The Question Box.

Why do many Socialists close their letters, "Yours for the revolution"?

Is Eugene V. Debs a rich man?

If Socialists come into power will they pay for the property the government takes?

What is your opinion of Gov. LaFollette?—A Reader, Appleton, Wis.

We close our letters so because we are in favor of a complete change in the social system. We are not reformers—we are for doing away with the present system and inaugurating another wholly different. Revolution does not mean bloodshed.

Comrade Debs is a poor man. He could have had great riches if he would have consented to serve the corporations. There are many men whom money cannot buy, today, just as there were in Washington's time.

How the people will acquire the property of the nation will depend on the wish of the majority. You will have a voice in the matter the same as others.

Gov. LaFollette is a reformer, and does not wish to change the system. He desires to prevent the robbery to some extent, but is not in favor of doing away with all profits.

Under Socialism will all individuals receive the same pay, regardless of difference in capability, degrees of responsibility, or importance of services rendered?—H. B. Dailey, 481 West Main St., Battle Creek, Mich.

No one can tell. That will depend on the consensus of opinion. Personally, I believe that each person who does the best he is capable of in any vocation useful to society should have as much as any other person in any other vocation, for he needs the same things and can enjoy the same comforts of life. There will be plenty for all under a sane system, but you may think differently and there may be more who think as you do than who think as I do, and, therefore, you will be in the majority and will create a differential wage. Socialism is an evolution and no one can tell just what the technical rules will be, any more than we can tell today just what rules and regulations for the people will be passed by the masters at their next meeting. Only under Socialism it will be the men and women who do the work who will make the rules and regulations regarding their work and rewards.

Can a pawn-broker be a true Socialist? Is he on the capitalist or on the other side?—C. K., Minneapolis.

Yes, he can be as good a Socialist as any other person. Many of them are. It is not what a man is forced to practice, but what ideal he wants realized and works for that makes the Socialist. He knows that his business could not be a private graft under Socialism. We have to adapt ourselves to the system we are under. Pawn-broking is a means of getting money, just the same as selling goods for more than they cost. We do not believe in working for wages, and you might as consistently question whether a man who worked for wages could be a Socialist. A man could not work for the perpetuation of this system and be a consistent Socialist, but he could do anything else permissible under the system and be one.

Do you favor the immediate establishment of direct legislation through any and all parties now, or are you afraid its ignorant use would retard the rapid evolution of the true Socialist ideal?—J. H. Myers, Washington.

The Socialist platforms have ever contained a plank demanding direct legislation. The old parties would never have heard of it but for the Socialist movement. Direct legislation will do the people no good until they have learned that there is something they want. The people of Oregon voted for direct legislation, but they have never used it for their benefit. Whether the capitalists adopt or reject, it will have no perceptible effect on the Socialist evolution. It would be only an index of how far the people had advanced in their desire for something different. Direct legislation is not an end, but a means to an end when handled by an intelligent people. We could get all the changes we wanted without it if the people understood what they wanted. We care nothing about what the capitalists do. We are going to rapid success.

When was the Socialist Labor party organized in the United States? Did it ever elect any state representatives or municipal officials?—Reader, Altoona, Pa.

The first national convention of the Socialist Labor Party was held in Newark, N. J., December 26, 1877. Thirty-one sections were represented by thirty-eight delegates. In 1879 the party had one hundred separate sections, with nearly 10,000 dues-paying members. It supported twenty-four periodicals—one of which was a daily published in St. Louis. Most of these publications had very short, but, for the time being, vigorous careers. In 1878 it elected three state representatives to the Illinois legislature and one state senator. In the spring of that year four aldermen were elected in Chicago, the S. L. P. candidate for mayor receiving 12,000 votes. In 1877, 7,000 votes were polled in St. Louis, at which time five members of the school board were elected and two aldermen. The total vote of the S. L. P. during these years is estimated between 50,000 and 100,000. It rapidly lost strength after this period of activity because of its compromise tactics, being in a very large measure snuffed out by its open alliance with the greenback party in 1880. Since that time its sphere of influence has been confined largely to New York City. It survived through the energetic work of a number of New York comrades, who later left it and joined with the Social Democratic party, forming at the unity convention at Indianapolis in 1901 the present Socialist party. At the last election the S. L. P. vote was considerably less than in 1900, and but little over one-third of its vote in 1898, at which time, according to the "Socialist Almanac," its vote was 82,204. Last year it was 34,000. Its early compromise tactics and its later bull-dozing methods made it imperative that a new party be organized to give expression to the American Socialist movement. It should be borne in mind that a political party is simply the vehicle through which a movement finds concrete expression. So long as the S. L. P. was true to the interests of the Socialist movement it was its rightful political expression. When it no longer met the requirements of the growing movement it was cast aside as we would discard a worn-out pair of shoes. If certain tendencies now being manifested in the ranks of the present Socialist party are allowed leeway, it may be necessary to re-organize. However, I do not anticipate that this will come soon. The party is now a power, and the membership can be depended upon to keep its skirts clear—even tho' a few leaders jump the track.

I am a manufacturer under the present system, and a Socialist besides. Ought I to give my employes their full product or exploit them the same as my competitors?

That is a matter that has nothing to do with Socialism. If you and all the other employers were to give the entire social product to the workers it would not produce Socialism. You would still have the power to exploit them if you desired. We demand a system under which no man would have the power to exploit his fellows. This can never come until the working class demand and take the political power and with it make laws taking from you and I the opportunity of exploitation. "Liberty is a thing that cannot be given, but must be taken." You would be simply giving so many alms to your people when you give them what the law and system says is your own. Men do not like to be beggars or paupers—they need justice, not alms.

Mike (the alderman)—So you have turned Socialist, have yez? Begorra I'll be after telling yez that I'll never divide up with the lokes of yez.

Pat (the section-hand)—Bad luck to yez, nobody is going to ask yez to divide up.

Mike—Faith, and what do yez Socialists want thin?

Pat—Nothing, except we are going to stop dividing up wid the lokes of yez; that's all.

No one who has closely observed the returns in the recent election has failed to see in them significant signs of peril. What we call Socialism in this country—meaning a mixture of selfishness, anger, hatred, jealousy and greed—is spreading.—John A. Sleicher, editor Leslie's Weekly.

There is only one remedy for the strike evil—ownership of the jobs by the workers.

At Finnegan's Grand Stand.

The gang was sitting on the sidewalk in front of Finn's place.

"Well," said the Station Agent, as he laid down the Star, "I see my old friend H. U. Mudge, of the Santa Fe, has made another step up the ladder."

"What's he got now?" asked Finnegan.

"Just been appointed second vice-president of the Rock Island at $35,000.00 a year."

"Where did you know him?" asked the grocery clerk.

"Oh, I was working for the Santa Fe in New Mexico when he was trainmaster there; my wife and I had a room at his house while I was working in the dispatcher's office at San Marcial. Mudge was a good fellow and a hard worker—I don't begrudge him his good luck, he deserves all he has got."

"How is it," asked Finnegan, "that you never got a better job? You have been railroading as long as this man Mudge."

"Well, sir," replied the S. A., "one reason is because I was never cut out for the railroad business and——"

"What are you in it for, then?" broke in the Bookkeeper.

"Well, my dear sir, I am in it for the same reason that you are keeping books for $50 per—because I have to make a living, and railroading happened to be the easiest thing I could get into. Under this system men do not do the things they like to do, except in rare instances, but rather the things they must do to exist. Under a sane organization of industry, men would do the things they were by nature fitted for—good telegraphers would not be farming and good farmers would not be telegraphing."

"Oh, well," said the B. K., "I don't care to discuss Socialism with you, but it's all poppycock about their being no chance for the young men of today. According to your own story this man Mudge began some twenty-five years ago on the section at 75 cents a day and now he's drawing a salary of $35,000.00 a year; seems to me it would be pretty hard to improve a system under which a man can do that by hard work and attention to business."

"I am quite willing to admit, my friend, that Mr. Mudge is a man of rare ability, that he has worked hard and always attended strictly to business, but there are many good railroad men of rare ability who have worked hard and attended to business, but they are not yet a president or even a superintendent—very few are drawing a hundred dollars a month. There are only a few $35,000.00 railroad jobs in this country, and, for that matter, there are not many $5,000 positions, and as capital combines and the railroads consolidate, even the number of these jobs are growing less every year. Every boy has a chance to be president of the United States, but that only lets one in every four years, or twenty-five in a hundred years. I tell you, my friend, that under the present system it doesn't matter how much ability men have or how hard they work or how well they attend to business, 99 per cent of those who have jobs must be satisfied with ordinary positions, and fifty per cent of them do well to have any positions at all. You may not know it, but the reason is there are never jobs enough to go around."

"Oh, I don't believe that," exclaimed the B. K., as he savagely knocked the ashes out of his pipe on the window sill.

"Well, it's true just the same, and I can prove it by the government reports of your own party. If you will take the trouble to secure a copy of the U. S. labor commissioner's eighteenth annual report and dig into it you'll get some surprising information. Among other things you will find that nearly 50 per cent of the working class are idle part of the time—idle because they can find no work to do. With the average working man today it is not a case of getting a good job, but getting a job at all."

"Well, I must close up," said Finnegan, the diplomat. "Come on, all you fellows, and have one on me."

Over in Indiana a monkey has been arrested for smoking a cigarette. No longer can we say that the law is never enforced except against us working mules—it now takes in the monkeys, and perhaps after a while it will get around to the capitalists.

Hell is empty; all the devils are on earth.

The Victims*

"It is not coal you are burning up,
But human creatures lives."

The flaring, flickering light from the lamps in their caps showed their coal-begrimed faces as they huddled together and talked in hushed tones of the thing that had happened. Near them on the floor of the mine lay a man's head, blackened and blood-smeared. A little beyond it was a hand, the fingers still twitching slightly. From underneath the mass of slate, newly fallen, a little red stream trickled slowly toward them. They moved a little farther from it, and a little farther, until they were huddled against the opposite wall, but it followed them stealthily.

They knew that they must die. No human power could rescue them before the deadly gases crept upon them. But the horror in their eyes was not all a horror of death.

The youngest, a boy of fourteen, slipped his hand into his father's.

"Let's write to her," he said, "and to the children."

"Write," groaned the father, "write! What can we tell her? Can we tell her how to fill six mouths when she has nothing—nothing?"

"We can tell her," the boy said bravely, though the horror deepened in his eyes, "that we're not afraid to die."

The man was already fumbling in his pocket for a pencil. The others followed his example.

"I'm not afraid to die," the father said, "but God knows I'm afraid for her to live."

They crouched down in the narrow space and began writing on such scraps of paper as they could find in their pockets, spreading it out as smoothly as possible on knee or dinner pail or smooth bit of slate. For a long while there was unbroken silence, save for the labored breathing of the men as the air became more oppressive and the scratching of the pencils as their work-stiffened fingers moved clumsily, but rapidly, in the race with death. And though they knew that it was their master's greed for profits that had made the mine a death trap there was no word of bitterness or resentment in the letters they wrote to their dearest.

Before they had finished writing one of them fell back and lay writhing and gasping for breath. They did not try to revive him. They knew that to do so would only prolong his torture. When he lay still at last, with distorted face and protruding tongue, they felt a little relieved. They knew he was at rest.

The boy was trembling violently. Each breath was harder to draw than the one before it. He turned a little, with his back to the dead man, and looked at his father.

"I'll tell her to use my clothes for the children," he whispered. "She won't do it unless I tell her to—and it will help a little."

* * * * * * * *

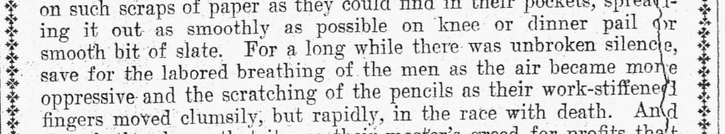
And outside, in the clear, morning sunlight, the women were weeping.

But in one of the costliest mansions of a city not far away a man sat at his dainty breakfast table scowling over the news that had just reached him through the telephone.

He looked across at the prettily painted thing for whom he had divorced the wife of his youth.

"It will cost a confounded lot of money," he growled, "to get that mine in working order again."

*From a Book of Stories by May Beals, entitled a "Rebel at Large." Price, 35c.



Copyright 1905 by Upton Sinclair. Author of "Manassas," "Prince Hagen," etc.

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the summer the packing houses were in full activity again, and Jurgis made more money. He did not make so much, however, as he had the previous summer, for the packers took on more hands. There were new men every week, it seemed—it was a regular system; and this number they would keep over to the next slack season, so that everyone would have less than ever. Sooner or later, by this plan, they would have all the floating labor of Chicago trained to do their work. And how very cunning a trick was that! The men were to teach new hands, who would some day come and break their strike; and meantime they were kept so poor that they could not prepare for the trial!

But let no one suppose that this superfluity of employees meant easier work for anyone! On the contrary, the speeding-up seemed to be growing more savage all the time; they were continually inventing new devices to crowd the work on—it was for all the world like the thumb-screw of the mediaeval torture chamber. They would get new pacemakers and pay them more; they would drive the men on with new machinery—it was said that in the hog-killing rooms the speed at which the hogs moved was determined by clock-work, and that it was increased a few minutes every day. In piece-work they would reduce the time, requiring the same work in a shorter time, and paying the same wages; and then, after the workers had accustomed themselves to this new speed, they would reduce the rate of payment to correspond with the reduction in time! They had done this so often in the canning establishments that the girls were fairly desperate; their wages had gone down by a full third in the past two years, and a storm of discontent was brewing that was likely to break any day. Only a month after Marija had become a beef-trimmer the canning factory that she had left posted a cut that would divide the girls' earnings almost squarely in half; and so great was the indignation at this that they marched out without even a parley, and organized in the street outside. One of the girls had read somewhere that a red flag was the proper symbol for oppressed workers, and so they mounted one, and paraded all about the yards, yelling with rage. A new union was the result of this outburst, but the impromptu strike went to pieces in three days, owing to the rush of new labor. At the end of it the girl who had carried the red flag went down town and got a position in Marshall Field's great retail store, at a salary of two dollars and a half a week.

Jurgis and Ona heard these stories with dismay, for there was no telling when their own time might come. Once or twice there had been rumors that one of the big houses was going to cut its unskilled men to fifteen cents an hour, and Jurgis knew that if this was done, his turn would come soon. He had learned by this time that Packingtown was really not a number of firms at all, but one great firm, the Beef Trust. And every week the managers of it got together and compared notes, and there was one scale for all the workers in the yards, and one standard of efficiency. Jurgis was told that they also fixed the price they would pay for beef on the hoof, and the price of all dressed meat in the country; but that was something he did not understand or care about as yet.

The only one who was not afraid of a cut was Marija, who congratulated herself, somewhat naively, that there had been one in her place only a short time before she came. Marija was getting to be a skilled beef-trimmer, and was mounting to the heights again. During the summer and fall Jurgis and Ona managed to pay her back the last penny they owed her, and so she began to have a bank account.

The possession of vast wealth entails cares and responsibilities, however, as poor Marija found out. She had taken the advice of a friend and invested her savings in a bank on Ashland avenue. Of course she knew nothing about it, except that it was big and imposing—what possible chance has a poor foreign working-girl to understand the banking business, as it is conducted in this land of frenzied finance? So Marija lived in continual dread lest something should happen to her bank, and would go out of her way mornings to make sure that it was still there; her principal thought was of fire, for she had deposited her money in bills, and was afraid that if they were burned up the bank would not give her any others. Jurgis made fun of her for this, for he was a man and was proud of his superior knowledge, telling her that the bank had fire-proof vaults, and all its millions of dollars hidden safely away in them.

However, one morning Marija took her usual detour and to her horror and dismay saw a crowd of people in front of the bank, filling the avenue solid for half a block. All the blood went out of her face for terror. She broke into a run, shouting to the people to ask what was the matter, but not stopping to hear what they answered till she had come to where the throng was so dense that she could no longer advance. There was a "run on the bank," they told her then, but she did not know what that was, and turned from one person to another, trying in an agony of fear to make out what they meant. Had something gone wrong with the bank? Nobody was sure, but they thought so. Couldn't she get her money? There was no telling; the people were afraid not, and they were all trying to get it. It was too early yet to tell anything—the bank would not open for nearly three hours. So, in a frenzy of despair Marija began to claw her way towards the doors of this building, through a throng of men, women and children, all as excited as herself. It was a scene of wild confusion, women shrieking and wringing their hands and fainting, and men fighting and trampling down everything in their way. In the midst of the melee Marija recollected that she did not have her bank-book, and could not get her money anyway, so she fought her way out and started on a run for home. This was fortunate for her, for a few minutes later the police-reserves arrived—and God help the people who are caught in a crowd that the police at the stock-yards are sent out to disperse!

In half an hour Marija was back, Teta Elzbieta with her, both of them breathless with running, and sick with fear. The crowd was now formed in a line, extending for several blocks, with half a hundred policemen keeping guard over it. There was nothing for them to do but to take their places at the end of it. At nine o'clock the bank opened and began to pay the waiting throng; but then, what good did that do Marija, who saw three thousand people before her—enough to take out the last penny of a dozen banks? And how in all that confusion were they going to tell her money from that of anyone else?

To make matters worse a drizzling rain came up, and soaked them to the skin; yet all the morning they stood there, creeping slowly toward the goal—all the afternoon they stood there, heart-sick, seeing that the hour of closing was coming, and that they were going to be left out. Marija made up her mind that, come what might, she would stay there and keep her place; but as nearly all did the same, all through the long, cold night, she got very little closer to the bank for that. Toward evening Jurgis came; he had heard the story from the children, and he brought some food and dry wraps, which made it a little easier.

The next morning, before daybreak, came a bigger crowd than ever, and more policemen from down town. Marija held on like grim death, and toward afternoon she got into the bank and got her money—all in big silver dollars—a handkerchief full. When she had once got her hands on them her fear vanished, and she wanted to put them back again; but the man at the window was savage, and said that the bank would take no more deposits from those who had taken part in the run. So Marija was forced to take her dollars home with her, watching to right and left, expecting every instant that some one would try to rob her; and when she got home she was not much better off. Until she could find another bank there was nothing to do but sew them up in her clothes, and so Marija went about for a week or more, loaded down with bullion, and afraid to cross the street in front of the house, because Jurgis told her she would sink out of sight in the mud. Weighted this way she made her way to the yards, again in terror, this time to see if she had lost her place. Fortunately about ten per cent of the working people of Packingtown had been depositors in that bank, and it was not convenient to discharge that many at once. The cause of the panic had been the attempt of a policeman to arrest a drunken man in a saloon next door, which had drawn a crowd at the hour the people were on their way to work, and so started the "run."

About this time Jurgis and Ona also began a bank-account. Besides having paid Jonas and Marija, they had almost paid for their furniture, and could have that little sum to count on. So long as each of them could bring home nine or ten dollars a week, they were able to get along finely. Also election-day came round again, and Jurgis made half a week's wages out of that, all net profit. It was a very close election that year, and the echoes of the battle reached even to Packingtown. The two rival sets of grafters hired halls and set off fireworks and made speeches, to try to get the people interested in the matter. Although Jurgis did not understand it all, he knew enough by this time to realize that it was not supposed to be right to sell your vote. However, every one did it, and his refusal to join would not have made the slightest difference in the results. The idea of refusing would have seemed absurd, had it ever came into his head.

Now chill winds and shortening days began to warn them that the winter was coming again. The very memory of the winter was a terror; it seemed that the respite had been too short—they had not had time enough to get ready for it. Still it came, inexorably, and the hunted look began to come back into the eyes of little Stanislovas. The prospect struck fear to the heart of Jurgis also, for he knew that Ona was not fit to face the cold and the snow-drifts this year. And suppose that some day when a blizzard struck them and the cars were not running, Ona should have to give it up, and should come the next day to find that her place had been given to some one who lived nearer and could be depended on?

It was the week before Christmas that the first great storm came, and then the soul of Jurgis rose up within him like a sleeping lion. There were four days that the Ashland avenue cars were stalled, and in those days, for the first time in his life, Jurgis knew what it was to be really opposed. He had faced difficulties before, but they had been child's play; now there was a death struggle, and all the furies were unchained in him. The first morning they set out two hours before dawn, Ona wrapped all in blankets and tossed upon his shoulder like a sack of meal, and the little boy, bundled nearly out of sight, hanging by his coat-tails. There was a raging blast beating in his face, and with the thermometer below zero; the snow was never short of his knees, and in some of the drifts it was nearly up to his arm-pits. It would catch his feet and try to trip him; it would build itself into a wall before him to beat him back; and he would fling himself into it, plunging like a wounded buffalo,

puffing and snorting in rage. So foot by foot he drove his way, and when at last he came to Anderson's he was staggering and almost blind, and leaned against a pillar gasping, and thanked God that the cattle came late to the killing-floor that day. In the evening the same thing had to be done again; and because Jurgis could not tell what hour of the night he would get off, he paid a saloon-keeper to let Ona sit and wait for him in a corner. Once it was eleven o'clock at night, and black as the pit, but still they got home.

That blizzard knocked many a man out, for the crowd outside begging for work was never greater, and the packers would not wait long for anyone. When it was over the soul of Jurgis was a song, for he had met the enemy and conquered, and felt himself the master of his fate.——So it might be with some monarch of the forest, that had vanquished his foes in fair fight, and then fell into some cowardly trap in the night-time. There are so many traps in the jungle—the creature that would escape them all must never sleep!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)