

CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

---

**THE EVOLUTION**  
*of PROPERTY from*  
**SAVAGERY to**  
**CIVILIZATION**

---



by  
**Paul Lafargue**

Forgotten Books

Paul Lafargue

**The Evolution of  
Property  
*from Savagery to*  
Civilization**

(1890)

English Edition: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London 1890.  
Transcribed & marked up by Einde O'Callaghan for the *Marxists' Internet  
Archive*.

---

“The economic structure of society is the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised, and to which definite social forms of thought correspond : in short the mode of production determines the character of the social, political, and intellectual life generally.”

Karl Marx, *Capital*

\* \* \* \*

“A critical knowledge of the evolution of the idea of property would embody, in some respects, the most remarkable portion of the mental history of mankind.”

Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society*

---

## **Publishers' Preface**

### **I. Forms of Contemporaneous Property**

### **II. Primitive Communism**

### **III. Family or Consanguine Collectivism**

### **IV. Feudal Property**

### **V. Bourgeois Property**

# Publishers' Preface

THE work of Paul Lafargue on the *Evolution of Property* was originally published as a series of articles, under the *nom de plume* of "Fergus," in the *Nouvelle Revue* of Paris, edited by Madame Adam. The originality of the theory advanced, and the mass of facts quoted, were noted not only in France but in England. The *Daily News* and the *Daily Telegraph*, notably, called attention to the chapter on *Primitive Communism* – a chapter written in answer to Professor Huxley's attack on Rousseau and Human Equality.

The Socialdemokratische Bibliothek, Hottingen, Zurich (a series of volumes issued by the German Socialist Party), has already published a translation of the work, and as soon as the more complete English edition is out it will be used as the basis of Italian and Polish translations. The *Fascio Operaio*, the official organ of the Italian Working Class Party, in its issue of July 27th, 1890, says:

"Lafargue's work is an attempt to work out the history of property along the lines of the materialistic conception of history. Lafargue, by his great talent and his wide reading, is undoubtedly equal to the task he has set himself."

The *Sozial Demokrat*, the official organ of the German Socialist Party as long as the persecution of Bismarck lasted, in its issue of July 5th, 1890, says:

"Lafargue's general reading, and his special study of pre-historic times and anthropology, qualify him for the writing of a *History of Property* ... We can confidently recommend his work as one eminently instructive suggestive, and readable."

# CHAPTER I

# Forms of

# Contemporaneous

# Property

POLITICAL economists have laid it down as an axiom that Capital, the form of property at present predominant, is eternal; they have tasked their brains to show that capital is coeval with the world, and that as it has had no beginning, so it can have no end. [1]In proof of which astounding assertion all the manuals of political economy repeat with much complacency the story of the savage who, having in his possession a couple of bows, lends one of them to a brother savage, for a share in the produce of his chase.

So great were the zeal, and ardour which economists brought to bear on their search for capitalistic property in prehistoric times, that they succeeded, in the course of their investigations, in discovering the existence of property outside the human species, to wit, among the invertebrates: for the ant, in her foresight, is a hoarder of provisions. It is a pity that they should not have gone a step farther, and affirmed that, if the ant lays up stores, she does so with a view to sell the same and realise a profit by the circulation of her capital.

But there is a gap in the economists' theory of the eternity of capital. They have omitted to show that the term capital likewise exists from all time. In a ship every rope has its appropriate name, with the exception of the bell rope. It is inadmissible that in the domain of political economy the terminology should have been so inadequate as not to furnish a name for so useful and all-important a thing as capital; yet it is a matter of fact that the term capital, in the modern sense, dates no farther back than the 18th century. This is the case also with the word philanthropy (the humanitarian hypocrisy proper to the capitalistic regime). And it was in the 18th century that capitalist property began to assert itself, and to acquire a preponderating influence in society. This social predominance of capital led to the French Revolution, which, although one of the most considerable events of modern history, was, after all, but a bourgeois revolution accomplished with those catchwords of liberty, fraternity, equality, justice and patriotism which the bourgeois were, later on, to employ in puffing their political and financial enterprises. At the time of the Revolution the capitalists were cattle so newly raised by society that in his *Dictionnaire de Mots Nouveaux* published in 1802, Sebastien Mercier thought it necessary to insert the word *capitaliste*, and to append the following curious definition:

“Capitalists: this word is well nigh unknown out of Paris. It designates a monster of wealth, a man who has a heart of iron, and no affections save metallic ones. Talk to him of the land tax and he laughs at you; he does not own an inch of land, how should you tax him? Like the Arabs of the desert who have plundered a caravan, and who bury their gold out of fear of other brigands, the capitalists have hidden away our money.”



In 1802 mankind had not as yet acquired the feeling of profound respect which in our day is inspired by the capitalist.

The term capital, though of Latin origin, has no equivalent in the Greek and Latin tongues. The non-existence of the word in two such rich languages affords a proof that capitalist property did not exist in ancient times, at least as an economical and social phenomenon.

The form of property which corresponds to the term capital was developed and acquired social importance only after the establishment of commercial production, which crowned the economical and political movement agitating Europe after the 12th century. This commercial production was stimulated by the discovery of America and the route to India by the Cape of Good Hope, by the importation of precious metals from America, the taking of Constantinople, the invention of printing, the family alliances among the sovereigns of Europe, and the organisation of the great feudal states, with the relative and general pacification which resulted therefrom. All these and other collateral causes co-operated to create a rapid development of capital, the most perfect of all forms of private property, and, it may be averred, the last. The comparatively recent appearance of capital is the best proof adducible that property is not immutable and always the same, but that, on the contrary, it, like all material and intellectual phenomena, incessantly evolves and passes through a series of forms which differ, but are derived, from one another.

So far indeed is property from being always identical that in our own society it affects divers forms, capable of being reduced to two principal ones.

- a. *Common property of ancient origin*, the type of which are the communal lands, exposed for centuries past to the encroachments of the nobility and *bourgeoisie*.
- I. FORMS OF COMMON PROPERTY b. *Common property of modern origin*, administered by the State, comprised under the term Public Services, (the Mint, Post Office, Public Roads, National Libraries, Museums, etc.)

- 
- a. *Property of personal appropriation*.
  - II. FORMS OF PRIVATE PROPERTY b. *Property – Instruments of labour*.
  - c. *Property – Capital*.

(a) Property of personal appropriation begins with the food one eats, and extends to the articles of clothing and objects of luxury (rings, jewels, etc.), with which one covers and decks oneself. Time was when the house, too, was included in this branch of personal property; a man possessed his dwelling, a marble palace or a hut of straw, like the tortoise his shell. If by the application of machinery to industry, civilisation has placed numberless objects of luxury within the reach of the poor which hitherto have been purchasable by the rich alone, it has on the other hand deprived the bulk of the nation of their dwelling-house. It constrains them to live in hired apartments and furnished lodgings; and in the



midst of unprecedented wealth it has reduced the producer to a strict minimum of property of personal appropriation.

Capitalist civilisation condemns the proletarian to vegetate in conditions of existence inferior to those of the savage. To waive the important fact that the savage does not labour for others, and to confine ourselves wholly to the question of food, it is indisputable that the barbarians who invaded and peopled Europe, and who, possessing as they did, herds of swine and other animals, and having within their reach all the resources of the chase in richly stocked forests, and of fishing in the seas and rivers – if ill-clad with the skins of wild beasts and coarsely-woven materials – partook of more animal food than do our proletarians, whose shoddy clothing, excellently woven by perfected machinery, is a very poor protection against the inclemencies of the weather. The condition of the proletarian is the harder in that his constitution is less robust and less inured to the rigour of the climate than was the body of the savage. The following fact affords an idea of the robustness of uncivilised man. In the prehistoric tombs of Europe skulls have been discovered bearing traces of perforations suggestive of trepanning. Anthropologists at first took these skulls for amulets or ornaments, and concluded that they had been perforated after death, until Broca showed that the operation could not have been performed on corpses by producing a number of skulls in which a process of cicatrisation was observable, that could not have taken place unless the trepanned person had survived the operation. It was objected that it must have been impossible for ignorant savages, with their rude instruments of bronze and silex, to practice so delicate an operation, considered dangerous by modern doctors, despite their learning and the excellence of their surgical

instruments. But all doubts have been now removed by the positive knowledge that this kind of operation is practised by savages with perfect success. Among the Berbers of the present day the operation is performed in the open air, and after the lapse of a few days, to the infinite astonishment of European witnesses, the trepanned man is on his legs again and resumes his occupations just as if a portion of his skull had not been scraped away, for the operation is performed by scraping. Skull wounds, which entail such grave complications in civilised persons, heal with extraordinary quickness and ease in primitive peoples. Notwithstanding the frantic enthusiasm with which civilisation inspires the philistine, the physical, and maybe the mental, inferiority of the civilised man, allowing, of course, for exceptions, must be conceded. It will require an education beginning at the cradle and prolonged throughout life and continued for several generations to restore to the human being of future society the vigour and perfection of the senses which characterise the savage and the barbarian. [2]Morgan, one of the rare anthropologists who do not share the imbecile disdain professed for the savage and the barbarian by the philistine, was also the first to classify in logical order the abundant and often contradictory materials that have accumulated respecting savage races, and to trace the first outlines of the evolution of prehistoric man. He observes,

“It may be suggested as not improbable of ultimate recognition that the progress of mankind in the period of savagery, in its relation to the sum of human progress, was greater in degree than in the three sub-periods of barbarism, and that the progress made in the whole period of barbarism was, in like manner, greater in degree than it has been since in the entire period of civilisation.” [3]

The savage or barbarian transplanted into civilised society cuts a sorry figure: he loses his native good qualities, while he contracts the diseases and acquires the vices of civilised man; but the history of the Greeks and the Egyptians shows us how marvellous a degree of material and intellectual development a barbarous people is capable of attaining when placed in the requisite conditions and evolving freely.

The civilised producer is reduced to the minimum of personal property necessary for the satisfaction of his most urgent wants merely because the capitalist possesses means and to spare for the indulgence of his most extravagant fancies. The capitalist should have a hundred heads and a hundred feet, like the Hecatonchiri of Greek mythology, if he would utilise the hats and boots that encumber his wardrobe. If the proletarians suffer from the want of personal property, the capitalists end by becoming the martyrs of a superfluity thereof. The ennui which oppresses them, and the maladies which prey on them, deteriorating and undermining the race, are the consequences of an excess of the means of enjoyment.

(b.) *Private property in the instruments of labour.* Man, according to Franklin's definition, is a tool-making animal. It is the manufacture of tools which distinguishes man from the brutes, his ancestors. Monkeys make use of sticks and stones, man is the only animal that has wrought silex for the manufacture of arms and tools, so that the discovery of a stone implement in a cavern or geological stratum is proof as positive of the presence of a human being as the human skeleton itself. The instrument of labour, the silex knife of the savage, the plane of the carpenter, the bistouri of the surgeon, the microscope of the physiologist, or the plough of

the peasant, is an addition to man's organs which facilitates the satisfaction of his wants.

So long as petty manual industry prevails, the free producer is the proprietor of his instruments of labour. In the middle ages the journeyman travelled with his bag of tools, which never left him; the yeoman, even before the constitution of private property, temporarily possessed the patch of land which was allotted to him in the territorial partition; the mediæval serf was so closely connected with the soil he cultivated as to be inseparable therefrom.

There remain many vestiges of this private property in the instruments of labour, but they are fast disappearing. In all the industries which have been seized on by machinery, the individual implement has been torn out of the worker's hand and replaced by the machine tool – a collective instrument of labour which can no longer be the property of the producer. Capitalism divests man of his personal property, the tool; and the first perfect instruments he had manufactured for himself, his weapons of defence, were the first to be wrested from him. The savage is the proprietor of his bow and arrows, which constitute at one and the same time his arms and his tools, historically the most perfected. The soldier was the first proletarian who was stripped of his tools, i.e., his arms, which, belong to the government that enrolls him.

Capitalistic society has reduced to a minimum the personal property of the proletarian. It was impossible to go further without causing the death of the producer – the capitalists' goose that lays the golden eggs. It tends to dispossess him

altogether of his instruments of labour, a spoliation which is already an accomplished fact for the great bulk of workers.

(c) *Property Capital*. The capital form of property is the truly typical form of property in modern society. In no other society has it existed as a universal or dominant fact.

The essential condition of this form of property is the exploitation of the free producer, who is robbed hourly of a fraction of the value he creates; a fact which Marx has demonstrated beyond refutation. Capital is based on the production of commodities, on a form of production, that is, in which a man produces in view, not of the consumption of the labourer, or of that of his feudal lord or slave-owning master, but in view of the market. In other societies, also, men bought and sold, but it was the surplus articles alone that were exchanged. In those societies the labourer, slave, or serf, was exploited, it is true, but the proprietor had at least certain obligations towards him; e.g., the slaveholder was bound to feed his human beast of burden whether he worked or not. The capitalist has been released from all charges, which now rest upon the free labourer. It roused the indignation of the good natured Plutarch that Cato, the sour moralist, rid himself of slaves grown old and decrepit in his service. What would he have said of the modern capitalist, who allows the workers that have enriched him to starve or to die in the workhouse ? In emancipating the slave and bondman, it was not the liberty of the producer that the capitalist sought to compass but the liberty of capital, which had to be discharged of all obligations towards the workmen. It is only when the capital form of property is in force that the proprietor can exercise in all its stringency the right to use and abuse.

These are the extant forms of property in modern society. Even a superficial view thereof will convince us that these forms are themselves undergoing change; e.g., while communal property of ancient origin is being converted into private property, private capitalistic property is being turned into common property administered by the State; but before attaining this ultimate form, capital dispossesses the producer of his individual tool and creates the collective instrument of labour.

Now having convinced ourselves that the existent forms of property are in a state of flux and evolution, we must be blind indeed if we refuse to admit that in the past also property was unstable, and that it has passed through different phases before arriving at the actual forms, which must, in their turn, resolve themselves and be replaced by other novel forms.

\* \* \* \*

In this essay I propose to treat of the various forms of property anterior to its assumption of the capital form. Before entering on my subject I would premise a few particulars touching the method employed by me in this attempt at a partial reconstruction of history.

All men, without distinction of race or colour, from the cradle to the grave, pass through the same phases of development. They experience at ages, which vary within narrow limits, according to race, climate, and conditions of existence, the same crises of growth, maturity, and decay. In like manner human societies traverse analogous social, religious, and political forms, with the ideas which correspond thereto. To Vico, who has been styled “ the father

of the philosophy of history,” is due the honour of having been the first to apprehend the great law of historical development.

In his *Scienza Nuova* he speaks of “an ideal, eternal history, in accordance with which are successively developed the histories of all nations, from what state soever of savagery, ferocity, or barbarism men progress towards domestication.” [4]

If we could ascertain the history of a people from the state of savagery to that of civilisation, we should have the typical history of each of the peoples that have inhabited the globe. It is out of our power to reconstruct that history, for it is impossible for us to reascend the successive stages travelled by a people in their course of progress. But if we cannot cut out this history, all of a piece, of the life of a nation or a race, we can, at any rate, reconstruct it by piecing together the scattered data which we possess respecting the different peoples of the globe. It is in this wise that humanity, as it grows older, learns to decipher the story of its infancy.

The manners and usages of the forefathers of civilised nations survive in those of the savage peoples whom civilisation has not wholly exterminated. The investigations of the customs, social and political institutions, religious and mental conceptions of barbarians, made by men of learning and research in both hemispheres, enable us to evoke a past which we had come to consider as irrecoverably lost. Among savage peoples, we can detect the beginnings of property: by gleaning facts in all parts of the globe, and by coordinating them into a logical series, we may succeed in following the different phases of the evolution of property.



## Footnotes

1. By capital is meant anything which produces interest: a sum of money lent, which at the end of months, or years, yields a profit; land that is cultivated, or any instrument of labour that is set in action not by its proprietor, but by salaried workmen; but the land which is cultivated by the peasant and his family, the gun of the poacher, the plane or hammer of the carpenter, albeit property, is not capitalistic property, because the owner utilises it himself instead of using it to extract surplus value from others. The notion of profit without labour sticks like a Nessus-shirt to the term capital.

2. Cæsar, to whom the panegyrists of our society allow certain powers of observation, never wearied of admiring the strength and skill in bodily exercises of the German barbarians whom he was forced to combat. So great was his admiration for them, that in order to overcome the heroic resistance of the Gauls, commanded by Vercingetorix, he sent across the Rhine into Germany for cavalry and light-armed infantry, who were used to engage among them; and as they were mounted on bad horses he took those of the military tribunes, the knights and veterans, and distributed them among the Germans. – *De Bello Gallico*, vii, 65.

3. Lewis Morgan, *Ancient Society*, Part 1, chap. iii. *Ratio of Human Progress*.

4. *Una storia ideal, eterna, sopra la quale corrono in tempo le storie di tutti le nazioni: ch'ovunque da tempi selvaggi, feroci e fieri cominciarno gli uomini ad addimesticarsi.* (G. Vico, *Principi di Scienza Nuova*, De' Principi, Libero secondo, Section V, ed. di Ferrari, Milano 1837)

## CHAPTER II

# Primitive Communism

### I.

IF political economists so confidently refer capital to the childhood of humanity, it is because they indulge themselves in a convenient ignorance of the customs of primitive peoples. [1]

There are savages at present in existence who have no conception of landed property, whether private or collective, and who have barely arrived at a notion of individual ownership of the objects which they personally appropriate. Certain Australians possess, for all personal property, the objects attached to their persons, such as arms, ornaments inserted in their ears, lips, and noses; or skins of beasts for clothing; human fat, wherewith to cure their rheumatism; stones laid up in baskets, woven of bark, fastened to the body of the owner. Personally appropriated by them, so to say incorporated with them, these objects are not taken away from them at their death, but are burned or buried with their corpses. Names are among the primary individual property we meet with. The savage never reveals his name to a stranger; it is a precious thing of which he will make a present to a friend: so completely is his name identified with

his person, that after his death his tribe ceases to pronounce it. For an object to become individual property, it must be really or fictitiously incorporated with the person of the proprietor: when the savage desires to intimate that an object belongs to him, he will simulate the appropriation of it by licking it with his tongue; the Esquimaux after buying any article, if but a needle, immediately applies it to his mouth, or he will consecrate the object by a symbolical act, significative of his intention to keep the same for his personal use: this is the origin of taboo.

Manufactured articles are, in like manner, owned only if they have been appropriated; thus, an Esquimaux cannot possess more than two canoes; the third is at the disposal of the clan: whatsoever the proprietor does not use is considered as property without an owner. A savage never holds himself responsible for the loss of a canoe or any other borrowed implement for hunting or fishing, and never dreams of restoring it.

If the savage is incapable of conceiving the idea of individual possession of objects not incorporated with his person, it is because he has no conception of his individuality as distinct from the consanguine group in which he lives. The savage is environed by such perpetual material danger, and compassed round with such constant imaginary terrors that he cannot exist in a state of isolation; he cannot even form a notion of the possibility of such a thing. To expel a savage from his clan, his horde, is tantamount to condemning him to death; among the pre-historic Greeks, as among all barbarians, a murder intentional or by accident of one of the members of the clan was punished by exile. Orestes, after the assassination of his mother, was compelled to expatriate

himself to appease the public indignation; in very advanced civilisations, like those of Greece and Italy in historic times, exile was considered the worst of penalties. "The exile," says the Greek poet Theognis, "has neither friends nor faithful comrades, the most doleful thing in exile." To be divided from his companions, to live alone, seemed a fearful thing to primeval man, accustomed to live in troops.

Savages, even though individually completer beings, seeing that they are self-sufficing, than are civilised persons, are so thoroughly identified with their hordes and clans that their individuality does not make itself felt either in the family or in property. [2]

The clan was all in all; the clan was the family; it was the clan that married; it was the clan, again, that was the owner of property. In the clan all things are in common: the bushmen of Africa who receives a present divides it among all the members of his horde; when he has captured an animal or found any object he shares his booty with his comrades, frequently reserving for himself the smallest portion. In times of famine, the young Fuegians explore the coast, and if they chance to light upon any Cetaceous animal (a favourite dainty) they hasten, before touching it, to inform their comrades of their find. These at once hurry to the spot; whereupon the oldest member of the party proceeds to portion out equal shares to all.

Hunting and fishing, those two primitive modes of production, are practised jointly, and the produce is shared in common. According to Martius, the Botocudos, those dauntless tribes of Brazil, organise their hunt in concert and never abandon the spot on which an animal has been

captured until they have devoured it. The same fact is reported of the Dacotas and the Australians. Even among those tribes in which the chase in common is in abeyance, this ancient mode of consuming the prey holds good: the successful hunter invited to a feast all the members of his clan, of his village, and occasionally of his tribe, to partake of his chase: they are, so to say, national feasts. At Svarietie, in the Caucasus, whenever a family slaughters an ox, a cow, or a dozen sheep, it is the occasion of a village feast; the villagers eat and drink together in memory of the relations that have died in the course of the year. The feasts of the dead are reminiscences of these common repasts.

Morgan, who has so minutely studied the primitive communist manners, in his last and important work [3] describes the methods of hunting and fishing practised among the Redskins of North America:

“The tribes of the plain, who subsist almost exclusively upon animal food, show in their usages in hunt the same tendency to communism. The Blackfeet, during the buffalo hunt, follow the herd on horseback, in large parties, composed of men, women, and children.

When the active pursuit of the herd commences, the hunters leave the dead animal in the track of the chase, to be appropriated by the first persons who come up behind. This method of distribution is continued until all are supplied. They cut up the beef into strings, and either dry it in the air or smoke it over a fire. Some make part of the capture into *pemmican*, which consists of dried and pulverised meat, mixed with melted buffalo fat, which is boiled in the hide of the animal. During the fishing season in the Columbia river, where fish is more abundant than in any other river on the earth, all the members of the tribe encamp together and make a common stock of the fish obtained. They are divided each day according to the number of women, giving to each an equal share. The fishes are split open, scarified and dried

on scaffolds, after which they are packed in baskets and removed to the villages.”

When the savage ceases to lead a nomadic existence, and when he settles and builds himself a dwelling-house, the house is not a private but a common one, even after the family has begun to assume a matriarchal form. The communal houses resemble those that La Perouse discovered in Polynesia; they are 10 feet high, 110 feet in length, and 10 feet in width, having the shape of an inverted pirogue; the entrance was by doors situated at both extremities, and they afforded shelter for a clan of upwards of 100 persons. The long houses of the Iroquois, which, according to Morgan, disappeared before the commencement of the present century, were 100 feet long by 30 broad, and 20 feet in height; they were traversed by a longitudinal passage having an opening at both ends; into this passage, like the alveoles of a hive, opened a series of small rooms, 7 feet in width, in which dwelt the married women of the clan. Each habitation bore the totem of the clan, i.e., the animal supposed to be its ancestor. The houses of the Dyaks of Borneo are similar, with the difference that they are raised from 15 to 20 feet from the ground on posts of hard timber; they recall the lake cities, built upon piles, discovered in the Swiss lakes. Herodotus says that the Pæonians dwelt in houses of this description in Lake Prasias (V, sec.16). The *casas grandes* of the Redskins of Mexico presented the appearance of an enormous stairway, with super-imposed storeys, subdivided into cells for the married people: not improbably it is in such like communist dwellings that the prehistoric Greeks lived, as may be inferred from the palace brought to light in Argolis by the excavations of Dr. Schliemann. In these communist

dwelling-houses the provisions are in common and the repasts are common.

We must turn to Morgan for a description of the life of the inhabitants of these communal houses. His researches were confined, it is true, to the American Redskins, and principally the Iroquois, amongst whom he had lived; but as he says,

“when any usage is found among the Iroquois in a definite or positive form, it renders probable the existence of the same usage in other tribes in the same condition, because their necessities were the same.”

“The Iroquois who formed a household, cultivated gardens, gathered harvest, and stored it in their dwellings as a common store. There was more or less of individual ownership of these products and of their possession by different families. For example, the corn, after stripping back the husk, was braided by the husk in bunches and hung up in the different apartments; but when one family had exhausted its supply, their wants were supplied by other families so long as any remained; each hunting or fishing party made a common stock of the capture, of which the surplus on their return was divided among the several families of each household, and, having been cured, were kept for winter use.”

In these Indian villages we note the singular phenomenon of individual ownership combined with common usage.

“There is nothing in the Indian house and family without its particular owner,” remarks Heckewelder, in treating of the Delawares and the Munsees; “every individual knows what belongs to him, from the horse or cow to the dog, cat, or kitten and little chicken ... For a litter of kittens or a brood of chickens there are often as many owners as there are individual animals. In purchasing a hen with her brood one frequently has to deal for it with several children. Thus while the principle of community of goods prevails in the state, the



rights of property are acknowledged among the members of the family.” [4]

The Indians of Laguna village (New Mexico) had common stores.

“Their women, generally, have the control of the granary,” wrote the Rev. Sam. Gorman to Morgan in 1869, “and they are more provident than their Spanish neighbours about the future; they try to have a year’s provision on hand. It is only when two years of scarcity succeed each other that Pueblos, as a community, suffer hunger.”

Among the Maya Indians food is prepared in a hut, and every family sends for a portion. Stephen saw a procession of women and children, each carrying an earthen bowl containing a quantity of smoking hot broth, all coming down the same road and disappearing among the different houses. [5]

But among the Iroquois each household prepared the food of its members. A matron made the division from the kettle to each family according to their needs; it was served warm to each person in earthen or wooden bowls. They had neither tables, chairs, or plates, in our sense, nor any room in the nature of a kitchen or a dining-room, but ate each by himself, sitting or standing where was most convenient to the person, the men eating first and by themselves, and the women and children afterwards and by themselves. That which remained was reserved for any member of the household when hungry. Towards evening the women cooked *hominy*, the maize having been pounded into bits the size of a grain of rice, which was boiled and put aside to be used cold as a lunch in the morning and evening and for entertainment of visitors; they had neither formal breakfast nor supper; each person, when hungry, ate whatever food

the house contained. They were moderate eaters. This, adds Morgan, is a fair picture of Indian life in general in America, when discovered.

Similar manners obtained in pre-historic Greece, and the *syssities* (common repasts) of historic times were but a reminiscence of the primitive communist repasts. Heraclides of Pontus, the disciple of Plato, has preserved for us a description of the communistic repasts of Creta, where the primitive manners prevailed during a long period of time. At the *andreies* (repasts of men) every adult citizen received an equal share, except the Archon, member of the council of the ancients (*geronia*), who received a fourfold portion one in his quality of simple citizen, another in that of president of the table, and two additional portions for the care of the hall and furniture. All the tables were under the supervision of a matriarch, who distributed the food and ostensibly set aside the choicest bits for the men who had distinguished themselves in the council or on the battlefield. Strangers were served first, even before the archon. A vessel with wine and water was handed round from guest to guest; at the end of the repast it was replenished. Heraclides mentions common repasts of the men only, but Hoeck assumes that in the Dorian cities there were also repasts of women and children. Our knowledge of the constant separation of the sexes among savages and barbarians renders probable the assumption of the learned historian of Creta.

According to Aristotle the provisions for these repasts were furnished by the harvests, the flocks and herds, and the tributes of the serfs belonging to the community; hence we may infer that men, women, and children, in Creta, were maintained at the expense of the state. He asserts that these

repasts may be traced back to a very remote antiquity; that it was Minos who established them in Creta and Italus among the Oenotrians, whom he taught agriculture; and as Aristotle finds these common repasts still prevalent in Italy, he concludes that they originated there, ignoring the fact that they occur among all primitive peoples. [6]

Plutarch informs us that at these common repasts no one person was considered as superior to the other, wherefore he styles them aristocratic assemblies (*sunedria aristokratika*). The persons who sat down at the same table were probably members of the same family. In Sparta the members of a *syssitia* were formed into corresponding military divisions, and fought together. Savages and barbarians, accustomed at all times to act in common, in battle always range themselves according to families, clans and tribes.

It was of such imperative necessity that every member of the clan should get his share of the aliments, that in the Greek language the word *moira*, which signifies the portion of a guest at a repast, came to signify Destiny, the supreme Goddess to whom men and gods are alike submitted and who deals out to everyone his portion of existence, just as the matriarch of the Cretan *syssitia* apportions to each guest his share of food. It should be remarked that in Greek mythology Destiny is personified by women – *Moira*, *Aissa*, and the *Keres* – and that their names signify the portion to which each person is entitled in the division of victuals or spoils.

When the common dwelling house, sheltering an entire clan, came to be sub-divided into private houses, containing a single family, the repasts ceased to be held in common, save

on occasions of religious and national solemnities, such as the Greek *syssities*, which were celebrated in order to preserve the memory of the past; the provisions, although individually possessed by each private family, continue, practically, at the disposal of the members of the tribe.

“Every man, woman, or child, in Indian communities,” says Catlin, “is allowed to enter anyone’s lodge, and even that of the chief of the nation, and eat when they are hungry. Even so can the poorest and most worthless drone of the nation; if he is too lazy to supply himself or to hunt, he can walk into any lodge, and everyone will share with him as long as there is anything to eat. He, however, who thus begs when he is able to hunt, pays dear for his meat, for he is stigmatised with the disgraceful epithet of *poltroon* or *beggar*.”

In the Caroline Isles, when an indigene sets out on a journey, he carries with him no provisions. When he is hungry he enters a lodge without any kind of ceremony, and without waiting for permission he plunges his hand into the tub containing the *popoi* (a paste of the fruit of the bread tree) and when his hunger is satisfied he departs without so much as thanking anybody. He has but exercised a right.

These communistic habits, which had once been general, were maintained in Ceremoniallong after the Spartans had issued out of barbarism; private property in objects of personal appropriation was extremely vague and precarious. Plutarch says that Lycurgus, the mythical personage to whom the Spartans refer all their institutions, forbade the closing of the house doors in order that everybody might walk in and help himself to the food and utensils he wanted, even in the absence of the owner: a citizen of Sparta was entitled, without permission, to ride the horses, use the dogs, and even dispose of the slaves of any other Spartan.

Very gradually did the idea of private property, which is so ingrained in, and appears so natural to, the philistine, dawn upon the human mind. The earliest reflections of man, on the contrary, led him to think that all things should be common to all.

“The Indians,” says Heckewelder, “think that the Great Spirit has made the earth, and all that it contains, for the common good of mankind; when he stocked the country and gave them plenty of game, it was not for the good of a few, but of all. Everything is given in common to the sons of men. Whatever liveth on the land, whatever groweth out of the earth, and all that is in the rivers and waters, was given jointly to all, and everyone is entitled to his share. Hospitality with them is not a virtue, but a strict duty ... They would lie down on an empty stomach rather than have it laid to their charge that they had neglected their duty by not satisfying the wants of the stranger, the sick, or the needy ... because they have a common right to be helped out of the common stock; for if the meat they have been served with was taken from the wood, it was common to all before the hunter took it; if corn and vegetables, it had grown out of the common ground, yet not by the power of man, but by that of the Great Spirit.” [7]

Caesar who had observed an analogous communism among the Germans who had invaded Belgium and Gaul, states that one of the objects of their customs was “to uphold in the people the sense of equality, since every man sees his resources equal to those of the most powerful.” And, in effect, this communism in production and consumption presupposes a perfect equality among all the members of the clan and tribe who consider themselves as derived from a common stock. But not only did this rudimentary communism maintain equality; it developed, also, sentiments of fraternity and liberality which put to shame the much vaunted brotherliness and charity of the Christian, and which have elicited the admiration of the observers of

savage tribes before they had been deteriorated by the Bible and brandy, the brutal mercantilism, and pestilential diseases of civilisation.

At no subsequent period of human development has hospitality been practised in so simple and perfect a way.

“If a man entered an Iroquois house,” says Morgan, “whether a villager, a tribesman, or a stranger, and at whatever hour of the day, it was the duty of the women of the house to set food before him. An omission to do this would have been a discourtesy amounting to an affront. If hungry, he eats, if not hungry, courtesy required he should taste the food and thank the giver.”

“To be narrow-hearted, especially to those in want, or to any of their own family, is accounted a great crime, and to reflect scandal on the rest of the tribe,” says another student of the primitive manners of the American Indians. [8] A guest was held sacred, even though an enemy. Tacitus describes the same usages among the barbarian Germans who invaded the Roman Empire.

“No people,” he says, “are more addicted to social entertainments, or more liberal in the exercise of hospitality. To refuse any person whatever admittance under their roof is accounted flagitious. Everyone according to his ability feasts his guest; when his provisions are exhausted, he who was late the host is now the guide and companion to another hospitable board. They enter the next house, and are received with equal cordiality. No one makes a distinction with respect to the rights of hospitality between a stranger and an acquaintance.”

Tacitus held up the barbarian Germans as an example to his civilised compatriots. Catlin, who, during a period of eight years, from 1832 to 1839, sojourned amongst the wildest Indian tribes of North America, writes:

“Morality and virtue, I venture to say, the civilised world need not undertake to teach them.”

Travellers, who were not ferocious and rapacious commercial travellers like Mr. Stanley, have not hesitated to bear testimony, with Cæsar, to the virtues of the savages, and to attribute those virtues to the communism in which they lived.

“The brotherly sentiments of the Redskins,” says the Jesuit Charlevoix, “are doubtless in part ascribable to the fact that the words *mine* and *thine*, ‘those cold words,’ as St. John Chrysostomos calls them, are all unknown as yet to the savages. The protection they extend to the orphans, the widows and the infirm, the hospitality which they exercise in so admirable a manner, are, in their eyes, but a consequence of the conviction which they hold that all things should be common to all men.” [9]

So writes the Jesuit Charlevoix. Let us hear what his contemporary and critic, the free-thinker Lahontan, says:

“Savages do not distinguish between *mine* and *thine*, for it may be affirmed that what belongs to the one belongs to the other. It is only among the Christian savages who dwell at the gates of our cities that money is in use. The others will neither handle it nor even look upon it. They call it: *the serpent of the white men*. They think it strange that some should possess more than others, and that those who have most should be more highly esteemed than those who have least. They neither quarrel nor fight among themselves; they neither rob nor speak ill of one another.” [10]



## II

So long as the savage hordes, composed of 30 or 40 members, are nomadic, they wander on the face of the earth, and fix wherever they find the means of sustenance. It is, probably, in following the seashores and the course of the rivers which supplied them with food that the savages peopled the continents. Such was the opinion of Morgan. The Bushmen and the Veddahs of Ceylon, who live in this state of savagery, do not dream of vindicating the right of property even in the territories of the chase – the most archaic form of landed property.

Primitive man, who does not till the soil, and who supports himself by hunting and fishing, and lives on a diet of wild fruits, eked out by milk, must have access to vast territories for his own sustenance and that of his herds: it has been computed, I know not with what accuracy, that each savage, for his subsistence, requires three square miles of land. Hence, when a country begins to be populous, it becomes necessary to divide the land among the tribes.

The earliest distribution of the land was into pasture and territories of chase common to the tribe, for the idea of individual ownership of the land is of ulterior and tardier growth. “The earth is like fire and water, that cannot be sold,” say the Omahas. The Maoris are so far from conceiving that the land is vendible, that, “although the whole tribe might have consented to a sale, they would still claim with every new-born child among them an additional payment, on the ground that they had only parted with their own rights, and could not sell those of the unborn. The government of New Zealand could settle the difficulty only

by buying land for a tribal annuity, in which every child that is born acquired a share.” Among the Jews and Semitic peoples there was no private property in land. “The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.” (*Leviticus*xxv., 23.) Christians set the commandment of their God at defiance. Full of reverence as they are for Jehovah and His laws, still greater is their veneration for almighty Capital.

Mankind underwent a long and painful process of development before arriving at private property in land.

Among the Fuegians vast tracts of unoccupied land circumscribe the territories of chase belonging to the tribe. Cæsar relates that the Suevi and Germans founded their pride upon having vast solitudes round their frontiers. (*De Bello Gallico* iv., 3.) Savage and barbarian peoples limit their territories by neutral zones, because an alien found upon the lands of any tribe is hunted like a wild beast, and mutilated or put to death if taken. Heckewelder reports that the Redskins cut off the noses and ears of every individual found on their territory, and sent him back to inform his chief that on the next occasion they would scalp him. The feudal saying, *Qui terre a, guerre a*, held good in primitive times; the violations of the territories of chase are among the chief causes of dispute and warfare between neighbouring tribes. The unoccupied areas, established to prevent incursions, came, at a later period, to serve as market places where the tribes met to exchange their belongings. Harold, in 1063, defeated the Cambrians, who made perpetual inroads on the territories of the Saxons; he made a covenant with them that every man of their nation found in arms east of the intrenchment of Offa should have his right hand cut off. The

Saxons, on their side, raised parallel trenches, and the space enclosed by the two walls became neutral ground for the merchants of both nations. Anthropologists have noted with a feeling of surprise that the sexes among savage peoples are isolated and live apart; there is reason for supposing that this separation of the sexes was introduced when it was sought to put a stop to the primitive promiscuity and prevent the sexual intercourse that was the rule between brother and sister. This separation of the sexes within the limits of the tribe, necessary in the interests of morality, was upheld and promoted by a differentiation of pursuits and by property. The man is habitually charged with the defence and the procuring of food, while on the woman devolves the culinary preparation of the food, the fabrication of the clothes or household utensils, and the management of the house once it has sprung into existence. [11] It is, as Marx observes, the division of labour which begins and which is based on sex: property, in its origin, was confined to a single sex.

The man is a hunter and a warrior; he possesses the horses and arms; to the woman belong the household utensils and other objects appropriate to her pursuits; these belongings she is obliged to transport on her head or back, in the same way that she carries her child, which belongs to her and not to the father, generally unknown.

The introduction of agriculture enhanced the separation of the sexes, while it was the determinant cause of the parcelling of the lands, the common property of the tribe. The man continues a warrior and a hunter; he resigns to his wife the labour of the fields consenting, on occasion, to assist at harvest time; among pastoral peoples he reserves to

himself the care of the flocks and herds, which comes to be looked on as a nobler pursuit than agriculture; it is, in truth, the less arduous of the two. The Kaffirs consider the tending of the herds as an aristocratic occupation; they call the cow the *black pearl*. The earliest laws of the Aryans forbade agriculture, thought degrading, to the two highest classes, the Brahmins and the Kshatryas, or warriors.

“For a Brahmin and a Kshatryas agriculture is blamed by the virtuous, as the plough with the iron point injures the earth and the beings in it.” [12]

As the use of a thing constitutes the sole condition of its ownership, landed property, on its first establishment among primitive nations, was allotted to the women. In all societies in which the matriarchal form of the family has maintained itself, we find landed property held by the woman; such was the case among the Egyptians, the Nairs, the Touaregs of the African desert, and the Basques of the Pyrenees; in the time of Aristotle two-thirds of the territory of Sparta belonged to the women.

Landed property, which was ultimately to constitute for its owner a means of emancipation and of social supremacy, was, at its origin, a cause of subjection; the women were condemned to the rude labour of the fields, from which they were emancipated only by the introduction of servile labour.

Agriculture, which led to private property in land, introduced the servile labour, which in the course of centuries has borne the names of slave-labour, bond-labour, and wage-labour.

### III

So long as primitive communism subsists, the tribal lands are cultivated in common. “ In certain parts of India,” says Nearchus, one of Alexander’s generals, and eye-witness of events that took place in the 4th century, B.C., “ the lands were cultivated in common by tribes or groups of relatives, who at the end of the year shared among themselves the fruits and crops.” [13]

Stephen cites a settlement of Maya Indians composed of 100 labourers, “ in which the lands are held and wrought in common and products shared by all.” [14]

From Tao, an Indian village of New Mexico, Mr. Miller, in Dec. 1877, wrote to Morgan: “There is a cornfield at each pueblo, cultivated by all in common, and when the grain is scarce the poor take from this store after it is housed, and it is in the charge and at the disposal of the Cacique, called the Governor.” In Peru, prior to the Spanish Conquest, agricultural labour possessed the attraction of a feast. At break of day, from an eminence, or a tower, the whole of the population was convoked men women, and children, who all assembled in holiday attire and adorned with their most precious ornaments. The crowd set to work, and sang in chorus hymns celebrating the prowess of the Incas. The work was accomplished with the utmost spirit and enthusiasm. [15] Cæsar relates that the Suevi, the most warlike and most powerful of the Germanic tribes, annually sent forth to combat a hundred men from a hundred cantons. The men that stayed at home were bound to maintain the men engaged in the expedition; the following year it was the combatants who remained at home and the

others who took up arms; in this way, he adds, the fields were always cultivated and the men practised in war. (*De Bello Gallico*, IV, 1.) The Scandinavians who ravaged Europe had similar communistic practices, combined with warlike expeditions; the latter over, they returned home to assist their wives in gathering in the harvest. This cultivation in common long survived the status of primitive communism. In the Russian villages which are under the regime of collective or consanguine property, a certain tract of land is often cultivated in common and is called *mirskia zapaschki* (fields tilled by the *mir*); the produce of the harvest is distributed among the families of the village. In other places the arable lands are tilled jointly, and are afterwards allotted to the families. In several communities of the Don the meadows elsewhere portioned out remain undivided, the mowing is performed in common, and it is only after the hay is made that the partition takes place. Forests, also, are cleared in common. The co-operative ploughing and digging practised in the village communities ought probably to be referred to the period of communist agriculture. In Fiji, when preparing a piece of ground, a number of men are employed, divided into groups of three or four. Each man being furnished with a digging stick, they drive them into the ground so as to enclose a circle of about two feet in diameter. When by repeated strokes the sticks reach the depth of 18 inches, they are used as levers, and the mass of soil between them is then loosened and raised. Mr. Gomme cites, after Ure, an analogous practice of the Scotch highlanders.

Cæsar shows us how the Germans set out annually on predatory expeditions; the booty was, probably, divided among all the warriors, including those who had remained at

home to perform the agricultural labour of the community. The Greeks of prehistoric times, also, were audacious pirates, who scoured the Mediterranean and fled with their booty to their citadels, perched on the tops of promontories like eagles' nests, and as inexpugnable as the round towers of the Scandinavians, built in the midst of the waters. A precious fragment of a Greek song, the *Skolion of Hybrias*, presents us with a picture of the heroic lives of the Greeks. The hero says:

“I have for riches a great lance, and my sword, and my buckler, the rampart of my body; with these I till the ground and reap the harvest and vintage the sweet juice of the grape; thanks to these I am styled the master of the *mnoia* (the slaves of the community). Let those who dare not bear the lance and the buckler kneel to me as to a master and call me the great king.”

Piracy is the favourite pursuit of prehistoric times. Nestor inquires of Telemachus, his guest, if he is a pirate (*Odyssey* III). Solon maintained a college of pirates at Athens (Institutes of Gaius), and Thucydides states that in ancient times piracy was honourable (I., sec. 5).

Wherever the heroes landed, they carried off men, women, cattle, crops, and movables; the men became slaves and common property; they were placed under the supervision of the women, and cultivated the lands for the warriors of the clan. All of the cities of Crete, one of the first islands colonised by these bold pirates, possessed, down to the time of Aristotle, troops of slaves, called *mnotie*, who cultivated the public domains. The Greek cities maintained, besides a public domain, public slaves, and upheld common repasts similar to those described by Heraclides. [16]

Mr. Hodgson, in 1830, described a village, thirty miles north-west of Madras, the inhabitants of which were assisted in their agricultural operations by slaves who were common property; for they were transferred with the other privileges of the village occupants when those privileges were sold or mortgaged. The mediæval towns and even villages had serfs in common. [17]

Thus we see that everywhere property in land and its produce, in domestic animals, serfs and slaves, was primarily property common to all the members of the clan. Communism was the cradle of humanity; the work of civilisation has been to destroy this primitive communism, of which the last vestiges that remain, in defiance of the rapacity of the aristocrat and the bourgeois, are the communal lands. But the work of civilisation is twofold: while on the one hand it destroys, on the other hand it reconstructs; while it broke into pieces the communist mould of primitive humanity, it was building up the elements of a higher and more complex form of communism. I am here concerned to trace out civilisation in its double movement of destruction and reconstruction.

## Footnotes

1. In his recent and notorious discussion with Mr. Herbert Spencer, the learned Professor Huxley, who acts as a champion of capital, and who calls Rousseau an ignoramus, has given a remarkable proof of his ignorance of the customs of savages which he discusses with such assurance, "The confident assertions," wrote the learned professor in the *Nineteenth Century* of January 1890, "that the land was originally held in common by the whole nation are singularly ill founded." "Land was hold as private or several property, and not as the property of the public or general body of the nation."



2. In savage hordes there exists no private family, not even the matriarchal one. The children belong to the entire horde, and they call mother, indifferently their own mother, the sisters of their mother and the women of the same age as their mother. When, in process of time, the sexual relations, at first promiscuous, began to be restricted, prior to the appearance of the "pairing family," there obtained the common marriage of the clan. All the women of one clan were the wives of the men of another clan, and, reciprocally, all the men of that clan were the joint husbands of the women; when they met, it was only necessary for them to recognise each other in order to legitimate a conjugal union. This curious form of communist marriage has been observed in Australia by Messrs. Fison and Howitt. Traces of it are discoverable in the mythological legends of Greece.

3. Lewis H. Morgan, *Houses and House Life of the American Aborigines*, Washington 1881.

4. Heckewelder, *History, Manners and Customs of Indian Nations who once inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States*. Reprinted in 1876. Heckewelder lived as a missionary among the American Indians for fifteen years, from 1771 to 1786, and was conversant with their language.

5. Stephen, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, II.

6. Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II, chap.iii., section 4; Book IV. Chap.ix., sections 2, 3, 4. French ed., B. St. Hilaire, 1818.

7. Hobbes, one of the great thinkers of modern times, thought it otherwise.

"Nature hath given to each of us an equal right to all things," says Hobbes in *De Cive*. "In a *state of nature* every man has a right to do and to take whatsoever he pleases: whence the common saying that Nature *has given all things to all men*, and whence it follows that in a state of nature utility is the rule of right."

8. James Adair, *History of the American Indians*, London 1775.
9. Charlevoix, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*.
10. *Voyage de Lahontan*, II.
11. "A man," said a Kurnai to Pison, "hunts, fishes, fights, and sits down," meaning that all besides is the business of the woman
12. *Laws of Manu*, Cap. x.
13. *Nearchus apud Strabo*, lib.xv.
14. Stephen, *Incidents of a travel in Yucatan*, II.
15. W. Prescott, *Conquest of Peru*.
16. The Greek slaves were divided into two classes, the public slaves (*Koine douleia*) belonging to the state, and the slaves belonging to private individuals, called *Klerotes*, i.e., adjudged by lot. Athens possessed a number of public slaves, who did not cultivate the soil, but discharged the functions of executioner, police agents, and inferior employees of the administration.
17. *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1830, vol.ii.

## CHAPTER III

# Family or Consanguine Collectivism

### I

THE common tribal property began to break up as the family was being constituted. A few remarks respecting the family will render an exposition of the evolution of property more intelligible to the reader.

We are at present aware that the human species, before arriving at the patriarchal form of the family, in which the father is the head, possesses the estates and transmits his name to all his children, passed through the matriarchal form, in which the mother occupied that high position. We have seen, above, the whole clan living in great joint tenement-houses, containing a certain number of rooms for the married women. The private family is then nascent; when we find it constituted in the matriarchal or patriarchal form, a segmentation has ensued of the communal house into as many private houses as there are households. In the matriarchal family the mother lives with her children and her younger brothers and sisters; receiving her husbands,

who belong to a different clan, each in his turn; it is then that family property makes its appearance.

Its beginnings were modest, for, at the outset, it consisted but of the cabin and the small garden surrounding it. Among certain people the patriarchal family may have been constituted and have superseded the matriarchal family prior to the constitution of family property, but the case is not universal; on the contrary it would seem that the revolution in the family was posterior to the formation of family property. Such was the case with the Egyptians, Greeks, and many other peoples the course of whose development was a normal one, undisturbed by the invasion of nations on a higher plane of civilisation.

So long as the matriarchal form subsists, the movables and immovables are transmitted by the women; a person inherits from his mother and not from his father, or the relations of his father. In Java, where this form of the family reached a high pitch of development, a man's property reverts to his mother's family; he is not at liberty to make a donation to his children, who belong to the clan of his wife, without the consent and concurrence of his brothers and sisters. If we judge from what we know of the Egyptians and other peoples, the male occupied a very subordinate position in the matriarchate. Among the Basques, who have preserved their primitive customs, notwithstanding Christianity and civilisation, when the eldest daughter, on her mother's death, becomes an heiress, she becomes at the same time the mistress of her younger brothers and sisters. The male is under the tutelage of his own family, and when he "goes out" to get married, with his sister's approbation, he falls under the dominion of his wife; he is subjected

throughout life to female authority, as son, brother and husband; he possesses nothing save the small peculium which his sister gives him on his marriage. "The husband," says a Basque proverb, "is his wife's head servant."

This elevated position of the woman affords a proof, let me observe in passing, that the physical and intellectual superiority of the male, far from being a primordial physiological necessity, is but the consequence of an economical situation, perpetuated during centuries, which allowed the male a freer and fuller development than it permitted to the female, held in bondage by the family. Broca, in the course of his discussion with Gratiolet on the relation of the brain weight and cranial capacity to the intelligence, conceded that the inferiority of the female might be due merely to an inferior education. M. Manouvrier, a disciple of Broca, and Professor at the Paris School of Anthropology, has demonstrated that the cranial capacities of the males of the Stone Age, which he had measured, were nearly as great as the average cranial capacities of the modern Parisians, whereas the cranial capacities of the females of the Stone Age were considerably greater than those of the modern female Parisians. [1]

Most disastrous has been the effect on the human species of this female inferiority; it has been one of the most active causes of the degeneration of civilised nations.

Without going to the length of pretending that in all countries the ascendancy of the female assumed the proportions which it attained in Egypt, it is an indubitable fact that wheresoever we meet with the matriarchal family we can note a dependency of the men upon the women,

coinciding, frequently, with a degree of animosity between the sexes, divided into two classes. Among the Natchez and among all the nations of the valley of the Mississippi, the term *woman*, applied to a man, was an affront. Herodotus relates that Sesostris, in order to perpetuate the memory of his glorious achievements, erected obelisks among the conquered nations, and that to mark his contempt for those who had offered him no resistance he caused the female sexual organ to be engraved thereon, as emblematic of their cowardice. To apply to a Homeric Greek the epithet *woman* was a grave insult. On the other hand, the warlike women of the tribes of Dahomey employ the word man by way of an injurious epithet. Unquestionably it was the desire to shake off this feminine ascendancy and to satisfy this feeling of animosity which led man to wrest from woman the control of the family.

Presumptively this family revolution was accomplished when the movable goods of individual property had multiplied; and when the family estate was constituted, and had been consecrated by time and custom; it was worth the men's while, for the nonce, to dethrone the women. There took place a positive dispossession of the women by the men, accomplished with more or less brutality, according to the nations; while in Ceremonialthe women conserved a measure of their former independence (a fact which caused Aristotle to say that it was among the most warlike peoples that the women exercised their greatest authority); at Athens, and in the maritime cities engaged in commerce, they were forcibly expropriated and despoiled. This dispossession gave rise to heroic combats; the women took up arms in defence of their privileges, and fought with such desperate energy that the whole of Greek mythology and

even recorded history have preserved the memory of their struggles.

So long as property was a cause of subjection, it was abandoned to the women; but no sooner had it become a means of emancipation and supremacy in the family and society than man tore it from her.

Without entering more specially into the history of its evolution, I would lay stress upon this point, to wit, that the family, wherever or however constituted, whether affecting the matriarchal or patriarchal form, invariably breaks up the communism of the clan or tribe. At first the clan was the common family of all its members; afterwards there came to exist private families, having interests distinct from those of the clan considered as an aggregate of a number of families; the communal territory of the tribe was then parcelled out so as to form the *collective property* [2] of each family.

The existent European family must not be considered as the type of the family founded on collective property. The family was not reduced to its last and simplest expression, as it is in our day, when it is composed of the three indispensable elements: the father, the mother, and the children; it consisted of the father, the recognised head of the family collectivity; of his legitimate wife and his concubines, living under the same roof; of his children, his younger brothers, with their wives and children, and his unmarried sisters: such a family comprised many members.

## II

The arable lands, hitherto cultivated in common by the entire clan, are divided into parcels of different categories, according to the quality of the soil; the parcels are formed into lots, in such wise that each lot contains an equal proportion of the different descriptions of soil; the number of lots corresponds to that of the families. A portion of the land is reserved in view of a possible increase of the population; it is let on lease or cultivated in common. To preclude injustice or grounds for complaint the shares were drawn by lot [3]; hence, in Greek and Latin, the words which designate lot (*sors*, *cleros*) signify also goods and patrimony.

If, when a family had complained of unfairness, they proved, on inquiry, that their complaint was justified, satisfaction was granted them by an additional allotment out of the reserve lands. The inquirers who have had opportunities of observing the way in which these partitions of the land are practised, have been struck by the spirit of equality which presides over them, and by the ability of the peasant land surveyors. Haxthausen relates how

“Count de Kinsleff, the minister of the imperial domains, had in several localities of the government of Woronieje caused the land to be valued and surveyed by land taxers and land surveyors. The results went to show that the measurements of the peasants were in all respects, save for a few minor discrepancies, in perfect consonance with the truth. Besides, who knows which of the two were the more accurate?” [4]

The pasture lands, forests, lakes, and ponds, the right of hunting and fishing, and other rights, such as the imposts raised on the caravans, etc., are the joint property of all the members of the clan.



The allotments are cultivated by each family under the direction of its chief and the supervision of the village council; the crops are the property of the family collectively, instead of belonging, as at an earlier period, to the tribe or clan. A family is not allowed to cultivate their lot at pleasure, says Marshall. "They must sow their fields with the same grain as that of the other families of the community." [5]

The system of cultivation is a triennial rotation. (1) corn or rye, (2) spring crops (barley, oats, beans, peas, etc.), (3) fallow. Not only the kind of seed to sow, but also the seed and harvest times, are prescribed by the communal council. Sir G. Campbell informs us that every Indian village possesses its calendar-Brahmin, or astrologist, whose business it is to indicate the propitious seasons for seed time and harvest. Haxthausen, an intelligent and impartial observer of the manners of the collectivist communes of Russia, remarks that

"the most perfect order, resembling a military discipline, presides over the labours of the fields. On the same day, at the same hour, the peasants repair to the fields, some to plough, others to harrow, the ground, etc., and they all return in company. This orderliness is not commanded by the *Starosta*, the village ancient; it is simply the result of that gregarious disposition which distinguishes the Russian people, and that love of union and order which animates the commune."

These characteristics, which Haxthausen considers as peculiar to the Russian people, are but an outgrowth of the collective form of property, and have been observed in all parts of the world. We have seen that, to determine the seed time, the Indians did not obey human orders, but celestial considerations suggested by the astrologer. Maine, who in his quality of jurisconsult of the Anglo-Indian government,

was in a position to closely study the village communities, writes:

“The council of the village elders does not command anything, it merely declares what has always been. Nor does it generally declare that which it believes some higher power to have commanded; those most entitled to speak on the subject deny that the natives of India necessarily require Divine or political authority as the basis of their usages; their antiquity is by itself assumed to be a sufficient reason for obeying them. Nor, in the sense of the analytical jurists, is there *right* or *duty* in an Indian village community; a person aggrieved complains not of an individual wrong but of the disturbance of the order of the entire little society.” [6]

The discipline referred to by Haxthausen is a natural and spontaneous product, unlike the movements of an army or the manoeuvres of the labourers on the *bonanza* farms of North America, which are produced to order. A Swiss clergyman, who wrote in the last century, teaches us that in the canton of Berne there existed the same orderliness and ardour in work observed in Russia.

“On an appointed evening,” he says, “the entire commune repairs to the communal meadows, every commoner choosing his own ground, and when the signal is given at midnight, from the top of the hill downwards, every man mows down the grass which stands before him in a straight line, and all that which he has cut till noon of the next day belongs to him. The grass which remains standing after the operation is trodden down and browsed by the cattle which are turned on to it.” [7]

The crops once got in, the lands allotted to the different families become common property again, and the villagers are free to send their cattle to de-pasture them.

Originally, the fathers of the families belonging to the clan, were alone entitled to a share in these allotments. It is only

at a later period that the stranger settlers, having obtained the freedom of the city after a term of residence, were admitted to the partition of the land. Landed property belonged to the fathers, whence *patria*, fatherland; in the Scandinavian laws, *house* and *fatherland* were synonyms. At that time a man possessed a *patria* and political rights only if he had a right to a share in the land. As a consequence, the fathers and males of the family alone were charged with the country's defence; they alone were privileged to bear arms. The progress of capitalism consists in confiding the defence of the country to those who do not possess an inch of land – who have no stake in the country – and to accord political rights to men who have no property.

Private property in land does not as yet obtain, because the land belongs to the entire village, and only the temporary usage of it is granted, on condition that it shall be cultivated according to the established customs, and under the supervision of the village elders charged with watching over the maintenance of those customs. The house alone, with its small enclosure, is the private property of the family; among some peoples, e.g. the Neo-Caledonians, the tenement was burnt on the death of the chief of the family, as well as his arms, his favourite animals, and, occasionally, his slaves. According to all appearance, the house for a long time was distinguished from the land, as a movable; it is so qualified in many customaries of France; in that of Lille, among others.

The house is inviolable; nobody has a right to enter it without the master's consent. The justice of the country was suspended at the threshold; if a criminal had penetrated into the house, nay, if he had but touched the door-latch, he was

secure from public prosecution and amenable only to the authority of the father of the family, who exercised the legislative and executive power within the precincts of the house. In 186 B.C., the Roman Senate, having condemned to death some Roman ladies, whose orgies compromised public morals, was forced to remit the execution of the sentence to the heads of the families; for the women, as constituting a part of the household, were answerable only to the master of it. To such extremes was this inviolability pushed in Rome that a father could not invoke the assistance of the magistrates or public force in case of his son's resistance. In the Middle Ages this sanctity of the domicile still existed; at Mulhouse, for example, a burgher shut up in his house ceased to be amenable to the justice of the town; the court was bound to transport itself to his house door in order to judge him, and it was open to him to reply to the questions put to him from the window. The right of asylum possessed by the Church was merely a transformation of this sanctity of the house; as we shall see hereafter, the Church was but a sort of communal house.

The habitations are not contiguous, but surrounded by a strip of territory. Tacitus, and numerous writers after him, have assumed that this insulation of the houses was prescribed as a measure of precaution against fire, so dangerous in villages in which the houses are built of wood and thatched with straw. I am of belief that the reason for this very prevalent custom should be looked for elsewhere. It has been shown that the tribal territories were surrounded by a strip of uncultivated land, which served to mark the boundaries of other neighbouring tribes; in like manner the family dwelling is surrounded by a piece of unoccupied land in order to render it independent of the adjacent dwelling-

houses; this was the sole land which, subsequently, it was permitted to enclose with palisades, walls, or hedges. In the barbarian codes it is known by the name of legal, legitimate court (*curtis legalis, hoba legitima*); in this spot was placed the family tomb. So indispensable was this insulation held to be that the Roman law of the Twelve Tables fixed the space to intervene the town houses at two-and-a-half feet. [8]

It was not the houses only, but also the family allotments of land which were isolated, so that the fear of fire could not have suggested the measure. A law of the Twelve Tables regulates that a strip of land, five feet in width, be left uncultivated. (Table VII., sec. 4.)

The breaking up of the common property of the clan into the collective property of the families of the clan was a more radical innovation than, in our day, would be a restitution of the landed estates to the community. Collective property was introduced with infinite difficulty, and only maintained itself by placing itself under Divine protection and the ægis of the law. I may add that the law was only invented for the purpose of protecting it. The justice which is other than the satisfaction of revenge, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth – the *lex talionis*, – made its appearance in human society only after the establishment of property, for, as Locke says,

“Where there is no property there is no injustice, is a proposition as certain as any demonstrated in Euclid. For the idea of property being a right to anything, and the idea to which the name injustice is given being the invasion or violation of that right.” [9]

As the witty Linguet said to Montesquieu, “*L’esprit des lois, c’est l’esprit de la propriété.*”

Religious rites and ceremonies were instituted to impress upon the superstitious minds of primitive peoples the respect due to this private property of the family collectively, so greatly opposed to their communistic usages. In Greece and Italy, on appointed days of the month and year, the chief of the family walked round his fields, along the uncultivated boundary, pushing the victims before him, singing hymns, and offering up sacrifices to the posts or stones, the metes and bounds of the fields, which were converted into divinities – they were the *Termini* of the Romans, the “divine bournes” of the Greeks. The cultivator was not to approach the landmark, “lest the divinity, on feeling himself struck by the ploughshare, should cry out to him, ‘Stop, this is my field, yonder is thine.’” The Bible abounds in recommendations to respect the fields of one’s neighbour: “Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour’s landmark.” (*Deut. xix., 14.*) “Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark.” Job, who has the soul of a landlord, numbers among the wickedest the man “who removes the landmarks.” (*Job xxiv.*) The Cossacks, with a view to inculcating on their children a respect for other people’s property, took them out for walks along the boundaries of the fields, whipping them all the way with rods. Plato, who drops his idealism when he deals with property, says, “Our first law must be that no man shall lay a hand on the boundary-mark which divides a field from his neighbour’s field, for it must remain unmoved. Let no man remove the stone which he has sworn to leave in its place.” (*Laws, VIII.*) The Etruscans called down maledictions on the heads of the guilty:

“He who has touched or removed the landmark shall be condemned by the gods; his house shall disappear; his race become extinct; his lands shall cease to bear fruit; hail, rust,

and canicular heat shall destroy his harvests; the limbs of the culprit shall ulcerate and rot.” [10]

The spiritual chastisements, which make so deep an impression on the wild and fiery imaginations of primitive peoples, having proved inadequate, it became necessary to resort to corporal punishments of unexampled severity – punishments repugnant to the feelings of barbarian peoples. Savages inflict the most cruel tortures on themselves by way of preparing for a life of perpetual struggle, but such tortures are never punitive; it is the civilised proprietor who has hit upon the *bene amat, bene castigat* of the Bible. Catlin, who knew the savages of America well, states that a Sioux chief had expressed his surprise to him at having seen “along the frontier white men whip their children; a thing that is very cruel.”

The worst crime that a barbarian can commit is to shed the blood of his clan; if he kills one of its members the entire clan must rise up to take vengeance on him. When a member of a clan was found guilty of murder or any other crime he was expelled, and devoted to the infernal gods, lest any should have to reproach himself with having spilt the blood of his clan by killing the murderer. Property marks its appearance by teaching the barbarian to trample under foot such pious sentiments; laws are enacted condemning to death all those who attack property.

“Whosoever,” decrees the law of the Twelve Tables, “shall in the night furtively have cut, or caused to graze on, the crops yielded by the plough, shall, if he has reached puberty, be devoted to Ceres and put to death; if he has not arrived at puberty he shall be beaten with rods at the will of the magistrate and condemned to repair the damage doubly. The manifest thief (i.e., taken in the act), if a freeman, shall be scourged with rods and delivered up to slavery. The

incendiary of a corn-stack shall be whipped and put to death by fire." (Table VIII, Secs.9, 10, 14.)

The Saxons punished theft with death. The Burgundian law surpassed the Roman law in cruelty; it condemned to slavery the wives and children under 14 years of age who had not denounced their husbands and fathers guilty of stealing a horse or an ox. (XLVII, sec.1, 2.) Property introduced the common informer into the family.

These moral and material punishments, which are met with in all countries and which are everywhere alike ferocious [11], abundantly prove the difficulty experienced by the collective form of property in introducing itself into the communist tribes.

Prior to the institution of collective property, the barbarian looked upon all the property belonging to the tribe as his own, and disposed of it accordingly; the Lacedæmonian, we have seen, had the right to enter private dwellings without any formalities and to take the food he required. The Lacedæmonians were, it is true, a comparatively civilised people, but their essentially warlike existence had enabled them to preserve their ancient usages. The travellers who have fallen victims to this propensity of the barbarian to appropriate everything within his reach, have described him as a thief; as if theft were compatible with a state of society in which private property is not as yet constituted. But as soon as collective property was established, the natural habit of appropriating what a man sees and covets, became a crime when practised at the expense of the private property of the family, and, in order to set a restraint upon this inveterate habit, it was found necessary to have recourse to moral and physical punishment; justice and our odious



criminal codes followed in the wake of collective property and are an outgrowth of it.

Collective property, if not the sole cause, was, at all events, the pre-eminent cause of the overthrow of the matriarchate by the patriarchate. The fate of the patriarchal family is intimately bound up with the collective form of property: the latter becomes the essential condition of its maintenance, and, so soon as it begins to break up, the patriarchal family is likewise disintegrated and superseded by the modern family; a sorry remnant, destined, ere long, to disappear.

Ancient society recognised the necessity of the integrity of collective property for the maintenance of the family. At Athens the State watched over its proper administration; anybody being entitled to demand the indictment of the head of a family who maladministered his goods. The collective property did not belong to the father, nor even to the individual members of the family, but to the family considered as a collective entity which is perpetual, and endures from generation to generation. [12] The property belonged to the family in the past, present, and future; to the ancestors who had their altars and their tombs in it; to the living members who were only usufructuaries, charged with continuing the family traditions, and with nursing the property in order to hand it down to their descendants. The chief of the family, who might be the father, the eldest brother, the younger brother, or, on occasions, the mother, was the administrator of the estate; it was his duty to attend to the wants of the individuals who composed the collectivity; to see that the lands were properly cultivated and the house kept in order, so that he might transmit the patrimony to his successor in the same state of prosperity in

which he had received it at the death of his predecessor. To enable him to fulfil this mission the head of the family was armed with despotic power; he was judge and executioner; he judged, condemned, and inflicted bodily punishment on the members of the family under his control; his authority stretched so far as to empower him to sell his children into slavery, and to inflict the pain of death on all his subordinates, including his wife, although she enjoyed the protection, sufficiently precarious, it is true, of her own family. The quantity of land distributed was generally proportionate to the number of males in the family; the father, with a view to the procuring of servants to cultivate it, married his sons while still in infancy to adult women, who became his concubines. Haxthausen relates that in Russia one could see tall and robust young women carrying their little husbands in their arms.

The worn-out phrase "The family is the pillar of the state," which modern moralists and politicians reiterate *ad nauseam* since it has ceased to be exact, was at one time an adequate expression of the truth. Where collective property exists, every village is a petty state, the government whereof is constituted by the council elected in the assembly of the family-chiefs, co-equals in rights and privileges. In India, where the collective form of property was highly developed, the village had its public officers, who were artisans (wheelwrights, tailors, weavers, etc.), schoolmasters, priests, and dancing women for public ceremonies; they were paid by the village community, and owed their services to the members having ancestral shares in the land, but not to stranger settlers. In the Greek republics the state maintained public prostitutes for the use of the males of the patrician families. Sir G. Campbell states, among other curious facts,

that the smith and the artisans generally, were more highly remunerated in the Indian villages than the priest.

The head man of the village, elected for his ability, his learning, and powers as a sorcerer, is the administrator of the property of the community; he alone is privileged to carry on commerce with the exterior, that is, to sell the surplus of the crops and cattle, and to buy such objects as are not manufactured in the village. As Haxthausen observes:

“Commerce is only carried on wholesale, which is of great advantage to the peasant, who, left to himself, is often under the necessity of selling his products below their real value, and at unfavourable moments. As commerce is in the hands of the chief, the latter is able from his connections with the chiefs of the neighbouring villages to wait for a rise in prices, and take advantage of all favourable circumstances before concluding a sale.”

All those who are familiar with the deceptions practised upon peasants by merchants will appreciate the justness of the observation of Haxthausen. The French bourgeois, who pounced upon Algiers and Tunis as on a prey, expressed great moral indignation at being prevented from entering into communication with the Arabs individually, and obliged to treat with the chiefs of the community; they loudly and pathetically bewailed the unhappy lot of the wretched Arabs bereft of the liberty of allowing themselves to be fleeced by the European merchants!

Petty societies, organised on the basis of collective property, are endowed with a vitality and power of resistance possessed by no other social form in an equal degree.

“The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything that they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations,” says Lord Metcalfe. “They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down, revolution succeeds to revolution; Hindu, Pagan, Mogul, Mahratta, Sikh, English are all masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same. In time of trouble they arm and fortify themselves; a hostile army passes through the country, the village communities collect their cattle within their walls and let the enemy pass unmolested. If plunder and devastation be directed against themselves, and the force employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance; but when the storm has passed over they return and resume their occupations. If a country remains for a series of years the scene of continued pillage and massacre, so that the village cannot be inhabited, the scattered villagers nevertheless return whenever the power of peaceable possession revives. A generation may pass away, but the succeeding generation will return. The sons will take the places of their fathers, the same site for the village, the same positions for their houses; the same lands will be re-occupied by the descendants ... It is not a trifling matter that will turn them out, for they will often maintain their posts throughout times of disturbance and convulsions, and acquire a strength sufficient to resist pillage and oppression with success.”

Farther on he adds:

“The village constitution which can survive all outward shock is, I suspect, easily subverted with the aid of our regulations and Courts of Justice by any internal disturbance; litigation, above all things, I should think would tend to destroy it.” [13]

Bourgeois exploitation cannot tolerate, alongside of it, the collective form of property, which it destroys and replaces by private property, the adequate form of bourgeois property. What has taken place in India and Algeria has occurred in France. The village collectivities that had lasted throughout the entire feudal period, and survived till 1789, were

disorganised by the dissolvent action of the laws during and after the bourgeois revolution. The great revolutionary jurist, Merlin *suspect* (so called because he had been the proposer of the sanguinary *loi des suspects*) did more towards bringing about the destruction and confiscation of the communal lands of the village collectivities than the feudal lords had done in the course of centuries.

Over and above the reasons of a political character which prompt monarchical governments to patronise the family organisation based on collective property, there exist yet others, equally important, of an administrative character. As the collectivist village forms a number of administrative units represented by the chief who directs it and trafficks in its name, the Government makes the latter responsible for the levying of the taxes and the recruiting of the militia, and charges him with additional functions which are not remunerated. In Russia the Imperial Government lends its weight to the decisions of the communal council, incorporating into the army, and even despatching to Siberia, all those whose conduct is not approved of by the elders. In France, the monarchy anterior to 1789 exerted itself to uphold these peasant collectivist organisations, assailed on the one hand by the feudal lords, who brutally despoiled them of their communal possessions and privileges, and on the other by the bourgeoisie, who seized upon their lands by every means. [14]

The feudal lords encouraged the organisation of the peasants into family collectivities. Dalloz mentions a contract of the 17th century in which a lord causes his lands to be cultivated by *métayers*, on condition that the peasants shall have “in common, fire and food and live in perpetual community.” A

legist of the 18th century, Dunod, furnishes us with the reason which led to the community of the cultivators: It is that “the seignorial domains are better cultivated, and the subjects better able to pay the tributes due to the lord when living in common than when forming separate households.”

Collective property, which destroyed the primitive tribal communism, established the family communism which secured all its members against want.

“The proletariat is not known in Russia,” wrote Haxthausen, “and so long as this institution (the *mir*) survives, it can never be found here. A man may become impoverished here and squander his substance, but the faults or misfortunes of the father can never affect his children, for these holding their rights of the commune, and not of the family, do not inherit their father’s poverty.”

It is precisely this security against want afforded by collective property which is offensive to the capitalist, whose whole fortune reposes on the misery of the working class.

Collective property is remarkable not only for the tenacity and indestructibility of the small peasant collectivities which it maintained, and the well-being which it afforded to the cultivators of the soil, but also for the grandeur of its achievements. In illustration whereof let me cite the marvellous works of irrigation in India and the terrace-culture of the mountain slopes of Java, covering, Wallace informs us, hundreds of square miles; “these terraces are increased year by year, as the population increases, by the inhabitants of each village working in concert under the direction of their chiefs, and it is, perhaps, by this system of village culture alone that such extensive terracing and irrigation has been rendered possible.” [15]

The collective form of property, traces of which have been met with wherever researches have been instituted, has survived for shorter or longer periods, according to the industrial and commercial development of the country in which it obtained. This form, created by the splitting up of the common property of the tribe, was bound to disappear in its turn, with the disintegration of the patriarchal family, in order to constitute the individual property of the several members of the dissolved family.

Private property, which was to succeed collective property, grew out of it. The house and garden enclosed by walls and palisades were the private property, absolute and inalienable, of the family; no public authority had the right to trench on it. In the interior of the house the different members, not omitting the slaves, possessed a *peculium*, some private property independent of that of the family; this individual property, acquired by the personal toil of its owner, was often considerable; it consisted of slaves, cattle, and movables of various kinds. The right to a *peculium* was acquired slowly; in the beginning no one member of the family could possess aught in severalty; all that he acquired reverted of right to the community.

The arable and pasture lands of which the family had but the usufruct became ultimately their private property, and when the family was broken up, i.e., when every male upon marrying quitted the collective dwelling for a house of his own, landed property shared the fate of personal property – it was divided amongst the children and was held in severalty.

The evolution of property, passing from the collective to the private form, has been extremely slow, so slow, indeed, that in many a country collective property, but for an external impulse, might possibly have endured for centuries without suffering a change. Villages founded on collective property form economic units; that is to say that they contain all they require for the intellectual and material wants of their inhabitants, and that contrariwise, they comprise few elements capable of determining change; here all things are accomplished in accordance with traditions prescribed by the elders, and handed down like precious heirlooms. In effect, once a village has arrived at such a degree of industrial and agricultural development as to be capable of satisfying the natural and simple wants of the villagers, it would seem that it no longer finds within itself any cause for change; an impulse from without is required to set it in motion.

Agriculture, which was the determinant cause of the parcelling out of the common tribal property, was, moreover, one of the causes of the splitting up of collectivist property. In proportion as improved methods of culture were introduced, the peasants recognised that one year's possession was insufficient to reap the benefits of the manures and labour incorporated with the lands that had been allotted them. They demanded that the partitions, hitherto annual, should in future take place every two, three, seven, and even twenty years: in Russia the government was constrained to impose the partitions on the taking of the census; the peasants call them *black*, i.e., *bad* partitions, which shows how uncongenial they were to the families who considered that they had proprietary rights in the lands which had been given them at the last distribution. Hence, it



was the arable lands to which improved methods were first applied, which, in the first place, became liable to be divided only after a certain number of years, and which finally became inalienable; whereas the pasture continued to be apportioned annually. So long as the arable lands are not private property, the trees planted in the communal lands belong to those who have planted them, even though they grow in territory which is subject to periodical partition.

In the villages in which collective property obtains all the chiefs of families are co-equals; they all possess an equal right to a share in the allotment of the lands, because all originally belonged to the same clan; the strangers who have come to reside there as artificers, fugitives, or prisoners of war, are entitled, after having obtained the freedom of the city, which corresponds to the antique adoption by the clan, to share in the territorial partition equally with the original inhabitants. This admission of strangers was feasible only so long as the villages grew slowly and as the land to be disposed of remained abundant: the populous villages were forced to disseminate, to send forth colonies and to clear the neighbouring forests. Every family was free, indeed, to make clearances outside a given limit and during a stated period, and was held to have a possessory right in the lands which it had brought under culture. But this abundance of uncultivated land began to fail in the villages situated near the seashore or by the riverside, which, owing to their more favoured position, attracted a larger number of strangers. Into these villages, which grew into small towns, it became difficult to gain admission, and for a right of sojourn certain fees were levied. [16]

The new-comers were excluded from the territorial partitions, from the right of common of pasture, and from the administration of the towns; these rights were strictly limited to the primitive families, who constituted a privileged body, a sort of communal aristocracy, to wit, the municipal aristocracy, opposed alike to the feudal or warlike aristocracy and to the alien artificers. The latter, in order to resist the continual aggressions of the communal aristocracy, formed trade corporations. This division of the members of the city was throughout the Middle Ages a constant source of intestine warfare.

A degree of inequality crept into the primitive families: it would happen that to one family fell an undue share of allotments; that others, in order to discharge their debts, were compelled to relinquish the enjoyment of their lots, and so forth. This engrossing of the land profoundly wounded the sentiments of equality which had not ceased to animate the members of the collectivist villages. Everywhere the monopolisers of land have been loaded with maledictions; in Russia they are called the community-eaters; in Java it is forbidden to claim more than one inheritance. Isaiah exclaims:

“Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.” (v. 8.)

But among the causes that operated most powerfully in bringing misery and disorganisation into the village collectivities were the fiscal charges, as witness Anglo-India.

At the outset the taxes were paid in kind and proportionally to the nature of the harvest; but this mode of payment no

longer answers the claims of a government which becomes centralised; it exacts money payment of the taxes in advance, taking no account of the state of the crops. The villagers, as a consequence, are constrained to apply to the usurers, those pests of the village; this vile brood, who are countenanced by the government, rob the peasant shamelessly; they transform him into a nominal proprietor, who tills his fields with no other object than to pay off his debts, which increase in proportion as he discharges them. The contempt and hatred inspired by the usurers is widespread and intense; if the anti-Semitic campaign in Russia has given rise to such sanguinary scenes in the villages, it is because the peasant made no distinction between the Jew and usurer; many an orthodox Christian who needed not to be circumcised in order to strip the cultivators as clean as ever the purest descendant of Abraham could have done, was robbed and massacred during the height of the fever of the anti-Semitic movement. These various causes co-operated with the development of industry and commerce to accelerate the monopolising of the land, vested more and more in private families, and to precipitate the dissolution of the patriarchal family.

## Footnotes

1. The following are M. Manouvrier's figures:

**Average cranial capacity of modern Parisians**

Number of skulls measured	Capacity in cubic centimetres
77 male	1560
41 female	1338

**Average cranial capacity of men and women of the Stone Age**

Number of skulls measured	Capacity
68 male	1644
30 female	1422

Thus the average cranial capacity of the male savage is inferior by 26 cubic centimetres, whereas the average cranial capacity of the female savage is superior by 84 cc. – L. Manouvrier, *De la quantité de l'encephale, Memoire de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, III, 2nd fascicule, 1885.

2. This form of property, under another name than that of *collective property*, which term I employ in contradistinction to the primitive communist form, has of recent years been the subject of extensive research. It has been investigated in Germany by Haxthausen, Maurer, Engels, etc.; in England by Maine, Seebohm, Gomme, etc.; in Belgium by Laveleye; in Russia by Schepotief, Kovalesky, etc.

3. Dividing the land by lot has been everywhere the primitive mode of distribution. "The Lord commanded the children of Israel, entering the Land of Canaan, to divide the land by lot." (*Numbers xxxiii.*, 54; *xxxvi.*, 2.)

4. *Etudes sur la situation intérieure, la vie nationale et les institutions de la Russie*, par le Baron A. de Haxthausen. French edition of 1847.

5. Marshall, *Elementary and Practical Treatise on Landed Property*, London 1804.

6. H.S. Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West*, p.63.

7. *Essai sur l'abolition du parcours et sur le partage des biens communaux*, par Sprungli de Neuenegg; publié par la Société d'Economie rurale de Berne (1763), cité par Neufchateau, dans son *Voyage agronomique dans la Senatorerie de Dijon*, 1806.

8. Table VII, sec.1. Restored text after Festus.

9. Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, Book IV., chap.iii., sec.18.

10. Sacred formula cited by Fustel de Coulanges, *Cité Antique*.

11. Property is invariably ferocious; until quite recently thieves were hanged after having suffered torture; the forgers of banknotes in civilised Europe were formerly sentenced to death, and are still condemned to hard labour for life.

12. Among the Germans and the Bavarians they were known by the name of estates belonging to the genealogies (*genealogiæ*) among the Ripuarian Franks under that of *terræ aviaticæ*; among the Anglo-Saxons under that of *ethel* or *alod parentum*.

13. *Report of Select Committee of the House of Commons*, 1832. The remarkable deposition of Lord Metcalfe is published *in extenso* in the appendix to Vol.XI.

Jurists, politicians, religious and socialist reformers have repeatedly discussed the rights of property, and these discussions, how interminable soever, have always come back to the initial point, to wit, that property had been established by violence, but that time, which disfigures all things, had added grace and sanctity to property. Until recent years the writers of philosophies of human

society ignored the existence of collective property. Baron Haxthausen, who travelled in Russia in 1840, made the discovery, and published an account, of it in his *Etudes sur la situation intérieure la vie nationale et les institutions rurales de la Russie*. He remarked that the *mir* was the realisation of the Utopianism of St. Simon, then in vogue. Bakounine and the liberal Russians, who had never so much as suspected the existence of collective property in Russia, now re-discovered Haxthausen's discovery; and as, in despite of their amorphous anarchism, they are above all things Russian Jingos, who imagine that the Slav race is the chosen race, privileged to guide mankind, they declared the *mir*, that primitive and exhausted form of property, to be the form of the future; it only remained for the western nations to obliterate their civilisation and to ape that of the Russian peasants.

In virtue of the principle that it is hardest to see what lies under our eyes, Haxthausen, who had discovered the *mir* in Russia, was unable to perceive the remains of the *Mark*, so numerous in Germany; he affirmed that collective property was a specialty of the Slavs. Maurer has the merit of having demonstrated that the Germans have passed through the stage of collective property; and, since Maurer, traces of it have been found in all countries and among all races. Before Haxthausen, the English officials in India had, indeed, called attention to this particular form of property in the provinces which they administered, but their discovery, buried in official reports, had obtained no publicity; but since the question has come under scientific observation it has been found that this same form had already been signalled by writers in the last, and in the first years of the present, centuries, notably by Le Grand d'Aussy, François de Neufchateau, in France, and the agronomist Marshall, in England.

14. Russian revolutionary socialists believe in the *mir*, and are in favour of its maintenance. They opine that the existence of a class of peasants living in collectivity must facilitate the establishment of agrarian communism. A socialist government, turning to account

the communistic sentiments developed by collective property, might conceivably adopt measures favourable to the nationalisation of the soil and its social cultivation; but the establishment of a revolutionary socialist power in Russia is highly improbable during the maintenance, as a general fact, of this form of property. All village collectivities, organised on the basis of the *mir*, are independent; they are self-sufficing, and keep up very imperfect relations among one another, and it is an easy matter for any government to stifle whatever disposition they might manifest for federation. This is what has come to pass in India. The English Government, with an army of 50,000 European soldiers, holds in subjection an empire as thickly peopled as Russia. The village collectivities united by no federative bonds are powerless to offer any considerable force of resistance. It may be asseverated that the surest basis of governmental despotism is precisely collective property, with the family and communal organisation which corresponds thereto.

15. A.R. Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, 1869, Vol.I.

16. In his *Histoire des biens Communaux jusqu'au XIII. siècle*, 1856, M. Rivière cites an *ordonnance* of 1223, which states that every stranger for the right of sojourn at Rheims must pay a bushel of oats and a hen to the archbishop, eight crowns to the mayor, and four to the aldermen. The archbishop is the feudal lord; the contributions due to him are comparatively insignificant, whereas those exacted by the mayor and aldermen, who belong to the communal or municipal aristocracy, are very onerous for the period.

## CHAPTER IV

# Feudal Property

### I

FEUDAL property presents itself under two forms: immovable property, called *corporeal* by the French feudists, consisting of a castle or manor with its appurtenances and surrounding lands, “as far as a capon can fly;” and movable or *incorporeal* property, consisting of military service, aids, reliefs, fines, tithes, etc.

Feudal property, of which ecclesiastical property is but a variety, springs up in the midst of village communities based on collective property, and evolves at their expense; after a long series of transformations it is resolved into bourgeois or capitalist property, the adequate form of private property.

Feudal property, and the social organisation which corresponds thereto, serve as a bridge from family, or, more correctly, consanguine collectivism to bourgeois individualism.

Under the feudal system the landlord has obligations and is far from enjoying the liberty of the capitalist – the right to use and abuse. The land is not marketable; it is burdened with conditions, and is transmitted according to traditional customs which the proprietor dares not infringe; he is bound to discharge certain defined duties towards his hierarchical superiors and inferiors.



The system, in its essence, is a compact of reciprocal services; the feudal lord only holds his land and possesses a claim on the labour and harvests of his tenants and vassals on condition of doing suit and service to his superiors and lending aid to his dependants. On accepting the oath of fealty and homage the lord engaged to protect his vassal against all and sundry by all the means at his command; in return for which support the vassal was bound to render military and personal service and make certain payments to his lord. The latter, in his turn, for the sake of protection, commended himself to a more puissant feudal lord, who himself stood in the relation of vassalage to a suzerain, to the king or emperor.

All the members of the feudal hierarchy, from the serf upwards to the king or emperor, were bound by the ties of reciprocal duties. A sense of duty was the spirit of feudal society, just as the lust of lucre is the soul of our own. All things were made to contribute to the impressing it upon the minds of great and small alike. Popular poetry, that primeval and all-powerful instrument of education, exalted duty into a religion. Roland, the epic hero of feudalism, assailed and overwhelmed by the Saracens at Roncevalles, upbraids his companion-in-arms, Oliver, who complains of Charlemagne's desertion of them, in this wise:

“Ne dites tel outrage.  
Mai seit de l’coer ki el piz se cuardet!  
Nus remeindrum en estal en la place;  
Par nus i iert e li colps e li caples.”

“Pur sun seigneur deit hum souffrir granzmals;  
E endurer e forz freiz e granz calz  
Si’n deit hum perdre del’sanc e de la carn  
Fier de ta lance e jo de Durendal,  
Ma bone espée que li Reis me dunat  
Se jo i moerc, dire poet ki l’avrat,  
Que ele fut a nobilie vassal!” [1]

Consanguine collectivism had but created the communal unit; feudalism called forth a provincial and national life by knitting together the independent and insulated groups of a province or a nation by a reciprocity of duties and services. Viewed in this light feudalism is a federation of baronies.

The duties which the lord owed his serfs, tenants and vassals were manifold and onerous, but with the decay of feudalism he shook off these duties, while, at the same time, he continued to exact and even aggravated, the dues and obligations which, originally, had been but the recompense of services he had rendered. Not content with neglecting his feudal duties, he raised a claim to the lands of his vassals, as also to the communal domains and forests. The feudists, justly stigmatised as “feudal pens,” maintained that the woodlands, forests, and meadows had immemorially belonged to the lord, who had merely resigned the usufruct thereof to his serfs and vassals. The English feudists made shorter work of it. They fabricated history and declared that at some period –

“sometimes vaguely associated with the feudalisation of Europe, sometimes more precisely with the Norman Conquest – the entire soil of England was confiscated; that the whole of each manor became the lord’s demesne; that the lord divided certain parts of it among his free retainers, but kept a part in his own hands to be tilled by his villeins; that all which was not required for this distribution was left as the lord’s waste; and that all customs which cannot be traced to feudal principles grew up insensibly through the subsequent tolerance of the feudal chief.” [2]

The bourgeois historians and Merlin, the terrible jurist of the convention and destroyer of the communal lands, solicitous to trace the private form of property to the feudal period, adopted the interested thesis of the aristocrats. The history of the genesis and evolution of feudal property will prove the unsoundness of the feudists’ theory and show that seignorial property was built up by fraud and violence.

## II

The feudal system appears as the hierarchical organisation of authority, notwithstanding that it was the outgrowth of a society of equals; but equality could never have brought forth despotism but for the co-operation, during centuries, of events which, for the understanding of that genesis, must be kept in mind.

The Teutonic tribes who had invaded Western Europe were a nomad population, in a state of barbarism nearly akin to that of the Iroquois tribes at the time of the discovery of America. Strabo tells us that the barbarians established in Belgium and in the North-East of France were ignorant of agriculture, and lived exclusively on milk and flesh; principally on pork, fresh or salt; that they possessed herds of swine – savage and dangerous as wolves – roaming at large in the immense forests which covered the country, and so abundant as to supply them with food and the means of buying the few articles they stood in need of. Strabo adds that the Gauls had similar manners, and that to know them it required but to contemplate the Germans of his time. When Cæsar landed in England he found that the Britons inhabiting Kent possessed much the same manners and customs as the Gauls; they did not till the land; they subsisted on a milk diet and on flesh, and were clad in skins. They painted their bodies blue in order to strike terror into their enemies, and had their wives in common by groups of ten or twelve, including brothers, fathers and sons. [3] In Europe and elsewhere the point of departure is the same.

The widest equality reigned among these barbarians, who were all warriors and hunters, and whose manners and

usages tended to preserve this heroic equality. When they settled and began to practise a rude kind of agriculture, they undertook warlike expeditions for the purpose of keeping up the exercise of fighting. A war chief of renown needed but to announce that he was starting on a campaign to see warriors flock to him, eager for spoils and glory. During the expedition they owed him obedience, as did the Greek warriors to Agamemnon, but they ate at the same table and banqueted with him without distinction of persons, and the booty was divided equally and by lot. Back again in their villages, they recovered their independence and equality, and the war chief lost his authority.

It is in this free and equal fashion that the Scandinavians, and in fact all barbarians, organised their expeditions. These piratical manners prevailed during the whole of the middle ages; when William the Conqueror and Pope Innocent III wanted to levy an army against the English and the Albigenses, it was only necessary for them to promise a division of the spoils taken from the vanquished. Before the battle of Hastings, just as the troops were about to engage in fight, William, with a loud voice called out to his soldiers:

“Fight bravely and put all to death; if we win, we shall all be rich; what I get, you shall get; if I conquer, you will conquer? if I obtain the land, you will obtain it.”

His Holiness the Pope used similar language on the 10th of March, in the year 1208, on stirring up the faithful to fight the heretic Albigenses:

“Up now, soldiers of Christ; root out impiety by every means that God may have revealed to you (the means that the Lord had revealed were fire, rapine, and murder), drive out of their castles the Earl of Toulouse and his vassals, and seize upon

their lands, that the orthodox Catholics may be established in the dominions of the heretics.”

The Crusades which launched the warriors of Europe on the East were similarly organised, having the delivery of the Holy Sepulchre for pretence and plunder for object. [4]

When the barbarians, in quest of territory, had conquered a country, they either put the inhabitants to death (as the Hebrews did, by Divine order), or contented themselves with ransacking the towns; they settled in the country, which they set about cultivating in their own way, and allowed the vanquished to live alongside of them according to their own customs and usages. But when they became sedentary and cultivators of the land, they little by little lost their warlike habits, although some of them remained invincibly attached to the primitive manners. The Germans observed by Tacitus had already lost some of their savage fierceness; they had established themselves and become addicted to agriculture; the tribe of the Catti, however, were dedicated to war. Always in the forefront of battle, they occupied the most dangerous posts; they possessed neither houses nor lands, nor had they cares of any sort. Wherever they presented themselves they were entertained. These warriors formed a kind of standing army, charged with defending those of their countrymen who were engaged in agricultural pursuits.

But no sooner had the invading barbarians established themselves and lost their native vigour than other barbarians pounced upon them as on an easy prey, and treated them like a conquered people. During many centuries compact masses of barbarians overran Europe: in the east, the Goths, Germans, and Huns; in the north and west, the Scandinavians; in the south, the Arabians;

desolating the towns and country in their passage. And when from east and north and south this human flood had ceased to pour down into Europe, and when the barbarians had lost their nomadic habits and resumed the work of civilisation which they had arrested and frustrated, there was unloosed another scourge; bands of armed men overspread the country, plundering and ransacking and levying contributions on every side; the battle over, the soldiers of the hostile armies fraternised and started on an expedition on their own account. [5]

During many centuries people lived in continual fear of robbery, kidnapping and murder. The invasions of the barbarians that ruined and disorganised the country did not prevent the tribes already settled from quarrelling among themselves. These constant internecine quarrels render barbarian nations powerless in the face of strangers; they are unable to stifle their clan hatreds and their village feuds in front of a common enemy. Tacitus, intent solely on the supremacy of the Romans, adjured the gods to foment this disastrous discord; for, said he, "fortune can bestow no higher benefit on Rome than the dissensions of her enemies." [6]

The inhabitants of the towns and provinces were constrained, for safety's sake, to live in fortified places. The charters of Auvergne of the 11th and 12th centuries designate such villages by the term of *castra* (camp). In the towns and boroughs houses were constructed in view of the necessity of sustaining a siege.

The village collectivities which, at the outset, were composed almost exclusively of individuals belonging to the same clan,

and consequently equals, elected chieftains charged with their defence, who eventually came to gather into their hands the several rights of jurisdiction, of settling differences, of interpreting the customs, and maintaining order. The Franks in their barbarous Latin called such a chieftain *graffio*, from *graf* the German for count. The elected chief of the village collectivities are the feudal barons in embryo.

In the beginning they were simply public officers subjected to the authority of the council of the elders and the popular assemblies, and with the execution of whose decisions they were charged; they were severely punished for every neglect of duty. [7]The *graffio* of the Frankish tribes who omitted to expel a stranger whose expulsion had been voted by the assembly was amerced in a fine of 200 gold *solidi* (*Lex Salica*). This was exactly the sum assessed as composition for murder (Weregild).

The powers which were at a later date to become the appanage of the feudal lords, belonged to the community met in full assembly (*Folkmoote*). All of the inhabitants were bound to attend in arms, under penalty of a fine; certain village collectivities possessed serfs, as, later on, did the lords.

The laws of Wales, collected in 940, by order of King Hoel-Du, and published in 1841 by A. Owen, indicate the mode of election and the qualities and the functions of these village chiefs which do not substantially differ from those of the barbarian war-chief. The chief of the clan was chosen by all the heads of families having wives and legitimate offspring, and he held his office for life; among certain peoples his

functions were temporary and revocable. It was imperative “that he should speak on behalf of his kin and be listened to; that he should fight on behalf of his kin and be feared; that he should be security on behalf of his kin and be accepted.” When he administered justice he was assisted by the seven oldest villagers; under his orders stood an *avenger*, charged with executing vengeance; for justice at that epoch was but revenge – the *lex talionis* – blow for blow, wound for wound. On the first alarm, after the clamour, called *haro* by the Normans and *biafor* by the Basques, the inhabitants were bound to issue forth from their houses, in arms, and place themselves under their chieftain’s command; he was the military chief, to whom all owed fidelity and obedience. Whoever failed to respond to his appeal was fined. In certain boroughs we find a military organisation, e.g., at Tarbes the inhabitants were formed into tithings having at their head a tithing-man, whose office it was to see that all the men were armed and that their arms were in good condition. [8]

All functions amongst barbarian tribes tend to become vested in certain families; the weaver’s, smith’s, priest’s, and magician’s callings are handed down from father to son; it is in this way that castes arise. The chief, charged with the maintenance of order at home and the duty of defence abroad, was chosen out of the body of the inhabitants; but little by little it became the habit to choose him out of the same family, which, ultimately, itself designated the chief of the community and omitted the formality of an election. It would be erroneous to suppose that in the beginning the chieftainship carried with it any special privilege; so far, indeed, was chieftainship from being coveted, that the man elected by the community was made liable to a fine if he refused to accept the charge. At Folkestone, if either the



mayor or any of the jurats refused to assume their respective offices upon being elected, “the commoners were to go and beat down their principal message.” At Hastings it was a law that “if the bailiff will not accept the charge all the commoners shall go and beat down his tenement.” [9]

Greatness was dangerous: the Scandinavians, in great calamities – in a pressing famine, for example – sacrificed their king, as the highest price with which they could purchase the Divine favour. In this manner the first king of Vermaland, a province of Sweden, was burnt in honour of Odin, to put an end to a great dearth. Earl Hakon, of Norway, offered his son in sacrifice to obtain of Odin the victory over the Jomsburg pirates, and Gideon immolated his daughter to Jehovah for a similar reason.

The Indian village communities observed in our day have, for public officers, weavers, smiths, school-masters, brahmins, dancers, etc., who are in the service of the community which rewards them by a lodging, an allowance of grain, and the allotment of a plot of land cultivated by the villagers. [10]

“In early Greece the *demiurgoi* seem to be the analogues of these Hindoo officials. Homer mentions the herald, the prophet, the bard, all of whom, although we cannot trace their exact position, appear to have exercised some kind of public function. Among the Keltic clans similar classes are known to have existed.” [11]

The chiefs elected by the village collectivities were treated in the same way as the officers of the Hindoo villages: their companions, in reward of their services, allotted them a larger share of land than to the rest of the inhabitants. Thus, in the borough of Malmesbury, the alderman, who was the

chief man, was annually granted a piece of land, known as the "Alderman's kitchen," in order that he might devote himself exclusively to the discharge of his office; his fields were cultivated by the commoners, who allowed him a share in their harvest and livestock. [12]

At the outset no special distinction marks out the elected chief; but the practice of continuously choosing him in the same family ended by creating a privilege that was changed into a hereditary right; the head of the privileged family became, by right of succession, and without requiring to submit to an election, the natural chief of the village. The royal authority had no other origin than this in the Frankish tribes. The *leudes* must be the heads of the families of the clan which are charged with furnishing the military chieftains; just as, among the Hebrews, the tribes of Levy must furnish the priests. They resided with the king and were partakers of the royal councils; upon occasions they resisted him and even offered him violence; it was these *leudes* who elected the king, whose functions became hereditary.

The village collectivities were perpetually at war with one another; in the partitions of the conquered lands the share of the chieftain and his family was, doubtless, more considerable than that of the commoners; to the privilege of birth was gradually superadded that of property.

On electing the village chief, the choice fell, we may presume, on the owner of the most spacious dwelling-house, affording the greatest facilities of defence and the best place of refuge for the peasants on an emergency. This strategical advantage, which, originally, may have been a matter of accident, came to be a condition exacted from every chieftain; in the Indian villages beyond the border the *burj*, or watch tower, is always attached to the house of the chief, and in constant use as a place of refuge and observation.

During the feudal period every lord was bound to possess a castle or fortified house having a courtyard protected by moats and drawbridges, a large square tower and a grist mill, to enable the peasants to shelter their crops and cattle, grind their corn and organise their defence. The chieftain's dwelling-house was considered as a sort of common house, and actually became such in times of danger. The members of the village collectivities applied themselves to repairing and fortifying it, surrounding it with walls and trenches; it was the custom for the members of a village to aid in the construction and repair of the houses of all the inhabitants without distinction. This custom is the origin of the right possessed by the feudal lord "to compel his vassals and tenants to contribute towards the construction of the fortifications in time of war." And the commentary of the feudal writer indicates the origin of the right.

"And as these fortifications serve alike for the security of the country and the towns, the safety of persons, and the conservation of property, non-residents owning lands in the locality are bound to contribute towards the same."

The barbarians, who were more of warriors than of cultivators, defended their houses and villages themselves; on the first alarm they rushed forth in battle array and placed themselves under the command of the chieftain, to assist him in beating back the aggressors; in the watch tower they mounted guard by day and watched at night; in many places the lord retained the right to exact from his vassals this service of watch and ward. But when agricultural habits began to get the upper hand, the peasants commuted this military service, which interfered with their pursuits, into a tribute to the chief; on condition that he should maintain a body of men-at-arms, charged exclusively with the work of protection and defence. A proportion of every fine imposed on a delinquent was reserved for the chieftain and his men-

at-arms. The chief was thus placed in a position to maintain an armed force which finally enabled him to impose his will and dominate his ancient companions.

The village built in the best strategical positions became a centre; in the event of invasion the inhabitants of the adjacent villages flocked to it for refuge, and in return for the protection afforded them in the hour of danger they were called on to contribute towards the costs of repairing the fortifications and maintaining the men at arms. The authority of these village chiefs extended to the surrounding country.

In this natural manner were generated in the collectivist villages, all of whose members were equal in rights and duties, the first elements of feudalism; they would have remained stable during centuries, as in India, but for the impulse of external events which disturbed them and infused them with new life. Wars and conquests developed these embryonic germs, and by agglomerating and combining them, built up the vast feudal system diffused during the Middle Ages, over Western Europe.

What in modern times has taken place in India helps us to realise the role of conquest in transforming the village chieftain into the feudal baron. When the English, established along the sea coasts, extended their dominion inland, they were brought into contact with villager organised in the manner described above; every agricultural group was commanded by a peasant, the head-man, who spoke in its name, and negotiated with the conquerors. The English authorities did not trouble to inquire into the origin and precise nature of his powers, or of the office held by him in the community; they preferred to take for granted that he was the master of the village of which he was but the representative, and to treat him as such; they enhanced and solidified his authority by all the weight conferred by the

right of the strongest, and on divers occasions assisted the head-man in oppressing his *quondam* companions, and despoiling them of their rights and possessions.

The mediæval conquerors acted in an analogous fashion; they confirmed the local chiefs in their possession of those posts in the villages which were too unimportant to be bestowed as *benefices* on their liege-men, and, in return, made them responsible for the levying of the taxes and the conduct of their dependants, thereby according them an authority they had not previously possessed in the village collectivities. But in every strategical place they installed one of their own warriors; it was a military post which they confided to him; the length of tenure of such posts, called *benefices*, was subject to variation; at first, they were revoked at pleasure, afterwards granted for life, and ultimately became hereditary. The beneficiary tenants took advantage of circumstances to turn their hereditary possessions into alodial property, i.e., into land exempt from all obligations. In France the early kings were repeatedly obliged to make ordinances against this kind of usurpation. "Let not him who holds a benefice of the emperor or the church convert any of it into his patrimony," says Charlemagne in a capitulary of the year 803 (*Cap. viii.*, s.3). But such ordinances were powerless to prevent the conversion of military chiefs into feudal barons. It may be said, therefore, that the feudal system had a dual origin; on the one hand it grew out of the conditions under which the village collectivities evolved, and on the other it sprang from conquest.

The feudal barons, whether village-chiefs transmogrified by the natural march of events, or military chieftains installed by the conquerors, were bound to reside in the country which it was their duty to administer and defend. The territory they possessed and the dues they received, in the

shape of labour and tithes, were the recompense of services rendered by them to the cultivators placed under their jurisdiction. The barons and their men-at-arms formed a permanent army, nourished and maintained by the inhabitants whom they directly protected. [13]

The baron owed justice, aid, and protection to his vassals, and these, in their turn, owed fidelity and homage to their lord. At every change, consequent on the death of either lords or vassals, the vassal was bound, within a space of 40 days, to repair to the principal manor there and not elsewhere, to indicate that he only swore fealty prospectively to a refuge in the baron's castle; if the lord was absent and had left no representative, the vassal made a vow of fealty in front of the manor-door, and caused the fact to be entered on the records. He was bound to come with his head uncovered and his belt ungirt, without sword and spurs, and to kneel down with his hands joined. The lord, in accepting his oath, took his vassal's hands into his own, in token of union and protection. The vassal thereupon enumerated the lands and dependencies which he placed under the safeguard of his lord; in early times he brought with him a clod of turf from his fields. Occasionally, too, the lord was the first to take his engagements towards his vassals. In the *Fors de Bigorre* (customary of Bigorre), it is said that the Comte de Bigorre,

“before receiving the oath of the inhabitants of the land, delegated to that effect, shall himself take the oath that he will change nothing in the ancient customs, nor in such as he shall find the people in possession of; he must have his oath confirmed by that of four nobles of his domain.”

The vassal owed military service to his lord when a foreign army had invaded his territory, when he wanted to deliver his besieged castle, or when he set out on a declared war – a war, that is to say, entered upon in the interests of the

inhabitants. But, although closely bound to him, the vassal might abandon his lord in certain cases specified in the capitularies of the years 813 to 816, to wit, if his lord had sought to kill him or reduce him to slavery, beaten him with a stick or sword, dishonoured his wife or daughter, or robbed him of his patrimony.

So soon as the authority of the feudal nobility was constituted, it became, in its turn, a source of trouble to the country whose defence it had been charged with. The barons, in order to enlarge their territories and extend their power, carried on continual warfare among themselves, only interrupted now and again by a short truce necessitated by the tillage of the fields. The wars of the barons may be compared to the industrial and commercial competition of modern times. The outcome is the same; both alike culminate in the concentration of property, and the social supremacy which it bestows. The vanquished, when not killed outright or utterly despoiled, became the vassals of the conqueror, who seized upon a portion of their lands and vassals. The petty barons disappeared for the benefit of the great ones, who became potent feudatories, and established ducal courts at which the lords in vassalage were bound to attend.

It frequently happened that the barons turned highwaymen, who plundered the fields and robbed the towns and travellers; they deserved the epithets of *gens-pille-hommes*, *gens-tue-hommes* (killers and pickers of men) which were applied to them. [14]

The towns were constrained to put themselves under the safeguard of the king or great feudatories, who concentrated the lands and feudal power, and changed the barons into courtiers. But in proportion as the petty barons disappeared, by so much the warfare slackened between castle and castle; a measure of tranquillity was restored to the country, and



the necessity for feudal protection ceased to be paramount. The lords, consequently, were in a position to absent themselves from their domains and to betake themselves to the ducal and royal courts; thither they went to play the courtier, and ceased to act as defenders of their vassals and dependants. From the hour that the cultivator no longer stood in need of military service, the feudal system had no reason to exist. Feudalism, born of warfare, perished by warfare; it perished by the very qualities which had justified its existence.

But so long as the feudal system subsisted, there remained traces of the primitive equality which had been its cradle, even though every vestige had disappeared of the equality which had distinguished the relations of the lord with his tenants and vassals. The feudal lord and the vassal became co-equals once again in the communal assemblies which discussed the agricultural interests alike of the villager and the lord; the assemblies met without his sanction, and despite his unwillingness to convoke them. His communal rights were as limited as those of the rest of the inhabitants; the heads of cattle he was entitled to send to pasture on the commons were strictly prescribed. Delisle, in his interesting study of the agricultural classes of Normandy, cites texts which show the limitation of his rights, e.g., the Seigneur de Bricqueville was entitled to send only two oxen and one horse to graze on the meadows. He was so far from being privileged that as La Poix de Frémenville, the great feudal jurist, informs us, "The lord who possesses no cattle of his own is not allowed to introduce any strange cattle, whether by letting on lease, selling, or even lending gratis his rights of common."



### III

The origin of ecclesiastical property is analogous to that of seignorial property. In those turbulent times men fled for protection to the church no less than to the baron's castle; the priestly power, indeed, far outweighed that of the baron; it was the priest who held the key of paradise. Men willed their goods to the church on their death beds in the hope of securing a seat in paradise; this custom, which was voluntary at the outset, became so general that it ended by being imposed as an obligation.

“Any person dying without leaving a part of his possessions to the Church – which was termed dying *déconfés* – was debarred from communion and sepulture. If a man died intestate his relations had to appeal to the bishops to appoint arbiters, who conjointly with themselves fixed the amount which the defunct ought to have bequeathed if he had made a testament.” [15]

The fear of the end of the world in the millennium contributed to multiply the donations to the priests and monasteries, for where was the use of keeping one's lands and chattels, when men and beast were about to perish, and the hour of judgment was at hand? But when the year 1000 had passed away without any sort of cataclysm, people recovered from their fright, and bitterly regretted having parted with, their belongings during their lifetime. With a view to intimidating the good people who demanded the restitution of their goods, the Church had recourse to anathemas and malisons. The cartularies of the period abound with formulas of maledictions calculated to strike terror into the hearts of the donator and his relations; here is a sample of the imprecations which frequently recur in the records of Auvergne.

“If a stranger, if any of your relations, if your son or your daughter should be insensate enough to contest this donation, to lay hands upon the goods dedicated to God and consecrated to His saints, may they be struck, like Herod, with an awful wound, may they, like Dathan, Abiram, and Judas, who sold the Lord, be tortured in the depths of hell.” [16]

But the property of the Church was derived, also, from other less turbid sources: men gave away their possessions and even their persons in exchange for her temporal protection.

“The major part of the acts of voluntary slavery (*obnoxatio*), says Guérard, were prompted by the spirit of devotion, and by the indulgence practised by the bishops and abbots towards their serfs, and by the benefits which the law accorded them.” [17]

The serfs and vassals of the Church and monasteries enjoyed equal privileges with those belonging to the king; they were entitled to a threefold compensation in case of injury, damage, or death. The king and the Church undertook to prosecute the culprit, whereas, ordinarily, that was the business of the family of the injured person.

The convents were fortified places able to sustain regular sieges, and the monks were experts in the use of arms. At Hastings, churchmen fought on both sides; the Abbey of Hida, a convent situated in Winchester, had brought Harold a contingent of twelve monks, who all fell fighting. The high dignitaries of the church were military chieftains, who laid down their cross and chasuble to grasp a sword and don a cuirass. Many, like the Bishop of Cahors, when they officiated, solemnly deposited on the altar their casque, cuirass, sword, and iron gauntlet. Roland at Roncevalles says to Oliver, in praise of Archbishop Turpin:

“Li arceves ques est mult bons chevaliers:  
Nen ad meilleur en terre, desuz ciel,

Bien set ferir e de lance e d'espier.”

In their enthusiasm for his prowess,

“Dient Francais: ‘Ci ad grant vasselage,  
En l’arceves que est bien la croce salve,  
Kar placet Dieu qu’assez de tels ait Carles’.” [18]

During the feudal period the clergy alone possessed instruction; this, like their weapons, they placed at the service of the parishioners who maintained them. Many a time they interposed between the rural populations and the lords who oppressed them; just as in Ireland, nowadays, the inferior clergy make common cause against the landlords with the farmers and peasants who provide for their subsistence. But if between the rural and urban populations and the priests there subsisted a close union, the clergy were often at war with the feudal nobility. If in their fits of superstitious terror and feverish piety the barons were capable of stripping themselves of a portion of their lands and riches in favour of the churches and monasteries, in their calmer moments they hankered after the possessions of the monks and priests, and seized the first opportunity of securing them.

The early kings and military chieftains bestowed churches and monasteries on their liege men and soldiers as rewards; from the 8th to the 11th centuries a considerable number of churches were in the hands of laymen. The kings of France down to the 18th century had conserved the *droit de régale*, which entitled them to all the fruits of the vacant bishoprics. When Henry VIII, the Bluebeard of English story and the Supreme Pontiff of England, in order to reform the Church, suppressed not fewer than 645 monasteries, 90 colleges, 2,374 chantries and free chapels, 100 hospitals, with revenue amounting to two millions per annum, and shared the

plunder with his courtiers and concubines, he practised on a larger scale what all his predecessors had done.

The nobility and clergy, the two classes who during the Middle Ages struggled for supremacy, discharged important and necessary functions; the tithes and socage-duty they received were the price of the services they rendered.

## IV

feudal burdens outlasted the feudal barons, who vanished when they had grown useless; these dues became the appanage of nobles, often of middle class origin, who did not render the services of which these dues had been the meed. Violently attacked by the bourgeois writers, and energetically defended by the feudists, they were definitely suppressed in France by the revolution of 1789. The earlier English revolution which established bourgeois authority, the House of Commons by the side of the House of Lords, has allowed a number of feudal privileges to subsist which are anachronisms at a time when the aristocratic or landed classes are simply a wing of the "great middle class" in every sense of the word.

The political economists and liberal bourgeois of this century, instead of investigating the origin of feudal obligations, exposing the transformations they have undergone, and explaining the necessity thereof, have fancied that they were giving proofs of learning and liberality of spirit by a sweeping condemnation of everything in any way connected with the feudal system. Howbeit, it is imperative for the understanding of the social organisation of the Middle Ages to ascertain the signification of these obligations, which are the movable form of feudal property. It would be wearisome to pass in review all of the feudal

obligations. I will confine myself to those which have more especially roused the ire of the bourgeois writers, and try to show that if they were maintained and aggravated by force, they had been, at the origin, freely consented to.

*SOCAGE.* – We have seen that the feudal baron, when not a military chieftain installed by a conqueror, was, as a rule, a simple citizen, a member of the community distinguished by no special privileges from the rest of the villagers, his co-equals; like these he received his allotment in the partition of the lands, and if his acres were cultivated for him by the commoners this was done that he might devote himself exclusively to their defence. Haxthausen has observed that the Russian lord continued to receive a quarter or a third of the territory of the *mir* which was cultivated by the villagers. Latruffe-Montmeylian says that in France the proportion of the communal lands allotted to the lord varied according to the nature of the rights of the inhabitants. It amounted to two thirds when the peasants' rights of common extended to the demesne forests, and to a third only when the rights were confined to the communal forest. [19] With the increase of the possessions of the barons and the monks, there followed a lack of serfs to cultivate their lands, wherefore they gave their arable *en bordelage* to peasant collectivities, "eating from the same pan and off the same loaf," to use the language of the period. [20] But, whether freemen or serfs, the tenants owed a certain number of days of work to the feudal lord, to till his field or house his corn.

As, at this period, production of commodities and commerce did not as yet exist, the baron, no less than the peasant, was obliged to produce all that was requisite to supply his wants. In the feudal habitation there existed workshops of every description for the manufacture of arms, farming implements, stuffs, clothing, etc., in which the peasants and their wives were bound to work for a certain number of days

in the year. The female labourer was under the direction of the lady of the manor herself, and the workshops for the same were termed *genicixæ*. The monasteries likewise possessed workshops for females. [21] These workshops were rapidly turned into harems for the lords and their retainers, and even into dens of debauchery, in which the barons and the priests debauched their female serfs and vassals. The word *genicaria* (woman working in the *genicia*) became synonymous with prostitute. Our modern brothels, as we see, have a religious and aristocratic origin.

In the beginning the number of days of work due to the baron by his vassal was insignificant; in some places it amounted to three days in the year. [22] In France, the royal ordinances, in default of a contract or custom, prescribed the number of twelve days. Villein socage was harder; but the service was not to exceed three days a week, and the serfs had, further, the enjoyment of a small field which the lord had ceded to him and from which he could not be expelled; he had also a share in the baron's harvest and a right of pasture in the forest and arable lands. Count Grasparin, who was Minister of Agriculture under Louis XVIII, in his treaty on **Fermage**, published in 1821, states his belief in the superiority, as regards the landed proprietor, of the system of *métayage* to that of *socage*. But in the decline of the feudal system the lords abused their power to aggravate socage. "They had usurped such authority," says Jean Chenu, a writer of the beginning of the seventeenth century, "that they exacted the labour of tillage, the gathering their grapes and a thousand other services, with no better title than the peasants' fear of being beaten or eaten up by their men at arms." When, in the fourteenth century, peace was gradually established in the interior of Europe, every useful function had been taken away from the feudal baron; and

the nobles who succeeded the barons became parasites and tyrants.

*BANS DE MOISSON.* – It has been supposed that the lord's right of prescribing the days on which to mow the fields, gather the grapes, reap the corn, etc., was a purely feudal one, whereas its origin is traceable to the period in which collective property obtained. We have seen above that in order to allow the arable lands to remain open to the cattle of the village, the elders fixed the days for the various harvests. This usage, established in the interests of the villagers, could only be diverted from its true ends when the lord began to traffic with his crops. He substituted his own authority for that of the council of the elders, or influenced their decisions so as to retard the proclamation of the *ban des moissons* and be beforehand with his own crops, and able, consequently, to sell them earlier and on better terms than the produce of the communal fields.

*BANALITÉ.* [23] – The term is feudal; but the custom which it designates is a communistic one. In the village collectivities, certain offices, as afore shown, were filled by individuals maintained at the expense of the commune; there was the village herdsman, who drove the cattle to pasture; there were common forges, mills, slaughter-houses, and animals to breed from, at the disposal of the community. Private families, instead of baking their own bread, sent it to be baked in the communal oven; a custom introduced from the economical consideration of reducing the consumption of fuel. The charge of watching over and attending to these ovens was entrusted to the council of elders; thereafter to the lord, who, whenever it was in his interest to do so, substituted his own authority for that of the men commissioned by the commune. A small tax was levied for this right of usage of the common objects; in an ordinance of 1223, of Guillaume Blanchemain, Archbishop



of Reims, it is said that “the prelate shall be the proprietor of the common oven and be entitled to the tribute of a loaf for every batch of thirty-two loaves.” Boucher d’Argis cites decrees of 1563 and 1673 fixing the right of grinding in the common mills at a 16th and a 13th; it is computed that, at present, the miller deducts more than a tenth. [24]

This sort of institutions could exist only in the absence of the production of commodities; they hampered commerce and stood in the way of private enterprise; the revolutionary bourgeois of France pronounced them tainted with feudalism, and abolished them in 1790.

The CHURCH, which eventually became the exclusive property of the clergy, and is now closed to the public out of the hours of worship, was previously the joint property of the curate, the baron, and the peasants. The chancel and altar belonged to the lord and curate; they were bound to repair the woodwork, flooring, seats, etc., but the nave belonged to the peasants, who used it for their markets, communal assemblies, and dancing parties, or as a storehouse for their crops in case of need. [25] Mr. Thorold Rogers says that in all cases the Church was the common hall of the parish, and a fortress in time of danger, occupying the site of the stockade which had been built when the first settlers occupied the ground. [26] The church bells, likewise, belonged to the peasants, who set them pealing to announce their assemblies, or to apprise the villagers of fires or hostile attacks. In the judicial archives of the French provinces of the 17th and 18th centuries, we find frequent mention of judgments rendered against the bells for having warned the peasants of the arrival of the collectors of the salt-tax; they were sentenced to be taken down and whipped by the hands of the executioner, “notwithstanding that they had been consecrated and blessed by a most solemn ceremony, in which the oil of St. Chrism and myrrh and incense had been



used and many prayers recited.” The Church was the house of God, elevated in the face of the feudal manor, and the feudal peasants gathered together under the shadow of it as around a strong and tender mother.

The TITHE raised on the harvests of the peasants and the nobles in favour of the Church, was, in the beginning, optional; just as it is in Ireland at the present hour; it was paid alike to the priest and sorcerer. Agobard, an archbishop of the 9th century, complains that the ecclesiastical tithe is paid with far less regularity than that accorded to the *tempestarii*, men endowed with the power to lay storms and conjure up foul weather. But from being optional the tithes became compulsory in virtue of the feudal adage, “no land without its tithes and burdens”; they were converted into a seignorial right, and accorded to lay lords and abbots, who re-sold them to other laymen. Discretionary at the outset, the tithes became obligatory; and, in the sequel, constituted an oppressive impost that no performance of services any longer authorised: even so is refined gold transmuted into vile copper!

## V

Just as the seignorial obligations, which became onerous and iniquitous when the feudal barons had ceased to afford protection to their vassals, tenants, and serfs, had at one time been voluntarily acquiesced in; in like manner, the landed property of the nobles, – at first a military post, entrusted temporarily to a warrior, or, simply a right to a share in the agrarian divisions, – grew and expanded by dint of fraud and violence, and generally at the expense of the communal lands.

Marx, in his admirable 27th chapter of *Capital*, “on the expropriation of the agricultural population from the land,” to which I refer the reader, has described the prompt and brutal fashion in which the Scotch and English lords stole the possessions of the yeomen. “The great encroachers,” as Harrison, the editor of *Holinshed’s Chronicle*, calls them, went to work expeditiously. In the 15th century the immense majority of the population consisted of peasant proprietors, whatever was the feudal title under which their right of property was hidden. Macaulay calculates that “the number of proprietors was not less than 160,000, who with their families must have made up more than one-seventh of the whole nation. The average income of these small landlords was estimated at between 60 and 70 a year.”

The chief period of eviction began with the 16th century. The great feudal lords drove the peasantry by force from the land, to which they had the same feudal right as the lord himself, and seized upon the common lands. The rapid rise of the Flemish wool manufacture, and the corresponding

rise in the price of wool in England, gave a direct impulse to these evictions. The sheep drove out the men.

“The shepe that were wont to be so meke and tame,” says Thomas More, “and so small eaters, now, as I heare say, be become so great devourers and so wylde, that they eate up and swallow downe the very men themselves.” [27]

In the last decade of the 17th century, the yeomanry, the class of independent peasants, were more numerous than the class of farmers. They had formed the backbone of Cromwell’s strength, and, even according to the confession of Macaulay, stood in favourable contrast to the drunken squires and to their servants, the county clergy, who had to marry their masters’ cast-off mistresses. About 1750 the yeomanry had disappeared, and so had in the last decade of the 18th century the last trace of the common land of the agricultural labourer. In the 19th century the very memory of the connection between the agricultural labourer and the communal property has, of course, vanished in England. The agricultural population has received not a farthing of compensation for the 3,511,770 acres of common land which, between 1800 and 1831 were stolen from them by parliamentary devices presented to the landlords by the landlords.

The last process of wholesale expropriation of the agricultural population from the soil is, finally, the so-called clearing of estates, i.e., the sweeping men off them. But what “clearing of estates” really and properly signifies we learn only in the promised land of modern romance, the Highlands of Scotland. There the process is distinguished by its systematic character, by the magnitude of the scale on which it is carried out at one blow (in Ireland, landlords

have gone to the length of sweeping away several villages at once; in Scotland areas as large as German principalities are dealt with), finally by the peculiar form of property under which the embezzled lands were held.

The Highland Celts were organised in clans, each of which was the owner of the land on which it was settled. The representative of the clan, its chief or "great man," was only the titular owner of this property, just as the Queen of England is the titular owner of all the national soil. When the English Government succeeded in suppressing the intestine wars of these "great men," and their constant incursions into the lowland plains, the chiefs of the clans by no means gave up their time-honoured trade as robbers; they only changed its form. On their own authority they transformed their nominal right into a right of private property, and as this brought them into collision with their clansmen, they resolved to drive them out by open force. "A king of England might as well claim to drive his subjects into the sea," says Professor Newman. This revolution, which began in Scotland after the last rising of the followers of the Pretender, can be followed through its first phases in the writings of Sir James Steuart and James Anderson. As an example of the method obtaining in the 19th century, the "clearing " made by the Duchess of Sutherland will suffice here. This person, well instructed in economy, resolved, on entering upon her government, to effect a radical cure, and to turn the whole country, whose population had already been, by earlier processes of a like kind, reduced to 15,000, into a sheep walk. From 1814 to 1820 these 15,000 inhabitants, about 3,000 families, were systematically hunted and rooted out. All their villages were destroyed and burnt, all their fields turned into pasturage. British soldiers

enforced the eviction, and came to blows with the inhabitants. One old woman was burnt to death in the flames of the hut which she refused to leave. Thus this fine lady appropriated 794,000 acres of land that had from time immemorial belonged to the clan. She assigned to the expelled inhabitants about 6,000 acres on the seashore – two acres per family. The 6,000 acres had until this time lain waste, and brought in no income to their owners. The duchess, in the nobility of her heart, actually went so far as to let these at an average rent of 2s. 6d. per acre to the clansmen who for centuries had shed their blood for her family. The whole of the stolen clan-land she divided into 29 great sheep farms, each inhabited by a single family, for the most part imported English farm servants. In the year 1835 the 15,000 Gaels were already replaced by 121,000 sheep. The remnant of the aborigines flung on the seashore tried to live by catching fish. They became amphibious and lived, as an English author says, half on land and half on water, and withal only half on both.

The plunder of the State lands on a large scale began with William of Orange.

“These estates were given away, sold at a ridiculous figure, or even annexed to private estates by direct seizure. All this happened without the slightest observation of legal etiquette. The crown lands thus fraudulently appropriated, together with the robbery of the Church estates, as far as these had not been lost again during the Republican Revolution, form the basis of the to-day princely domains of the English oligarchy. The bourgeois capitalists favoured the operation with the view, among others, to promoting free trade in land, extending the domain of modern agriculture on the large farm system, and to increasing their supply of the free agricultural proletarians ready to hand.”

After the restoration of the Stuarts the landed proprietors had carried by legal means an act of usurpation, effected everywhere on the Continent without any legal formality. In 1660 a House of Commons, in which the landlords were supreme, relieved their estates of all feudal dues, then amounting to about one half of the entire revenues of the State. Military service, purveyance, aids, reliefs, premier seisin, wardship, alienation, escheat, all disappeared in a day. In their place were substituted excise duties. By 12 Charles II, c.23 the great bulk of taxation was for the first time transferred from the land to the people, who have borne it ever since.

Landed property monopolised by the lords was exempted from all dues towards the State, as the lord had been discharged from all obligations towards his vassals and tenants: feudal property had been changed into capitalist property.

This transformation was accomplished in Great Britain in the midst of the most awful misery of the peasant class; the cultivators were expelled from the land by wholesale and made beggars. Their numbers became a social danger against which the most barbarous measures were taken. Legislation treated them as “voluntary” criminals, and assumed that it depended on their own will to go on working under the old conditions that no longer existed. In England this legislation began under Henry VII.

Henry VIII, 1530: “Beggars old and unable to work receive a beggar’s license. On the other hand, whipping and imprisonment for sturdy vagabonds. They are to be tied to a cart tail and whipped until the blood streams from their

bodies, then to swear an oath to go back to their birth place, or to where they have lived the last three years, and to put themselves to labour.” What grim irony! In 27 Henry VIII the former statute is repeated, but strengthened with new clauses. For the second arrest for vagabondage the whipping is to be repeated and half the ear sliced off, but for the third relapse the offender is to be executed as a hardened criminal and enemy of the commonweal.”

Elizabeth, 1572: Unlicensed beggars above 14 years of age are to be severely flogged and branded on the left ear unless someone will take them into service for two years; in case of a repetition of the offence, if they are over 18 they are to be executed, unless someone will take them into service for two years; but for the third offence they are to be executed without mercy as felons. Similar statutes, 18 Elizabeth, c.13, and another of 1597, James I: Anyone wandering about and begging is declared a rogue and a vagabond. Justices of the Peace in petty sessions are authorised to have them publicly whipped, and for the first offence to imprison them for six months, for the second two years. Whilst in prison they are to be whipped as much and as often as the Justices of the Peace think fit. Incurrible and dangerous rogues are to be branded with an “R” on the left shoulder and set to hard labour, and, if they are caught begging again, to be executed without mercy. – These statutes, legally binding until the beginning of the 18th century, were only repealed by 12 Ann, c.23.

Albeit not a single nation in Europe can boast of having raised an aristocracy that accomplished its work of monopolising the land with anything like the rapacity and ferociousness of Scotch and English landlords, nevertheless

in all countries the peasant class has been in great part despoiled of its territorial possessions; and no means have been left untried to bring about that most laudable and lucrative consummation. Let me enumerate a few of the devices that were resorted to in France.

The feudal obligations, aids, and fines became so excessive that the peasants commuted for them by ceding to the lords a portion of the common lands. These cessions of territory, greedily hungered after by the feudal lords, would appear, well-nigh all of them, to have been obtained by the aid of artifice; the nobles corrupted a certain number of villagers who managed to constitute in their own persons the general assembly of the commune that voted the cessions; hence we come across royal ordinances in France which specify that for a cession of territory to be valid it must be voted in an assembly of all the inhabitants of the Commune.

The robbers of the communal lands did not invariably employ Jesuitical means; they often plundered with open brutality. In the 16th century, a period when the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie were rapidly developing, the communal lands were coveted at one and the same time by the nobles and by the bourgeois speculators. The towns were enlarged to meet the new requirements, and agriculture increased its yield. The development of agriculture was the great object of the speculators; under the pretext of giving increased extension to the arable lands, they induced the King to grant them, by royal edict, the right of bringing under culture the waste lands; they hastened to include in the category of waste lands the communal territories, and proceeded to wrest them from the peasants, who took up arms in their defence; and to vanquish whose resistance the



speculators were compelled to appeal for aid to the armed force of the State.

The nobles had recourse to chicanery in order to win possession of the village territories; they pretended that the lands owned by the peasants did not correspond with their title deeds, which was perfectly true; they insisted on the verification of their claims, and confiscated what was held by imperfect titles for their own benefit. Upon occasion they proceeded after a revolutionary fashion; they destroyed the title-deeds which they had got hold of, and so disabled the peasants from establishing their rights to the fields now left without an owner; whereupon in virtue of the feudal adage, "*pas de terre sans seigneur*" the nobles seized upon the peasants' territory. The *autos da fé* of proprietary titles, held by the peasants during the revolution of 1789, were in retaliation of the suppression of the peasant titles perpetrated by the nobility of the 16th century.

The forests were grabbed up more brutally: eschewing all legal formalities, the lords adjudged to themselves the ownership of the woods and underwood; they enclosed the forests and forbade hunting, and abolished the right of estovers; the right of taking wood for fuel and for the repairs of houses, fences, implements, etc. These encroachments of the nobles on the forest-lands, which were the common property of the village, gave rise to terrible revolts of the peasants.

The *jacqueries* [28] which broke out in the middle of the 14th century in the provinces of the North and the centre of France, were, in fact, occasioned by the pretensions of the nobles to forbid hunting and to interfere with the rights of

common in the forests, and the enjoyment of the rivers. Similar conflicts arose in Germany, such as the famous revolt of the Saxons against the Emperor Henry II, and that of the Suabian peasants, who, in the time of Luther, took up arms against the lords who debarred them from the enjoyment of the forests. These peasant insurrections compelled the lords on several occasions to respect the ancient rights of common which consisted in the right – limited only by the peasant’s wants – to take wood and brushwood for hedging, firing, and repairing his implements (hedge-bote, fire-bote, and plough-bote); and in the right of common pasture, or the right to send his cows, horses, swine, and in some cases his goats, to graze on the commons throughout the year, the month of May alone excepted. So firmly rooted were these rights that Lapoix de Fréminville declared, in 1760, that even in the event of their abuse by the peasants they could not be taken away from them: “for the right of usage is perpetual, and being so, it is accorded alike to the actual inhabitants and to those who may come after them; one cannot strip of an acquired right even those who are as yet unborn.” But the revolutionary bourgeoisie of 1789 felt none of the feudal legist’s respect for the peasants’ rights, and abolished them for the benefit of the landed proprietor.

If the lords did, as a matter of fact, occasionally bow to the peasants’ rights of common, they nevertheless constantly declared that these were enjoyed on sufferance only; for they looked upon themselves as the proprietors of the forests; just as in later times they came to pretend to the ownership of the vassals’ lands. In the Middle Ages, when a free man, an alodial proprietor, *commended* himself to a lord, sought the protection, that is to say, of a powerful person, he

presented him with a clod of turf, and vowed fealty and homage to him; yet he remained the master of his field. But in a number of provinces, e.g., in Brittany, the lord considered himself as the owner of the subsoil, while he recognised the peasants' rights to the *superficies*, i.e., the crops, trees, buildings, etc. It is in virtue of such legal fictions that during the bourgeois period the nobles expropriated the peasants, descendants from the vassals, their ancestors. In Scotland, the robbery of the peasant property was perpetrated with such undisguised brutality as to arouse the public indignation. Karl Marx, in *Capital*, has related how the pious Duchess of Sutherland dispossessed the peasants whose fathers had built up the glory and the grandeur of her house.

Until the bourgeois revolution of 1789 had established private property in land, the landed estates in France, including those of the nobility, were subjected to rights of common, which periodically took from them the character of private property. Once the harvest was secured, the forests and arable land appropriated by the nobility became common property again, and the peasants were free to turn their cattle on them. The vines were liable to a similar usage. François de Neufchateau, in his *Agronomical Voyage*, 1806, cites a *Memoire*, published in 1763, by the *Société d'Economie Rurale en Berne*, in which it is complained that "after the vintage the vineyards are laid open to the sheep, who grass there as on common land." But not only were the landlords bound to permit the pasturing on their lands of the village cattle; they were moreover forbidden to cultivate the soil according to their own methods; they were constrained to conform to the council of the elders, and required permission for the planting of their vines. A

permission of this kind was refused a few years before the French Revolution to Montesquieu, greatly to the scandal of the political economists. The proprietor was not allowed to leave his lands uncultivated; for a royal ordinance of Louis XIV, enacted in 1693, and which but consecrated an ancient usage, authorises, – in the event of the owner not cultivating his land himself. – “any person to sow the same and to gather the fruits.”

Landed property, under the feudal system, was anything but free; not only was it burdened with obligations, but it belonged to the family collectively; the owner could not dispose of it at pleasure; he was only the usufructuary possessor whose mission it was to transmit his estates to his descendants. The Church estates, likewise, bore this character; they were the property of the Church, the great Catholic family; the abbots, monks, and priests who occupied the lands were merely the administrators – the very faithless administrators – of them. In order to claim immunity from impositions, the French clergy, down to the time of the revolution, pretended that ecclesiastical possessions ought not to be considered as ordinary property; that it was nobody’s property (*res nullius*), because it was sacred, religious property (*res sacræ, res religiosæ*). The revolutionary bourgeois took them at their word; they declared that the clergy were not the proprietors of the ecclesiastical estates, which belonged to the Church. Now, the Greek word *ecclesia*, whence is derived *eglise* (church), signifies the assembly, the reunion of all the faithful, which is the nation at large; wherefore the estates of the Church are national property. By the help of such subterfuge did the revolutionary bourgeois, like Henry VII. of England, lay

hands upon the Church property and distribute amongst themselves the estates which belonged to the poor.

It is these obligations of feudal property which the political economists and Liberal historians attack with special virulence; obligations which were vestiges of the primitive communism that secured a measure of well-being to the peasants, and which they forfeited as soon as private property had superseded feudal property.

The bourgeois historians have invented the legend of the Revolution of 1789 bestowing the land upon the peasant, and freedom and happiness therewithal; whereas the plain truth is that the great Revolution stripped him of his rights of common and other secular rights of equal importance, delivering him up, defenceless, into the clutches of the usurers and middlemen; loading him with taxes and forcing him to enter into competition with the great landed proprietor, equipped with capital and machinery. The great bourgeois revolution was fraught with misery and ruin for the peasant. According to the official census, there were, in 1857, 7,846,000 landed proprietors in France; out of these 3,600,000 were so poor that they paid no direct contributions; the number of proprietors, great or small, was consequently reduced to 4,246,000. In 1879 the various questions were ventilated of an agricultural credit, of the application to the landlords of the law of bankruptcy, of the simplification of the law of procedure in expropriations; and an inquiry was instituted to determine the number of landed proprietors entitled to a share in the famous credit. *La République Française*, conducted by Gambetta, much interested in the question, stated in its issue of 25th August, 1879, that there existed in France only 2,826,000 landed

proprietors, offering the necessary guarantees entitling them to a share in the credit. Thus from 1851 to 1879 the number of landed proprietors deserving of the name had dwindled to 1,420,000.

To dissipate the errors and falsehoods which the bourgeois writers have propagated respecting the status of the cultivator during the Feudal Period, and the benefits accruing to him from the Revolution, it suffices to compare the conditions of labour of the mediæval cultivator with those of the modern agricultural labourer. The researches made by men of learning, during the last 50 years, and the numerous documents discovered in different towns and convents, enable us to institute such a comparison.

L. Delisle, in his afore-cited study of the condition of the labouring classes in Normandy, points out how the lord shared the fortune of the labourer; for the rent was based upon the harvest. For instance, the tenants of the monks of St. Julien de Tours contributed the sixth sheaf; in other parts the tenant contributed the tenth sheaf; in still others the twelfth. Now, we may rummage the bourgeois world and shall not find a landlord contenting himself with a twelfth or even a sixth of the crops gathered on his estate. These conditions were not confined to a single province, for in the south of France, at Moissac, we meet with identical ones.

Enactments of 1212 and 1214 show us the monks of the Abbey of Moissac receiving only a third, a fourth, or even as little as a tenth of the crops harvested by the peasants who tilled their lands. Lagreze-Fossat, who has studied these enactments, remarks that “a mutual agreement was come to between the peasants and the monks, and the contribution

of the produce demanded by the latter does not bear the character of an impost; it was debated beforehand, and freely consented to.” [29]

In the 11th and 12th centuries, when the vine was cultivated in Normandy, the landlords claimed only one half of the crops; the other half belonged to the cultivators. Nowadays, in the vine-growing countries, the peasant rarely tastes the wine he produces.

Guérard has discovered and published the account-book of the Abbey of St. Germain des Près; that precious document, which dates from the time of Charlemagne, enables us to study the lives of the serfs and peasants of the 9th century. The abbey lands were cultivated, not by individuals, but by collectivities of peasants, composed of from 20 to 30 adult persons living together, and the dues paid by them would appear ridiculously small to a modern farmer.

The abbey lands were divided into three categories, the *manses ingenuiles*, the *manses lidiles*, the *manses serviles*. At that period certain qualities were inherent in the land; it was seignorial, free, or servile: Guérard calculates that the peasants paid in labour and in kind 5s. 6d. per acre for the free lands, 8s. 1d. for the tributary lands, and 10s. for the servile lands. The cultivators employed on the abbatial lands, and who, to judge from their names, were mostly Germans, attained, with their families, to the respectable figure of 10,026. The condition of these peasants, considering their great numbers, must have been the normal condition of the cultivators; and what labourer of our day, I ask, would not gladly consent to barter his bourgeois

landlord of the 19th for the monk of the 9th century, and hold servile lands at the rate of 10s. per acre? [30]

The condition of the English labourer was no worse.

“There is one very unpleasing remark,” says Hallam in his *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, “which everyone who attends to the subject of prices will be induced to make, that the labouring classes, especially those engaged in agriculture, were better provided with the means of subsistence in the reign of Edward III or of Henry VI than they are at present. In the fourteenth century, Sir John Cullum observes, a harvest man had fourpence a day which enabled him in a week to buy a comb of wheat; but to buy a comb of wheat a man must now (1784) work ten or twelve days. So under Henry VI, if meat was at a farthing-and-a-half the pound, which, I suppose, was about the truth, a labourer earning threepence a day, or eighteenpence in the week, could buy a bushel of wheat at six shillings the quarter, and twenty-four pounds of meat for his family. Several Acts of Parliament regulate the wages that might be paid to labourers of different kinds. Thus the Statute of Labourers in 1330 [1\*] fixed the wages of reapers during harvest at threepence a day, without diet, equal to five shillings at present; that of 23 H. VI, c.12, in 1444, fixed the reapers’ wages at fivepence, and those of common workmen in building at threepence-halfpenny, equal to 6s. 8d. and 4s. 5d.; that of 11 H. VII, c.22, in 1496, leaves the wages of labourers in harvest as before, but rather increases those of ordinary workmen. The yearly wages of a chief hind or shepherd by the Act of 1444, were £1 4s., equivalent to about £20; those of a common servant in husbandry, 18s. 4d., with meat and drink; they were somewhat augmented by the Statute of 1496. Yet, although these wages are regulated as a maximum by Acts of Parliament, which may naturally be supposed to have had a view rather towards diminishing than enhancing the current rate, I am not fully convinced that they were not rather beyond it; private accounts at least do not always correspond with these statutable prices. And it is necessary to remember that the uncertainty of employment, natural to so imperfect a state of husbandry, must have diminished the labourers’ means of subsistence. Extreme



dearth, not more owing to adverse seasons than to improvident consumption, was frequently endured. But after every allowance of this kind, I should find it difficult to resist the conclusion that, however the labourer has derived benefit from the cheapness of manufactured commodities and from many inventions of common utility, he is much inferior in ability to support a family to his ancestors three or four centuries ago.” [31]

When the French Revolution broke out in 1789 feudal property had not as yet succeeded in enfranchising itself from the manifold obligations which recalled its collectivist origin, and which prevented it from being converted into private property having the right to use and to abuse.

## Footnote

1. “Speak not such outrage.  
Curse on the heart that cravens in the breast!  
Fast in the place will we maintain our stand,  
And blows and sword-thrusts shall be dealt by us.”

“Much evil must one suffer for his lord;  
Endure alike the hard cold and high heat;  
And for him must one lose his blood and bone!  
Fight with thy lance, as I with Durendal,  
My good sword that my king did give to me;  
And if I die, who gets it well may say,  
Right noble was the vassal owned the sword!”

*Chanson de Roland*, secs.xciii. and xciv

The song of Roland was frequently sung at the beginning of a battle. At Hastings, when the two hostile armies were face to face, “the Earl,” (William, Earl of Normandy), says William of Malmesbury, commenced the song of Roland, “that the warlike example of that man might stimulate the soldiers.” According to Wace, the Trouvère, the song was sung by the Norman, Taillefer:

“Taillefer ki moult bien cantout  
Sur un cheval gi tost alout,  
Devant le Due allout cantant  
De Karlemaigne e de Rollant,  
E d’Oliver e des vassals  
Qui moururent en Roncevals.”

Thus Englished by Sir Walter Scott:

“Taillefer, who sang both well and loud,  
Came mounted on a courser proud;  
Before the Duke the minstrel sprung  
And loud of Charles and Roland sung  
Of Oliver and champions mo  
Who died at fatal Roncevaux.”

As Taillefer sang he played with his sword, and, casting it high in the air, caught it again with his right hand, while all in chorus shouted the cry of “God aid us!”

2. H.S. Maine, *Village Communities*, p.84. This opinion was formulated, in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons which sat to consider the subject of enclosures, by a lawyer, Mr. Blamire, who, according to Mr. Maine, was “an official unusually familiar with English landed property in its less usual shapes.”

3. *De Bello Gallico*, V, sec.14.

4. A celebrated bourgeois economist, M. de Molinari, has innocently compared the financial enterprises of our times with the predatory expeditions of the Middle Ages. Both, indeed, aim at plunder, but with this difference, that whereas the feudal warrior staked his life, the capitalists who gnaw, rat-like, at the 10 and 20 per cent, interest, risk their capital alone, which they have taken good care not to create.

5. After the battle of Poitiers (1356) the soldiers, being out of employment, associated and made war on their own behalf. In 1360, after the Treaty of Bretigny, which restored King John of France – a prisoner in England – to liberty, the soldiers of the two armies were dismissed. They formed themselves into bands and took the field. One band operated in the north, another, and more considerable one, commanded by Talleyrand Perigord, descended into the valley of the Rhone, and after having ravaged La Provence passed through Avignon – where the Pope regaled the chiefs and gave absolution and a present of 500,000 ducats to the soldiers – ransacking the towns and laying waste the country.

6. **Germania**, 1, sec.xxviii

7. The customary of Béarn began with a haughty declaration of independence. “These are the customs of Béarn, which show that of old

there existed no lords in Béarn. But the inhabitants, hearing praise of a knight of Bigorre, set forth in quest of him and made him a lord for the space of one year. But he being unwilling to conform to the customs; the popular assembly of Pau summoned him to respect the customs ... he, refusing to obey, was killed in the assembly.”

8. L. Deville, *Etudes historiques sur Tarbes, Bulletin de la Société Académique des Hautes Pyrénées*, sixième année, deux livraisons. 1861.

9. Gomme, *Village Communities*, p.254.

10. These pieces of land frequently bear the name of the trade of the exercise of which they were the reward.

“There are,” says Maine, “several English parishes in which certain pieces of land in the common field have from time immemorial been known by the name of a particular trade; and there is often a popular belief that nobody not following the trade can legally be the owner of the lot associated with it.”

11. Dr. Hearn, *Aryan Households*, p.150.

12. “The Basutos assemble every year to dig up and sow the field appropriated for the personal maintenance of their chief’s first wife. Hundreds of men, in a straight line, raise and lower their mattocks simultaneously and with perfect regularity. The entire village concurs in the maintenance of the chieftain.” Casalis, *The Basutos*.

13. In the Romance languages the original name of the feudal lord, the term *baron*, signified a *strong* man, a *doughty* warrior, which well indicates the essentially military character of feudalism. *Vassal* similarly bore the sense of *brave*, *valiant*.

14. Vitry, the legate of Innocent III, who in Germany and Belgium preached the crusade against the Albigenses (in 1208), writes: “The lords, despite their titles and dignities, continue to sally forth for prey and to play the robber and brigand, desolating entire regions by fire.” The manners of the clergy were neither better nor worse. The Archbishop of Narbonne, at the end of the twelfth century, strolled about the fields with his canons and archdeacons, hunting the wild beasts, plundering the peasants, and violating the women. He had in his pay a band of Aragonese routiers whom he employed to ransack the country. The bishops and abbots loved mightily, sings a troubadour, “fair women and red wine, fine horses and rich array; living in luxury, whereas our Lord was content to live in poverty.”

15. Montesquieu, *L’Esprit des lois*.

16. Cited by H.F. Rivière in his *Histoire des Institutions de l’Auvergne*, 1874.

17. B. Guérard, *Polyptique de l’Abbé Irminon*, section 145.

18. “A right good cavalier, the Archbishop,  
None better on the earth, under the sky;  
Expert in fight alike with lance and spear.”

\* \* \*

“The French cry out: ‘Here be great bravery;  
The Cross is in safe keep with the Archbishop;  
Would God that Charles had more knights like to him!’”

19. Latruffe Montmeylian, *Da Droit des Communes sur les biens Communaux*, Paris 1825. Montmeylian is one of the rare French writers who had the courage to defend communal property against the rapacity of the capitalists.

20. *Bordelage* is a feudal system of tenure resembling *métayage*, inasmuch as the rent for the land is paid not in money, but in a portion of the produce. This tenure has been general in all feudal Europe; in France it lasted till the Revolution of 1789. Guérard found it flourishing in the 9th century, on the lands of the Abbey of St. Germain des Près, Mr. L. Gomme, in his **Village Communities**, describes similar peasant associations in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

21. In the donation made in 728 by Count Eberhard to the monastery of Merbach, mention is made of 40 workwomen employed in the *geniciaæ*.

22. “Let the freeman enjoy liberty and go three times a year into the count’s service,” ordains the *Customary of Bigorre*.

23. The term signifies the compulsory usage of a thing belonging to the lord on condition of a due.

24. Boucher d’Argis. **Code rural**, Ch.xv, *Des banalités*.

25. A synodical statute of 1529 prohibits “To hold or suffer in the church or cemeteries here any festivals, dances, games, merry-makings, representations, markets, and other illicit assemblies; for the church is ordained solely to serve the Lord, and not for suchlike follies.” The naive believers of the Middle Ages saw no harm in dancing, and representing their mysteries, in the house of the Lord.

26. Thorold Rogers, **Economical Interpretation of History**.

27. **Utopia**, translated by Robinson. Ed. Arber, London 1869.
28. *Jacqueries* were insurrections of the peasants; a term derived from the insulting epithet of *Jacques Bonhomme* applied to the peasants by the nobles.
29. A. Lagreze Fossat, *Etudes Historiques sur Moissac*, 1872. Moissac is a small town in the Department of Tarn et Garonne, of considerable importance in the Middle Ages.
30. *Polyptique de l'Abbé Irminon on dénombrement des manses' serfs et revenus de l'Abbaye de St. Germain des Près sous le regne de Charlemagne*. Publié par Guérard, 1844.
31. *The Student's History of the Middle Ages*, Henry Hallam. Adapted by William Smith, Part II, chap.ix, pp.566-7.
- 

## Note by MIA

1\*. "1830" in the published version of the book, but from the context this seems unlikely.

## CHAPTER V

# Bourgeois Property

### I

WE have seen that landed property was originally common to the entire tribe in the shape of woodland, pasture, and even arable land; that it was converted into collective property when the clan broke up into the matriarchal or patriarchal families, and, lastly, into private property, on the disintegration of the patriarchal family and the constitution of the modern family, including the parents with their children, and a few supernumeraries, say the grandparents or an odd uncle or aunt who has failed in securing an establishment of his or her own, and whose inheritance is greedily coveted after.

The march of movable property has been a different one; though, starting from the communist form, it far more rapidly arrived at the private form; even among savages, living in community, the arms and ornaments are considered as attached to the individual, and are frequently interred with the corpses. [1]

The instruments of labour have at all times been considered as the personal property of him who wielded them; during the periods of slavery and serfdom, the tools and the soil were surrendered to the slave or serf who used them and for

whom they constituted a sort of property. Individual appropriation of the instrument of labour results from its personal character, and it owes this character to the fact that it is small, of little value, and capable of being manipulated by a single individual; from this point of view the implement of the artificer may be assimilated to the field of the peasant cultivator, which is small, of little value, and usable by a single individual, that is to say, cultivable by himself and the members of his family.

Landed property, as it evolved, prior to the bourgeois property, on the one hand ran into small peasant property and on the other into feudal property. Agriculture was the prime motor of this evolution. Commerce was the motor of the evolution of the property of the instruments of labour and industrial products, which, once it has attained a certain degree of development reacts, as Marx has demonstrated, on landed property, and accelerates its transformation into bourgeois property.

## II

In the collectivist village the peasants produce all that they consume (bread, meat, flax, wool, etc.), and the artificers (smiths, weavers, tailors, etc.) are only admitted into it when their services are required. They reside, as a rule, in the outskirts of the village, and, after a certain term of sojourn there, generally that of a year and a day, they obtain the right of city; are authorised to send their cattle to graze on the common pasture, and are entitled to a share in the land. At the outset there takes place no exchange of products in these villages; the handicraftsmen are public functionaries in the service of the community, and are paid by an annual

tribute of provisions. They only work to order; the raw materials are supplied them, and, wherever feasible, they work in the houses of their customers. When they ceased to be public officials, their work was paid in kind or by service, in the same way as the man-at-arms was paid for his work of defence. This primitive form of industrial labour persisted as long as the villages continued to be small and retained the collectivist form of landed property. The villages situated at the intersection of the roads, frequented by the caravans of travelling merchants, or near the mouths of rivers, or the seaside, were the first to undergo a change; a temporary market was established there for which the handicraftsmen wrought. Wherever the artificers found means to sell their products they multiplied; instead of finding themselves repulsed or received indifferently, they were sought and welcomed. The population of the villages – transformed into towns and boroughs – composed of specialised handicraftsmen practising different crafts and standing in need of one another's services, came to establish a permanent market where the inhabitants exchanged their products or sold them, during the fairs, to itinerant traders.

The character of industry then experiences a change; the artificer becomes independent of his customer. He no longer waits for the latter to supply him with the material he must work up; he buys it, and keeps a stock of it on hand; he ceases to work to order, and works only with a view to sell. To his quality of producer is superadded that of trader; he buys the raw material, and sells his finished work; he enlarges his shop, and seeks the help of apprentices and journeymen, who work under his direction and side by side with him, lodging in his house and eating at his table. The fund he requires is of so modest a description as hardly to



deserve the name of capital, in the sense in which Marx employs the word, even although this fund be capital in embryo.

The increase of the population in the mediæval villages forbids the access of new-comers to the communal lands, and precludes their sharing in the agrarian divisions. The village lands remained the exclusive property of the original inhabitants and their descendants, who constituted a sort of municipal aristocracy, while, in the country, the exigencies of defence called into life the feudal aristocracy. The urban aristocracy has survived in certain towns of democratic Switzerland. In the Alsatia of our day these urban aristocrats have become great manufacturers.

By way of resisting the despotism of the aristocrats of the towns, who monopolised the land and power, the handicraftsmen organised guilds, which, in the beginning, were open to all the artificers of the locality without distinction. These guilds not only defended the craftsmen against the municipal aristocrats, but protected them against their mutual competition. The market in which they sold their wares acquired a capital importance; as it was restricted to the inhabitants of the town and the itinerant hawkers of the fairs, the corporations were bound to see that the market was not overstocked with goods. The corporations now became close, and the number of persons admitted into them, and at liberty, consequently, to open a shop in the town, was limited, as was also the number of journeymen the masters might employ and wares they might turn out. In order to facilitate the quantity of and to render effective the supervision of the syndics of the corporations, the craftmasters were obliged to work with open doors and

windows, and sometimes in the streets. Each guild possessed its speciality, to which its members were strictly bound to adhere – e.g., the bootmakers were restricted to the making of new boots; the repairing and soling of old boots was prohibited, as belonging of right to the corporation of cobblers.

The right of sale was no less jealously protected than that of production; at the fairs the seller was only allowed to accost the buyer as he passed in front of the stall; once he had stepped beyond it, the seller had forfeited the right to call him back, or to offer him goods for sale, for he now pertained to the owner of the neighbouring stall. These multiplex and minute regulations attest the importance already acquired by the market, the expansion of which was, at a later date, to transform the mode of production and the correlative social relations.

In handicraft production lay this inherent contradiction: if the craftsman was a synthetic labourer, combining in his person the intellectual and manual functions of his handicraft, production and the instruments of production were, on the contrary, scattered over the land. Every province, every borough and town, every seignorial domain and peasant farmstead, produced the food and other necessities of life required by its inhabitants, selling only what was superfluous, and buying only a few articles of luxury. As they imported none of the articles of consumption, the mediæval towns and provinces were economically independent, and, as a consequence, able to live in a state of isolation; they formed so many distinct petty States, habitually at war with one another.

The economic theory which corresponded to this dispersion of production tended to promote their independence. The agriculturists, who were the economic theoreticians of the feudal epoch, advised the landed proprietor to produce all on his own domain, so as to have nothing to purchase outside its limits, and we have seen that in the manors of the feudal lords there existed workshops for manufacturing all and everything, not excepting arms.

That theory remained valid long after the phenomena which had given rise to it had disappeared. When, in the 16th century, the silk industry was imported into France from Italy, the royal policy, instead of concentrating it in the locality in which it had a chance of success, disseminated it over the provinces. Attempts were made to rear the silkworm in countries in which it was difficult if not impossible to cultivate the mulberry-tree, on the leaves of which it feeds. During the Revolution of 1789 it was sought to acclimatise the cotton-plant, to avoid having to buy it abroad; and it was the desire to shake off the tribute paid to the colonies by the purchase of the sugar-cane which led to the discovery of the saccharine properties of the beetroot.

When the warfare between castle and castle abated, owing to the disappearance of the vanquished, whose lands were engrossed by the victor, and there ensued a greater security of the highways, commercial intercourse between the different provinces became possible and great centres of handicraft production sprang up. The city of Ghent, which manufactured cloths from wool imported chiefly from England, possessed in the 14th century a population of upwards of half-a-million inhabitants. The development of commerce shook the social organisation of the feudal city.

In the towns which prospered industrially, the guildmasters of handicrafts developed into close corporations the freedom of which was obtainable only by the privilege of birth, money or royal favour, or else unless one chanced to be a son or relation of a guildmaster by serving a long term of apprenticeship; it was necessary to pay for learning the handicraft, for the right of exercising it, and again on being made free of the trade. The guildmasters excluded a number of artificers who no longer worked on their own account, but in the workshops of their masters. Heretofore the handicraftsman could hope to become a master and a shopkeeper in his turn; but in proportion as commerce and industry were developed the men lost all prospect of this; shut out from the incorporated trades, and in enmity with the masters who employed them, they formed vast associations of journeymen which were at once national and international, whereas the guilds of the masters were essentially local. The masters, enriched by the development of production, allied themselves with the municipal aristocrats in order to cope with the apprentices and journeymen, who on several occasions were set on and supported by the feudal nobility, jealous of the growing municipal aristocracy. All the industrial towns of the Middle Ages were stained with blood by the conflicts between journeymen and craftsmasters.

The discovery of the passage of the Indies by rounding the Cape of Good Hope, and that of America, which date from the end of the 15th century, by bringing the gold of America into the European market, and by introducing transoceanic commerce, depreciated the value of landed property, gave a decisive impulse to the rising bourgeois production in the cities of the Mediterranean, the cities of the Low Countries,

and the Hanseatic League, and opened the era of modern revolution. [2]

The countries newly discovered in India and America were put to plunder, and turned into markets for the industrial and agricultural products of Europe. England exported corn to America; l'Auvergne cheese, wine, etc.

The creation of the colonial market and the importation of American gold furthered the development of manufacturing industry. Private individuals were enabled to accumulate the funds required for the establishment of manufactories, which in the beginning were simply workshops of artificers, only distinguished from these by the greater number of workmen employed, and the larger quantity of commodities manufactured. As these workshops infringed all the regulations of the guilds, and encroached on the privileges of the masters, they could not be established in the towns, but had to be set up in the suburbs, the country or the maritime cities which, newly founded, possessed neither municipal aristocracy nor incorporated trades. In London and Paris, it was outside the city walls, in Westminster, Southwark, and the Faubourg St. Antoine that the manufactories were created. They were established by merchants enriched by the colonial trade, and not by the guildmasters, bound in the chains of routine, and fettered by corporative bonds. In the present day we see railways constructed and directed, not by the masters of stage-coach companies, but by financial men.

Manufacture, which struck at the corporations, and ruined the guildmasters of handicrafts, was equally prejudicial to the artificer, whom it apparently benefited by affording a greater regularity and a greater quantity of labour and a

higher salary. Division of labour was introduced into the manufactories; all the operations of a trade were disjoined and isolated; the manufacture of a pin, for example, was decomposed into some twenty different operations, performed by an equal number of specialised labourers. The artificer who, heretofore, had been familiar with all the processes of his craft, and each of which he accomplished in turn, became now a detail labourer, condemned for life to execute a single operation.

The impulsion given to commerce and to production hastened the expansion of the towns, which were compelled to burst their bounds and spread over the adjoining fields. An economical difficulty then arose: it became necessary to find the means of existence for these newly-created populations.

During the primitive collectivist period, the town had not come to exist, even as the residence of the military chief, exercising royal power. The Merovingian kings, like the Indian princes, travelled with a more or less numerous retinue of men-at-arms and retainers, followed by artificers of divers trades. The spot on which they camped became a temporary city: they subsisted on the fees and donations of the surrounding country. The absence of roads and the difficulty of communication precluded all permanent conglomeration of persons; whom there was no means of supporting. The feudal cities, dependent on the agricultural produce of the neighbouring localities for their means of subsistence, were necessarily bound to restrict themselves to a limited number of inhabitants. So long as the absence of roads or the insecurity of such as existed, rendered all commercial intercourse between the towns impossible or

difficult, there was no question of guarding against the exportation of the means of subsistence. But so soon as the means of communication began to be improved, and as men began to transport grain from one province to the other, all the towns and provinces took measures for prohibiting the exportation of corn from their territories, and preventing it being monopolised. In all the European towns we meet with regulations for the sale of cereals in the markets at stated times; a maximum price was fixed, and the quantity allowed to be purchased was determined; the proprietors, under penalty of confiscation, were prohibited from garnering corn for more than two years; it was, furthermore, forbidden to buy the standing corn or that already housed. The extension of the towns, and the difficulty of procuring provisions outside their own territories, turned every bad harvest year into a year of dearth or famine. The paramount concern of the municipal authorities was to prevent famines; they ordained the storing of provisions capable of supplying the town for at least three months, and saw to it that a sufficient quantity of land was annually sown with corn. An edict of 1577, in France, restricted the planting of vineyards, which became, yearly, more important, and required that for every portion of land planted with vines a double portion be devoted to corn.

In order to meet the new requirements it was necessary that agriculture should be developed; new lands were brought under culture, woodlands were deforested and marshlands reclaimed, while the cornfields were enlarged. In years of good harvests the corn was so abundant that the price of it ceased to be remunerative; it became urgent to create fresh markets. In France the circulation of corn was permitted between the provinces, and also the exportation of it to

England and the Colonies. These economic liberties were but short-lived, for no sooner had corn attained a certain price in a locality than its exportation was prohibited. From 1669 to 1683, during a period of fourteen years, the exportation of corn was permitted on nine occasions and prohibited during six years.

These regulations were powerless to prevent local famines; nay, it happened that they intensified the same by prohibiting the exportation of corn from a province in which it was superabundant; the towns confiscated corn in its transit through their territories, whenever fearful of competition or threatened with famine. Colbert was constrained to employ force to get 2,500 sacks of corn, which the Parliament of Bordeaux sought to retain, expedited to Paris. It would happen that a town suffered from famine, whilst at a distance of some fifty miles the wheat supply was abundant. The circulation of wine, wool, etc., was subjected to similar restraint; seaports like Bordeaux and Marseilles, in order to command a better sale for their own wines, prevented the shipment of the wines of the neighbouring provinces. Prior to the Revolution of 1789, the last royal ministers endeavoured to show the danger and uselessness of these regulations; they caused them to be temporarily suspended, but were always in the last instance compelled to re-establish them. It required a revolution to abolish them and to strip the peasants of their privileges, which burdened landed property and hampered the development of modern agriculture, just as the privileges of the corporations had shackled the development of industry.

The incorporated trades that opposed the establishment of manufactures in their towns stood in fear, above all things,



of innovations; in order to maintain the industrial equality of the masters of handicrafts, and to prevent the one from enjoying an advantage not shared by the other, the introduction of new processes and improvements of any kind were prohibited. Argand, the inventor of a lamp with a double air-current, which tripled the lighting capacity of the oil, was, in the 18th century, had before the Parliament of Paris, by the corporation of tinworkers, who claimed the exclusive right of manufacturing lamps. It was due to the influence of the royal courtesans, Mesdames Pompadour, Du Barry, and Marie Antoinette that printed calicoes were allowed to be sold; for the chambers of commerce of Rouen, Lyons, and Amiens had protested energetically, predicting the ruin of industry and a cataclysm in France if the manufacture of these cottons was authorised.

The feudal fetters which impeded the development of agriculture and industry once broken, bourgeois property was free to implant itself and begin its evolution.

The landlord obtained the right of enclosing his fields; the people's right of pasture after the harvest was abolished. This right of enclosure was of supreme importance, for, anterior to it, the landlord could apply no other methods of culture than those employed by the commoners in general, on pain of seeing his harvests prowled on by their cattle. This right of enclosure was, too, the right most loudly clamoured for in France in the 18th century. The common lands, wherever it was possible, were divided; were given away, that is, to the bourgeois; for the inhabitants of the community to whom they were apportioned sold them at a nominal price; this partition of the land, for which a multiplicity of philanthropical and moral reasons has been

adduced, was but a means of preventing the small peasant from possessing cattle, and of depriving him of his resources in order to turn him into a wage-labourer. The church property, which ought to have been restituted to the poor, to whom it belonged, was plundered with the utmost brutality and cynicism in England as well as in France; for everywhere the bourgeois is animated by the same thievish instincts.

Leopold Delisle, in the preface of his history of the agricultural classes of the Middle Ages, observes:

“A significant fact is the stationary condition of our agriculture for the last five centuries, from the 10th to the 15th. Almost all of the practices described in our old records hold good to this day among our labourers; to such an extent that a 13th century peasant who should visit one of our small farms, would experience but little surprise.”

But this same 13th century peasant would feel lost in one of the great modern farms on which the methods of mechanical agriculture are applied.

The most improved methods of culture have transformed agricultural products and increased the produce. Modern agriculture is ruinous; it exhausts the soil, alike by the abundance of the crops and their exportation abroad. Their consumption in the towns interferes with the circulation of matter which formerly went on between the soil and animals and man, in the form of meat, grain, and fruit, etc., consumed by him and back from man and beast to the soil, in the shape of excrements. So long as the consumption of the harvest took place upon the spot the circulation was complete; to remedy the present defective circulation it has become necessary to restore the fertility of the soil by artificial means – by gorging it with manures brought from

afar, from South America and the Napoleonic battlefields, and with artificial and chemical manures.

Modern agriculture demands a vast expenditure of labour; but in proportion as more labour was required, in the same proportion the industrial towns drew off the labourers and depopulated the country. "There is a lack of agricultural hands," has been the general cry for the last eighty years; and it is this dearth of agricultural labourers which has furnished the necessary incitement for the procurement of the means of labour in abundance. The application of machinery to agricultural labour became an imperative necessity; but machinery can only be applied on great farms; wherefore the concentration of land was a pre-requisite for the application of machinery and the introduction of scientific agriculture.

In 1857 M. Leonce de Lavergne cited, by way of example, a farm of the Department of l'Oise on which 1,250 acres of beetroot were cultivated, and 8,250 bushels of wheat were gathered. "There is nothing more colossal to be met with in England," he exclaimed exultingly. [3]

But how insignificant do these colossal farms appear when compared with the *Bonanza* farms of the New World.

Since 1874 an American cultivator, Mr. Dalrymple, whose name has obtained a world-wide celebrity, has directed the operations of six farms, of an area of 75,000 acres, belonging to a financial company. He divided these farms into sections of 2,000 acres, sub-divided into three lots of 650 acres. These 75,000 acres are cultivated by a regiment of 600 labourers, under a military discipline. At harvest time the central administration engages from 500 to 600

supplementary labourers, and distributes them among the different sections. As soon as the autumn operations are ended the men are discharged, with the exception of the foreman and 110 men per section. In certain farms of Dakota and Minnesota the mules and horses do not winter on the field of operation; once the ground is broken they are sent southward and return only in the following spring. Mounted mechanics accompany the ploughs, sowing machines, etc., ready at a moment's notice to repair the machinery out of order. The grain is conveyed to the threshing machines, which are in operation night and day; it is threshed and winnowed and sacked automatically, and despatched to the railroads which adjoin the farms, and from thence to Duluth or Buffalo. Every year Mr. Dalrymple increases the acreage under culture by 5,000 acres; in 1880 it amounted to 25,000 acres.

At the same time that the bourgeoisie of Europe stripped the peasants of the communal lands and feudal privileges, it imposed upon them tributes of blood and money; it left them at the mercy of the usurers, who converted them into nominal proprietors, exposed to the competition of the great land owners and farmers of America and India. These and other causes combined to accelerate the expropriation of the peasant and his conversion into a proletarian. In America, where financial agriculture is carried to the highest pitch of perfection, we meet also with the most highly developed agricultural proletariat.

The cultivators of the corn-growing States of the Union may be classed under four great categories: 1. the day labourers or agricultural proletarians; 2. the small farmers (peasant proprietors and *métayers*); 3. proprietors who direct the

cultivation of their land; 4. great financial farmers of whom, in Europe, the only counterparts are to be found in different parts of Roumania and in the south of Russia.

The great majority of the cultivators is composed of proletarians, who do not possess an inch of land or a hut of mud; they do not own the bed on which they lie or the spoon they eat with; they realise the ideal of men stripped of all private property save that which they directly appropriate in the shape of food or clothing. They have no fixed abode in the fields they cultivate, and which they abandon as soon as the work is done. The managers of the financial farms recruit the labourers everywhere; in the villages and large towns the latter are hired by the day, week or month. The men are engaged for the agricultural campaign, placed under the direction of overlookers and foremen and conveyed to the farms; they are lodged and fed and supplied with medicine and paid a wage. They are drilled and formed into regular agricultural regiments, and subjected to a military discipline. They rise, feed, and go to bed at prescribed hours; throughout the week spirits are prohibited; on Sundays the men are free to go and drink at the neighbouring ale-houses. When the work is performed in autumn they are discharged; during the winter months only a small number of men is kept on at the farms to tend the cattle and to take care of the farm implements. The rest return to the towns and villages to practise whatever trade they can put themselves to.

The transformation of landed property and of its mode of culture was necessitated by the transformation undergone by industrial and financial property. The country, in order to supply the men and money required by industry for its

workshops and colossal enterprises (railways, tunnels, etc.), unparalleled since the giant achievements of the period of primitive communism, was drained of its population, and the hiding-places in which the peasants had deposited their savings were cleared out.

At previous epochs the citizens, with the exception of an infinitesimal minority of noblemen, priests, and artificers, satisfied all their wants by cultivating the land; in the bourgeois world an ever-increasing mass of citizens is divorced from agricultural labour, and engaged in industrial and commercial pursuits, and dependent for their means of subsistence on the population employed in tilling the soil.

### III

A mediæval village was an economic unit, because within its limits all the handicrafts were practised which the villagers required. Capitalist production begins by destroying this economic unit; it dissociates the handicrafts and isolates them, assigning to special centres the exercise of distinct crafts. A town or province no longer produces all the articles required by its inhabitants; it relies upon other towns or provinces for the manufacture of special goods. The silk manufactures that it had been sought to disperse over France were, by the end of the last century, almost wholly concentrated in Lyons and its environs. The textile manufactures of wool, flax, and cotton are centralised in certain districts, whilst the production of iron, beetroot-sugar, etc., is confined to others.

The ancient communal and provincial units have been destroyed, and in their place units of a different sort have

been constituted. The ancient units were complex; they were formed by the conglomeration, in a township or province, of all the industries required by it; whereas the modern economic units are simple. They are constituted each by a single industry – iron or sugar here, cotton or leather yonder. A capitalistic nation, like France, is not subdivided into provinces or departments in harmony with its geographical configuration and historical traditions, but is divided into simple economic units: into cotton districts or wine districts, corn-growing or sugar-growing regions, carboniferous or silk producing centres. All of these industrial units are interdependent from their reciprocal wants, no one industrial centre being capable, like the mediæval cities, of subsisting a month or even a week without the support of other centres. If, for example, the town of Rouen supplies the whole of France with cotton goods, she imports her corn from La Beauce, her cattle from the north, her coals from the Loire, her oil from Marseilles, and so forth. A capitalistic nation is a gigantic workshop, and every speciality of social production is executed in special centres, situated at great distances from one another but narrowly knit together by reciprocal wants. The political autonomy of the mediæval townships has become an impossibility; the correlation of economic wants serves as a basis for the political unity of the nation. Capitalist production, which has destroyed the local and provincial unity of handicraft production, is about to destroy the national unity of its own creation and to replace it by a vaster, an international unity.

England, that was the first nation to apply machinery, had manifested the pretension of constraining the rest of the nations to become exclusively agricultural countries,

reserving for herself the industrial role. Lancashire was to weave all the cotton produced by the Indies and the United States. This premature attempt at an international industrial monopolisation has miscarried. America, at the present day, manufactures cotton goods in excess of her requirements, and India, whose cotton industry had been ruined by England, has taken to weaving by machinery. Sixteen years ago the consumption of cotton by the manufactories of India amounted to 87,000 bales; in 1885 the consumption of cotton amounted to 585,000 bales. [4]

India was the cradle of the cotton industry; calicoes first came from Calcutta, and muslin from Mosul; ere long the Indian cottons, manufactured in the proximity of the cottonfields, will once again invade the European markets and, in their turn, ruin the industry of Manchester and the cotton centres of the Continent. The cotton goods of India and the United States will supplant those of Rouen and Manchester. A Yankee merchant, impressed by the impending fate of the Lancashire manufacturers, charitably advised them to transport their machinery to Louisiana, where they would have the raw material close at hand, and so save the expense of its conveyance. The international displacement of an industry goes on under our eyes; the manufactories are drawn into the sphere of the agricultural centres which produce the raw material. But before they had become industrial centres India and the United States had held Europe in subjection, thanks to their agricultural production. The War of Secession of the United States, from 1861 to 1865, threw out of work the weavers of France and England; and exaggerated the cultivation of cotton, "the golden plant," in Egypt, whilst it ruined the *fellahs* and



delivered up Egyptian finance into the hands of Rothschild and other cosmopolitan bankers.

The wheat production is in the act of being centralised in certain parts of the world. England, that in the 17th century produced corn sufficient for her home consumption, with a surplus for exportation, at the present moment imports from America, Australia, and India more than one half of the wheat she consumes. The nations of Europe to-day are in a state of economic dependence on one another, and on the half-civilised countries. This international economic interdependence is on the increase, and will, in times to come, form the basis of the political unity of human kind, a unity which will be founded on the ruins of the existing national unities.

## IV

Capitalist production has advanced from the local and provincial political units to the national political units by creating industrial organisms which could not have been constituted but for the local concentration of production and the decomposition of the process of production. Thus, while manufacturing production agglomerated the labourers and the means of production in its workshops, it introduced the division of labour which decomposed the instrument of labour and condemned the labourer to the lifelong execution of a single operation. The implements of the artificer were few and simple, whereas those of the industrial manufacturer are complex and multifarious. In proportion as the fractional labourer became unfit for all save a single operation, the instrument of labour – developing on the same lines – was differentiated and became specialised. In

certain manufactories from four to five hundred hammers of different shapes and weights were employed, each hammer serving exclusively to execute a special operation. The great mechanical industry has undone the work of manufacture; it has torn the instruments of labour out of the hands of the detail labourer, and has annexed them to a framework of steel and iron, which is, so to say, the skeleton of the machine tool, while the instruments annexed to it are its organs. The machine tool is a mechanical synthesis.

But capitalist production has produced yet another synthesis.

In domestic industry there is an economic unit; the same family transforms the raw material (wool, flax, etc.) which it has produced; this unit has been decomposed. Already in the most primitive communities we see certain industries fall to the lot of certain individuals, who are professional wheelwrights, smiths weavers, or tailors, etc.; later on, in order to obtain an economic unit, we have no longer to consider an isolated family but the entire village or burgh. With the development of commerce and the progress of industry, these distinctive industries were multiplied and became specialities devolving upon certain artificers, grouped in corporations.

It is on the basis of the specialisation of industries in the cities that capitalist production was built up. It commenced by establishing weavers', dyers', wheelwrights', and cabinet makers' workshops, in the interior of which the division of labour and the machine accomplished their revolutions. But these manufactures, which subsequently were converted into colossal factories, remained, like the small artificer's

workshop, restricted to a special industrial process, or to the production of a commodity and its varieties; weavers did nothing but weave and spinners did nothing but spin. But these specialised manufactories cease to be isolated; a number of them come to be agglomerated and are attached to a factory. Dyeworks, printworks, etc., establish themselves in the neighbourhood of mechanical weaving and spinning industries, so that under one and the same capitalistic administration the raw material goes through the entire series of its industrial transformations. And this conglomeration has not been confined to complementary industries, but has taken place in quite independent industries. This centralisation does not necessarily occur in one and the same spot; frequently the different factories are set up in different localities, situated at a considerable distance from one another, but under the control of the same administration.

The National Banks, such as the Banks of England and France, are types of these complex industrial organisations which spread all over the land. A national bank possesses paper mills for the manufacture of the paper for its banknotes; printing presses and engravers' workshops for printing and engraving the same; and photographic apparatus for the detecting of forgeries; it founds hundreds of branch offices in commercial and industrial centres; enters into connection with town and country bankers at home, as well as the national bankers of foreign countries. The central bank becomes, so to say, the heart of the financial system of the country; and so ingeniously organised is the system that the pulsations of the national bank – the rise or fall of its rate of discount – find an echo in

the remotest villages of the country, and even react on the money markets of foreign nations.

Another striking type is the *Times* newspaper. This industrial organism employs a legion of correspondents, scattered over the four quarters of the globe; telegraph wires connect it with the great capitals of Europe; it manufactures its own paper, founds its own type, and employs a set of mechanics to superintend and repair its machinery; it composes, stereotypes, and publishes its sixteen large pages of printed matter, and possesses horses and carts for distributing the papers to other retail vendors. All that it still wants are alfa-fields in Africa to supply the raw material for the paper, and these it will, in good time, no doubt, contrive to acquire. There will come a day when American and Indian manufacturers will adjoin to their factories fields for the cultivation of the cotton plant and workshops for the working up of their calicoes into articles of clothing. Scotch woollen manufacturers have already opened establishments in London in which they sell in the shape of ready-made garments the woollen goods they have manufactured. Capitalistic industry is in the act of reconstituting the economic unit of domestic production; heretofore the same peasant family produced the raw material which it wrought up into industrial products; one and the same capitalistic administration will by-and-by undertake to produce the raw material, transform it into industrial products, and sell these to the customer.

By means of the division of labour, capitalist production began by destroying the unit of labour represented by the handicraftsman; thereupon it proceeded to reconstitute that unit of labour, no longer represented by the labourer, but by

“the iron man,” the machine. At present it tends to constitute giant organisms of production, composed of industries the most diverse and opposite; the special industries which are, so to say, the organs of these monsters, may exist apart, at enormous distances from one another, and be divided by political frontiers and geographical obstacles (mountains, rivers, or seas). These international ogres of labour consume heat, light, electricity, and other natural forces, as well as the brain power and muscular power of man.

Such is the economic mould in which the human material of the nineteenth century is run.

## V

Simultaneously with the extension of the manufacturing system and the factories, property, under the form of gold and silver, underwent a change. At the outset, these two metals, even when stamped and converted into money, were property of an essentially private character; their owner hoarded them or used them for personal ornament. In India and the countries of the East the latter is still one of the uses they are chiefly put to. They but rarely served as a means of exchange, the products themselves being ordinarily bartered. The feudal kings could utter false coin, or debase the coin, without very materially injuring the commercial transactions of their subjects. But when, with the advent of the commercial period, gold and silver became the representative signs of value, the standard measure of all commodities, these metals acquired the right to breed legitimately, to bear legal interest; till then lending on interest had been considered dishonourable; a practice

defensible only towards the stranger – “who is the enemy,” says the unlovely God of the Jews. Lending money for profit was condemned by the Pope and Councils. Such as were addicted to the practice were hated and contemned. Exposed to danger of every sort, they jeopardised their lives and fortunes. The Jews of the Middle Ages, those accumulators of gold and silver, alive to the risks incurred by their beloved gold, put their faith in the promises neither of king nor nobles, and only advanced moneys on the deposits of precious stones, or on equally good security.

The bourgeois rehabilitated usury, and exalted the business of the money-lender into one of the most lucrative and honourable of civilised functions; to live on one’s income as a fund-holder is the bourgeois’ ideal life. In the 16th century, while Calvin, the authorised representative of the religious manifestation of the bourgeois economic revolution, was legitimating the lending on interest in the name of all the theological virtues, the Chancellor Duprat laid the foundations, in France, of the public debt by creating in 1522 perpetual annuities at a rate of interest of 8 per cent, called *rentes de l’hôtel de ville*. The public debt became the savings-bank of the bourgeoisie, where they deposited the money they could find no employment for in business. In earlier ages, the temple of Jerusalem, the house of Jehovah, filled that office; it served as a bank for deposits, and the Jews, from every part of the world stored their precious metals there; but those deposits bore no interest.

The public debt is a bourgeois improvement. The kings of France, prior to 1789, still imbued with the feudal ideas on usury, were wont, on an emergency, to lower the rate of interest by a fourth or one-half, and at times even to suspend

payment. Other European sovereigns acted quite as unceremoniously by their fund-holders. This aristocratic fashion of treating their creditors has been made a constant reproach to the feudal government by the bourgeoisie: one of the first acts of the Bourgeois Revolution of 1789 was to proclaim the inviolability of the public debt and to place it above all political revolutions and all contingent changes of government. The public debt was thenceforward solidly constituted.

“The public debt,” says Marx, “becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter’s wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding, and thus turns it into capital without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from the employment in industry or even in usury. The State creditors actually give away nothing, for the sum lent is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable, which go on functioning in their hands just as so much hard cash would.” [5]

It is just as if the bank-notes bore interest.

The establishment of the public credit, while it afforded a hitherto unparalleled security to the individual capitalist, enhanced the influence of the financiers to whom the Government were obliged to apply for money, a fact, however, which in no wise prevented the kings of the old regime from treating them like the Jews of the Middle Ages; dragging them before the courts of justice, despoiling and hanging them. Howbeit, a century before the Revolution of 1789 their influence in society had become so considerable that the highest nobility solicited the favour of giving their

daughters in marriage to the upstarts of finance, in order to acquire the right of sharing their millions.

The social ascendancy gained by finance, and which keeps on growing, is an economical necessity at a time when great commercial, industrial, and agricultural enterprises, banks, railways, canals, high furnaces, etc., have outgrown the means of private capitalists to carry them out, and require associated capital for their execution; the function of the financier is first to accumulate capital and afterwards to distribute it according to the requirements of industry and commerce. In a society based on mechanical industry, the importance of the capital sunk in the instruments of labour (the *constant capital* of Marx); the quantity of circulating capital (*variable capital*); the rapidity and abundance of production; the distance from the markets, the time required for the sale of the goods and realisation of the payments, all make of finance the pivot of the economic system.

But finance, mechanical industry, and modern methods of cultivation could not develop without essentially modifying the character of property, by converting it from a personal thing into an impersonal thing; bidding the time when it shall resume its primitive form and once again become common.

In the system of small landed property and petty industry, property was an appendage of the proprietor, as his implement was an appendage of the artificer. An industrial enterprise depended upon the personal character of the proprietor: his thrift, activity, and intelligence, just as the perfection of his work depended upon the skill of the artificer who handled the implement. It was impossible for



the proprietor to sicken, age, or retire without endangering the success of the industrial undertaking of which he was the soul. He fulfilled a social function that had its pains and penalties, its profits and rewards. Property, at that epoch, was truly personal, whence the popular saying: "*La propriété est le fruit du travail.*" But modern production has reversed the terms; the capitalist is no longer an appendage of his property whose prosperity no longer depends upon his individual worth. The *eye of the master* has lost its occupation. All great financial, agricultural, and industrial undertakings are directed by administrations more or less successfully organised and highly paid. The function of the modern proprietor consists in pocketing his income and squandering it on wine and women; not a social function is, in our day, assigned to the proprietor in the technical organisation of producers who are all wage-labourers. After having filled a useful part in production, the proprietor has become useless and even a nuisance, as a bourgeois economist remarks. [6]

Political economists, who are but the overpaid apologists of bourgeois society, have sought to justify the tax levied by capital on the produce of labour in the shape of interest, ground rent, profits, &c., by pretending that the capitalist renders useful service by his abstinence, his administrative ability, and so forth. If it was possible for Adam Smith to defend this specious proposition with some show of reason, the Griffens, Roschers, Leroy-Beaulieus, and other such small fry of political economy, ought really, if they would continue to draw their salaries from the middle-class for their interested special pleadings, to set their wits to work to devise something less palpably absurd than the pretended

usefulness of the capitalist in the modern system of great mechanical production.

Mechanical production has robbed the artisan of his technical skill and turned the wage-labourer into a servant of the machine; the capitalistic organisation of industry has made a parasite of the capitalist. The parasitical nature of his role is recognised and proclaimed by the creation of anonymous companies whose shares and obligations the bourgeois' titles of property pass from hand to hand, without exerting any influence on production, and on the Stock Exchange change hands a dozen times a day. The Rothschilds, Grants, Goulds, and other financiers of that stamp, practically demonstrate to the capitalists that they are useless, by cheating them out of their shares and bonds by Stock Exchange swindling, and other financial hanky-panky, and by accumulating in their strong boxes the profits derived from the great organisms of production. In the days when the feudal baron dwelt in his fortified castle, in the midst of his vassals, administering justice to them in time of peace, and donning his armour and putting himself at the head of his men to defend them in cases of invasion, the feudal nobility was a class essentially useful and which it was impossible to suppress; but so soon as a relative tranquillity had been established in the country, and as the towns and boroughs, converted into strongholds, became capable of defending themselves, the nobles ceased to be wanted; they abandoned their castles and betook themselves to the ducal, episcopal, royal, and imperial courts, in which they ended by becoming a body estranged from the nation, and living on it parasitically: that very moment their doom was sealed. If the nobility have not in all European nations been as brutally mowed down as they were during the French Revolution in

1789, they have yet everywhere forfeited their feudal privileges, and become merged in the ranks of the bourgeois, from whom, at present, they only distinguish themselves by the absurdity of their aristocratic pretensions. In capitalistic nations the nobility have disappeared as a ruling class. The same fate awaits the capitalist class. The day that the capitalist ceased to have a function to perform in social production, the death-warrant of his class was signed; it remains but to execute the sentence pronounced by the economic phenomena, and the capitalists who may survive the ruin of their order will lack even the grotesque privileges of the pedigreed nobility to console them for the lost grandeur of their class. Machinery which has killed the artificer will kill the capitalist.

## VI

Civilisation, after having destroyed the rude and simple communism of the beginnings of humanity, elaborates the elements of a complex and scientific communism. Just as in primitive times, labour is to-day performed in common, and the producer owns neither the instruments of labour nor the products of his labour. The produce of labour is not, as yet, shared in common, as was the case with the savage and barbarian tribes; it is monopolised by idle capitalists whose suppression is now but a question of time and opportunity. Let the parasites of property have been swept away, and communistic property will affirm itself and implant itself in society. In primitive society property was common only among members of the same tribe, connected by the ties of blood; every human being not included in the narrow circle of kinship was a stranger, an enemy; but in the society of the future, property will be held in common by all the members

of the great human family, without distinction of nationality, race, or colour; for the workers, bowed under the same capitalistic yoke, have recognised that brothers in misery, brothers in revolt, they must remain brothers in victory. This final communist and international revolution of property is inevitable; already, in the midst of bourgeois civilisation, do the institutions and communistic customs of primitive times revive.

Universal suffrage, the mode of election employed by savages and barbarians in electing their military chiefs and sachems, is re-established, after having been set aside by the bourgeois governments who had proclaimed it the basis of political power.

In primitive ages, habitations were common, repasts were common, and education was common. In our municipal schools children are taught gratuitously and in common; in some cities they are beginning to receive gratuitous repasts. In our restaurants civilised folk are being poisoned and cheated in common, and in the many-storied houses of our large cities they are cooped up in common like rabbits in a hutch.

If universal suffrage is a juggle; if our town houses are unwholesome; if the rest of our institutions, affecting a mock communistic character, are a bane to those whom they profess to benefit, it is because they evolve in a bourgeois society and are established for the sole behoof of the capitalist. None the less are they of capital importance; they destroy individualistic instincts and form and fashion men for the communistic habits of the society to come.

Communism exists in a latent form in bourgeois society; circumstances, not to be foreseen, will cause it to burst forth openly, and will re-instate it as the only possible form of future society.

## Footnote

1. Immortality, that dreary idea, says Frederick Engels, so long the torment of humanity, is an invention of the savages; just as they bestow a soul upon their bodies, or rather a double, who leaves them during sleep and at death, so they attribute to animals, vegetables, and even to inanimate objects, a soul capable of living outside of them; thus, on the burial of a warrior, they destroyed his arms, and killed the animals that were to follow him into the other world.

2. It is the habit to describe as revolutionary political events of a tumultuous and explosive character, while vastly less importance is attached to economic events of far greater revolutionary influence upon the march of society and the conditions of human existence. The manners and customs of the peasant have subsisted unmodified throughout many centuries in despite of wars, changes of frontiers, and social and political vicissitudes. An English anthropologist Mr. Farrer, has remarked that the superstitions of the peasant singularly resemble those of the savage. Country people have only of quite recent years been roused by the establishment of railways. In our day economic phenomena exert such preponderating influence that in France changes of government occur, to effect which there is no need to make the cannon speak; it is enough if the Deputies to the Chambers speak.

3. Leonce de Lavergne, *L'Agriculture et la Population*, Paris 1857.

4. Thomas Ellison, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain*, 1886.

5. Karl Marx, *Capital*, chap.xxxi.

6. "In an enterprise carried on by a company the body of directors may possess but a small fraction of capital; they might, conceivably, possess none at all, and, contrary to the generally received opinion, such a state of things would be the most satisfactory one as regards a proper administration of the company; a body of directors who should be shareholders having no right to administer themselves. It is enough if they possess the requisite capacity, competency, and morality for their functions, all of which qualities are to be found more readily, and at less cost, apart from capital than associated with it." (G. De Molinari, *L'évolution économique du dix-neuvième siècle*, 1880, p.38)