

that any other institutions stood up as recognizable exceptions, as landmarks on that high tableland of equality.

If this is inconsistent, nothing is consistent; if this is unpractical, all human life in unpractical. If a man wants what he calls a flower-garden he plants flowers where he can, and especially where they will determine the general character of the landscape gardening. But they do not completely cover the garden; they only positively colour it. He does not expect roses to grow in the chimney-pots, or daisies to climb up the railings; still less does he expect tulips to grow on the pine, or the monkey tree to blossom like a rhododendron. But he knows perfectly well what he means by a flower-garden; and so does everybody else. If he does not want a flower-garden but a kitchen-garden, he proceeds differently. But he does not expect a kitchen-garden to be exactly like a kitchen. He does not dig out all the potatoes, because it is not a flower-garden and the potato has a flower. He knows the main thing he is trying to achieve; but, not being a born fool, he does not think he can achieve it everywhere in exactly the same degree, or in a manner equally unmingled with things of another sort. The flower-gardener will not banish nasturtiums to the kitchen-garden because some strange people have been known to eat them. Nor will the other class a vegetable as a flower because it is called a cauliflower. So, from our social garden, we should not necessarily exclude every modern machine any more than we should exclude every medieval monastery. And indeed the apologue is appropriate enough; for this is the sort of elementary human reason that men never lost until they lost their gardens: just as that higher reason that is more than human was lost with a garden long ago.

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## II SOME ASPECTS OF BIG BUSINESS

1. The Bluff of the Big Shops
2. A Misunderstanding about Method
3. A Case in Point
4. The Tyranny of Trusts

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### I THE BLUFF OF THE BIG SHOPS

Twice in my life has an editor told me in so many words that he dared not print what I had written, because it would offend the advertisers in his paper. The presence of such pressure exists everywhere in a more silent and subtle form. But I have a great respect for the honesty of this particular editor; for it was, evidently as near to complete honesty as the editor of an important weekly magazine can possibly go. He told the truth about the falsehood he had to tell.

On both those occasions he denied me liberty of expression because I said that the widely advertised stores and large shops were really worse than little shops. That, it may be interesting to note, is one of the things that a man is now forbidden to say; perhaps the only thing he is really forbidden to say. If it had been an attack on Government, it would have been tolerated. If it had been an attack on God, it would have been respectfully and tactfully applauded. If I had been abusing marriage

or patriotism or public decency, I should have been heralded in headlines and allowed to sprawl across Sunday newspapers. But the big newspaper is not likely to attack the big shop; being itself a big shop in its way and more and more a monument of monopoly. But it will be well if I repeat here in a book what I found it impossible to repeat in an article. I think the big shop is a bad shop. I think it bad not only in a moral but a mercantile sense; that is, I think shopping there is not only a bad action but a bad bargain. I think the monster emporium is not only vulgar and insolent, but incompetent and uncomfortable; and I deny that its large organization is efficient. Large organization is loose organization. Nay, it would be almost as true to say that organization is always disorganization. The only thing perfectly organic is an organism; like that grotesque and obscure organism called a man. He alone can be quite certain of doing what he wants; beyond him, every extra man may be an extra mistake. As applied to things like shops, the whole thing is an utter fallacy. Some things like armies have to be organized; and therefore do their very best to be well organized. You must have a long rigid line stretched out to guard a frontier; and therefore you stretch it tight. But it is not true that you must have a long rigid line of people trimming hats or tying bouquets, in order that they may be trimmed or tied neatly. The work is much more likely to be neat if it is done by a particular craftsman for a particular customer with particular ribbons and flowers. The person told to trim the hat will never do it quite suitably to the person who wants it trimmed; and the hundredth person told to do it will do it badly; as he does. If we collected all the stories from all the housewives and householders about the big shops sending the wrong goods, smashing the right goods, forgetting to send any sort of goods, we should behold a welter of inefficiency. There are far more blunders in a big shop than ever happen in a small shop, where the individual customer can curse the individual shopkeeper. Confronted with modern efficiency the customer is silent; well aware of that organization's talent for sacking the wrong man. In short, organization is a necessary evil--which in this case is not necessary.

I have begun these notes with a note on the big shops because they are things near to us and familiar to us all. I need not dwell on other and still more entertaining claims made for the colossal combination of departments. One of the funniest is the statement that it is convenient to get everything in the same shop. That is to say, it is convenient to walk the length of the street, so long as you walk indoors, or more frequently underground, instead of walking the same distance in the open air from one little shop to another. The truth is that the monopolists' shops are really very convenient--to the monopolist. They have all the advantage of concentrating business as they concentrate wealth, in fewer and fewer of the citizens. Their wealth sometimes permits them to pay tolerable wages; their wealth also permits them to buy up better businesses and advertise worse goods. But that their own goods are better nobody has ever even begun to show; and most of us know any number of concrete cases where they are definitely worse. Now I expressed this opinion of my own (so shocking to the magazine editor and his advertisers) not only because it is an example of my general thesis that small properties should be revived, but because it is essential to the realization of another and much more curious truth. It concerns the psychology of all these things: of mere size, of mere wealth, of mere advertisement and arrogance.

And it gives us the first working model of the way in which things are done to-day and the way in which (please God) they may be undone to-morrow.

There is one obvious and enormous and entirely neglected general fact to be noted before we consider the laws chiefly needed to renew the State. And that is the fact that one considerable revolution could be made without any laws at all. It does not concern any existing law, but rather an existing superstition. And the curious thing is that its upholders boast that it is a superstition. The other day I saw and very thoroughly enjoyed a popular play called *It Pays to Advertise*; which is all about a young business man who tries to break up the soap monopoly of his father, a more old-fashioned business man, by the wildest application of American theories of the psychology of advertising. One thing that struck me as rather interesting about it was this. It was quite good comedy to give the old man and the young man our sympathy in turn. It was quite good farce to make the old man and the young man each alternately look a fool. But nobody seemed to feel what I felt to be the most outstanding and obvious points of folly. They scoffed at the old man because he was old; because he was old-fashioned; because he himself was healthy enough to scoff at the monkey tricks of their mad advertisements. But nobody really criticized him for having made a corner, for which he might once have stood in a pillory. Nobody seemed to have enough instinct for independence and human dignity to be irritated at the idea that one purse-proud old man could prevent us all from having an ordinary human commodity if he chose. And as with the old man, so it was with the young man. He had been taught by his American friend that advertisement can hypnotize the human brain; that people are dragged by a deadly fascination into the doors of a shop as into the mouth of a snake; that the subconscious is captured and the will paralysed by repetition; that we are all made to move like mechanical dolls when a Yankee advertiser says, "Do It Now." But it never seemed to occur to anybody to resent this. Nobody seemed sufficiently alive to be annoyed. The young man was made game of because he was poor; because he was bankrupt; because he was driven to the shifts of bankruptcy; and so on. But he did not seem to know he was something much worse than a swindler, a sorcerer. He did not know he was by his own boast a mesmerist and a mystagogue; a destroyer of reason and will; an enemy of truth and liberty.

I think such people exaggerate the extent to which it pays to advertise; even if there is only the devil to pay. But in one sense this psychological case for advertising is of great practical importance to any programme of reform. The American advertisers have got hold of the wrong end of the stick; but it is a stick that can be used to beat something else besides their own absurd big drum. It is a stick that can be used also to beat their own absurd business philosophy. They are always telling us that the success of modern commerce depends on creating an atmosphere, on manufacturing a mentality, on assuming a point of view. In short, they insist that their commerce is not merely commercial, or even economic or political, but purely psychological. I hope they will go on saying it; for then some day everybody may suddenly see that it is true.

For the success of big shops and such things really is psychology;

not to say psycho-analysis; or, in other words, nightmare. It is not real and, therefore, not reliable. This point concerns merely our immediate attitude, at the moment and on the spot, towards the whole plutocratic occupation of which such publicity is the gaudy banner. The very first thing to do, before we come to any of our proposals that are political and legal, is something that really is (to use their beloved word) entirely psychological. The very first thing to do is to tell these American poker-players that they do not know how to play poker. For they not only bluff, but they boast that they are bluffing. In so far as it really is a question of an instant psychological method, there must be, and there is, an immediate psychological answer. In other words, because they are admittedly bluffing, we can call their bluff.

I said recently that any practical programme for restoring normal property consists of two parts, which current cant would call destructive and constructive; but which might more truly be called defensive and offensive. The first is stopping the mere mad stampede towards monopoly, before the last traditions of property and liberty are lost. It is with that preliminary problem of resisting the world's trend towards being more monopolist, that I am first of all dealing here. Now, when we ask what we can do, here and now, against the actual growth of monopoly, we are always given a very simple answer. We are told that we can do nothing. By a natural and inevitable operation the large things are swallowing the small, as large fish might swallow little fish. The trust can absorb what it likes, like a dragon devouring what it likes, because it is already the largest creature left alive in the land. Some people are so finally resolved to accept this result that they actually condescend to regret it. They are so convinced that it is fate that they will even admit that it is fatality. The fatalists almost become sentimentalists when looking at the little shop that is being bought up by the big company. They are ready to weep, so long as it is admitted that they weep because they weep in vain. They are willing to admit that the loss of a little toy-shop of their childhood, or a little tea-shop of their youth, is even in the true sense a tragedy. For a tragedy means always a man's struggle with that which is stronger than man. And it is the feet of the gods themselves that are here trampling on our traditions; it is death and doom themselves that have broken our little toys like sticks; for against the stars of destiny none shall prevail. It is amazing what a little bluff will do in this world.

For they go on saying that the big fish eats the little fish, without asking whether little fish swim up to big fish and ask to be eaten. They accept the devouring dragon without wondering whether a fashionable crowd of princesses ran after the dragon to be devoured. They have never heard of a fashion; and do not know the difference between fashion and fate. The necessitarians have here carefully chosen the one example of something that is certainly not necessary, whatever else is necessary. They have chosen the one thing that does happen still to be free, as a proof of the unbreakable chains in which all things are bound. Very little is left free in the modern world; but private buying and selling are still supposed to be free; and indeed still are free; if anyone has a will free enough to use his freedom. Children may be driven by force to a particular school. Men may be driven by force away from a public-house. All sorts of people, for all sorts

of new and nonsensical reasons, may be driven by force to a prison. But nobody is yet driven by force to a particular shop.

I shall deal later with some practical remedies and reactions against the rush towards rings and corners. But even before we consider these, it is well to have paused a moment on the moral fact which is so elementary and so entirely ignored. Of all things in the world, the rush to the big shops is the thing that could be most easily stopped--by the people who rush there. We do not know what may come later; but they cannot be driven there by bayonets just yet. American business enterprise, which has already used British soldiers for purposes of advertisement, may doubtless in time use British soldiers for purposes of coercion. But we cannot yet be dragooned by guns and sabres into Yankee shops or international stores. The alleged economic attraction, with which I will deal in due course, is quite a different thing: I am merely pointing out that if we came to the conclusion that big shops ought to be boycotted, we could boycott them as easily as we should (I hope) boycott shops selling instruments of torture or poisons for private use in the home. In other words, this first and fundamental question is not a question of necessity but of will. If we chose to make a vow, if we chose to make a league, for dealing only with little local shops and never with large centralized shops, the campaign could be every bit as practical as the Land Campaign in Ireland. It would probably be nearly as successful. It will be said, of course, that people will go to the best shop. I deny it; for Irish boycotters did not take the best offer. I deny that the big shop is the best shop; and I especially deny that people go there because it is the best shop. And if I be asked why, I answer at the end with the unanswerable fact with which I began at the beginning. I know it is not merely a matter of business, for the simple reason that the business men themselves tell me it is merely a matter of bluff. It is they who say that nothing succeeds like a mere appearance of success. It is they who say that publicity influences us without our will or knowledge. It is they who say that "It Pays to Advertise"; that is, to tell people in a bullying way that they must "Do It Now," when they need not do it at all.

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## II A MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT METHOD

Before I go any further with this sketch, I find I must pause upon a parenthesis touching the nature of my task, without which the rest of it may be misunderstood. As a matter of fact, without pretending to any official or commercial experience, I am here doing a great deal more than has ever been asked of most of the mere men of letters (if I may call myself for the moment a man of letters) when they confidently conducted social movements or setup social ideals. I will promise that, by the end of these notes, the reader shall know a great deal more about how men might set about making a Distributive State than the readers of Carlyle ever knew about how they should set about finding a Hero King or a Real Superior. I think we can explain how to make a small shop or a small farm a common feature of our society better than Matthew Arnold explained how to make the State the organ of Our Best Self. I think the farm will be marked on some sort of rude map more clearly than the Earthly Paradise on the navigation chart

of William Morris; and I think that in comparison with his News from Nowhere this might fairly be called News from Somewhere. Rousseau and Ruskin were often much more vague and visionary than I am; though Rousseau was even more rigid in abstractions, and Ruskin was sometimes very much excited about particular details. I need not say that I am not comparing myself to these great men; I am only pointing out that even from these, whose minds dominated so much wider a field, and whose position as publicists was much more respected and responsible, nothing was as a matter of fact asked beyond the general principles we are accused of giving. I am merely pointing out that the task has fallen to a very minor poet when these very major prophets were not required to carry out and complete the fulfilment of their own prophecies. It would seem that our fathers did not think it quite so futile to have a clear vision of the goal with or without a detailed map of the road; or to be able to describe a scandal without going on to describe a substitute. Anyhow, for whatever reason, it is quite certain that if I really were great enough to deserve the reproaches of the utilitarians, if I really were as merely idealistic or imaginative as they make me out, if I really did confine myself to describing a direction without exactly measuring a road, to pointing towards home or heaven and telling men to use their own good sense in getting there--if this were really all that I could do, it would be all that men immeasurably greater than I am were ever expected to do; from Plato and Isaiah to Emerson and Tolstoy.

But it is not all that I can do; even though those who did not do it did so much more. I can do something else as well; but I can only do it if it be understood what I am doing. At the same time I am well aware that, in explaining the improvement of so elaborate a society, a man may often find it very difficult to explain exactly what he is doing, until it is done. I have considered and rejected half a dozen ways of approaching the problem, by different roads that all lead to the same truth. I had thought of beginning with the simple example of the peasant; and then I knew that a hundred correspondents would leap upon me, accusing me of trying to turn all of them into peasants. I thought of beginning with describing a decent Distributive State in being, with all its balance of different things; just as the Socialists describe their Utopia in being, with its concentration in one thing. Then I knew a hundred correspondents would call me Utopian; and say it was obvious my scheme could not work, because I could only describe it when it was working. But what they would really mean by my being Utopian, would be this: that until that scheme was working, there was no work to be done. I have finally decided to approach the social solution in this fashion: to point out first that the monopolist momentum is not irresistible; that even here and now much could be done to modify it, much by anybody, almost everything by everybody. Then I would maintain that on the removal of that particular plutocratic pressure, the appetite and appreciation of natural property would revive, like any other natural thing. Then, I say, it will be worth while to propound to people thus returning to sanity, however sporadically, a sane society that could balance property and control machinery. With the description of that ultimate society, with its laws and limitations, I would conclude.

Now that may or may not be a good arrangement or order of ideas; but it is an intelligible one; and I submit with all humility

that I have a right to arrange my explanations in that order, and no critic has a right to complain that I do not disarrange them in order to answer questions out of their order. I am willing to write him a whole Encyclopaedia of Distributism if he has the patience to read it; but he must have the patience to read it. It is unreasonable for him to complain that I have not dealt adequately with Zoology, State Provision For, under the letter B; or described the honourable social status of the Guild of the Xylographers while I am still dealing alphabetically with the Guild of Architects. I am willing to be as much of a bore as Euclid; but the critic must not complain that the forty-eighth proposition of the second book is not a part of the Pons Asinorum. The ancient Guild of Bridge-Builders will have to build many such bridges.

Now from comments that have come my way, I gather that the suggestions I have already made may not altogether explain their own place and purpose in this scheme. I am merely pointing out that monopoly is not omnipotent even now and here; and that anybody could think, on the spur of the moment, of many ways in which its final triumph can be delayed and perhaps defeated. Suppose a monopolist who is my mortal enemy endeavours to ruin me by preventing me from selling eggs to my neighbours, I can tell him I shall live on my own turnips in my own kitchen-garden. I do not mean to tie myself to turnips; or swear never to touch my own potatoes or beans. I mean the turnips as an example; something to throw at him. Suppose the wicked millionaire in question comes and grins over my garden wall and says, "I perceive by your starved and emaciated appearance that you are in immediate need of a few shillings; but you can't possibly get them," I may possibly be stung into retorting, "Yes, I can. I could sell my first edition of Martin Chuzzlewit." I do not necessarily mean that I see myself already in a pauper's grave unless I can sell Martin Chuzzlewit; I do not mean that I have nothing else to suggest except selling Martin Chuzzlewit; I do not mean to brag like any common politician that I have nailed my colours to the Martin Chuzzlewit policy. I mean to tell the offensive pessimist that I am not at the end of my resources; that I can sell a book or even, if the case grows desperate, write a book. I could do a great many things before I came to definitely anti-social action like robbing a bank or (worse still) working in a bank. I could do a great many things of a great many kinds, and I give an example at the start to suggest that there are many more of them, not that there are no more of them. There are a great many things of a great many kinds in my house, besides the copy of a Martin Chuzzlewit. Not many of them are of great value except to me; but some of them are of some value to anybody. For the whole point of a home is that it is a hotch-potch. And mine, at any rate, rises to that austere domestic ideal. The whole point of one's own house is that it is not only a number of totally different things, which are nevertheless one thing, but it is one in which we still value even the things that we forget. If a man has burnt my house to a heap of ashes, I am none the less justly indignant with him for having burnt everything, because I cannot at first even remember everything he has burnt. And as it is with the household gods, so it is with the whole of that household religion, or what remains of it, to offer resistance to the destructive discipline of industrial capitalism. In a simpler society, I should rush out of the ruins, calling for help on the Commune or the King, and crying out, "Haro! a robber has burnt my house." I might, of course, rush down the street crying in one

passionate breath, "Haro! a robber has burnt my front door of seasoned oak with the usual fittings, fourteen window frames, nine curtains, five and a half carpets, 753 books, of which four were editions de luxe, one portrait of my great-grandmother," and so on through all the items; but something would be lost of the fierce and simple feudal cry. And in the same way I could have begun this outline with an inventory of all the alterations I should like to see in the laws, with the object of establishing some economic justice in England. But I doubt whether the reader would have had any better idea of what I was ultimately driving at; and it would not have been the approach by which I propose at present to drive. I shall have occasion later to go into some slight detail about these things; but the cases I give are merely illustrations of my first general thesis: that we are not even at the moment doing everything that could be done to resist the rush of monopoly; and that when people talk as if nothing could now be done, that statement is false at the start; and that all sorts of answers to it will immediately occur to the mind.

Capitalism is breaking up; and in one sense we do not pretend to be sorry it is breaking up. Indeed, we might put our own point pretty correctly by saying that we would help it to break up; but we do not want it merely to break down. But the first fact to realize is precisely that; that it is a choice between its breaking up and its breaking down. It is a choice between its being voluntarily resolved into its real component parts, each taking back its own, and its merely collapsing on our heads in a crash or confusion of all its component parts, which some call communism and some call chaos. The former is the one thing all sensible people should try to procure. The latter is the one thing that all sensible people should try to prevent. That is why they are often classed together.

I have mainly confined myself to answering what I have always found to be the first question, "What are we to do now?" To that I answer, "What we must do now is to stop the other people from doing what they are doing now." The initiative is with the enemy. It is he who is already doing things, and will have done them long before we can begin to do anything, since he has the money, the machinery, the rather mechanical majority, and other things which we have first to gain and then to use. He has nearly completed a monopolist conquest, but not quite; and he can still be hampered and halted. The world has woken up very late; but that is not our fault. That is the fault of all the fools who told us for twenty years that there could never be any Trusts; and are now telling us, equally wisely, that there can never be anything else.

There are other things I ask the reader to bear in mind. The first is that this outline is only an outline, though one that can hardly avoid some curves and loops. I do not profess to dispose of all the obstacles that might arise in this question, because so many of them would seem to many to be quite a different question. I will give one example of what I mean. What would the critical reader have thought, if at the very beginning of this sketch I had gone off into a long disputation about the Law of Libel? Yet, if I were strictly practical, I should find that one of the most practical obstacles. It is the present ridiculous position that monopoly is not resisted as a social force but can still be resented as a legal imputation. If you try to stop a man cornering milk, the first thing that happens will be a smashing libel action for calling it a corner. It is manifestly mere common sense that if the thing is not a sin it



is not a slander. As things stand, there is no punishment for the man who does it; but there is a punishment for the man who discovers it. I do not deal here (though I am quite prepared to deal elsewhere) with all these detailed difficulties which a society as now constituted would raise against such a society as we want to constitute. If it were constituted on the principles I suggest, those details would be dealt with on those principles as they arose. For instance, it would put an end to the nonsense whereby men, who are more powerful than emperors, pretend to be private tradesmen suffering from private malice; it will assert that those who are in practice public men must be criticized as potential public evils. It would destroy the absurdity by which an "important case" is tried by a "special jury"; or, in other words, that any serious issue between rich and poor is tried by the rich. But the reader will see that I cannot here rule out all the ten thousand things that might trip us up; I must assume that a people ready to take the larger risks would also take the smaller ones.

Now this outline is an outline; in other words, it is a design, and anybody who thinks we can have practical things without theoretical designs can go and quarrel with the nearest engineer or architect for drawing thin lines on thin paper. But there is another and more special sense in which my suggestion is an outline; in the sense that it is deliberately drawn as a large limitation within which there are many varieties. I have long been acquainted, and not a little amused, with the sort of practical man who will certainly say that I generalize because there is no practical plan. The truth is that I generalize because there are so many practical plans. I myself know four or five schemes that have been drawn up, more or less drastically, for the diffusion of capital. The most cautious, from a capitalist standpoint, is the gradual extension of profit-sharing. A more stringently democratic form of the same thing is the management of every business (if it cannot be a small business) by a guild or group clubbing their contributions and dividing their results. Some Distributists dislike the idea of the workman having shares only where he has work; they think he would be more independent if his little capital were invested elsewhere; but they all agree that he ought to have the capital to invest. Others continue to call themselves Distributists because they would give every citizen a dividend out of much larger national systems of production. I deliberately draw out my general principles so as to cover as many as possible of these alternative business schemes. But I object to being told that I am covering so many because I know there are none. If I tell a man he is too luxurious and extravagant, and that he ought to economize in something, I am not bound to give him a list of his luxuries. The point is that he will be all the better for cutting down any of his luxuries. And my point is that modern society would be all the better for cutting up property by any of these processes. This does not mean that I have not my own favourite form; personally I prefer the second type of division given in the above list of examples. But my main business is to point out that any reversal of the rush to concentrate property will be an improvement on the present state of things. If I tell a man his house is burning down in Putney, he may thank me even if I do not give him a list of all the vehicles which go to Putney, with the numbers of all the taxicabs and the time-table of all the trams. It is enough that I know there are a great many vehicles for him to choose from, before he is reduced to the proverbial adventure of going to Putney on a pig.

It is enough that any one of those vehicles is on the whole less uncomfortable than a house on fire or even a heap of ashes. I admit I might be called unpractical if impenetrable forests and destructive floods lay between here and Putney; it might then be as merely idealistic to praise Putney as to praise Paradise. But I do not admit that I am unpractical because I know there are half a dozen practical ways which are more practical than the present state of things. But it does not follow, in fact, that I do not know how to get to Putney. Here, for instance, are half a dozen things which would help the process of Distributism, apart from those on which I shall have occasion to touch as points of principle. Not all Distributists would agree with all of them; but all would agree that they are in the direction of Distributism. (1) The taxation of contracts so as to discourage the sale of small property to big proprietors and encourage the break-up of big property among small proprietors. (2) Something like the Napoleonic testamentary law and the destruction of primogeniture. (3) The establishment of free law for the poor, so that small property could always be defended against great. (4) The deliberate protection of certain experiments in small property, if necessary by tariffs and even local tariffs. (5) Subsidies to foster the starting of such experiments. (6) A league of voluntary dedication, and any number of other things of the same kind. But I have inserted this chapter here in order to explain that this is a sketch of the first principles of Distributism and not of the last details, about which even Distributists might dispute. In such a statement, examples are given as examples, and not as exact and exhaustive lists of all the cases covered by the rule. If this elementary principle of exposition be not understood I must be content to be called an unpractical person by that sort of practical man. And indeed in his sense there is something in his accusation. Whether or no I am a practical man, I am not what is called a practical politician, which means a professional politician. I can claim no part in the glory of having brought our country to its present promising and hopeful condition. Harder heads than mine have established the present prosperity of coal. Men of action, of a more rugged energy, have brought us to the comfortable condition of living on our capital. I have had no part in the great industrial revolution which has increased the beauties of nature and reconciled the classes of society; nor must the too enthusiastic reader think of thanking me for this more enlightened England, in which the employee is living on a dole from the State and the employer on an overdraft at the Bank.

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### III A CASE IN POINT

It is as natural to our commercial critics to argue in a circle as to travel on the Inner Circle. It is not mere stupidity, but it is mere habit; and it is not easy either to break into or to escape from that iron ring. When we say things can be done, we commonly mean either that they could be done by the mass of men, or else by the ruler of the State. I gave an example of something that could be done quite easily by the mass; and here I will give an example of something that could be done quite easily by the ruler. But we must be prepared for our critics beginning to argue in a circle and saying that the present populace will never agree or the present ruler act in that way. But this complaint is a confusion. We are answering people who call our ideal impossible in itself.

If you do not want it, of course, you will not try to get it; but do not say that because you do not want it, it follows that you could not get it if you did want it. A thing does not become intrinsically impossible merely by a mob not trying to obtain it; nor does a thing cease to be practical politics because no politician is practical enough to do it.

I will start with a small and familiar example. In order to ensure that our huge proletariat should have a holiday, we have a law obliging all employers to shut their shops for half a day once a week. Given the proletarian principle, it is a healthy and necessary thing for a proletarian state; just as the saturnalia is a healthy and necessary thing for a slave state. Given this provision for the proletariat, a practical person will naturally say: "It has other advantages, too; it will be a chance for anybody who chooses to do his own dirty work; for the man who can manage without servants." That degraded being who actually knows how to do things himself, will have a look in at last. That isolated crank, who can really work for his own living, may possibly have a chance to live. A man does not need to be a Distributist to say this; it is the ordinary and obvious thing that anybody would say. The man who has servants must cease to work his servants. Of course, the man who has no servants to work cannot cease to work them. But the law is actually so constructed that it forces this man also to give a holiday to the servants he has not got. He proclaims a saturnalia that never happens to a crowd of phantom slaves that have never been there. Now there is not a rudiment of reason about this arrangement. In every possible sense, from the immediate material to the abstract and mathematical sense, it is quite mad. We live in days of dangerous division of interests between the employer and the employed. Therefore, even when the two are not divided, but actually united in one person, we must divide them again into two parties. We coerce a man into giving himself something he does not want, because somebody else who does not exist might want it. We warn him that he had better receive a deputation from himself, or he might go on strike against himself. Perhaps he might even become a Bolshevik, and throw a bomb at himself; in which case he would have no other course left to his stern sense of law and order but to read the Riot Act and shoot himself. They call us unpractical; but we have not yet produced such an academic fantasy as this. They sometimes suggest that our regret for the disappearance of the yeoman or the apprentice is a mere matter of sentiment. Sentimental! We have not quite sunk to such sentimentalism as to be sorry for apprentices who never existed at all. We have not quite reached that richness of romantic emotion that we are capable of weeping more copiously for an imaginary grocer's assistant than for a real grocer. We are not quite so maudlin yet as to see double when we look into our favourite little shop; or to set the little shopkeeper fighting with his own shadow. Let us leave these hard-headed and practical men of business shedding tears over the sorrows of a non-existent office boy, and proceed upon our own wild and erratic path, that at least happens to pass across the land of the living.

Now if so small a change as that were made to-morrow, it would make a difference: a considerable and increasing difference. And if any rash apologist of Big Business tells me that a little thing like that could make very little difference, let him beware. For he is doing the one thing which such apologists commonly avoid

above all things: he is contradicting his masters. Among the thousand things of interest, which are lost in the million things of no interest, in the newspaper reports of Parliament and public affairs, there really was one delightful little comedy dealing with this point. Some man of normal sense and popular instincts, who had strayed into Parliament by some mistake or other, actually pointed out this plain fact: that there was no need to protect the proletariat where there was no proletariat to protect; and that the lonely shopkeeper might, therefore, remain in his lonely shop. And the Minister in charge of the matter actually replied, with a ghastly innocence, that it was impossible; for it would be unfair to the big shops. Tears evidently flow freely in such circles, as they did from the rising politician, Lord Lundy; and in this case it was the mere thought of the possible sufferings of the millionaires that moved him. There rose before his imagination Mr. Selfridge in his agony, and the groans of Mr. Woolworth, of the Woolworth Tower, thrilled through the kind hearts to which the cry of the sorrowing rich will never come in vain. But whatever we may think of the sensibility needed to regard the big store-owners as objects of sympathy, at any rate it disposes at a stroke of all the fashionable fatalism that sees something inevitable in their success. It is absurd to tell us that our attack is bound to fail; and then that there would be something quite unscrupulous in its so immediately succeeding. Apparently Big Business must be accepted because it is invulnerable, and spared because it is vulnerable. This big absurd bubble can never conceivably be burst; and it is simply cruel that a little pin-prick of competition can burst it.

I do not know whether the big shops are quite so weak and wobbly as their champion said. But whatever the immediate effect on the big shops, I am sure there would be an immediate effect on the little shops. I am sure that if they could trade on the general holiday, it would not only mean that there would be more trade for them, but that there would be more of them trading. It might mean at last a large class of little shopkeepers; and that is exactly the sort of thing that makes all the political difference, as it does in the case of a large class of little farmers. It is not in the merely mechanical sense a matter of numbers. It is a matter of the presence and pressure of a particular social type. It is not a question merely of how many noses are counted; but in the more real sense whether the noses count. If there were anything that could be called a class of peasants, or a class of small shopkeepers, they would make their presence felt in legislation, even if it were what is called class legislation. And the very existence of that third class would be the end of what is called the class war; in so far as its theory divides all men into employers and employed. I do not mean, of course, that this little legal alteration is the only one I have to propose; I mention it first because it is the most obvious. But I mention it also because it illustrates very clearly what I mean by the two stages: the nature of the negative and positive reform. If little shops began to gain custom and big shops began to lose it, it would mean two things, both indeed preliminary but both practical. It would mean that the mere centripetal rush was slowed down, if not stopped, and might at last change to a centrifugal movement. And it would mean that there were a number of new citizens in the State to whom all the ordinary Socialist or servile arguments were inapplicable. Now when you have got your considerable sprinkling of small proprietors, of men with the psychology and philosophy of small property,

then you can begin to talk to them about something more like a just general settlement upon their own lines; something more like a land fit for Christians to live in. You can make them understand, as you cannot make plutocrats or proletarians understand, why the machine must not exist save as the servant of the man, why the things we produce ourselves are precious like our own children, and why we can pay too dearly for the possession of luxury by the loss of liberty. If bodies of men only begin to be detached from the servile settlements, they will begin to form the body of our public opinion. Now there are a large number of other advantages that could be given to the small man, which can be considered in their place. In all of them I presuppose a deliberate policy of favouring the small man. But in the primary example here given we can hardly even say that there is any question of favour. You make a law that slave-owners shall free their slaves for a day: the man who has no slaves is outside the thing entirely; he does not come under it in law, because he does not come into it in logic. He has been deliberately dragged into it; not in order that all slaves shall be free for a day, but in order that all free men shall be slaves for a lifetime. But while some of the expedients are only common justice to small property, and others are deliberate protection of small property, the point at the moment is that it will be worth while at the beginning to create small property though it were only on a small scale. English citizens and yeomen would once more exist; and wherever they exist they count. There are many other ways, which can be briefly described, by which the break-up of property can be encouraged on the legal and legislative side. I shall deal with some of them later, and especially with the real responsibility which Government might reasonably assume in a financial and economic condition which is becoming quite ludicrous. From the standpoint of any sane person, in any other society, the present problem of capitalist concentration is not only a question of law but of criminal law, not to mention criminal lunacy.

Of that monstrous megalomania of the big shops, with their blatant advertisements and stupid standardization, something is said elsewhere. But it may be well to add, in the matter of the small shops, that when once they exist they generally have an organization of their own which is much more self-respecting and much less vulgar. This voluntary organization, as every one knows, is called a Guild; and it is perfectly capable of doing everything that really needs to be done in the way of holidays and popular festivals. Twenty barbers would be quite capable of arranging with each other not to compete with each other on a particular festival or in a particular fashion, It is amusing to note that the same people who say that a Guild is a dead medieval thing that would never work are generally grumbling against the power of a Guild as a living modern thing where it is actually working. In the case of the Guild of the Doctors, for instance, it is made a matter of reproach in the newspapers, that the confederation in question refuses to "make medical discoveries accessible to the general public." When we consider the wild and unbalanced nonsense that is made accessible to the general public by the public press, perhaps we have some reason to doubt whether our souls and bodies are not at least as safe in the hands of a Guild as they are likely to be in the hands of a Trust. For the moment the main point is that small shops can be governed even if they are not bossed by the Government. Horrible as this may seem to the democratic idealists of the day, they can be governed by themselves.

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#### IV THE TYRANNY OF TRUSTS

We have most of us met in literature, and even in life, a certain sort of old gentleman; he is very often represented by an old clergyman. He is the sort of man who has a horror of Socialists without any very definite idea of what they are. He is the man of whom men say that he means well; by which they mean that he means nothing. But this view is a little unjust to this social type. He is really something more than well-meaning; we might even go so far as to say that he would probably be right-thinking, if he ever thought. His principles would probably be sound enough if they were really applied; it is his practical ignorance that prevents him from knowing the world to which they are applicable. He might really be right, only he has no notion of what is wrong. Those who have sat under this old gentleman know that he is in the habit of softening his stern repudiation of the mysterious Socialists by saying that, of course, it is a Christian duty to use our wealth well, to remember that property is a trust committed to us by Providence for the good of others as well as ourselves, and even (unless the old gentleman is old enough to be a Modernist) that it is just possible that we may some day be asked a question or two about the abuse of such a trust. Now all this is perfectly true, so far as it goes, but it happens to illustrate in a rather curious way the queer and even uncanny innocence of the old gentleman. The very phrase that he uses, when he says that property is a trust committed to us by Providence, is a phrase which takes on, when it is uttered to the world around him, the character of an awful and appalling pun. His pathetic little sentence returns in a hundred howling echoes, repeating it again and again like the laughter of a hundred fiends in hell: "Property is a Trust."

Now I could not more conveniently sum up what I meant by this first section than by taking this type of the dear old conservative clergyman, and considering the curious way in which he has been first caught napping, and then as it were knocked on the head. The first thing we have had to explain to him is expressed in that horrible pun about the Trust. While he has been crying out against imaginary robbers, whom he calls Socialists, he has been caught and carried away bodily by real robbers, whom he still could not even imagine. For the gangs of gamblers who make the great combines are really gangs of robbers, in the sense that they have far less feeling than anybody else for that individual responsibility for individual gifts of God which the old gentleman very rightly calls a Christian duty. While he has been weaving words in the air about irrelevant ideals, he has been caught in a net woven out of the very opposite words and notions: impersonal, irresponsible, irreligious. The financial forces that surround him are further away than anything else from the domestic idea of ownership with which, to do him justice, he himself began. So that when he still bleats faintly, "Property is a trust," we shall reply firmly, "A trust is not property."

And now I come to the really extraordinary thing about the old gentleman. I mean that I come to the queerest fact about the conventional or conservative type in modern English society. And that is the fact that the same society, which began by saying there was no such danger to avoid, now says that the danger cannot possibly be avoided.

Our whole capitalist community has taken one huge stride from the extreme of optimism to the extreme of pessimism. They began by saying that there could not be Trusts in this country. They have ended by saying that there cannot be anything else except Trusts in this age. And in the course of calling the same thing impossible on Monday and inevitable on Tuesday, they have saved the life of the great gambler or robber twice over; first by calling him a fabulous monster, and second by calling him an almighty fate. Twelve years ago, when I talked of Trusts, people said: "There are no Trusts in England." Now, when I say it, the same people say: "But how do you propose that England should escape from the Trusts?" They talk as if the Trusts had always been a part of the British Constitution, not to mention the Solar System. In short, the pun and parable with which I began this article have exactly and ironically come true. The poor old clergyman is now really driven to talk as if a Trust with a big T were something that had been bestowed on him by Providence. He is driven to abandon all that he originally meant by his own curious sort of Christian individualism, and hastily reconcile himself to something that is more like a sort of plutocratic collectivism. He is beginning, in a rather bewildered way, to understand that he must now say that monopoly and not merely private property is a part of the nature of things. The net had been thrown over him while he slept, because he never thought of such a thing as a net; because he would have denied the very possibility of anybody weaving such a net. But now the poor old gentleman has to begin to talk as if he had been born in the net. Perhaps, as I say, he has had a knock on the head; perhaps, as his enemies say, he was always just a little weak in the head. But, anyhow, now that his head is in the noose, or the net, he will often start preaching to us about the impossibility of escaping from nets and nooses that are woven or spun upon the wheel of the fates. In a word, I wish to point out that the old gentleman was much too heedless about getting into the net and is much too hopeless about getting out of it.

In short, I would sum up my general suggestions so far by saying that the chief danger to be avoided now, and the first danger to be considered now, is the danger of supposing the capitalist conquest more complete than it is. If I may use the terms of the Penny Catechism about the two sins against hope, the peril now is no longer the peril of presumption but rather of despair. It is not mere impudence like that of those who told us, without winking an eyelid, that there were no Trusts in England. It is rather mere impotence like that of those who tell us that England must soon be swallowed up in an earthquake called America. Now this sort of surrender to modern monopoly is not only ignoble, it is also panic-stricken and premature. **It is not true that we can do nothing.** What I have written so far has been directed to showing the doubtful and the terrified that it is not true that we can do nothing. Even now there is something that can be done, and done at once; though the things so to be done may appear to be of different kinds and even of degrees of effectiveness. Even if we only save a shop in our own street or stop a conspiracy in our own trade, or get a Bill to punish such conspiracies pressed by our own member, we may come in the nick of time and make all the difference.

To vary the metaphor to a military one, what has happened is that the monopolists have attempted an encircling movement.

But the encircling movement is not yet complete. Unless we do something it will be complete; but it is not true to say that we can do nothing to prevent it being completed. We are in favour of striking out, of making sorties or sallies, of trying to pierce certain points in the line (far enough apart and chosen for their weakness), of breaking through the gap in the uncompleted circle. Most people around us are for surrender to the surprise; precisely because it was to them so complete a surprise. Yesterday they denied that the enemy could encircle. The day before yesterday they denied that the enemy could exist. They are paralysed as by a prodigy. But just as we never agreed that the thing was impossible, so we do not now agree that it is irresistible. Action ought to have been taken long ago; but action can still be taken now. That is why it is worth while to dwell on the diverse expedients already given as examples. A chain is as strong as its weakest link; a battleline is as strong as its weakest man; an encircling movement is as strong as its weakest point, the point at which the circle may still be broken. Thus, to begin with, if anybody asks me in this matter, "What am I to do now?" I answer, "Do anything, however small, that will prevent the completion of the work of capitalist combination. Do anything that will even delay that completion. Save one shop out of a hundred shops. Save one croft out of a hundred crofts. Keep open one door out of a hundred doors; for so long as one door is open, we are not in prison. Throw up one barricade in their way, and you will soon see whether it is the way the world is going. Put one spoke in their wheel, and you will soon see whether it is the wheel of fate." For it is of the essence of their enormous and unnatural effort that a small failure is as big as a big failure. The modern commercial combine has a great many points in common with a big balloon. It is swollen and yet it is swollen with levity; it climbs and yet it drifts; above all, it is full of gas, and generally of poison gas. But the resemblance most relevant here is that the smallest prick will shrivel the biggest balloon. If this tendency of our time received anything like a reasonably definite check, I believe the whole tendency would soon begin to weaken in its preposterous prestige. Until monopoly is monopolist it is nothing. Until the combine can combine everything, it is nothing. Ahab has not his kingdom so long as Naboth has his vineyard. Haman will not be happy in the palace while Mordecai is sitting in the gate. A hundred tales of human history are there to show that tendencies can be turned back, and that one stumbling-block can be the turning-point. The sands of time are simply dotted with single stakes that have thus marked the turn of the tide. The first step towards ultimately winning is to make sure that the enemy does not win, if it be only that he does not win everywhere. Then, when we have halted his rush, and perhaps fought it to a standstill, we may begin a general counter-attack. The nature of that counter-attack I shall next proceed to consider. In other words, I will try to explain to the old clergyman caught in the net (whose sufferings are ever before my eyes) what it will no doubt comfort him to know: that he was wrong from the first in thinking there could be no net; that he is wrong now in thinking there is no escape from the net; and that he will never know how wrong he was till he finds he has a net of his own, and is once more a fisher of men.

I began by enunciating the paradox that one way of supporting small shops would be to support them. Everybody could do it, but nobody can imagine it being done. In one sense nothing is so simple,



and in another nothing is so hard. I went on to point out that without any sweeping change at all, the mere modification of existing laws would probably call thousands of little shops into life and activity. I may have occasion to return to the little shops at greater length; but for the moment I am only running rapidly through certain separate examples, to show that the citadel of plutocracy could even now be attacked from many different sides. It could be met by a concerted effort in the open field of competition. It could be checked by the creation or even correction of a large number of little laws. Thirdly, it could be attacked by the more sweeping operation of larger laws. But when we come to these, even at this stage, we also come into collision with larger questions.

The common sense of Christendom, for ages on end, has assumed that it was as possible to punish cornering as to punish coining. Yet to most readers to-day there seems a sort of vital contradiction, echoed in the verbal contradiction of saying, "Put not your trust in Trusts." Yet to our fathers this would not seem even so much of a paradox as saying, "Put not your trust in princes," but rather like saying, "Put not your trust in pirates." But in applying this to modern conditions, we are checked first by a very modern sophistry.

When we say that a corner should be treated as a conspiracy, we are always told that the conspiracy is too elaborate to be unravelled. In other words, we are told that the conspirators are too conspiratorial to be caught. Now it is exactly at this point that my simple and childlike confidence in the business expert entirely breaks down. My attitude, a moment ago trustful and confiding, becomes disrespectful and frivolous. I am willing to agree that I do not know much about the details of business, but not that nobody could possibly ever come to know anything about them. I am willing to believe that there are people in the world who like to feel that they depend for the bread of life on one particular bounder, who probably began by making large profits on short weight. I am willing to believe that there are people so strangely constituted that they like to see a great nation held up by a small gang, more lawless than brigands but not so brave. In short, I am willing to admit that there may be people who trust in Trusts. I admit it with tears, like those of the benevolent captain in the Bab Ballads who said:

"It's human nature p'raps; if so,  
Oh, isn't human nature low?"

I myself doubt whether it is quite so low as that; but I admit the possibility of this utter lowness; I admit it with weeping and lamentation. But when they tell me it would be impossible to find out whether a man is making a Trust or not--that is quite another thing. My demeanour alters. My spirits revive. When I am told that if cornering were a crime nobody could be convicted of that crime--then I laugh; nay, I jeer.

A murder is usually committed, we may infer, when one gentleman takes a dislike to the appearance of another gentleman in Piccadilly Circus at eleven o'clock in the morning; and steps up to the object of his distaste and dexterously cuts his throat. He then walks across to the kind policeman who is regulating the traffic, and draws his attention to the presence of the corpse on the pavement,

consulting him about how to dispose of the encumbrance. That is apparently how these people expect financial crimes to be done, in order to be discovered. Sometimes indeed they are done almost as brazenly, in communities where they can safely be discovered. But the theory of legal impotence looks very extraordinary when we consider the sort of things that the police do discover. Look at the sort of murders they discover. An utterly ordinary and obscure man in some hole-and-corner house or tenement among ten thousand like it, washes his hands in a sink in a back scullery; the operation taking two minutes. The police can discover that, but they could not possibly discover the meeting of men or the sending of messages that turn the whole commercial world upside down. They can track a man that nobody has ever heard of to a place where nobody knew he was going, to do something that he took every possible precaution that nobody should see. But they cannot keep a watch on a man that everybody has heard of, to see whether he communicates with another man that everybody has heard of, in order to do something that nearly everybody knows he is trying all his life to do. They can tell us all about the movements of a man whose own wife or partner or landlady does not profess to know his movements; but they cannot tell when a great combination covering half the earth is on the move. Are the police really so foolish as this; or are they at once so foolish and so wise? Or if the police were as helpless as Sherlock Holmes thought them, what about Sherlock Holmes? What about the ardent amateur detective about whom all of us have read and some of us (alas!) have written. Is there no inspired sleuth to succeed where all the police have failed; and prove conclusively from a greasy spot on the tablecloth that Mr. Rockefeller is interested in oil? Is there no keen-faced man to infer from the late Lord Leverhulme buying up a crowd of soap-businesses that he was interested in soap? I feel inclined to write a new series of detective stories myself, about the discovery of these obscure and cryptic things. They would describe Sherlock Holmes with his monstrous magnifying-glass poring over a paper and making out one of the headlines letter by letter. They would show us Watson standing in amazement at the discovery of the Bank of England. My stories would bear the traditional sort of titles, such as "The Secret of the Skysign" and "The Mystery of the Megaphone" and "The Adventure of the Unnoticed Hoarding."

What these people really mean is that they cannot imagine cornering being treated like coining. They cannot imagine attempted forestalling, or, indeed, any activity of the rich, coming into the realm of the criminal law at all. It would give them a shock to think of such men subjected to such tests. I will give one obvious example. The science of finger-prints is perpetually paraded before us by the criminologists when they merely want to glorify their not very glorious science. Finger-prints would prove as easily whether a millionaire had used a pen as whether a housebreaker had used a jemmy. They might show as clearly that a financier had used a telephone as that a burglar had used a ladder. But if we began to talk about taking the finger-prints of financiers, everybody would think it was a joke. And so it is: a very grim joke. The laughter that leaps up spontaneously at the suggestion is itself a proof that nobody takes seriously, or thinks of taking seriously, the idea of rich men and poor being equal before the law.

That is the reason why we do not treat Trust magnates and monopolists as they would be treated under the old laws of popular justice.

And that is the reason why I take their case at this stage, and in this section of my remarks, along with such apparently light and superficial things as transferring custom from one shop to another. It is because in both cases it is a question wholly and solely of moral will; and not in the least, in any sense, a question of economic law. In other words, it is a lie to say that we cannot make a law to imprison monopolists, or pillory monopolists, or hang monopolists if we choose, as our fathers did before us. And in the same sense it is a lie to say that we cannot help buying the best advertised goods or going to the biggest shop or falling in, in our general social habits, with the general social trend. We could help it in a hundred ways; from the very simple one of walking out of a shop to the more ceremonial one of hanging a man on a gallows. If we mean that we do not want to help it, that may be very true, and even in some cases very right. But arresting a forestaller is as easy as falling off a log or walking out of a shop. Putting the log-roller in prison is no more impossible than walking out of the shop is impossible; and it is highly desirable for the health of this discussion that we should realize the fact from the first. Practically about half of the recognized expedients by which a big business is now made have been marked down as a crime in some community of the past; and could be so marked in a community of the future. I can only refer to them here in the most cursory fashion. One of them is the process against which the statesmen of the most respectable party rave day and night so long as they can pretend that it is only done by foreigners. It is called Dumping. There is a policy of deliberately selling at a loss to destroy another man's market. Another is: a process against which the same statesmen of the same party actually have attempted to legislate, so long as it was confined to moneylenders. Unfortunately, however, it is not by any means confined to moneylenders. It is the trick of tying a poorer man up in a tangle of all sorts of obligations that he cannot ultimately discharge, except by selling his shop or business. It is done in one form by giving to the desperate things on the instalment plan or on long credit. All these conspiracies I would have tried as we try a conspiracy to overthrow the State or to shoot the King. We do not expect the man to write the King a post-card, telling him he is to be shot, or to give warning in the newspapers of the Day of Revolution. Such plots have always been judged in the only way in which they can be judged: by the use of common sense as to the existence of a purpose and the apparent existence of a plan. But we shall never have a real civic sense until it is once more felt that the plot of three citizens against one citizen is a crime, as well as the plot of one citizen against three. In other words, private property ought to be protected against private crime, just as public order is protected against private judgment. But private property ought to be protected against much bigger things than burglars and pick-pockets. It needs protection against the plots of a whole plutocracy. It needs defence against the rich, who are now generally the rulers who ought to defend it. It may not be difficult to explain why they do not defend it. But anyhow, in all these cases, the difficulty is in imagining people wanting to do it; not in imagining people doing it. By all means let people say that they do not think the ideal of the Distributive State is worth the risk or even worth the trouble. But do not let them say that no human being in the past has ever taken any risk; or that no children of Adam are capable of taking any trouble. If they chose to take half as much risk to achieve justice as they

have already taken to achieve degradation, if they toiled half as laboriously to make anything beautiful as they toiled to make everything ugly, if they had served their God as they have served their Pork King and their Petrol King, the success of our whole Distributive democracy would stare at the world like one of their flaming sky-signs and scrape the sky like one of their crazy towers.

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### III SOME ASPECTS OF THE LAND

1. The Simple Truth
2. Vows and Volunteers
3. The Real Life on the Land

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### I THE SIMPLE TRUTH

All of us, or at least all those of my generation, heard in our youth an anecdote about George Stephenson, the discoverer of the Locomotive Steam-Engine. It was said that some miserable rustic raised the objection that it would be very awkward if a cow strayed on the railway line, whereupon the inventor replied, "It would be very awkward for the cow." It is supremely characteristic of his age and school that it never seemed to occur to anybody that it might be rather awkward for the rustic who owned the cow.

Long before we heard that anecdote, however, we had probably heard another and more exciting anecdote called "Jack and the Beanstalk." That story begins with the strange and startling words, "There once was a poor woman who had a cow." It would be a wild paradox in modern England to imagine that a poor woman could have a cow; but things seem to have been different in ruder and more superstitious ages. Anyhow, she evidently would not have had a cow long in the sympathetic atmosphere of Stephenson and his steam-engine. The train went forward, the cow was killed in due course; and the state of mind of the old woman was described as the Depression of Agriculture. But everybody was so happy in travelling in trains and making it awkward for cows that nobody noticed that other difficulties remained. When wars or revolutions cut us off from cows, the industrialists discovered that milk does not come originally from cans. On this fact some of us have founded the idea that the cow (and even the miserable rustic) have a use in society, and have been prepared to concede her as much as three acres. But it will be well at this stage to repeat that we do not propose that every acre should be covered with cows; and do not propose to eliminate townspeople as they would eliminate rustics. On many minor points we might have to compromise with conditions, especially at first. But even my ideal, if ever I found it at last, would be what some call a compromise. Only I think it more accurate to call it a balance. For I do not think that the sun compromises with the rain when together they make a garden; or that the rose that grows there is a compromise between green and red. But I mean that even my Utopia would contain different things of different types holding on different tenures: that as in a medieval state there were some peasants, some monasteries, some common land, some private land, some town guilds, and so on, so in my modern state there would be some things nationalized, some machines owned corporately, some guilds sharing common profits,