracts.

Is it possible to conceive of a more shameful exhibition, or confession, of the servility, the baseness, or the utter degradation, of both bar and bench, than their refusal to say one word in favor of justice, liberty, men's natural rights, or the natural, and only real, "obligation" of their contracts?

And yet, from that day to this—a period of sixty years, save one—neither bar nor bench, so far as I know, have ever uttered one syllable in vindication of men's natural right to make their own contracts, or to have the only true, real, natural, inherent, intrinsic "obligation" of their contracts respected by lawmakers or courts.

Can any further proof be needed that all ideas of justice and men's natural rights are absolutely banished from the minds of lawmakers, and from so-called courts of justice? or that absolute and irresponsible lawmaking has usurped their place?

Or can any further proof be needed, of the utter worthlessness of all the constitutions, which these lawmakers and judges swear to support, and profess to be governed by?

#### SECTION XVIII.

If, now, it be asked, what is this constitutional "obligation of contracts," which the States are forbidden to impair, the answer is, that it is, and necessarily must be, the *natural* obligation; or that obligation, which contracts have, on principles



of natural law, and natural justice, as distinguished from any arbitrary or unjust obligation, which lawmakers may assume to create, and attach to contracts.

This natural obligation is the only *one* "obligation," which *all* obligatory contracts can be said to have. It is the only *inherent* "obligation," that any contract can be said to have. It is recognized all over the world—at least as far as it is known—as the one only *true* obligation, that any, or all, contracts can have. And, so far as it is known—it is held valid all over the world, except in those exceptional cases, where arbitrary and tyrannical governments have assumed to annul it, or substitute some other in its stead.

The constitution assumes that this *one* "obligation of contracts," which it designs to protect, is the natural one, because it assumes that it existed, *and was known*, at the time the constitution itself was established; and certainly no *one* "obligation," *other than the natural one*, can be said to have been known, as applicable to *all* obligatory contracts, at the time the constitution was established. Unless, therefore, the constitution be presumed to have intended the natural "obligation," it cannot be said to have intended any *one* "obligation" whatever; or, consequently, to have forbidden the violation of any *one* "obligation" whatever.

It cannot be said that "the obligation," which the constitution designed to protect, was any arbitrary "obligation," that was unknown at the time the constitution was established, but that was to be created, and made known afterward; for then this provision of the constitution could have had no effect, until such arbitrary "obligation" should have been created, and made known. And as it gives us no information as to how, or by whom, this arbitrary "obligation" was to be created, or what the obligation itself was to be, or how it could ever be known to be the one that was intended to be protected, the provision itself becomes a mere nullity, having no effect to protect any "obligation" at all.

It would be a manifest and utter absurdity to say that the constitution intended to protect any "obligation" whatever, unless it be presumed to have intended some particular "obligation," *that was known at the time*; for that would be equivalent to saying that the constitution intended to establish a law, of which no man could know the meaning.

But this is not all.

The right of property is a natural right. The only real right of property, that is known to mankind, is the natural right. Men have also a natural right to convey their natural rights of property from one person to another. And there is no means known to mankind, by which this *natural* right of property can be transferred, or conveyed, by one man to another, except by such contracts as are *naturally* obligatory; that is, naturally capable of conveying and binding the right of property.

All contracts whatsoever, that are naturally capable, competent, and sufficient to convey, transfer, and bind the natural right of property, are naturally obligatory;

and really and truly do convey, transfer, and bind such rights of property as they purport to convey, transfer, and bind.

All the other modes, by which one man has ever attempted to acquire the property of another, have been thefts, robberies, and frauds. But these, of course, have never conveyed any real rights of property.

To make any contract binding, obligatory, and effectual for conveying and transferring rights of property, these three conditions only are essential, *viz.*, 1. That it be entered into by parties, who are mentally competent to make reasonable contracts. 2. That the contract be a purely voluntary one: that is, that it be entered into without either force or fraud on either side. 3. That the right of property, which the contract purports to convey, be such an one as is naturally capable of being conveyed, or transferred, by one man to another.

Subject to these conditions, all contracts whatsoever, for conveying rights of property—that is, for buying and selling, borrowing and lending, giving and receiving property—are naturally obligatory, and bind such rights of property as they purport to convey.

Subject to these conditions, all contracts, for the conveyance of rights of property, are recognized as valid, all over the world, by both civilized and savage man, except in those particular cases where governments arbitrarily and tyrannically prohibit, alter, or invalidate them.

This *natural* “obligation of contracts” must necessarily be presumed to be the one, and the only one, which the constitution forbids to be impaired, by any State law whatever, if we are to presume that the constitution was intended for the maintenance of justice, or men’s natural rights.

On the other hand, if the constitution be presumed not to protect this *natural* “obligation of contracts,” we know not *what* other “obligation” it did intend to protect. It mentions no other, describes no other, gives us no hint of any other; and nobody can give us the least information as to what other “obligation of contracts” was intended.

It could not have been any “obligation” which the *State* lawmakers might arbitrarily create, and annex to *all* contracts; for this is what no lawmakers have ever attempted to do. And it would be the height of absurdity to suppose they ever will invent any *one* “obligation,” and attach it to *all* contracts. They have only attempted either to annul, or impair, the natural “obligation” of *particular* contracts; or, *in particular cases*, to substitute other “obligations” of their own invention. And this is the most they will ever attempt to do.

#### SECTION XIX.

Assuming it now to be proved that the “obligation of contracts,” which the States are forbidden to “impair,” is the *natural* “obligation”; and that, *constitutionally*

*speaking*, this provision secures, to all the people of the United States, the right to enter into, and have the benefit of, all contracts whatsoever, that have that *one natural* "obligation," let us look at some of the more important of those State laws that have either impaired that obligation, or prohibited the exercise of that right.

1. That law, in all the States, by which any, or all, the contracts of persons, under twenty-one years of age, are either invalidated, or forbidden to be entered into.

The mental capacity of a person to make reasonable contracts, is the only criterion, by which to determine his legal capacity to make obligatory contracts. And his mental capacity to make reasonable contracts is certainly not to be determined by the fact that he is, or is not, twenty-one years of age. There would be just as much sense in saying that it was to be determined by his height, or his weight, as there is in saying that it should be determined by his age.

Nearly all persons, male and female, are mentally competent to make reasonable contracts, long before they are twenty-one years of age. And as soon as they are mentally competent to make reasonable contracts, they have the same natural right to make them, that they ever can have. And their contracts have the same natural "obligation" that they ever can have.

If a person's mental capacity to make reasonable contracts be drawn in question, that is a question of fact, to be ascertained by the same tribunal that is to ascertain all the other facts involved in the case. It certainly is not to be determined by any arbitrary legislation, that shall deprive any one of his natural right to make contracts.

2. All the State laws, that do now forbid, or that have heretofore forbidden, married women to make any or all contracts, that they are, or were, mentally competent to make reasonably, are violations of their natural right to make their own contracts.

A married woman has the same natural right to acquire and hold property, and to make all contracts that she is mentally competent to make reasonably, as has a married man, or any other man. And any law invalidating her contracts, or forbidding her to enter into contracts, on the ground of her being married, are not only absurd and outrageous in themselves, but are also as plainly violations of that provision of the constitution, which forbids any State to pass any law impairing the natural obligation of contracts, as would be laws invalidating or prohibiting similar contracts by married men.

3. All those State laws, commonly called acts of incorporation, by which a certain number of persons are licensed to contract debts, without having their individual properties held liable to pay them, are laws impairing the natural obligation of their contracts.

On natural principles of law and reason, these persons are simply partners; and their private properties, like those of any other partners, should be held liable for

their partnership debts. Like any other partners, they take the profits of their business, if there be any profits. And they are naturally bound to take all the risks of their business, as in the case of any other business. For a law to say that, if they make any profits, they may put them all into their own pockets, but that, if they make a loss, they may throw it upon their creditors, is an absurdity and an outrage. Such a law is plainly a law impairing the natural obligation of their contracts.

4. All State insolvent laws, so-called, that distribute a debtor's property equally among his creditors, are laws impairing the natural obligation of his contracts.

If the natural obligation of contracts were known, and recognized as law, we should have no need of insolvent or bankrupt laws.

The only force, function, or effect of a *legal* contract is to convey and bind rights of property. A contract that conveys and binds no right of property, has no *legal* force, effect, or obligation whatever.\*

Consequently, the natural obligation of a contract of debt binds the debtor's property, and nothing more. That is, it gives the creditor a mortgage upon the debtor's property, and nothing more.

A first debt is a first mortgage; a second debt is a second mortgage; a third debt is a third mortgage; and so on indefinitely.

The first mortgage must be paid in full, before anything is paid on the second. The second must be paid in full, before anything is paid on the third; and so on indefinitely.

When the mortgaged property is exhausted, the debt is cancelled; there is no other property that the contract binds.

If, therefore, a debtor, at the time his debt becomes due, pays to the extent of his ability, and has been guilty of no fraud, fault, or neglect, during the time his debt had to run, he is thenceforth discharged from all legal obligation.

If this principle were acknowledged, we should have no occasion, and no use, for insolvent or bankrupt laws.

Of course, persons who have never asked themselves what the *natural* "obligation of contracts" is, will raise numerous objections to the principle, that a legal contract binds nothing else than rights of property. But their objections are all shallow and fallacious.

I have not space here to go into all the arguments that may be necessary to prove that contracts can have no *legal* effect, except to bind rights of property; or to show the truth of that principle in its application to all contracts whatsoever. To do this would require a somewhat elaborate treatise. Such a treatise I hope sometime to publish. For the present, I only assert the principle; and assert that the ignorance of this truth is at least one of the reasons why courts and lawyers have never been able to agree as to what "the obligation of contracts" was.

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\*It may have very weighty moral obligation; but it can have no legal obligation.

In all the cases that have now been mentioned, — that is, of minors (so-called), married women, corporations, insolvents, and in all other like cases — the tricks, or pretences, by which the courts attempt to uphold the validity of all laws that forbid persons to exercise their natural right to make their own contracts, or that annul, or impair, the *natural* “obligation” of their contracts, are these:

1. They say that, if a law forbids any particular contract to be made, such contract, being then an illegal one, can have no “obligation.” Consequently, say they, the law cannot be said to impair it; because the law cannot impair an “obligation,” that has never had an existence.

They say this of all contracts, that are arbitrarily forbidden; although, naturally and intrinsically, they have as valid an obligation as any others that men ever enter into, or as any that courts enforce.

By such a naked trick as this, these courts not only strike down men’s natural right to make their own contracts, but even seek to evade that provision of the constitution, which they are all sworn to support, and which commands them to hold valid the *natural* “obligation” of all men’s contracts; “anything in the constitutions or laws of the States to the contrary notwithstanding.”

They might as well have said that, if the constitution had declared that “no State shall pass any law impairing any man’s natural right to life, liberty, or property” — (that is, his *natural* right to live, and do what he will with himself and his property, so long as he infringes the right of no other person) — this prohibition could be evaded by a State law declaring that, from and after such a date, no person should have any natural right to life, liberty, or property; and that, therefore, a law arbitrarily taking from a man his life, liberty, and property, could not be said to impair his right to them, because no law could impair a right that did not exist.

The answer to such an argument as this, would be, that it is a natural truth that every man, who ever has been, or ever will be, born into the world, *necessarily has been, and necessarily will be, born with an inherent right to life, liberty, and property*; and that, in forbidding this right to be impaired, *the constitution presupposes, implies, assumes, and asserts that every man has, and will have, such a right*; and that this *natural* right is the very right, which the constitution forbids any State law to impair.

Or the courts might as well have said that, if the constitution had declared that “no State shall pass any law impairing the obligation of contracts made for the purchase of food,” that provision could have been evaded by a State law forbidding any contract to be made for the purchase of food; and then saying that such contract, being illegal, could have no “obligation,” that could be impaired.

The answer to this argument would be that, by forbidding any State law impairing the obligation of contracts made for the purchase of food, the constitution presupposes, implies, assumes, and asserts that such contracts have, and always

will have, a *natural* "obligation"; and that this *natural* "obligation" is the very "obligation," which the constitution forbids any State law to impair.

So in regard to all other contracts. The constitution presupposes, implies, assumes, and asserts the natural truth, that certain contracts have, *and always necessarily will have, a natural* "obligation." And this *natural* "obligation"—which is the only real obligation that any contract can have—is the very one that the constitution forbids any State law to impair, in the case of any contract whatever that has such obligation.

And yet all the courts hold the direct opposite of this. They hold that, if a State law forbids any contract to be made, such a contract can then have no obligation; and that, consequently, no State law can impair an obligation that never existed.

But if, by forbidding a contract to be made, a State law can prevent the contract's having any obligation, State laws, by forbidding any contracts at all to be made, can prevent all contracts, thereafter made, from having any obligation; and thus utterly destroy all men's natural rights to make any obligatory contracts at all.

2. A second pretence, by which the courts attempt to evade that provision of the constitution, which forbids any State to "pass any law impairing the obligation of contracts," is this: They say that the State law, that requires, or obliges, a man to fulfil his contracts, is *itself* "the obligation," which the constitution forbids to be impaired; and that therefore the constitution only prohibits the impairing of any law for enforcing such contracts as shall be made under it.

But this pretence, it will be seen, utterly discards the idea that contracts have any *natural* obligation. It implies that contracts have no obligation, except the laws that are made for enforcing them. But if contracts have no *natural* obligation, they have no obligation at all, *that ought to be enforced*; and the State is a mere usurper, tyrant, and robber, in passing any law to enforce them.

Plainly a State cannot rightfully enforce any contracts at all, unless they have a *natural* obligation.

3. A third pretence, by which the courts attempt to evade this provision of the constitution, is this: They say that "the law is a part of the contract" itself; and therefore cannot impair its obligation.

By this they mean that, if a law is standing upon the statute book, prescribing what obligation certain contracts shall, or shall not, have, it must then be presumed that, whenever such a contract is made, the parties intended to make it according to that law; and really to make the law a part of their contract; *although they themselves say nothing of the kind.*

This pretence, that the law is a part of the contract, is a mere trick to cheat people out of their natural right to make their own contracts; and to compel them to make only such contracts as the lawmakers choose to permit them to make.

To say that it must be presumed that the parties intended to make their contracts according to such laws as may be prescribed to them—or, what is the same thing, to make the laws a part of their contracts—is equivalent to saying that the parties must be presumed to have given up all their natural right to make their own contracts; to have acknowledged themselves imbeciles, incompetent to make reasonable contracts, and to have authorized the lawmakers to make their contracts for them; for if the lawmakers can make any part of a man's contract, and presume his consent to it, they can make a whole one, and presume his consent to it.

If the lawmakers can make any part of men's contracts, they can make the whole of them; and can, therefore, buy and sell, borrow and lend, give and receive men's property of all kinds, according to their (the lawmakers') own will, pleasure, or discretion; without the consent of the real owners of the property, and even without their knowledge, until it is too late. In short, they may take any man's property, and give it, or sell it, to whom they please, and on such conditions, and at such prices, as they please; without any regard to the rights of the owner. They may, in fact, at their pleasure, strip any, or every, man of his property, and bestow it upon whom they will; and then justify the act upon the presumption that the owner consented to have his property thus taken from him and given to others.

This absurd, contemptible, and detestable trick has had a long lease of life, and has been used as a cover for some of the greatest of crimes. By means of it, the marriage contract has been perverted into a contract, on the part of the woman, to make herself a legal non-entity, or *non compos mentis*; to give up, to her husband, all her personal property, and the control of all her real estate; and to part with her natural, inherent, inalienable right, as a human being, to direct her own labor, control her own earnings, make her own contracts, and provide for the subsistence of herself and her children.

There would be just as much reason in saying that the lawmakers have a right to make the entire marriage contract; to marry any man and woman against their will; dispose of all their personal and property rights; declare them imbeciles, incapable of making a reasonable marriage contract; then presume the consent of both the parties; and finally treat them as criminals, and their children as outcasts, if they presume to make any contract of their own.

This same trick, of holding that the law is a part of the contract, has been made to protect the private property of stockholders from liability for the debts of the corporations, of which they were members; and to protect the private property of special partners, so-called, or limited partners, from liability for partnership debts.

This same trick has been employed to justify insolvent and bankrupt laws, so-called, whereby a first creditor's right to a first mortgage on the property of his debtor, has been taken from him, and he has been compelled to take his chances with as many subsequent creditors as the debtor may succeed in becoming indebted to

All these absurdities and atrocities have been practiced by the lawmakers of the States, and sustained by the courts, under the pretence that they (the courts) did not know what the natural "obligation of contracts" was; or that, if they did know what it was, the constitution of the United States imposed no restraint upon its unlimited violation by the State lawmakers.

## SECTION XX.

But, not content with having always sanctioned the unlimited power of the *State* lawmakers to abolish all men's natural right to make their own contracts, the Supreme Court of the United States has, within the last twenty years, taken pains to assert that congress also has the arbitrary power to abolish the same right.

1. It has asserted the arbitrary power of congress to abolish all men's right to make their own contracts, by asserting its power *to alter the meaning of all contracts, after they are made*, so as to make them widely, or wholly, different from what the parties had made them.

Thus the court has said that, after a man has made a contract to pay a certain number of dollars, at a future time,—*meaning such dollars as were current at the time the contract was made*,—congress has power to coin a dollar of less value than the one agreed on, and authorize the debtor to pay his debt with a dollar of less value than the one he had promised.

To cover up this infamous crime, the court asserts, over and over again,—what no one denies,—that congress has power (constitutionally speaking) to alter, at pleasure, the value of its coins. But it then asserts that congress has this additional, and wholly different, power, to wit, the power to declare that this alteration in the value of the coins *shall work a corresponding change in all existing contracts for the payment of money*.

In reality they say that a contract to pay money is not a contract to pay any particular amount, or value, of such money as was known and understood by the parties at the time the contract was made, *but only such, and so much, as congress shall afterwards choose to call by that name, when the debt shall become due*.

They assert that, by simply retaining the name, while altering the thing,—*or by simply giving an old name to a new thing*,—congress has power to utterly abolish the contract which the parties themselves entered into, and substitute for it any such new and different one, as they (congress) may choose to substitute.

Here are their own words:

*The contract obligation . . . was not a duty to pay gold or silver, or the kind of money recognized by law at the time when the contract was made, nor was it a duty to pay money of equal intrinsic value in the market. . . . But the obligation of a contract to pay money is to pay that which the law shall recognize as money when the payment is to be made.—Legal Tender Cases, 12 Wallace 548.*



This is saying that the obligation of a contract to pay money is not an obligation to pay what both the law and the parties recognize as money, *at the time when the contract is made*, but only such substitute as congress shall afterwards prescribe, "*when the payment is to be made.*"

This opinion was given by a majority of the court in the year 1870.

In another opinion the court says:

Under the power to coin money, and to regulate its value, congress may issue coins of the same denomination [that is, bearing the same name] as those already current by law, but of less intrinsic value than those, by reason of containing a less weight of the precious metals, *and thereby enable debtors to discharge their debts by the payment of coins of the less real value.* A contract to pay a certain sum of money, without any stipulation as to the kind of money in which it shall be made, may always be satisfied by payment of that sum [that is, that *nominal* amount] *in any currency which is lawful money at the place and time at which payment is to be made.* — *Juilliard vs. Greenman*, 110 *U. S. Reports*, 449.

This opinion was given by the entire court—save one, Field—at the October term of 1883.

Both these opinions are distinct declarations of the power of congress to alter men's contracts, *after they are made*, by simply retaining the name, while altering the thing, that is agreed to be paid.

In both these cases, the court means distinctly to say that, *after the parties to a contract have agreed upon the number of dollars to be paid*, congress has power to reduce the value of the dollar, and authorize all debtors to pay the less valuable dollar, instead of the one agreed on.

In other words, the court means to say that, after a contract has been made for the payment of a certain number of dollars, *congress has power to alter the meaning of the word dollar*, and thus authorize the debtor to pay in something different from, and less valuable than, the thing he agreed to pay.

Well, if congress has power to alter men's contracts, *after they are made*, by altering the meaning of the word dollar, and thus reducing the value of the debt, it has a precisely equal power to *increase* the value of the dollar, and thus compel the debtor to pay *more* than he agreed to pay.

Congress has evidently just as much right to *increase* the value of the dollar, after a contract has been made, as it has to *reduce* its value. It has, therefore, just as much right to cheat debtors, by compelling them to pay *more* than they agreed to pay, as it has to cheat creditors, by compelling them to accept *less* than they agreed to accept.

All this talk of the court is equivalent to asserting that congress has the right to alter men's contracts at pleasure, *after they are made*, and make them over into something, or anything, wholly different from what the parties themselves had made them.

And this is equivalent to denying all men's right to make their own contracts,

or to acquire any contract rights, which congress may not *afterward*, at pleasure, alter, or abolish.

It is equivalent to saying that the words of contracts are not to be taken in the sense in which they are used, by the parties themselves, at the time when the contracts are entered into, but only in such different senses as congress may choose to put upon them at any future time.

If this is not asserting the right of congress to abolish altogether men's natural right to make their own contracts, what is it?

Incredible as such audacious villainy may seem to those unsophisticated persons, who imagine that a court of law should be a court of justice, it is nevertheless true, that this court intended to declare the unlimited power of congress to alter, at pleasure, the contracts of parties, *after they have been made*, by altering the kind and amount of money by which the contracts may be fulfilled. That they intended all this, is proved, not only by the extracts already given from their opinions, but also by the whole tenor of their arguments—too long to be repeated here—and more explicitly by these quotations, *viz.*:

There is no well-founded distinction to be made between the constitutional validity of an act of congress declaring treasury notes a legal tender for the payment of debts contracted after its passage, and that of an act making them a legal tender for the discharge of all debts, *as well those incurred before, as those made after, its enactment.*—*Legal Tender Cases*, 12 Wallace 530 (1870).

Every contract for the payment of money, simply, is necessarily subject to the constitutional power of the government over the currency, whatever that power may be, *and the obligation of the parties is, therefore, assumed with reference to that power.*—12 Wallace 549.

Contracts for the payment of money are subject to the authority of congress, *at least so far as relates to the means of payment.*—12 Wallace 549.

The court means here to say that “every contract for the payment of money, simply,” is necessarily made, by the parties, *subject to the power of congress to alter it afterward*—by altering the kind and value of the money with which it may be paid—*into anything, into which they (congress) may choose to alter it.*

And this is equivalent to saying that all such contracts are made, by the parties, *with the implied understanding that the contracts, as written and signed by themselves, do not bind either of the parties to anything*; but that they simply suggest, or initiate, some non-descript or other, which congress may afterward convert into a binding contract, *of such a sort, and only such a sort, as they (congress) may see fit to convert it into.*

Every one of these judges knew that no two men, having common honesty and common sense,—unless first deprived of all power to make their own contracts,—would ever enter into a contract to pay money, with any understanding that the government had any such arbitrary power as the court here ascribes to it, to alter

their contract after it should be made. Such an absurd contract would, in reality, be no *legal* contract at all. It would be a mere gambling agreement, having, naturally and really, no *legal* "obligation" at all.

But further. A *solvent* contract to pay money is in reality—in law, and in equity—a *bona fide mortgage upon the debtor's property*. And this mortgage right is as veritable a right of property, as is any right of property, that is conveyed by a warranty deed. And congress has no more right to invalidate this mortgage, by a single iota, than it has to invalidate a warranty deed of land. And these judges will sometime find out that such is "the obligation of contracts," if they ever find out what "the obligation of contracts" is.

The justices of that court have had this question—what is "the obligation of contracts"?—before them for seventy years, and more. But they have never agreed among themselves—even by so many as a majority—as to what it is. And this disagreement is very good evidence that *none* of them have known what it is; for if any one of them had known what it is, he would doubtless have been able, long ago, to enlighten the rest.

Considering the vital importance of men's contracts, it would evidently be more to the credit of these judges, if they would give their attention to this question of "the obligation of contracts," until they shall have solved it, than it is to be telling fifty millions of people that they have no right to make any contracts at all, except such as congress has power to invalidate after they shall have been made. Such assertions as this, coming from a court that cannot even tell us what "the obligation of contracts" is, are not entitled to any serious consideration. On the contrary, they show us what farces and impostures these judicial opinions—or decisions, as they call them—are. They show that these judicial oracles, as men call them, are no better than some of the other so-called oracles, by whom mankind have been duped.

But these judges certainly never will find out what "the obligation of contracts" is, until they find out that men have the natural right to make their own contracts, and unalterably fix their "obligation"; and that governments can have no power whatever to make, unmake, alter, or invalidate that "obligation."

Still further. Congress has the same power over weights and measures that it has over coins. And the court has no more right or reason to say that congress has power to alter existing contracts, by altering the value of the coins, than it has to say that, after any or all men have, for value received, entered into contracts to deliver so many bushels of wheat or other grain, so many pounds of beef, pork, butter, cheese, cotton, wool, or iron, so many yards of cloth, or so many feet of lumber, congress has power, by altering these weights and measures, to alter all these existing contracts, so as to convert them into contracts to deliver only half as many, or to deliver twice as many, bushels, pounds, yards, or feet, as the parties agreed upon.

To add to the farce, as well as to the iniquity, of these judicial opinions, it must be kept in mind, that the court says that, after A has sold valuable property to B, and has taken in payment an honest and sufficient mortgage on B's property, congress has the power to compel him (A) to give up this mortgage, and to accept, in place of it, not anything of any real value whatever, but only the promissory note of a so-called government; and that government one which—if taxation without consent is robbery—never had an honest dollar in its treasury, with which to pay any of its debts, and is never likely to have one; but relies wholly on its future robberies for its means to pay them; and can give no guaranty, but its own interest at the time, that it will even make the payment out of its future robberies.

If a company of bandits were to seize a man's property for their own uses, and give him their note, promising to pay him out of their future robberies, the transaction would not be considered a very legitimate one. But it would be intrinsically just as legitimate as is the one which the Supreme Court sanctions on the part of congress.

Banditti have not usually kept supreme courts of their own, to legalize either their robberies, or their promises to pay for past robberies, out of the proceeds of their future ones. Perhaps they may now take a lesson from our Supreme Court, and establish courts of their own, that will hereafter legalize all their contracts of this kind.

#### SECTION XXI.

To justify its declaration, that congress has power to alter men's contracts after they are made, the court dwells upon the fact that, at the times when the legal-tender acts were passed, the government was in peril of its life; and asserts that it had therefore a right to do almost anything for its self-preservation, without much regard to its honesty, or dishonesty, towards private persons. Thus it says:

A civil war was then raging, which seriously threatened the overthrow of the government, and the destruction of the constitution itself. It demanded the equipment and support of large armies and navies, and the employment of money to an extent beyond the capacity of all ordinary sources of supply. Meanwhile the public treasury was nearly empty, and the credit of the government, if not stretched to its utmost tension, had become nearly exhausted. Moneyed institutions had advanced largely of their means, and more could not be expected of them. They had been compelled to suspend specie payments. Taxation was inadequate to pay even the interest on the debt already incurred, and it was impossible to await the income of additional taxes. The necessity was immediate and pressing. The army was unpaid. There was then due to the soldiers in the field nearly a score of millions of dollars. The requisitions from the War and Navy departments for supplies, exceeded fifty millions, and the current expenditure was over one million per day. . . . Foreign credit we had none. We say nothing of the overhanging paralysis of trade, and business generally, which threatened loss of confidence in the ability of the government to maintain its continued existence, and therewith the complete destruction of all remaining national credit.

It was at such a time, and in such circumstances, that congress was called upon to devise means for maintaining the army and navy, for securing the large supplies of money needed, and indeed for the preservation of the government created by the constitution. It was at such a time, and in such an emergency, that the legal-tender acts were passed.—12 *Wallace* 540-1.

In the same case Bradley said:

Can the poor man's cattle, and horses, and corn be thus taken by the government, when the public exigency requires it, and cannot the rich man's bonds and notes be in like manner taken to reach the same end?—p. 561.

He also said:

It is absolutely essential to independent national existence that government should have a firm hold on the two great instrumentalities of the *sword* and the *purse*, and *the right to wield them without restriction, on occasions of national peril*. In certain emergencies government must have at its command, *not only the personal services—the bodies and lives—of its citizens*, but the lesser, though not less essential, power of absolute control over the resources of the country. Its armies must be filled, and its navies manned, by the citizens in person.—p. 563.

Also he said:

*The conscription may deprive me of liberty, and destroy my life. . . . All these are fundamental political conditions on which life, property, and money are respectively held and enjoyed under our system of government, nay, under any system of government*. There are times when the exigencies of the State rightly absorb all subordinate considerations of private interest, convenience, and feeling.—p. 563.

Such an attempt as this, to justify one crime, by taking for granted the justice of other and greater crimes, is a rather desperate mode of reasoning, for a court of law; to say nothing of a court of justice. The answer to it is, that no government, however good in other respects—any more than any other good institution—has any right to live otherwise than on purely voluntary support. It can have no right to take either "the poor man's cattle, and horses, and corn," or "the rich man's bonds and notes," or poor men's "bodies and lives," without their consent. And when a government resorts to such measures to save its life, we need no further proof that its time to die has come: A good government, no more than a bad one, has any right to live by robbery, murder, or any other crime.

But so think not the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. On the contrary, they hold that, in comparison with the preservation of the government, all the rights of the people to property, liberty, and life are worthless things, not to be regarded. So they hold that in such an exigency as they describe, congress had the right to commit any crime against private persons, by which the government could be saved. And among these lawful crimes, the court holds that

congress had the right to issue money that should serve as a license to all holders of it, to cheat—or rather openly rob—their creditors.

The court might, with just as much reason, have said that, to preserve the life of the government, congress had the right to issue such money as would authorize all creditors to demand twice the amount of their honest dues from all debtors.

The court might, with just as much reason, have said that, to preserve the life of the government, congress had the right to sell indulgences for all manner of crimes; for theft, robbery, rape, murder, and all other crimes, for which indulgences would bring a price in the market.

Can any one imagine it possible that, if the government had always done nothing but that “equal and exact justice to all men”—which you say it is pledged to do,—but which you must know it has never done,—it could ever have been brought into any such peril of its life, as these judges describe? Could it ever have been necessitated to take either “the poor man’s cattle, and horses, and corn,” or “the rich man’s bonds and notes,” or poor men’s “bodies and lives,” without their consent? Could it ever have been necessitated to “conscript” the poor man—too poor to pay a ransom of three hundred dollars—made thus poor by the tyranny of the government itself—“deprive him of his liberty, and destroy his life”? Could it ever have been necessitated to sell indulgences for crime to either debtors, or creditors, or anybody else? To preserve “the constitution”—a constitution, I repeat, that authorized nothing but “equal and exact justice to all men”—could it ever have been necessitated to send into the field millions of ignorant young men, to cut the throats of other young men as ignorant as themselves—few of whom, on either side, had ever read the constitution, or had any real knowledge of its legal meaning; and not one of whom had ever signed it, or promised to support it, or was under the least obligation to support it?

\* It is, I think, perfectly safe to say, that not one in a thousand, probably not one in ten thousand, of these young men, who were sent out to butcher others, and be butchered themselves, had any real knowledge of the constitution they were professedly sent out to support; or any reasonable knowledge of the real character and motives of the congresses and courts that profess to administer the constitution. If they had possessed this knowledge, how many of them would have ever gone to the field?

But further. Is it really true that the right of the government to commit all these atrocities:

*Are the fundamental political conditions on which life, property, and money are respectively held and enjoyed under our system of government?*

If such is the real character of the constitution, can any further proof be required of the necessity that it be buried out of sight at once and forever?

The truth was that the government was in peril, *solely because it was not fit to ex-*

ist. It, and the State governments—all but parts of one and the same system—were rotten with tyranny and crime. And being bound together by no honest tie, and existing for no honest purpose, destruction was the only honest doom to which any of them were entitled. And if we had spent the same money and blood to destroy them, that we did to preserve them, it would have been ten thousand times more creditable to our intelligence and character as a people.

Clearly the court has not strengthened its case at all by this picture of the peril in which the government was placed. It has only shown to what desperate straits a government, founded on usurpation and fraud, and devoted to robbery and oppression, may be brought, by the quarrels that are liable to arise between the different factions—that is, the different bands of robbers—of which it is composed. When such quarrels arise, it is not to be expected that either faction—having never had any regard to human rights, when acting in concert with the other—will hesitate at any new crimes that may be necessary to prolong its existence.

Here was a government that had never had any legitimate existence. It professedly rested all its authority on a certain paper called a constitution; a paper, I repeat, that nobody had ever signed, that few persons had ever read, that the great body of the people had never seen. This government had been imposed, by a few property holders, upon a people too poor, too scattered, and many of them too ignorant, to resist. It had been carried on, for some seventy years, by a mere cabal of irresponsible men, called lawmakers. In this cabal, the several local bands of robbers—the slaveholders of the South, the iron monopolists, the woollen monopolists, and the money monopolists, of the North—were represented. The whole purpose of its laws was to rob and enslave the many—both North and South—for the benefit of a few. But these robbers and tyrants quarreled—as lesser bands of robbers have done—over the division of their spoils. And hence the war. No such principle as justice to anybody—black or white—was the ruling motive on either side.

In this war, each faction—already steeped in crime—plunged into new, if not greater, crimes. In its desperation, it resolved to destroy men and money, without limit, and without mercy, for the preservation of its existence. The northern faction, having more men, money, and credit than the southern, survived the Kilkenny fight. Neither faction cared anything for human rights then, and neither of them has shown any regard for human rights since. “As a war measure,” the northern faction found it necessary to put an end to the one great crime, from which the southern faction had drawn its wealth. But all other government crimes have been more rampant since the war, than they were before. Neither the conquerors, nor the conquered, have yet learned that no government can have any right to exist for any other purpose than the simple maintenance of justice between man and man.

And now, years after the fiendish butchery is over, and after men would seem

to have had time to come to their senses, the Supreme Court of the United States, representing the victorious faction, comes forward with the declaration that one of the crimes—the violation of men's private contracts—resorted to by its faction, in the heat of conflict, as a means of preserving its power over the other, was not only justifiable and proper at the time, *but that it is also a legitimate and constitutional power, to be exercised forever hereafter in time of peace!*

Mark the knavery of these men. They first say that, because the government was in peril of its life, it had a right to license great crimes against private persons, if by so doing it could raise money for its own preservation. Next they say that, *although the government is no longer in peril of its life*, it may still go on forever licensing the same crimes as it was before necessitated to license!

They thus virtually say that the government may commit the same crimes in time of peace, that it is necessitated to do in time of war; and, that, consequently, it has the same right to "take the poor man's cattle, and horses, and corn," and "the rich man's bonds and notes," and poor men's "bodies and lives," in time of peace, *when no necessity whatever can be alleged*, as in time of war, when the government is in peril of its life.

In short, they virtually say, that this government exists for itself alone; and that all the natural rights of the people, to property, liberty, and life, are mere baubles, to be disposed of, at its pleasure, whether in time of peace, or in war.

#### SECTION XXII.

As if to place beyond controversy the fact, that the court may iorever hereafter be relied on to sanction every usurpation and crime that congress will ever dare to put into the form of a statute, without the slightest color of authority from the constitution, necessity, utility, justice, or reason, it has, on three separate occasions, announced its sanction of the monopoly of money, as finally established by congress in 1866, and continued in force ever since.

This monopoly is established by a prohibitory tax—a tax of ten per cent.—on all notes issued for circulation as money, other than the notes of the United States and the national banks.

This ten per cent. is called a "tax," but is really a penalty, and is intended as such, and as nothing else. Its whole purpose is—*not to raise revenue*—but solely to establish a monopoly of money, by prohibiting the issue of all notes intended for circulation as money, except those issued, or specially licensed, by the government itself.

This prohibition upon the issue of all notes, except those issued, or specially licensed, by the government, is a prohibition upon all freedom of industry and traffic. It is a prohibition upon the exercise of men's natural right to lend and hire such money capital as all men need to enable them to create and distribute



wealth, and supply their own wants, and provide for their own happiness. Its whole purpose is to reduce, as far as possible, the great body of the people to the condition of servants to a few—a condition but a single grade above that of chattel slavery—in which their labor, and the products of their labor, may be extorted from them at such prices only as the holders of the monopoly may choose to give.

This prohibitory tax—so-called—is therefore really a penalty imposed upon the exercise of men's natural right to create and distribute wealth, and provide for their own and each other's wants. And it is imposed solely for the purpose of establishing a practically omnipotent monopoly in the hands of a few.

Calling this penalty a "tax" is one of the dirty tricks, or rather downright lies—that of calling things by false names—to which congress and the courts resort, to hide their usurpations and crimes from the common eye.

Everybody—who believes in the government—says, of course, that congress has power to levy taxes; that it must do so to raise revenue for the support of the government. Therefore this lying congress call this penalty a "tax," instead of calling it by its true name, a penalty.

It certainly is no tax, because no revenue is raised, or intended to be raised, by it. It is not levied upon property, or persons, as such, but only upon a certain act, or upon persons for doing a certain act; an act that is not only perfectly innocent and lawful in itself, but that is naturally and intrinsically useful, and even indispensable for the prosperity and welfare of the whole people. Its whole object is simply to deter everybody—except those specially licensed—from performing this innocent, useful, and necessary act. And this it has succeeded in doing for the last twenty years; to the destruction of the rights, and the impoverishment and immeasurable injury of all the people, except the few holders of the monopoly.

If congress had passed an act, in this form, to wit:

No person, nor any association of persons, incorporated or unincorporated—*unless specially licensed by congress*—shall issue their promissory notes for circulation as money; and a *penalty* of ten per cent. upon the amount of all such notes shall be imposed upon the persons issuing them,

the act would have been the same, in effect and intention, as is this act, that imposes what it calls a "tax." The penalty would have been understood by everybody as a punishment for issuing the notes; and would have been applied to, and enforced against, those only who should have issued them. And it is the same with this so-called tax. It will never be collected, except for the same cause, and under the same circumstances, as the penalty would have been. It has no more to do with raising a revenue, than the penalty would have had. And all these lying lawmakers and courts know it.

But if congress had put this prohibition distinctly in the form of a *penalty*, the usurpation would have been so barefaced—so destitute of all color of constitu-

tional authority—that congress dared not risk the consequences. And possibly the court might not have dared to sanction it; if, indeed, there be any crime or usurpation which the court dare not sanction. So these knavish lawmakers called this penalty a “tax”; and the court says that such a “tax” is clearly constitutional. And the monopoly has now been established for twenty years. And substantially all the industrial and financial troubles of that period have been the natural consequences of the monopoly.

If congress had laid a prohibitory tax upon all food—that is, had imposed a penalty upon the production and sale of all food—except such as it should have itself produced, or specially licensed; and should have reduced the amount of food, thus produced or licensed, to one tenth, twentieth, or fiftieth of what was really needed; the motive and the crime would have been the same, in character, if not in degree, as they are in this case, *viz.*, to enable the few holders of the licensed food to extort, from everybody else, by the fear of starvation, all their (the latter's) earnings and property, in exchange for this small quantity of privileged food.

Such a monopoly of food would have been no clearer violation of men's natural rights, than is the present monopoly of money. And yet this colossal crime—like every other crime that congress chooses to commit—is sanctioned by its servile, rotten, and stinking court.

On what *constitutional* grounds—that is, on what provisions found in the constitution itself—does the court profess to give its sanction to such a crime?

On these three only:

1. On the power of congress to lay and collect taxes, etc.
2. On the power of congress to coin money.
3. On the power of congress to borrow money.

Out of these simple, and apparently harmless provisions, the court manufactures an authority to grant, to a few persons, a monopoly that is practically omnipotent over all the industry and traffic of the country; that is fatal to all other men's natural right to lend and hire capital for any or all their legitimate industries; and fatal absolutely to all their natural right to buy, sell, and exchange any, or all, the products of their labor at their true, just, and natural prices.

Let us look at these constitutional provisions, and see how much authority congress can really draw from them.

1. The constitution says:

*The congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts, and provide for the common defence and general welfare of the United States.*

This provision plainly authorizes no taxation whatever, except for the raising of revenue to pay the debts and legitimate expenses of the government. It no more authorizes taxation for the purpose of establishing monopolies of any kind whatever, than it does for taking openly and boldly all the property of the many,

and giving it outright to a few. And none but a congress of usurpers, robbers, and swindlers would ever think of using it for that purpose.

The court says, *in effect*, that this provision gives congress power to establish the present monopoly of money; that the power to tax all other money, is a power to prohibit all other money; and a power to prohibit all other money is a power to give the present money a monopoly.

How much is such an argument worth? Let us show by a parallel case, as follows.

Congress has the same power to tax all other property, that it has to tax money. And if the power to tax money is a power to prohibit money, then it follows that the power of congress to tax all other property than money, is a power to prohibit all other property than money; and a power to prohibit all other property than money, is a power to give monopolies to all such other property as congress may not choose to prohibit; or may choose to specially license.

On such reasoning as this, it would follow that the power of congress to tax money, and all other property, is a power to prohibit all money, and all other property; and thus to establish monopolies in favor of all such money, and all such other property, as it chooses not to prohibit; or chooses to specially license.

Thus, this reasoning would give congress power to establish all the monopolies, it may choose to establish, not only in money, but in agriculture, manufactures, and commerce; and protect these monopolies against infringement, by imposing prohibitory taxes upon all money and other property, except such as it should choose not to prohibit; or should choose to specially license.

Because the constitution says that "congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes," etc., to raise the revenue necessary for paying the current expenses of the government, the court say that congress have power to levy prohibitory taxes—taxes that shall yield no revenue at all—but shall operate only as a penalty upon all industries and traffic, and upon the use of all the means of industry and traffic, that shall compete with such monopolies as congress shall choose to grant.

This is no more than an unvarnished statement of the argument, by which the court attempts to justify a prohibitory "tax" upon money; for the same reasoning would justify the levying of a prohibitory tax—that is, penalty—upon the use of any and all other means of industry and traffic, by which any other monopolies, granted by congress, might be infringed.

There is plainly no more connection between the "power to lay and collect taxes," etc., for the necessary expenses of the government, and the power to establish this monopoly of money, than there is between such a power of taxation, and a power to punish, as a crime, any or all industry and traffic whatsoever, except such as the government may specially license.

This whole cheat lies in the use of the word "tax," to describe what is really a penalty, upon the exercise of any or all men's natural rights of providing for their subsistence and well-being. And none but corrupt and rotten congresses and courts would ever think of practising such a cheat.

2. The second provision of the constitution, relied on by the court to justify the monopoly of money, is this:

The congress shall have power to coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coins.

The only important part of this provision is that which says that "the congress shall have power to coin money, [and] regulate the value thereof."

That part about regulating the value of foreign coins—if any one can tell how congress can regulate it—is of no appreciable importance to anybody; for the coins will circulate, or not, as men may, or may not, choose to buy and sell them as money, and at such value as they will bear in free and open market,—that is, in competition with all other coins, and all other money. This is their only true and natural market value; and there is no occasion for congress to do anything in regard to them.

The only thing, therefore, that we need to look at, is simply the power of congress "to coin money."

So far as congress itself is authorized to coin money, this is simply a power to weigh and assay metals,—gold, silver, or any other,—stamp upon them marks indicating their weight and fineness, and then sell them to whomsoever may choose to buy them; and let them go in the market for whatever they may chance to bring, in competition with all other money that may chance to be offered there.

It is no power to impose any restrictions whatever upon any or all other honest money, that may be offered in the market, and bought and sold in competition with the coins weighed and assayed by the government.

The power itself is a frivolous one, of little or no utility; for the weighing and assaying of metals is a thing so easily done, and can be done by so many different persons, that there is certainly no *necessity* for its being done at all by a government. And it would undoubtedly have been far better if all coins—whether coined by governments or individuals—had all been made into pieces bearing simply the names of pounds, ounces, pennyweights, etc., and containing just the amounts of pure metal described by those weights. The coins would then have been regarded as only so much metal; and as having only the same value as the same amount of metal in any other form. Men would then have known exactly how much of certain metals they were buying, selling, and promising to pay. And all the jugglery, cheating, and robbery that governments have practised, and licensed individuals to practise—by coining pieces bearing the same names, but having different amounts of metal—would have been avoided.

And all excuses for establishing monopolies of money, by prohibiting all other money than the coins, would also have been avoided.

As it is, the constitution imposes no prohibition upon the coining of money by individuals, but only by State governments. Individuals are left perfectly free to

coin it, except that they must not “counterfeit the securities and current coin of the United States.”

For quite a number of years after the discovery of gold in California—that is, until the establishment of a government mint there—a large part of the gold that was taken out of the earth, was coined by private persons and companies; and this coinage was perfectly legal. And I do not remember to have ever heard any complaint, or accusation, that it was not honest and reliable.

The true and only value, which the coins have as money, is that value which they have as metals, for uses in the arts,—that is, for plate, watches, jewelry, and the like. This value they will retain, whether they circulate as money, or not. At this value, they are so utterly inadequate to serve as *bona fide* equivalents for such other property as is to be bought and sold for money; and, after being minted, are so quickly taken out of circulation, and worked up into articles of use—plate, watches, jewelry, etc.—that they are practically of almost no importance at all as money.

But they can be so easily and cheaply carried from one part of the world to another, that they have substantially the same market value all over the world. They are also, in but a small degree, liable to great or sudden changes in value. For these reasons, they serve well as standards—are perhaps the best standards we can have—by which to measure the value of all other money, as well as other property. But to give them any monopoly as money, is to deny the natural right of all men to make their own contracts, and buy and sell, borrow and lend, give and receive, all such money as the parties to bargains may mutually agree upon; and also to license the few holders of the coins to rob all other men in the prices of the latter’s labor and property.

3. The third provision of the constitution, on which the court relies to justify the monopoly of money, is this:

The congress shall have power to borrow money.

Can any one see any connection between the power of congress “to borrow money,” and its power to establish a monopoly of money?

Certainly no such connection is visible to the legal eye. But it is distinctly visible to the political and financial eye; that is, to that class of men, for whom governments exist, and who own congresses and courts, and set in motion armies and navies, whenever they can promote their own interests by doing so.

To a government, whose usurpations and crimes have brought it to the verge of destruction, these men say:

Make bonds bearing six per cent. interest; sell them to us at half their face value; then give us a monopoly of money based upon these bonds—such a monopoly as will subject the great body of the people to a dependence upon us for the necessaries of life, and compel them to sell their labor and property to us at our own prices; then, under pretence of rais-

ing revenue to pay the interest and principal of the bonds, impose such a tariff upon imported commodities as will enable us to get fifty per cent. more for our own goods than they are worth; in short, pledge to us all the power of the government to extort for us, in the future, everything that can be extorted from the producers of wealth, and we will lend you all the money you need to maintain your power.

And the government has no alternative but to comply with this infamous proposal, or give up its infamous life.

This is the only real connection there is between the power of congress "to borrow money," and its power to establish a monopoly of money. It was only by an outright sale of the rights of the whole people, for a long series of years, that the government could raise the money necessary to continue its villainous existence.

Congress had just as much constitutional power "to borrow money," by the sale of any and all the other natural rights of the people at large, as it had "to borrow money" by the sale of the people's natural rights to lend and hire money.

When the Supreme Court of the United States—assuming to be an oracle, empowered to define authoritatively the legal rights of every human being in the country—declares that congress has a constitutional power to prohibit the use of all that immense mass of money capital, in the shape of promissory notes, which the real property of the country is capable of supplying and sustaining, and which is sufficient to give to every laboring person, man or woman, the means of independence and wealth—when that court says that congress has power to prohibit the use of all this money capital, and grant to a few men a monopoly of money that shall condemn the great body of wealth-producers to hopeless poverty, dependence, and servitude—and when the court has the audacity to make these declarations on such nakedly false and senseless grounds as those that have now been stated, it is clearly time for the people of this country to inquire what constitutions and governments are good for, and whether they (the people) have any natural right, as human beings, to live for themselves, or only for a few conspirators, swindlers, usurpers, robbers, and tyrants, who employ lawmakers, judges, etc., to do their villainous work upon their fellow-men.

The court gave their sanction to the monopoly of money in these three separate cases, viz.: *Veazie Bank vs. Fenno*, 8 *Wallace*, 549 (1869). *National Bank vs. United States*, 101 *U. S. Reports*, 5 and 6 (1879). *Juilliard vs. Greenman*, 110 *U. S. Reports* 445-6 (1884).

### SECTION XXIII.

If anything could add to the disgust and detestation which the monstrous falsifications of the constitution, already described, should excite towards the court that resorts to them, it would be the fact that the court, not content with falsifying to the utmost the constitution itself, *goes outside of the constitution, to the tyrann-*

*nical practices of what it calls the "sovereign" governments of "other civilized nations," to justify the same practices by our own.*

It asserts, over and over again, the idea that our government is a "sovereign" government; that it has the same rights of "sovereignty," as the governments of "other civilized nations"; especially those in Europe.

What, then, is a "sovereign" government? It is a government that is "sovereign" over all the natural rights of the people. This is the only "sovereignty" that any government can be said to have. Under it, the people have no *rights*. They are simply "subjects,"—that is, slaves. They have but one law, and one duty, *viz.*, obedience, submission. They are not recognized as having any *rights*. They can claim nothing as their own. They can only accept what the government chooses to give them. The government owns them and their property; and disposes of them and their property, at its pleasure, or discretion; without regard to any consent, or dissent, on their part.

Such was the "sovereignty" claimed and exercised by the governments of those, so-called, "civilized nations of Europe," that were in power in 1787, 1788, and 1789, when our constitution was framed and adopted, and the government put in operation under it. And the court now says, virtually, that the constitution intended to give to our government the same "sovereignty" over the natural rights of the people, that those governments had then.

But how did the "civilized governments of Europe" become possessed of such "sovereignty"? Had the people ever granted it to them? Not at all. The governments spurned the idea that they were dependent on the will or consent of their people for their political power. On the contrary, they claimed to have derived it from the only source, from which such "sovereignty" could have been derived; that is, from God Himself.

In 1787, 1788, and 1789, all the great governments of Europe, except England, claimed to exist by what was called "Divine Right." That is, they claimed to have received authority from God Himself, to rule over their people. And they taught, and a servile and corrupt priesthood taught, that it was a religious duty of the people to obey them. And they kept great standing armies, and hordes of pimps, spies, and ruffians, to keep the people in subjection.

And when, soon afterwards, the revolutionists of France dethroned the king then existing—the Legitimist king, so-called—and asserted the right of the people to choose their own government, these other governments carried on a twenty years' war against her, to reëstablish the principle of "sovereignty" by "Divine Right." And in this war, the government of England, although not itself claiming to exist by Divine Right,—but really existing by brute force,—furnished men and money without limit, to reëstablish that principle in France, and to maintain it wherever else, in Europe, it was endangered by the idea of popular rights.

The principle, then, of "Sovereignty by Divine Right"—sustained by brute force—was the principle on which the governments of Europe then rested; and most of them rest on that principle today. And now the Supreme Court of the United States virtually says that our constitution intended to give to our government the same "sovereignty"—the same absolutism—the same supremacy over all the natural rights of the people—as was claimed and exercised by those "Divine Right" governments of Europe, a hundred years ago!

That I may not be suspected of misrepresenting these men, I give some of their own words as follows:

It is not doubted that the power to establish a standard of value, by which all other values may be measured, or, in other words, to determine what shall be lawful money and a legal tender, is in its nature, and of necessity, a governmental power. *It is in all countries exercised by the government.*—*Hepburn vs. Griswold*, 8 *Wallace* 615.

The court call a power,

To make treasury notes a legal tender for the payment of *all* debts [private as well as public] *a power confessedly possessed by every independent sovereignty other than the United States.*—*Legal Tender Cases*, 12 *Wallace*, p. 529.

Also, in the same case, it speaks of:

That general power over the currency, *which has always been an acknowledged attribute of sovereignty in every other civilized nation than our own.*—p. 545.

In this same case, by way of asserting the power of congress to do any dishonest thing that any so-called "sovereign government" ever did, the court say:

Has any one, in good faith, avowed his belief that even a law debasing the current coin, by increasing the alloy [and then making these debased coins a legal tender in payment of debts previously contracted], would be taking private property? It might be impolitic, and unjust, but could its constitutionality be doubted?—p. 552.

In the same case, Bradley said:

As a government, it [the government of the United States] was invested with *all the attributes of sovereignty.*—p. 555.

Also he said:

Such being the character of the General Government, it seems to be a self-evident proposition that it is invested with all those inherent and implied powers, which, at the time of adopting the constitution, were generally considered to belong to every government, as such, and as being essential to the exercise of its functions.—p. 556.

Also he said:

Another proposition equally clear is, *that at the time the constitution was adopted, it was,*



*and for a long time had been, the practice of most, if not all, civilized governments, to employ the public credit as a means of anticipating the national revenues for the purpose of enabling them to exercise their governmental functions.—p. 556.*

Also he said:

*It is our duty to construe the instrument [the constitution] by its words, in the light of history, of the general nature of government, and the incidents of sovereignty.—p. 55.*

Also he said:

*The government simply demands that its credit shall be accepted and received by public and private creditors during the pending exigency. Every government has a right to demand this, when its existence is at stake.—p. 560.*

Also he said:

*These views are exhibited . . . for the purpose of showing that it [the power to make its notes a legal tender in payment of private debts] is one of those vital and essential powers inhering in every national sovereignty, and necessary to its self-preservation.—p. 564.*

In still another legal tender case, the court said:

*The people of the United States, by the constitution, established a national government, with sovereign powers, legislative, executive, and judicial.—Juilliard vs. Greenman, 110 U. S. Reports, p. 438.*

Also it calls the constitution:

*A constitution, establishing a form of government, declaring fundamental principles, and creating a national sovereignty, intended to endure for ages.—p. 439.*

Also the court speaks of the government of the United States:

*As a sovereign government.—p. 446.*

Also it said:

*It appears to us to follow, as a logical and necessary consequence, that congress has the power to issue the obligations of the United States in such form, and to impress upon them such qualities as currency, for the purchase of merchandise and the payment of debts, as accord with the usage of other sovereign governments. The power, as incident to the power of borrowing money, and issuing bills or notes of the government for money borrowed, of impressing upon those bills or notes the quality of being a legal tender for the payment of private debts, was a power universally understood to belong to sovereignty, in Europe and America, at the time of the framing and adoption of the constitution of the United States. The governments of Europe, acting through the monarch, or the legislature, according to the distribution of powers under their respective constitutions, had, and have, as sovereign a power of issuing paper money as of stamping coin. This power has been distinctly recognized in an important modern case, ably argued and fully considered, in which the Emperor of Austria, as King of Hungary, obtained from the English Court of Chancery an injunction*

against the issue, in England, without his license, of notes purporting to be public paper money of Hungary.—p. 447.

Also it speaks of :

Congress, as the legislature of a *sovereign* nation.—p. 449.

Also it said :

The power to make the notes of the government a legal tender in payment of private debts, *being one of the powers belonging to sovereignty in other civilized nations*, . . . we are irresistibly impelled to the conclusion that the impressing upon the treasury notes of the United States the quality of being a legal tender in payment of private debts, is an appropriate means, conducive and plainly adapted to the execution of the undoubted powers of congress, consistent with the letter and spirit of the constitution, etc.—p. 450.

On reading these astonishing ideas about “sovereignty”—“sovereignty” over all the natural rights of mankind—“sovereignty,” as it prevailed in Europe “at the time of the framing and adoption of the constitution of the United States”—we are compelled to see that these judges obtained their constitutional law, not from the constitution itself, but from the example of the “Divine Right” governments existing in Europe a hundred years ago. These judges seem never to have heard of the American Revolution, or the French Revolution, or even of the English Revolutions of the seventeenth century—revolutions fought and accomplished to overthrow these very ideas of “sovereignty,” which these judges now proclaim, as the supreme law of this country. They seem never to have heard of the Declaration of Independence, nor of any other declaration of the natural rights of human beings. To their minds, “the sovereignty of governments” is everything; human rights nothing. They apparently cannot conceive of such a thing as a people’s establishing a government as a means of preserving their personal liberty and rights. They can only see what fearful calamities “sovereign governments” would be liable to, if they could not compel their “subjects”—the people—to support them against their will, and at every cost of their property, liberty, and lives. They are utterly blind to the fact, that it is this very assumption of “sovereignty” over all the natural rights of men, that brings governments into all their difficulties, and all their perils. They do not see that it is this very assumption of “sovereignty” over all men’s natural rights, that makes it necessary for the “Divine Right” governments of Europe to maintain not only great standing armies, but also a vile purchased priesthood, that shall impose upon, and help to crush, the ignorant and superstitious people.

These judges talk of “the *constitutions*” of these “sovereign governments” of Europe, as they existed “at the time of the framing and adoption of the constitution of the United States.” They apparently do not know that those governments had no constitutions at all, except the Will of God, their standing armies, and the judges, lawyers, priests, pimps, spies, and ruffians they kept in their service.

If these judges had lived in Russia, a hundred years ago, and had chanced to be visited with a momentary spasm of manhood—a fact hardly to be supposed of such creatures—and had been sentenced therefor to the knout, a dungeon, or Siberia, would we ever afterward have seen them, as judges of our Supreme Court, declaring that government to be the model after which ours was formed?

These judges will probably be surprised when I tell them that the constitution of the United States contains no such word as “sovereign,” or “sovereignty”; that it contains no such word as “subjects”; nor any word that implies that the government is “sovereign,” or that the people are “subjects.” At most, it contains only the mistaken idea that a power of making laws—by lawmakers chosen by the people—was consistent with, and necessary to, the maintenance of liberty and justice for the people themselves. This mistaken idea was, in some measure, excusable in that day, when reason and experience had not demonstrated, to their minds, the utter incompatibility of all lawmaking whatsoever with men’s natural rights.

The only other provision of the constitution, that can be interpreted as a declaration of “sovereignty” in the government, is this:

*This constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land, and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.*—Art. VI.

This provision I interpret to mean simply that the constitution, laws, and treaties of the United States, shall be “the supreme law of the land”—*not anything in the natural rights of the people to liberty and justice, to the contrary notwithstanding*—but only that they shall be “the supreme law of the land,” “*anything in the constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding,*”—that is, whenever the two may chance to conflict with each other.

If this is its true interpretation, the provision contains no declaration of “sovereignty” over the natural rights of the people.

Justice is “the supreme law” of this, and all other lands; anything in the constitutions or laws of any nation to the contrary notwithstanding. And if the constitution of the United States intended to assert the contrary, it was simply an audacious lie—a lie as foolish as it was audacious—that should have covered with infamy every man who helped to frame the constitution, or afterward sanctioned it, or that should ever attempt to administer it.

Inasmuch as the constitution declares itself to have been “ordained and established” by

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity,

everybody who attempts to administer it, is bound to give it such an interpretation, and only such an interpretation, as is consistent with, and promotive of, those objects, if its language will admit of such an interpretation.

To suppose that "the people of the United States" intended to declare that the constitution and laws of the United States should be "the supreme law of the land," *anything in their own natural rights, or in the natural rights of the rest of mankind, to the contrary notwithstanding*, would be to suppose that they intended, not only to authorize every injustice, and arouse universal violence, among themselves, but that they intended also to avow themselves the open enemies of the rights of all the rest of mankind. Certainly no such folly, madness, or criminality as this can be attributed to them by any rational man—always excepting the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, the lawmakers, and the believers in the "Divine Right" of the cunning and the strong, to establish governments that shall deceive, plunder, enslave, and murder the ignorant and the weak.

Many men, still living, can well remember how, some fifty years ago, those famous champions of "sovereignty," of arbitrary power, Webster and Calhoun, debated the question, whether, in this country, "sovereignty" resided in the general or State governments. But they never settled the question, for the very good reason that no such thing as "sovereignty" resided in either.

And the question was never settled, until it was settled at the cost of a million of lives, and some ten thousand millions of money. And then it was settled only as the same question had so often been settled before, to wit, that "the heaviest battalions" are "sovereign" over the lighter.

The only real "sovereignty," or right of "sovereignty," in this or any other country, is that right of sovereignty which each and every human being has over his or her own person and property, so long as he or she obeys the one law of justice towards the person and property of every other human being. This is the only *natural* right of sovereignty, that was ever known among men. All other so-called rights of sovereignty are simply the usurpations of impostors, conspirators, robbers, tyrants, and murderers.

It is not strange that we are in such high favor with the tyrants of Europe, when our Supreme Court tells them that our government, although a little different in form, stands on the same essential basis as theirs of a hundred years ago; that it is as absolute and irresponsible as theirs were then; that it will spend more money, and shed more blood, to maintain its power, than they have ever been able to do; that the people have no more rights here than there; and that the government is doing all it can to keep the producing classes as poor here as they are there.

SECTION XXIV.

John Marshall has the reputation of having been the greatest jurist the country has ever had. And he unquestionably would have been a great jurist, if the two fundamental propositions, on which all his legal, political, and constitutional ideas were based, had been true.

These propositions were, first, that government has all power; and, secondly, that the people have no rights.

These two propositions were, with him, cardinal principles, from which, I think, he never departed.

For these reasons he was the oracle of all the rapacious classes, in whose interest the government was administered. And from them he got all his fame.

I think his record does not furnish a single instance, in which he ever vindicated men's natural rights, in opposition to the arbitrary legislation of congress.

He was chief justice thirty-four years: from 1801 to 1835. In all that time, so far as I have known, he never declared a single act of congress unconstitutional; and probably never would have done so, if he had lived to this time.

And, so far as I know, he never declared a single State law unconstitutional, on account of its injustice, or its violation of men's natural rights; but only on account of its conflict with the constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States.

He was considered very profound on questions of "sovereignty." In fact, he never said much in regard to anything else. He held that, in this country, "sovereignty" was divided: that the national government was "sovereign" over certain things; and that the State governments were "sovereign" over all other things. He had apparently never heard of any natural, individual, human rights, that had never been delegated to either the general or State governments.

As a practical matter, he seemed to hold that the general government had "sovereignty" enough to destroy as many of the natural rights of the people as it should please to destroy; and that the State governments had "sovereignty" enough to destroy what should be left, if there should be any such. He evidently considered that, to the national government, had been delegated the part of the lion, with the right to devour as much of his prey as his appetite should crave; and that the State governments were jackals, with power to devour what the lion should leave.

In his efforts to establish the absolutism of our governments, he made himself an adept in the use of all those false definitions, and false assumptions, to which courts are driven, who hold that constitutions and statute books are supreme over all natural principles of justice, and over all the natural rights of mankind.

Here is his definition of law. He professes to have borrowed it from some one, — he does not say whom, — but he accepts it as his own.

Law has been defined by a writer, whose definitions especially have been the theme of almost universal panegyric, "*To be a rule of civil conduct prescribed by the supreme power*

*in a State.*" In our system, the legislature of a State is the supreme power, in all cases where its action is not restrained by the constitution of the United States.—*Ogden vs. Saunders*, 12 *Wheaton* 347.

This definition is an utterly false one. It denies all the natural rights of the people; and is resorted to only by usurpers and tyrants, to justify their crimes.

The true definition of law is, that it is a fixed, immutable, natural principle; and not anything that man ever made, or can make, unmake, or alter. Thus we speak of the laws of matter, and the laws of mind; of the law of gravitation, the laws of light, heat, and electricity, the laws of chemistry, geology, botany; of physiological laws, of astronomical and atmospherical laws, etc., etc.

All these are natural laws, that man never made, nor can ever unmake, or alter.

The law of justice is just as supreme and universal in the moral world, as these others are in the mental or physical world; and is as unalterable as are these by any human power. And it is just as false and absurd to talk of anybody's having the power to abolish the law of justice, and set up their own will in its stead, as it would be to talk of their having the power to abolish the law of gravitation, or any of the other natural laws of the universe, and set up their own will in the place of them.

Yet Marshall holds that this natural law of justice is no law at all, in comparison with some "rule of civil conduct prescribed by [what he calls] the supreme power in a State."

And he gives this miserable definition, which he picked up somewhere—out of the legal filth in which he wallowed—as his sufficient authority for striking down all the natural obligation of men's contracts, and all men's natural rights to make their own contracts; and for upholding the State governments in prohibiting all such contracts as they, in their avarice and tyranny, may choose to prohibit. He does it too, directly in the face of that very constitution, which he professes to uphold, and which declares that "No State shall pass any law impairing the [natural] obligation of contracts."

By the same rule, or on the same definition of law, he would strike down any and all the other natural rights of mankind.

That such a definition of law should suit the purposes of men like Marshall, who believe that governments should have all power, and men no rights, accounts for the fact that, in this country, men have had no "*rights*"—but only such permits as lawmakers have seen fit to allow them—since the State and United States governments were established,—or at least for the last eighty years.

Marshall also said:

The right [of government] to regulate contracts, to prescribe the rules by which they may be evidenced, to prohibit such as may be deemed mischievous, is unquestionable, and has been universally exercised.—*Ogden vs. Saunders*, 12 *Wheaton* 347.

He here asserts that "the supreme power in a State"—that is, the legislature of a State—has "the right" to "deem it *mischievous*" to allow men to exercise their natural right to make their own contracts! Contracts that have a natural obligation! And that, if a State legislature thinks it "mischievous" to allow men to make contracts that are naturally obligatory, "*its right to prohibit them is unquestionable.*"

Is not this equivalent to saying that governments have all power, and the people no rights?

On the same principle, and under the same definition of law, the lawmakers of a State may, of course, hold it "mischievous" to allow men to exercise any of their other natural rights, as well as their right to make their own contracts; and may therefore prohibit the exercise of any, or all, of them.

And this is equivalent to saying that governments have all power, and the people no rights.

If a government can forbid the free exercise of a single one of man's natural rights, it may, for the same reason, forbid the exercise of any and all of them; and thus establish, practically and absolutely, Marshall's principle, that the government has all power, and the people no rights.

*In the same case, of Ogden vs. Saunders, Marshall's principle was agreed to by all the other justices, and all the lawyers!*

Thus Thompson, one of the justices, said:

Would it not be within the legitimate powers of a State legislature to declare *prospectively* that no one should be made responsible, upon contracts entered into before arriving at the age of *twenty-five* years? This, I presume, cannot be doubted.—p. 300.

On the same principle, he might say that a State legislature may declare that no person, under fifty, or seventy, or a hundred, years of age, shall exercise his natural right of making any contract that is naturally obligatory.

In the same case, Trimble, another of the justices, said:

If the positive law [that is, the statute law] of the State declares the contract shall have no obligation, *it can have no obligation, whatever may be the principles of natural law in regard to such a contract. This doctrine has been held and maintained by all States and nations. The power of controlling, modifying, and even taking away, all obligation from such contracts as, independently of positive enactments to the contrary, would have been obligatory, has been exercised by all independent sovereigns.*—p. 320.

Yes; and why has this power been exercised by "all States and nations," and "all independent sovereigns"? Solely because these governments have all—or at least so many of them as Trimble had in his mind—been despotic and tyrannical; and have claimed for themselves all power, and denied to the people all rights.

Thus it seems that Trimble, like all the rest of them, got his constitutional law, not from any natural principles of justice, not from men's natural rights, not from the constitution of the United States, nor even from any constitution affirming

men's natural rights, but from "the doctrine [that] has been held and maintained by all [those] States and nations," and "all [those] independent sovereigns," who have usurped all power, and denied all the natural rights of mankind.

Marshall gives another of his false definitions, when, speaking for the whole court, in regard to the power of congress "to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States," he asserts the right of congress to an arbitrary, absolute dominion over all men's natural rights to carry on such commerce. Thus he says:

What is this power? It is the power to regulate: *that is, to prescribe the rule by which commerce is to be governed. This power, like all others vested in congress, is complete in itself, may be exercised to its utmost extent, and acknowledges no limitations, other than are prescribed by the constitution.* These are expressed in plain terms, and do not affect the questions which arise in this case, or which have been discussed at the bar. If, as has always been understood, the sovereignty of congress, though limited to specific objects, is plenary as to those objects, the power over commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States, is vested in congress as absolutely as it would be in a single government, having in its constitution the same restrictions on the exercise of the power as are found in the constitution of the United States. *The wisdom and the discretion of congress, their identity with the people, and the influence which their constituents possess at elections, are, in this, as in many other instances, as that, for example, of declaring war, the sole restraints on which they [the people] have relied, to secure them from its abuse. They are the restraints on which the people must often rely SOLELY, in all representative governments.*—Gibbons vs. Ogden, 9 Wheaton 196.

This is a general declaration of absolutism over all "commerce with foreign nations and among the several States," with certain exceptions mentioned in the constitution; such as that "all duties, imposts, and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States," and "no tax or duty shall be laid on articles exported from any State," and "no preference shall be given, by any regulation of commerce or revenue, to the ports of one State over those of another; nor shall vessels bound to, or from, one State, be obliged to enter, clear, or pay duties in another."

According to this opinion of the court, congress has—subject to the exceptions referred to—absolute, irresponsible dominion over "all commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States"; and all men's natural rights to trade with each other, among the several States, and all over the world, are prostrate under the feet of a contemptible, detestable, and irresponsible cabal of lawmakers; and the people have no protection or redress for any tyranny or robbery that may be practised upon them, except "*the wisdom and the discretion of congress, their identity with the people, and the influence which their constituents possess at elections*"!

It will be noticed that the court say that "*all the other powers, vested in congress, are complete in themselves, and may be exercised to their utmost extent, and acknowledge no limitations, other than those prescribed by the constitution.*"

They say that among "all the other [practically unlimited] powers, vested in



congress," is the power "of declaring war"; and, of course, of carrying on war; that congress has power to carry on war, for any reason, to any extent, and against any people, it pleases.

Thus they say, virtually, that *the natural rights of mankind* impose no constitutional restraints whatever upon congress, in the exercise of their lawmaking powers.

Is not this asserting that governments have all power, and the people no rights?

But what is to be particularly noticed, is the fact that Marshall gives to congress all this practically unlimited power over all "commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States," *solely on the strength of a false definition of the verb "to regulate."* He says that "the power to regulate commerce" is the power "*to prescribe the rule by which commerce is to be governed.*"

This definition is an utterly false, absurd, and atrocious one. It would give congress power arbitrarily to control, obstruct, impede, derange, prohibit, and destroy commerce.

The verb "to regulate" does not, as Marshall asserts, imply the exercise of any arbitrary control whatever over the thing regulated; nor any power "to prescribe [arbitrarily] the rule, by which" the thing regulated "is to be governed." On the contrary, it comes from the Latin word, *regula*, a rule; and implies the pre-existence of a rule, to which the thing regulated is made to conform.

To regulate one's diet, for example, is not, on the one hand, to starve one's self to emaciation, nor, on the other, to gorge one's self with all sorts of indigestible and hurtful substances, in disregard of the natural laws of health. But it supposes the pre-existence of the *natural laws of health*, to which the diet is made to conform.

A clock is not "regulated," when it is made to go, to stop, to go forwards, to go backwards, to go fast, to go slow, at the mere will or caprice of the person who may have it in hand. It is "regulated" only when it is made to conform to, to mark truly, the diurnal revolutions of the earth. These revolutions of the earth constitute the pre-existing rule, by which alone a clock can be regulated.

A mariner's compass is not "regulated," when the needle is made to move this way and that, at the will of an operator, without reference to the north pole. But it is regulated when it is freed from all disturbing influences, and suffered to point constantly to the north, as it is its nature to do.

A locomotive is not "regulated," when it is made to go, to stop, to go forwards, to go backwards, to go fast, to go slow, at the mere will and caprice of the engineer, and without regard to economy, utility, or safety. But it is regulated, when its motions are made to conform to a pre-existing rule, that is made up of economy, utility, and safety combined. What this rule is, in the case of a locomotive, may not be known with such scientific precision, as is the rule in the case of a clock, or a mariner's compass; but it may be approximated with sufficient accuracy for practical purposes.

The pre-existing rule, by which alone commerce can be "regulated," is a matter of science; and is already known, so far as the natural principle of justice, in relation to contracts, is known. The natural right of all men to make all contracts whatsoever, that are naturally and intrinsically just and lawful, furnishes the pre-existing rule, by which *alone* commerce can be regulated. And it is the only rule, to which congress have any constitutional power to make commerce conform.

When all commerce, that is intrinsically just and lawful, is secured and protected, and all

commerce that is intrinsically unjust and unlawful, is prohibited, then commerce is regulated, and not before.\*

This false definition of the verb "*to regulate*" has been used, time out of mind, by knavish lawmakers and their courts, to hide their violations of men's natural right to do their own businesses in all such ways—that are naturally and intrinsically just and lawful—as they may choose to do them in. These lawmakers and courts dare not always deny, utterly and plainly, men's right to do their own businesses in their own ways; but they will assume "*to regulate*" them; and in pretending simply "*to regulate*" them, they contrive "*to regulate*" men out of all their natural rights to do their own businesses in their own ways.

How much have we all heard (we who are old enough), within the last fifty years, of the power of congress, or of the States, "*to regulate the currency.*" And "*to regulate the currency*" has always meant to fix the kind, and limit the amount, of currency, that men may be permitted to buy and sell, lend and borrow, give and receive, in their dealings with each other. It has also meant to say *who shall have the control of the licensed money*; instead of making it mean the suppression only of false and dishonest money, and then leaving all men free to exercise their natural right of buying and selling, borrowing and lending, giving and receiving, all such, and so much, honest and true money, or currency, as the parties to any or all contracts may mutually agree upon.

Marshall's false assumptions are numerous and tyrannical. They all have the same end in view as his false definitions; that is, to establish the principle that governments have all power, and the people no rights. They are so numerous that it would be tedious, if not impossible, to describe them all separately. Many, or most, of them are embraced in the following, *viz.*:

1. The assumption that, by a certain paper, called the constitution of the United States—a paper (I repeat and reiterate) which nobody ever signed, which but few persons ever read, and which the great body of the people never saw—and also by some forty subsidiary papers, called State constitutions, which also nobody ever signed, which but few persons ever read, and which the great body of the people never saw—all making a perfect system of the merest nothingness—the assumption, I say, that, by these papers, the people have all consented to the abolition of justice itself, the highest moral law of the Universe; and that all their own natural, inherent, inalienable rights to the benefits of that law, shall be annulled; and that they themselves, and everything that is theirs, shall be given over into the irresponsible custody of some forty little cabals of blockheads and villains called lawmakers—blockheads, who imagine themselves wiser than justice itself, and villains, who care nothing for either wisdom or justice, but only for the

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\*The above extracts are from a pamphlet published by me in 1864, entitled "*Considerations for Bankers,*" etc., pp. 55, 56, 57.

gratification of their own avarice and ambitions; and that these cabals shall be invested with the right to dispose of the property, liberty, and lives of all the rest of the people, at their pleasure or discretion; or, as Marshall says, "their wisdom and discretion!"

If such an assumption as that does not embrace nearly, or quite, all the other false assumptions that usurpers and tyrants can ever need, to justify themselves in robbing, enslaving, and murdering all the rest of mankind, it is less comprehensive than it appears to me to be.

2. In the following paragraph may be found another batch of Marshall's false assumptions.

The right to contract is the attribute of a free agent, and he may rightfully coerce performance from another free agent, who violates his faith. Contracts have consequently an intrinsic obligation. [*But*] *When men come into society, they can no longer exercise this original natural right of coercion. It would be incompatible with general peace, and is therefore surrendered. Society prohibits the use of private individual coercion, and gives in its place a more safe and more certain remedy.* But the right to contract is not surrendered with the right to coerce performance.—*Ogden vs. Saunders*, 12 *Wheaton* 350.

In this extract, taken in connection with the rest of his opinion in the same case, Marshall convicts himself of the grossest falsehood. He acknowledges that men have a natural right to make their own contracts; that their contracts have an "intrinsic obligation"; and that they have an "original and natural right" to coerce performance of them. And yet he assumes, and virtually asserts, that men voluntarily "come into society," and "surrender" to "society" their natural right to coerce the fulfilment of their contracts. He assumes, and virtually asserts, that they do this, *upon the ground, and for the reason, that "society gives in its place a more safe and more certain remedy"*; that is, "a more safe and more certain" enforcement of all men's contracts that have "an intrinsic obligation."

In thus saying that "men come into society," and "surrender" to society, their "original and natural right" of coercing the fulfilment of contracts, and that "*society gives in its place a more safe and certain remedy*," he virtually says, and means to say, that, *in consideration of such "surrender" of their "original and natural right of coercion," "society" pledges itself to them that it will give them this "more safe and more certain remedy"*; that is, that it will more safely and more certainly enforce their contracts than they can do it themselves.

And yet, in the same opinion—only two and three pages preceding this extract—he declares emphatically that "the right" of government—or of what he calls "society"—"*to prohibit such contracts as may be deemed mischievous, is unquestionable.*"—p. 347.

And as an illustration of the exercise of this right of "society" to prohibit such contracts "as may be deemed mischievous," he cites the usury laws, thus:

The acts against usury declare the contract to be void in the beginning. They deny that

the instrument ever became a contract. They deny it all original obligation; and cannot impair that which never came into existence.—p. 348.

All this is as much as to say that, when a man has voluntarily “come into society,” and has “surrendered” to society “his original and natural right of coercing” the fulfilment of his contracts, and when he has done this in the confidence that society will fulfil its pledge to “give him a more safe and more certain coercion” than he was capable of himself, “society” may then turn around to him, and say:

We acknowledge that you have a natural right to make your own contracts. We acknowledge that your contracts have “an intrinsic obligation.” We acknowledge that you had “an original and natural right” to coerce the fulfilment of them. We acknowledge that it was solely in consideration of our pledge to you, that we would give you a more safe and more certain coercion than you were capable of yourself, that you “surrendered” to us your right to coerce a fulfilment of them. And we acknowledge that, *according to our pledge*, you have now a right to require of us that we coerce a fulfilment of them. But after you had “surrendered” to us your own right of coercion, we took a different view of the pledge we had given you; and concluded that it would be “mischievous” to allow you to make such contracts. We therefore “prohibited” your making them. And having prohibited the making of them, we cannot now admit that they have any “obligation.” We must therefore decline to enforce the fulfilment of them. And we warn you that, if you attempt to enforce them, by virtue of your own “original and natural right of coercion,” we shall be obliged to consider your act a breach of “the general peace,” and punish you accordingly. We are sorry that you have lost your property, but “society” must judge as to what contracts are, and what are not, “mischievous.” We can therefore give you no redress. Nor can we suffer you to enforce your own rights, or redress your own wrongs.

Such is Marshall’s theory of the way in which “society” got possession of all men’s “original and natural right” to make their own contracts, and enforce the fulfilment of them; and of the way in which “society” now justifies itself in prohibiting all contracts, though “intrinsically obligatory,” which it may choose to consider “mischievous.” And he asserts that, in this way, “society” has acquired “*an unquestionable right*” to cheat men out of all their “original and natural right” to make their own contracts, and enforce the fulfilment of them.

A man’s “original and natural right” to make all contracts that are “intrinsically obligatory,” and to coerce the fulfilment of them, is one of the most valuable and indispensable of all human possessions. But Marshall assumes that a man may “surrender” this right to “society,” under a pledge from “society,” that it will secure to him “a more safe and certain” fulfilment of his contracts, than he is capable of himself; and that “society,” having thus obtained from him this “surrender,” may then turn around to him, and not only refuse to fulfil its pledge to him, but may also prohibit his own exercise of his own “original and natural right,” which he has “surrendered” to “society!”

This is as much as to say that, if A can but induce B to intrust his (B’s) pro-

perty with him (A), for safekeeping, under a pledge that he (A) will keep it more safely and certainly than B can do it himself, *A thereby acquires an "unquestionable right" to keep the property forever, and let B whistle for it!*

This is the kind of assumption on which Marshall based all his ideas of the constitutional law of this country; that *constitutional law*, which he was so famous for expounding. It is the kind of assumption, by which he expounded the people out of all their "original and natural rights."

He had just as much right to assume, and practically did assume, that the people had voluntarily "come into society," and had voluntarily "surrendered" to their governments *all their other natural rights*, as well as their "original and natural right" to make and enforce their own contracts.

He virtually said to all the people of this country :

You have voluntarily "come into society," and have voluntarily "surrendered" to your governments all your natural rights, of every name and nature whatsoever, *for safe keeping*; and now that these governments have, *by your own consent*, got possession of all your natural rights, they have an "*unquestionable right*" to withhold them from you forever.

If it were not melancholy to see mankind thus cheated, robbed, enslaved, and murdered, on the authority of such naked impostures as these, it would be, to the last degree, ludicrous, to see a man like Marshall—reputed to be one of the first intellects the country has ever had—solemnly expounding the "constitutional powers," as he called them, by which the general and State governments were authorized to rob the people of all their natural rights as human beings.

And yet this same Marshall has done more than any other one man—certainly more than any other man within the last eighty-five years—to make our governments, State and national, what they are. He has, for more than sixty years, been esteemed an oracle, not only by his associates and successors on the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States, but by all the other judges, State and national, by all the ignorant, as well as knavish, lawmakers in the country, and by all the sixty to a hundred thousand lawyers, upon whom the people have been, and are, obliged to depend for the security of their rights.

This system of false definitions, false assumptions, and fraud and usurpation generally, runs through all the operations of our governments, State and national. There is nothing genuine, nothing real, nothing true, nothing honest, to be found in any of them. They all proceed upon the principle, that governments have all power, and the people no rights.

#### SECTION XXV.

But perhaps the most absolute proof that our national lawmakers and judges are as regardless of all constitutional, as they are of all natural, law, and that their

statutes and decisions are as destitute of all constitutional, as they are of all natural, authority, is to be found in the fact that these lawmakers and judges have trampled upon, and utterly ignored, certain amendments to the constitution, which had been adopted, and (constitutionally speaking) become authoritative, as early as 1791; only two years after the government went into operation.

If these amendments had been obeyed, they would have compelled all congresses and courts to understand that, if the government had any constitutional powers at all, they were simply powers to protect men's natural rights, and not to destroy any of them.

These amendments have actually forbidden any lawmaking whatever in violation of men's natural rights. And this is equivalent to a prohibition of any lawmaking at all. And if lawmakers and courts had been as desirous of preserving men's natural rights, as they have been of violating them, they would long ago have found out that, since these amendments, the constitution authorized no lawmaking at all.

These amendments were ten in number. They were recommended by the first congress, at its first session, in 1789; two-thirds of both houses concurring. And in 1791, they had been ratified by all the States: and from that time they imposed the restrictions mentioned upon all the powers of congress.

These amendments were proposed, by the first congress, for the reason that, although the constitution, as originally framed, had been adopted, its adoption had been procured only with great difficulty, and in spite of great objections. *These objections were that, as originally framed and adopted, the constitution contained no adequate security for the private rights of the people.*

These objections were admitted, by very many, if not all, the friends of the constitution themselves, to be very weighty; and such as ought to be immediately removed by amendments. And it was only because these friends of the constitution pledged themselves to use their influence to secure these amendments, that the adoption of the constitution itself was secured. And it was in fulfilment of these pledges, and to remove these objections, that the amendments were proposed and adopted.

The first eight amendments specified particularly various prohibitions upon the power of congress; such, for example, as those securing to the people the free exercise of religion, the freedom of speech and the press, the right to keep and bear arms, etc., etc. Then followed the ninth amendment, in these words:

The enumeration in the constitution, of certain rights, [retained by the people] shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Here is an authoritative declaration, that "the people" have "*other rights*" than those specially "enumerated in the constitution"; and that these "*other rights*" were "*retained by the people*"; that is, *that congress should have no power to infringe them.*

What, then, were these "other rights," that had not been "enumerated"; but which were nevertheless "retained by the people"?

Plainly they were men's natural "rights"; for these are the only "rights" that "the people" ever had, or, consequently, that they could "retain."

And as no attempt is made to enumerate *all* these "other rights," or any considerable number of them, and as it would be obviously impossible to enumerate all, or any considerable number, of them; and as no exceptions are made of any of them, the necessary, the legal, the inevitable inference is, that they were *all* "retained"; and that congress should have no power to violate any of them.

Now, if congress and the courts had attempted to obey this amendment, as they were constitutionally bound to do, they would soon have found that they had really no lawmaking power whatever left to them; because they would have found that they could make no law at all, *of their own invention*, that would *not* violate men's natural rights.

All men's natural rights are co-extensive with natural law, the law of justice; or justice as a science. This law is the exact measure, and the only measure, of any and every man's natural rights. No one of these natural rights can be taken from any man, without doing him an injustice; and no more than these rights can be given to any one, unless by taking from the natural rights of one or more others.

In short, every man's natural rights are, first, the right to do, with himself and his property, everything that he pleases to do, and that justice towards others does not forbid him to do; and, secondly, to be free from all compulsion, by others, to do anything whatever, except what justice to others requires him to do.

Such, then, has been the constitutional law of this country since 1791; admitting, for the sake of the argument—what I do not really admit to be a fact—that the constitution, so called, has ever been a law at all.

This amendment, from the remarkable circumstances under which it was proposed and adopted, must have made an impression upon the minds of all the public men of the time; although they may not have fully comprehended, and doubtless did not fully comprehend, its sweeping effects upon all the supposed powers of the government.

But whatever impression it may have made upon the public men of that time, its authority and power were wholly lost upon their successors; and probably, for at least eighty years, it has never been heard of, either in congress or the courts.

John Marshall was perfectly familiar with all the circumstances, under which this, and the other nine amendments, were proposed and adopted. He was thirty-two years old (lacking seven days) when the constitution, as originally framed, was published (September 17, 1787); and he was a member of the Virginia convention that ratified it. He knew perfectly the objections that were raised to it, in that convention, on the ground of its inadequate guaranty of men's natural rights. He knew with what force these objections were urged by some of the ablest members

of the convention. And he knew that, to obviate these objections, the convention, as a body, without a dissenting voice, so far as appears, recommended that very stringent amendments, for securing men's natural rights, be made to the constitution. And he knew further, that, but for these amendments being recommended, the constitution would not have been adopted by the convention.\*

The amendments proposed were too numerous to be repeated here, although they would be very instructive, as showing how jealous the people were, lest their natural rights should be invaded by laws made by congress. And that the convention might do everything in its power to secure the adoption of these amendments, it resolved as follows:

And the convention do, in the name and behalf of the people of this commonwealth, enjoin it upon their representatives in congress to exert all their influence, and use all reasonable and legal methods, to obtain a ratification of the foregoing alterations and provisions, in the manner provided by the 5th article of the said Constitution; and, in all congressional laws to be passed in the meantime, to conform to the spirit of these amendments, as far as the said Constitution will admit.—*Elliot's Debates, Vol. 3, p. 661.*

In seven other State conventions, to wit, in those of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland, North Carolina, and South Carolina, the inadequate security for men's natural rights, and the necessity for amendments, were admitted, and insisted upon, in very similar terms to those in Virginia.

In Massachusetts, the convention proposed nine amendments to the constitution; and resolved as follows:

And the convention do, in the name and in the behalf of the people of this commonwealth, enjoin it upon their representatives in Congress, at all times, until the alterations and provisions aforesaid have been considered, agreeably to the 5th article of the said Constitution, to exert all their influence, and use all reasonable and legal methods, to obtain a ratification of the said alterations and provisions, in such manner as is provided in the said article.—*Elliot's Debates, Vol. 2, p. 178.*

The New Hampshire convention, that ratified the constitution, proposed twelve amendments, and added:

And the Convention do, in the name and behalf of the people of this State, enjoin it upon their representatives in congress, at all times, until the alterations and provisions aforesaid have been considered agreeably to the fifth article of the said Constitution, to exert all their influence, and use all reasonable and legal methods, to obtain a ratification of the said alterations and provisions, in such manner as is provided in the article.—*Elliot's Debates, Vol. 1, p. 326.*

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\* For the amendments recommended by the Virginia convention, see "Elliot's Debates," Vol. 3, pp. 657 to 663. For the debates upon these amendments, see pages 444 to 452, and 460 to 462, and 468 to 471, and 579 to 652.



The Rhode Island convention, in ratifying the constitution, put forth a declaration of rights, in eighteen articles, and also proposed twenty-one amendments to the constitution; and prescribed as follows:

And the Convention do, in the name and behalf of the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, enjoin it upon their senators and representative or representatives, which may be elected to represent this State in congress, to exert all their influence, and use all reasonable means, to obtain a ratification of the following amendments to the said Constitution, in the manner prescribed therein; and in all laws to be passed by the congress in the mean time, to conform to the spirit of the said amendments, as far as the Constitution will admit. — *Elliot's Debates, Vol. 1, p. 335.*

The New York convention, that ratified the constitution, proposed a great many amendments, and added:

And the Convention do, in the name and behalf of the people of the State of New York, enjoin it upon their representatives in congress, to exert all their influence, and use all reasonable means, to obtain a ratification of the following amendments to the said Constitution, in the manner prescribed therein; and in all laws to be passed by the congress, in the mean time, to conform to the spirit of the said amendments as far as the Constitution will admit. — *Elliot's Debates, Vol. 1, p. 329.*

The New York convention also addressed a "CIRCULAR LETTER" to the governors of all the other States, the first two paragraphs of which are as follows:

THE CIRCULAR LETTER,

*From the Convention of the State of New York to the Governors of the several States in the Union.*

POUGHKEEPSIE, JULY 23, 1788.

Sir, We, the members of the Convention of this State, have deliberately and maturely considered the Constitution proposed for the United States. Several articles in it appear so exceptionable to a majority of us, that nothing but the fullest confidence of obtaining a revision of them by a general convention, and an invincible reluctance to separating from our sister States, could have prevailed upon a sufficient number to ratify it, without stipulating for previous amendments. We all unite in opinion, that such a revision will be necessary to recommend it to the approbation and support of a numerous body of our constituents.

We observe that amendments have been proposed, and are anxiously desired, by several of the States, as well as by this; and we think it of great importance that effectual measures be immediately taken for calling a convention, to meet at a period not far remote; for we are convinced that the apprehensions and discontents, which those articles occasion, cannot be removed or allayed, unless an act to provide for it be among the first that shall be passed by the new congress. — *Elliot's Debates, Vol. 2, p. 413.*

In the Maryland convention, numerous amendments were proposed, and thirteen were agreed to; "most of them by a unanimous vote, and all by a great majority." Fifteen others were proposed, but there was so much disagreement in regard to them, that none at all were formally recommended to congress. But, says Elliot:

All the members, who voted for the ratification [of the constitution], declared that they would engage themselves, under every tie of honor, to support the amendments they had agreed to, both in their public and private characters, until they should become a part of the general government. — *Elliot's Debates*, Vol. 2, pp. 550, 552-3.

The first North Carolina convention refused to ratify the constitution, and

*Resolved*, That a declaration of rights, asserting and securing from encroachments the great principles of civil and religious liberty, and the inalienable rights of the people, together with amendments to the most ambiguous and exceptionable parts of the said constitution of government, ought to be laid before congress, and the convention of States that shall or may be called for the purpose of amending the said Constitution, for their consideration, previous to the ratification of the Constitution aforesaid, on the part of the State of North Carolina. — *Elliot's Debates*, Vol. 1, p. 332.

The South Carolina convention, that ratified the constitution, proposed certain amendments, and

*Resolved*, That it be a standing instruction to all such delegates as may hereafter be elected to represent this State in the General Government, to exert their utmost abilities and influence to effect an alteration of the Constitution, conformably to the foregoing resolutions. — *Elliot's Debates*, Vol. 1. p. 325.

In the Pennsylvania convention, numerous objections were made to the constitution, but it does not appear that the convention, as a convention, recommended any specific amendments. But a strong movement, outside of the convention, was afterwards made in favor of such amendments. (“*Elliot's Debates*,” Vol. 2, p. 542.)

Of the debates in the Connecticut convention, Elliot gives only what he calls “*A Fragment*.”

Of the debates in the conventions of New Jersey, Delaware, and Georgia, Elliot gives no accounts at all.

I therefore cannot state the grounds, on which the adoption of the constitution was opposed. They were doubtless very similar to those in the other States. This is rendered morally certain by the fact, that the amendments, soon afterwards proposed by congress, were immediately ratified by all the States. Also by the further fact, that these States, by reason of the smallness of their representation in the popular branch of congress, would naturally be even more jealous of their rights, than the people of the larger States.

It is especially worthy of notice that, in some, if not in all, the conventions that ratified the constitution, although the ratification was accompanied by such urgent recommendations of amendments, and by an almost absolute assurance that they would be made, it was nevertheless secured only by very small majorities.

Thus in Virginia, the vote was only 89 ayes to 79 nays. (*Elliot*, Vol. 3, p. 654.)

In Massachusetts, the ratification was secured only by a vote of 187 yeas to 163 nays. (*Elliot*, Vol. 2, p. 181.)

In New York, the vote was only 30 yeas to 27 nays. (Elliot, Vol. 2, p. 413.)

In New Hampshire and Rhode Island, neither the yeas nor nays are given. (Elliot, Vol. 1, pp. 327-335.)

In Connecticut, the yeas were 128; *nays not given*. (Elliot, Vol. 1, p. 321-2.)

In New Jersey, the yeas were 38; *nays not given*. (Elliot, Vol. 1, p. 321.)

In Pennsylvania, the yeas were 46; *the nays not given*. (Elliot, Vol. 1, p. 320.)

In Delaware, the yeas were 30; *nays not given*. (Elliot, Vol. 1, p. 319.)

In Maryland, the vote was 57 yeas; *nays not given*. (Elliot, Vol. 1, p. 325.)

In North Carolina, neither the yeas nor nays are given. (Elliot, Vol. 1, p. 333.)

In South Carolina, neither the yeas nor nays are given. (Elliot, Vol. 1, p. 325.)

In Georgia, the yeas were 26; *nays not given*. (Elliot, Vol. 1, p. 324.)

We can thus see by what meagre votes the constitution was adopted. We can also see that, but for the prospect that important amendments would be made, specially for securing the natural rights of the people, the constitution would have been spurned with contempt, as it deserved to be.

And yet now, owing to the usurpations of lawmakers and courts, the original constitution—with the worst possible construction put upon it—has been carried into effect; and the amendments have been simply cast into the waste baskets.

Marshall was thirty-six years old, when these amendments became a part of the constitution in 1791. Ten years after, in 1801, he became Chief Justice. It then became his sworn constitutional duty to scrutinize severely every act of congress, and to condemn, as unconstitutional, all that should violate any of these natural rights. Yet he appears never to have thought of the matter afterwards. Or, rather, this ninth amendment, the most important of all, seems to have been so utterly antagonistic to all his ideas of government, that he chose to ignore it altogether, and, as far as he could, to bury it out of sight.

Instead of recognizing it as an absolute guaranty of all the natural rights of the people, he chose to assume—for it was all a mere assumption, a mere making a constitution out of his own head, to suit himself—that the people had all voluntarily “come into society,” and had voluntarily “surrendered” to “society” all their natural rights, of every name and nature—trusting that they would be secured; and that now, “society,” having thus got possession of all these natural rights of the people, had the “unquestionable right” to dispose of them, at the pleasure—or, as he would say, according to the “wisdom and discretion”—of a few contemptible, detestable, and irresponsible lawmakers, whom the constitution (thus amended) had forbidden to dispose of any one of them.

If, now, Marshall did not see, in this amendment, any legal force or authority, what becomes of his reputation as a constitutional lawyer? If he did see this force and authority, but chose to trample them under his feet, he was a perjured tyrant and traitor.

What, also, are we to think of all the judges,—forty in all,—his associates and

successors, who, for eighty years, have been telling the people that the government has all power, and the people no rights? Have they all been mere blockheads, who never read this amendment, or knew nothing of its meaning? Or have they, too, been perjured tyrants and traitors?

What, too, becomes of those great constitutional lawyers, as we have called them, who have been supposed to have won such immortal honors, as “expounders of the constitution,” but who seem never to have discovered in it any security for men’s natural rights? Is their apparent ignorance, on this point, to be accounted for by the fact, that that portion of the people, who, by authority of the government, are systematically robbed of all their earnings, beyond a bare subsistence, are not able to pay such fees as are the robbers who are authorized to plunder them?

If any one will now look back to the records of congress and the courts, for the last eighty years, I do not think he will find a single mention of this amendment. And why has this been so? Solely because the amendment—if its authority had been recognized—would have stood as an insuperable barrier against all the ambition and rapacity—all the arbitrary power, all the plunder, and all the tyranny—which the ambitious and rapacious classes have determined to accomplish through the agency of the government.

The fact that these classes have been so successful in perverting the constitution (thus amended) from an instrument avowedly securing all men’s natural rights, into an authority for utterly destroying them, is a sufficient proof that no lawmaking power can be safely intrusted to any body, for any purpose whatever.

And that this perversion of the constitution should have been sanctioned by all the judicial tribunals of the country, is also a proof, not only of the servility, audacity, and villainy of the judges, but also of the utter rottenness of our judicial system. It is a sufficient proof that judges, who are dependent upon lawmakers for their offices and salaries, and are responsible to them by impeachment, cannot be relied on to put the least restraint upon the acts of their masters, the lawmakers.

Such, then, would have been the effect of the ninth amendment, if it had been permitted to have its legitimate authority.

#### SECTION XXVI.

The tenth amendment is in these words:

The powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, *or to the people.*

This amendment, equally with the ninth, secures to “the people” all their natural rights. And why?

Because, in truth, no powers at all, neither legislative, judicial, nor executive, had been “delegated to the United States by the constitution.”

But it will be said that the amendment itself implies that certain lawmaking "powers" had been "delegated to the United States by the constitution."

No. It only implies that those who adopted the amendment *believed* that such lawmaking "powers" had been "delegated to the United States by the constitution."

But in this belief, they were entirely mistaken. And why?

1. Because it is a natural impossibility that any lawmaking "powers" whatever can be delegated by any one man, or any number of men, to any other man, or any number of other men.

Men's natural rights are all inherent and inalienable; and therefore cannot be parted with, or delegated, by one person to another. And all contracts whatsoever, for such a purpose, are necessarily absurd and void contracts.

For example. I cannot delegate to another man any right to *make* laws—that is, laws of his own invention—and compel me to obey them.

Such a contract, on my part, would be a contract to part with my natural liberty; to give myself, or sell myself, to him as a slave. Such a contract would be an absurd and void contract, utterly destitute of all legal or moral obligation.

2. I cannot delegate to another any right to make laws—that is, laws of his own invention—and compel a third person to obey them.

For example. I cannot delegate to A any right to make laws—that is, laws of his own invention—and compel Z to obey them.

I cannot delegate any such right to A, because I have no such right myself; and I cannot delegate to another what I do not myself possess.

For these reasons no lawmaking powers ever could be—and therefore no lawmaking powers ever were—"delegated to the United States by the constitution"; no matter what the people of that day—any or all of them—may have attempted to do, or may have believed they had power to do, in the way of delegating such powers.

But not only were no lawmaking powers "delegated to the United States by the constitution," but neither were any *judicial* powers so delegated. And why? Because it is a natural impossibility that one man can delegate his judicial powers to another.

Every man has, by nature, certain judicial powers, or rights. That is to say, he has, by nature, the right to judge of, and enforce his own rights, and judge of, and redress his own wrongs. But, in so doing, he must act only in accordance with his own judgment and conscience, and *subject to his own personal responsibility, if, through either ignorance or design, he commits any error injurious to another.*

Now, inasmuch as no man can delegate, or impart, his own judgment or conscience to another, it is naturally impossible that he can delegate to another his judicial rights or powers.

So, too, every man has, by nature, a right to judge of, and enforce, the rights,

and judge of, and redress the wrongs, of any and all other men. This right is included in his natural right to maintain justice between man and man, and to protect the injured party against the wrongdoer. But, in doing this, he must act only in accordance with his own judgment and conscience, and subject to his own personal responsibility for any error he may commit, either through ignorance or design.

But, inasmuch as, in this case, as in the preceding one, he can neither delegate nor impart his own judgment or conscience to another, he cannot delegate his judicial power or right to another.

But not only were no lawmaking or judicial powers "delegated to the United States by the constitution," neither were any executive powers so delegated. And why? Because, in a case of justice or injustice, it is naturally impossible that any one man can delegate his executive right or power to another.

Every man has, by nature, the right to maintain justice for himself, and for all other persons, by the use of so much force as may be reasonably necessary for that purpose. But he can use the force only in accordance with his own judgment and conscience, and on his own personal responsibility, if, through ignorance or design, he commits any wrong to another.

But inasmuch as he cannot delegate, or impart, his own judgment or conscience to another, he cannot delegate his executive power or right to another.

*The result is, that, in all judicial and executive proceedings, for the maintenance of justice, every man must act only in accordance with his own judgment and conscience, and on his own personal responsibility for any wrong he may commit; whether such wrong be committed through either ignorance or design.*

The effect of this principle of personal responsibility, in all judicial and executive proceedings, would be—or at least ought to be—that no one would give any judicial opinions, or do any executive acts, except such as his own judgment and conscience should approve, *and such as he would be willing to be held personally responsible for.*

No one could justify, or excuse, his wrong act, by saying that a power, or authority, to do it had been delegated to him, by any other men, however numerous.

For the reasons that have now been given, neither any legislative, judicial, nor executive powers ever were, or ever could have been, "delegated to the United States by the constitution"; no matter how honestly or innocently the people of that day may have believed, or attempted, the contrary.

And what is true, in this matter, in regard to the national government, is, for the same reasons, equally true in regard to all the State governments.

But this principle of personal responsibility, each for his own judicial or executive acts, does not stand in the way of men's associating, at pleasure, for the maintenance of justice; and selecting such persons as they think most suitable, for judicial and executive duties; and *requesting* them to perform those duties; and

then paying them for their labor. But the persons, thus selected, must still perform their duties according to their own judgments and consciences alone, and subject to their own personal responsibility for any errors of either ignorance or design.

To make it safe and proper for persons to perform judicial duties, subject to their personal responsibility for any errors of either ignorance or design, two things would seem to be important, if not indispensable, viz.:

1. That, as far as is reasonably practicable, all judicial proceedings should be in writing; that is, that all testimony, and all judicial opinions, even to quite minute details, should be in writing, and be preserved; so that judges may always have it in their power to show fully what their acts, and their reasons for their acts, have been; and also that anybody, and everybody, interested, may forever after have the means of knowing fully the reasons on which everything has been done; and that any errors, ever afterwards discovered, may be corrected.

2. That all judicial tribunals should consist of so many judges—within any reasonable number—as either party may desire; or as may be necessary to prevent any wrong doing, by any one or more of the judges, either through ignorance or design.

Such tribunals, consisting of judges, numerous enough, and perfectly competent to settle justly probably ninety-nine one-hundredths of all the controversies that arise among men, could be obtained in every village. They could give their immediate attention to every case; and thus avoid most of the delay, and most of the expense, now attendant on judicial proceedings.

To make these tribunals satisfactory to all reasonable and honest persons, it is important, and probably indispensable, that all judicial proceedings should be had, *in the first instance*, at the expense of the association, or associations, to which the parties to the suit belong.

An association for the maintenance of justice should be a purely voluntary one; and should be formed upon the same principle as a mutual fire or marine insurance company; that is, each member should pay his just proportion of the expense necessary for protecting all.

A single individual could not reasonably be expected to delay, or forego, the exercise of his natural right to enforce his own rights, and redress his own wrongs, except upon the condition that there is an association that will do it promptly, and without expense to him. But having paid his proper proportion of the expense necessary for the protection of all, he has then a right to demand prompt and complete protection for himself.

Inasmuch as it cannot be known which party is in the wrong, until the trial has been had, the expense of both parties must, *in the first instance*, be paid by the association, or associations, to which they belong. But after the trial has been had, and it has been ascertained which party was in the wrong, and (if such should be

the case) so clearly in the wrong as to have had no justification for putting the association to the expense of a trial, he then may properly be compelled to pay the cost of all the proceedings.

If the parties to a suit should belong to different associations, it would be right that the judges should be taken from both associations; or from a third association, with which neither party was connected.

If, with all these safeguards against injustice and expense, a party, accused of a wrong, should refuse to appear for trial, he might rightfully be proceeded against, in his absence, if the evidence produced against him should be sufficient to justify it.

It is probably not necessary to go into any further details here, to show how easy and natural a thing it would be, to form as many voluntary and mutually protective judicial associations, as might be either necessary or convenient, in order to bring justice home to every man's door; and to give to every honest and dishonest man, all reasonable assurance that he should have justice, and nothing else, done for him, or to him.

#### SECTION XXVII.

Of course we can have no courts of justice, under such systems of lawmaking, and supreme court decisions, as now prevail.

We have a population of fifty to sixty millions; *and not a single court of justice, State or national!*

But we have everywhere courts of injustice—open and avowed injustice—claiming sole jurisdiction of all cases affecting men's rights of both person and property; and having at their beck brute force enough to compel absolute submission to their decrees, whether just or unjust.

Can a more decisive or infallible condemnation of our governments be conceived of, than the absence of all courts of justice, and the absolute power of their courts of injustice?

Yes, they lie under still another condemnation, to wit, that their courts are not only courts of injustice, but they are also secret tribunals; adjudicating all causes according to the secret instructions of their masters, the lawmakers, and their authorized interpreters, their supreme courts.

I say *secret tribunals*, and *secret instructions*, because, to the great body of the people, whose rights are at stake, they are secret to all practical intents and purposes. They are secret, because their reasons for their decrees are to be found only in great volumes of statutes and supreme court reports, which the mass of the people have neither money to buy, nor time to read; and would not understand, if they were to read them.

These statutes and reports are so far out of reach of the people at large, that the only knowledge a man can ordinarily get of them, when he is summoned before



one of the tribunals appointed to execute them, is to be obtained by employing an expert—or so-called lawyer—to enlighten him.

This expert in injustice is one who buys these great volumes of statutes and reports, and spends his life in studying them, and trying to keep himself informed of their contents. But even he can give a client very little information in regard to them; for the statutes and decisions are so voluminous, and are so constantly being made and unmade, and are so destitute of all conformity to those natural principles of justice which men readily and intuitively comprehend; and are moreover capable of so many different interpretations, that he is usually in as great doubt—perhaps in even greater doubt—than his client, as to what will be the result of a suit.

The most he can usually say to his client, is this:

Every civil suit must finally be given to one of two persons, the plaintiff or defendant. Whether, therefore, your cause is a just, or an unjust, one, you have at least one chance in two, of gaining it. But no matter how just your cause may be, you need have no hope that the tribunal that tries it, will be governed by any such consideration, if the statute book, or the past decisions of the supreme court, are against you. So, also, no matter how unjust your cause may be, you may nevertheless expect to gain it, if the statutes and past decisions are in your favor. If, therefore, you have money to spend in such a lottery as this, I will do my best to gain your cause for you, whether it be a just, or an unjust, one.

If the charge is a criminal one, this expert says to his client:

You must either be found guilty, or acquitted. Whether, therefore, you are really innocent or guilty, you have at least one chance in two, of an acquittal. But no matter how innocent you may be of any real crime, you need have no hope of an acquittal, if the statute book, or the past decisions of the supreme court, are against you. If, on the other hand, you have committed a real wrong to another, there may be many laws on the statute book, many precedents, and technicalities, and whimsicalities, through which you may hope to escape. But your reputation, your liberty, or perhaps your life, is at stake. To save these you can afford to risk your money, even though the result is so uncertain. Therefore you had best give me your money, and I will do my best to save you, whether you are innocent or guilty.

But for the great body of the people,—those who have no money that they can afford to risk in a lawsuit,—no matter what may be their rights in either a civil or criminal suit,—their cases are hopeless. They may have been taxed, directly and indirectly, to their last dollars, for the support of the government; they may even have been compelled to risk their lives, and to lose their limbs, in its defence; yet when they want its protection,—that protection for which their taxes and military services were professedly extorted from them,—they are coolly told that the government offers no justice, nor even any chance or semblance of justice, except to those who have more money than they.

But the point now to be specially noticed is, that in the case of either the civil

or criminal suit, the client, whether rich or poor, is nearly or quite as much in the dark as to his fate, and as to the grounds on which his fate will be determined, as though he were to be tried by an English Star Chamber court, or one of the secret tribunals of Russia, or even the Spanish Inquisition.

Thus in the supreme exigencies of a man's life, whether in civil or criminal cases, where his property, his reputation, his liberty, or his life is at stake, he is really to be tried by what is, *to him*, at least, a *secret tribunal*; a tribunal that is governed by what are, *to him*, the *secret instructions* of lawmakers, and supreme courts; neither of whom care anything for his rights of property in a civil suit, or for his guilt or innocence in a criminal one; but only for their own authority as lawmakers and judges.

The bystanders, at these trials, look on amazed, but powerless to defend the right, or prevent the wrong. Human nature has no rights, in the presence of these infernal tribunals.

Is it any wonder that all men live in constant terror of such a government as that? Is it any wonder that so many give up all attempts to preserve their natural rights of person and property, in opposition to tribunals, to whom justice and injustice are indifferent, and whose ways are, to common minds, hidden mysteries, and impenetrable secrets.

But even this is not all. The mode of trial, if not as infamous as the trial itself, is at least so utterly false and absurd, as to add a new element of uncertainty to the result of all judicial proceedings.

A trial in one of these courts of injustice is a trial by battle, almost, if not quite, as really as was a trial by battle, five hundred or a thousand years ago.

Now, as then, the adverse parties choose their champions, to fight their battles for them.

These champions, trained to such contests, and armed, not only with all the weapons their own skill, cunning, and power can supply, but also with all the iniquitous laws, precedents, and technicalities that lawmakers and supreme courts can give them, for defeating justice, and accomplishing injustice, can—if not always, yet none but themselves know how often—offer their clients such chances of victory—independently of the justice of their causes—as to induce the dishonest to go into court to evade justice, or accomplish injustice, not less often perhaps than the honest go there in the hope to get justice, or avoid injustice.

We have now, I think, some sixty thousand of these champions, who make it the business of their lives to equip themselves for these conflicts, and sell their services for a price.

Is there any one of these men, who studies justice as a science, and regards that alone in all his professional exertions? If there are any such, why do we so seldom, or never, hear of them? Why have they not told us, hundreds of years ago, what are men's natural rights of person and property? And why have they not

told us how false, absurd, and tyrannical are all these lawmaking governments? Why have they not told us what impostors and tyrants all these so-called lawmakers, judges, etc., etc., are? Why are so many of them so ambitious to become lawmakers and judges themselves?

Is it too much to hope for mankind, that they may sometime have courts of justice, instead of such courts of injustice as these?

If we ever should have courts of justice, it is easy to see what will become of statute books, supreme courts, trial by battle, and all the other machinery of fraud and tyranny, by which the world is now ruled.

If the people of this country knew what crimes are constantly committed by these courts of injustice, they would squelch them, without mercy, as unceremoniously as they would squelch so many gangs of bandits or pirates. In fact, bandits and pirates are highly respectable and honorable villains, compared with the judges of these courts of injustice. Bandits and pirates do not—like these judges—attempt to cheat us out of our common sense, in order to cheat us out of our property, liberty, or life. They do not profess to be anything but such villains as they really are. They do not claim to have received any “Divine” authority for robbing, enslaving, or murdering us at their pleasure. They do not claim immunity for their crimes, upon the ground that they are duly authorized agents of any such invisible, intangible, irresponsible, unimaginable thing as “society,” or “the State.” They do not insult us by telling us that they are only exercising that authority to rob, enslave, and murder us, which we ourselves have delegated to them. They do not claim that they are robbing, enslaving, and murdering us, solely to secure our happiness and prosperity, and not from any selfish motives of their own. They do not claim a wisdom so superior to that of the producers of wealth, as to know, better than they, how their wealth should be disposed of. They do not tell us that we are the freest and happiest people on earth, inasmuch as each of our male adults is allowed one voice in ten millions in the choice of the men, who are to rob, enslave, and murder us. They do not tell us that all liberty and order would be destroyed, that society itself would go to pieces, and man go back to barbarism, if it were not for the care, and supervision, and protection, they lavish upon us. They do not tell us of the almshouses, hospitals, schools, churches, etc., which, out of the purest charity and benevolence, they maintain for our benefit, out of the money they take from us. They do not carry their heads high, above all other men, and demand our reverence and admiration, as statesmen, patriots, and benefactors. They do not claim that we have voluntarily “come into their society,” and “surrendered” to them all our natural rights of person and property; nor all our “original and natural right” of defending our own rights, and redressing our own wrongs. They do not tell us that they have established infallible supreme courts, to whom they refer all questions as to the legality of their acts, and that they do nothing that is not sanctioned by these courts. They do not attempt

to deceive us, or mislead us, or reconcile us to their doings, by any such pretences, impostures, or insults as these. *There is not a single John Marshall among them.* On the contrary, they acknowledge themselves robbers, murderers, and villains, pure and simple. When they have once taken our money, they have the decency to get out of our sight as soon as possible; they do not persist in following us, and robbing us, again and again, so long as we produce anything that they can take from us. In short, they acknowledge themselves *hostes humani generis: enemies of the human race.* They acknowledge it to be our unquestioned right and duty to kill them, if we can; that they expect nothing else, than that we will kill them, if we can; and that we are only fools and cowards, if we do not kill them, by any and every means in our power. They neither ask, nor expect, any mercy, if they should ever fall into the hands of honest men.

For all these reasons, they are not only modest and sensible, but really frank, honest, and honorable villains, contrasted with these courts of injustice, and the lawmakers by whom these courts are established.

Such, Mr. Cleveland, is the real character of the government, of which you are the nominal head. Such are, and have been, its lawmakers. Such are, and have been, its judges. Such have been its executives. Such is its present executive. Have you anything to say for any of them?

Yours frankly,

LYSANDER SPOONER.

BOSTON, MAY 15, 1836.

THE END.

But this one law of justice is a natural principle, and not any thing that any human power can make, unmake, or modify. Being a natural principle, it is a subject of science, and is to be learned like all other sciences. It is also the same in all places, and in all times ; and will remain the same in all places, and among all peoples, so long as the world shall stand.

The want of this one law is the only obstacle, not only in the way of your carrying your present discoveries and inventions all over the world, but also to such a multiplication of discoveries and inventions as doubtless mankind at large — nor even the most far-seeing of them — have ever conceived of.

You, above all other men, (I repeat) have the power and the inducements to carry this law all over the world, and establish its authority in opposition to all the adverse laws and governments that now exist.

In subsequent letters, and other separate publications, *if scientists and inventors shall favor the enterprise*, I purpose to show that it is perfectly feasible and easy to establish, *all over the world*, their right of *perpetual* property in their discoveries and inventions. In fact, unless scientists and inventors can maintain their own rights of property, and establish justice in the place of such transparent conspiracies and villanies as all the principal-governments of the world now are, it is plain that, instead of claiming to be the great lights and benefactors of mankind, they ought to write themselves down as imbeciles, cowards, and slaves.