

WHAT SHALL WE DO by Leo Tolstoy

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CHAPTER 16 It was hard for me to own this; but when I had got so far I was terrified at the delusion in which I had been living. I had been head over ears in the mud myself, and yet I had been trying to drag others out of it. What is it that I really want? I want to do good; I want to contrive so that no human beings shall be hungry and cold, and that men may live as it is proper for them to live. I desire this; and I see that in consequence of all sorts of violence, extortions, and various expedients in which I too take part, the working people are deprived of the necessary things, and the non-working community, to whom I also belong, monopolize the labour of others. I see that this use of other people's labour is distributed thus: That the more cunning and complicated the devices employed by the man himself (or by those from whom he has inherited his property), the more largely he employs the labours of other people, and the less he works himself. First come the millionaires; then the wealthy bankers, merchants, land-owners, government officials; then the smaller bankers, merchants, government officials and land-owners, to whom I belong too; then shopmen, publicans, usurers, police sergeants and inspectors, teachers, sacristans, clerks; then, again, house-porters, footmen, coachmen, water-carters, cabmen, pedlers; and then, last of all, the workmen, factory hands and peasants, the number of this class in proportion to the former being as ten to one. I see that the lives of nine-tenths of the working people essentially require exertion

and labour, like every other natural mode of living; but that, in consequence of the devices by which the necessaries of life are taken away from these people, their lives become every year more difficult, and more beset with privations; and our lives, the lives of the non-labouring community, owing to the co-operation of sciences and arts which have this very end in view, become every year more sumptuous, more attractive and secure. I see that in our days the life of a labouring man, and especially the lives of the old people, women, and children of the working-classes, are quite worn away by increased labour out of proportion to their nourishment, and that even the very first necessaries of life are not secured for them. I see that side by side with these the lives of the non-labouring class, to which I belong, are each year more and more filled up with superfluities and luxury, and are becoming continually more secure. The lives of the wealthy have reached that degree of security of which in olden times men only dreamed in fairy-tales, to the condition of the owner of the magic purse with the "inexhaustible ruble"; to a state where a man not only is entirely free from the law of labour for the sustenance of his life, but has the possibility of enjoying all the goods of this life without working, and of bequeathing to his children, or to anyone he chooses, this purse with the "inexhaustible ruble." I see that the results of the labour of men pass over more than ever from the masses of labourers to those of the non-labourers; that the pyramid of the social structure is, as it were, being rebuilt, so that the stones of the foundation pass to the top, and the rapidity of this passage increases in a kind of geometric progression. I see that there is going on something like what would take place in an ant-hill if the society of ants should lose the sense of the general law, and some of them were to take the results of labour out of the foundations and carry them to the top of the hill, making the foundation narrower and narrower and thus enlarging the top, and so

by that means cause their fellows to pass also from the foundation to the top. I see that instead of the ideal of a laborious life, men have created the ideal of the purse with the "inexhaustible ruble." The rich, I among their number, arrange this ruble for themselves by various devices; and in order to enjoy it we locate ourselves in towns, in a place where nothing is produced but everything is swallowed up. The poor labouring man, swindled so that the rich may have this magic ruble, follows them to town; and there he also has recourse to tricks, either arranging matters so that he may work little and enjoy much (thus making the condition of other workingmen still more heavy), or, not having attained this state, he ruins himself and drifts into the continually and rapidly increasing number of cold and hungry tenants of doss-houses. I belong to the class of those men who by means of these various devices take away from the working people the necessaries of life, and who thus, as it were, create for themselves the inexhaustible fairy ruble which tempts in turn these unfortunate ones. I wish to help men; and therefore it is clear that first of all I ought on the one side to cease to plunder them as I am doing now, and on the other to leave off tempting them. But by means of most complicated, cunning, and wicked contrivances practised for centuries, I have made myself the owner of this ruble; that is, have got into a condition where, never doing anything myself, I can compel hundreds and thousands of people to work for me, and I am really availing myself of this privileged monopoly notwithstanding that all the time I imagine I pity these men and wish to help them. I sit on the neck of a man, and having quite crushed him down compel him to carry me and will not alight from off his shoulders, though I assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to ease his condition by every means in my power—except by getting off his back. Surely this is plain. If I wish to help the poor, that is, to make the poor cease to be poor, I ought not

to create the poor. Yet I give money capriciously to those who have gone astray, and take away tens of rubles from men who have not yet become bad, thereby making them poor and at the same time depraved. This is very clear; but it was exceedingly difficult for me to understand at first, without some modification or reserve which would justify my position. However as soon as I come to see my own error, all that formerly appeared strange, complicated, clouded, and inexplicable, became quite simple and intelligible; but the important matter was, that the direction of my life indicated by this explanation, became at once, simple, clear, and agreeable, instead of being, as formerly, intricate, incomprehensible, and painful. Who am I, I thought, that desire to better men's condition? I say I desire this, and yet I do not get up till noon, after having played cards in a brilliantly lighted saloon all night—I, an enfeebled and effeminate man requiring the help and services of hundreds of people, I come to help them! to help these men who rise at five, sleep on boards, feed on cabbage and bread, understand how to plough, to reap, to put a handle to an axe, to hew, to harness horses, to sew; men who, by their strength and perseverance and skill and self-restraint are a hundred times stronger than I who come to help them. What could I experience in my intercourse with these people but shame? The weakest of them, a drunkard, an inhabitant of Rzhanoﬀ's house, he whom they call "the sluggard," is a hundred times more laborious than I; his balance, so to say—in other words the relation between what he takes from men and what he gives to them—is a thousand times more to his credit than mine when I count what I receive from others and what I give them in return. And such men I go to assist! I go to help the poor. But of the two who is the poorer? No one is poorer than myself. I am a weak, good-for-nothing parasite who can only exist under very peculiar conditions, can live only when thousands of people labour to support this life

which is not useful to anyone. And I, this very caterpillar which eats up the leaves of a tree, I wish to help the growth and the health of the tree and to cure it! All my life is spent thus: I eat, talk, and listen; then I eat, write, or read, which are only talking and listening in another form; I eat again, and play; then eat, talk, and listen, and finally eat and go to sleep: and thus every day is spent; I neither do anything else nor understand how to do it. And in order that I may enjoy this life it is necessary that from morning till night house-porters, dvorniks, cooks (male and female), footmen, coachmen, and laundresses, should work; to say nothing of the manual labour necessary so that the coachmen, cooks, footmen, and others may have the instruments and articles by which and upon which they work for me—axes, casks, brushes, dishes, furniture, glasses, shoe-black, kerosene, hay, wood, and food. All these men and women work hard all the day and every day in order that I may talk, eat, and sleep. And I, this useless man, imagined I was able to benefit the very people who were serving me! That I did not benefit any one and that I was ashamed of myself, is not so strange as the fact that such a foolish idea ever came into my mind. The woman who nursed the sick old man helped him; the peasant's wife, who cut a slice of her bread earned by herself, from the very sowing of the corn that made it, helped the hungry one; Simon, who gave three kopeks which he had earned, assisted the pilgrim, because these three kopeks really represented his labour; but I had served nobody, worked for no one, and knew very well that my money did not represent my labour. And so I felt that in money, or in money's worth, and in the possession of it, there was something wrong and evil; that the money itself, and the fact of my having it, was one of the chief causes of those evils which I had seen before me; and I asked myself, What is money?

CHAPTER 17 Money! Then what is money? It is answered, money represents labour. I meet educated people who even assert that money represents labour performed by those who possess it. I confess that I myself formerly shared this opinion, although I did not very clearly understand it. But now it became necessary for me to learn thoroughly what money is. In order to do so, I addressed myself to science. Science says that money in itself is neither unjust nor pernicious; that money is the natural result of the conditions of social life, and is indispensable, first, for convenience of exchange; secondly, as a measure of value; thirdly, for saving; and fourthly, for payments. The fact that when I have in my pocket three rubles to spare, which I am not in need of, I have only to whistle and in every civilized town I can obtain a hundred people ready for these three rubles to do the worst, most disgusting, and humiliating act I require, it is said, comes not from money, but from the very complicated conditions of the economical life of nations! The dominion of one man over others does not come from money, but from the circumstance that a workingman does not receive the full value of his labour; and the fact that he does not get the full value of his labour depends upon the nature of capital, rent, and wages, and upon complicated connections between the distribution and consumption of wealth. In plain language, it means that people who have money may twist round their finger those who have none. But science says that this is an illusion; that in every kind of production three factors take part—land, savings of labour (capital), and labour, and that the dominion of the few over the many proceeds from the various connections between these factors of production, because the two first factors, land and capital, are not in the hands of working people; and from this fact and from the various combinations which result from it this domination proceeds. Whence comes the great power of money, which strikes us all with a sense of its injustice and

cruelty? Why is one man, by the means of money, to have dominion over others? Science says, "It comes from the division of the factors of production, and from the consequent combinations which oppress the worker." This answer has always appeared to me to be strange, not only because it leaves one part of the question unnoticed (namely, the significance of money), but also because of the division of the factors of production, which to an unprejudiced man will always appear artificial and out of touch with reality. Science asserts that in every production three agents come into operation—land, capital and labour; and along with this division it is understood that property (or its value in money) is naturally divided among those who possess one of these agents; thus, rent (the value of the ground) belongs to the land-owner; interest belongs to the capitalist; and wages to the worker. Is this really so? First, is it true that in every production only three agencies operate? Now, while I am writing proceeds the production of hay around me. Of what is this production composed? I am told of the land which produces the grass; of capital (scythes, rakes, pitch-forks, carts which are necessary for the housing of the hay); and of labour. But I see that this is not true. Besides the land, there is the sun and rain; and, in addition, social order, which has been keeping these meadows from any damage which might be caused by letting stray cattle graze upon them, the skill of workmen, their knowledge of language, and many other agencies of production—which, for some unknown reason, are not taken into consideration by political economy. The power of the sun is as necessary as the land, even more. I may mention the instances when men (in a town, for example), assume the right to keep out the sun from others by means of walls or trees. Why, then, is the sun not included among the factors of production? Rain is another means as necessary as the ground itself. The air too. I can imagine men without water and pure air because other men had

assumed to themselves the right to monopolise these essential necessities of all. Public security is likewise a necessary element. Food and dress for workmen are similar factors in production; this is even recognized by some economists. Education, the knowledge of language which creates the possibility to apply work, is likewise an agent. I could fill a volume by enumerating such combinations, not mentioned by science. Why, then, are three only to be chosen, and laid as a foundation for the science of political economy? Sunshine and water equally with the earth are factors in production, so with the food and clothes of the workers, and the transmission of knowledge. All may be taken as distinct factors in production. Simply because the right of men to enjoy the rays of the sun, rain, food, language, and audience, are challenged only on rare occasions; but the use of land and of the instruments of labour are constantly challenged in society. This is the true foundation; and the division of the factors of production into three, is quite arbitrary, and is not involved in the nature of things. But it may perhaps be urged that this division is so suitable to man, that wherever economic relationships are formed these three factors appear at once and alone. Let us see whether this is really so. First of all, I look at what is around me—at Russian colonists, of whom millions have for ages existed. They come to a land, settle themselves on it, and begin to work; and it does not enter the mind of any of them that a man who does not use the land can have any claim to it—and the land does not assert any rights of its own. On the contrary, the colonists conscientiously recognize the communism of the land and the right of every one of them to plough and to mow wherever he likes. For cultivation, for gardening, for building houses, the colonists obtain various implements of labour: nor does it enter the mind of any of them that these instruments of labour may be allowed to bring profit in themselves, and the capital does not assert any rights of its

own. On the contrary, the colonists consciously recognize among themselves that all interest for tools, or borrowed corn or capital, is unjust. They work upon a free land, labour with their own tools, or with those borrowed without interest, each for himself, or all together, for common business; and in such a community, it is impossible to prove either the existence of rent, interest accruing from capital, or remuneration for labour. In referring to such a community I am not indulging my fancy but describing what has always taken place, not only among Russian colonists, but everywhere, as long as human nature is not sinned against. I am describing what appears to everyone to be natural and rational. Men settle on land, and each member undertakes the business which suits him, and, having procured the necessary tools, does his own work. If these men find it more convenient to work together, they form a workmen's association. But neither in separate households, nor in associations, will separate agents of production appear till men artificially and forcibly divide them. There will be simply labour and the necessary conditions of labour—the sun which warms all, the air which they breathe, water which they drink, land on which they labour, clothes on the body, food in the stomach, stakes, shovels, ploughs, machines with which they work. And it is evident that neither the rays of the sun, nor the clothes on the body, nor the stakes, nor the spade, nor the plough, with which each man works, nor the machines with which they labour in the workmen's association, can belong to anyone else than those who enjoy the rays of the sun, breathe the air, drink the water, eat the bread, clothe their bodies, and labour with the spade or with the machines, because all these are necessary only for those who use them. And when men act thus, we see they act rationally. Therefore, observing all the economic conditions created among men, I do not see that division into three is natural. I see, on the contrary, that it is neither natural nor rational.

But perhaps the setting apart of these three does not occur in primitive societies, only when the population increases and cultivation begins to develop it is unavoidable. And we cannot but recognise the fact that this division has occurred in European society. Let us see whether it is really so. We are told that in European society this division of agencies has been; that is, that one man possesses land, another accomplished the instruments of labour, and the third is without land and instruments. We have grown so accustomed to this assertion that we are no longer struck by the strangeness of it. But in this assertion lies an inner contradiction. The conception of a labouring man, includes the land on which he lives and the tools with which he works. If he did not live on the land and had no tools he would not be a labourer. A workman deprived of land and tools never existed and never can exist. There cannot be a bootmaker without a house for his work built on land, without water, air, and tools to work with. If the peasant has no land, horse, water or scythe; if the bootmaker is without a house, water, or awl, then that means that some one has driven him from the ground, or taken it from him, and has cheated him out of his scythe, cart, horse, or awl; but it does not in any way mean that there can be country labourers without scythes or bootmakers without tools. As you cannot think of a fisherman on dry land without fishing implements, unless you imagine him driven away from the water by some one who has taken his fishing implements from him; so also you cannot picture a workman without land on which to live, and without tools for his trade, unless somebody has driven him from the former, or robbed him of the latter. There may be men who are hunted from one place to another, and who, having been robbed, are compelled perforce to work for another man and make things necessary for themselves, but this does not mean that such is the nature of production. It means only that in such case, the natural conditions of production are

violated. But if we are to consider as factors of production all of which a workman may be deprived by force, why not count among these the claim on the person of a slave? Why not count claims on the rain and the rays of the sun? One man might build a wall and so keep the sun from his neighbour; another might come who would turn the course of a river through his own pond and so contaminate its water; or claim a fellow-being as his own property. But none of these claims, although enforced by violence, can be recognised as a basis. It is therefore as wrong to accept the artificial rights to land and tools as separate factors in production, as to recognise as such the invented rights to use sunshine, air, water, or the person of another. There may be men who claim the land and the tools of a workman, as there were men who claimed the persons of others, and as there may be men who assert their rights to the exclusive use of the rays of the sun, or of water and air. There may be men who drive away a workman from place to place, taking from him by force the products of his labour as they are produced, and the very instruments of its production, who compel him to work, not for himself, but for his master, as in the factories;—all this is possible; but the conception of a workman without land and tools is still an impossibility, as much as that a man can willingly become the property of another, notwithstanding men have claimed other men for many generations. And as the claim of property in the person of another cannot deprive a slave of his innate right to seek his own welfare and not that of his master; so, too, the claim to the exclusive possession of land and the tools of others cannot deprive the labourer of his inherent rights as a man to live on the land and to work with his own tools, or with communal tools, as he thinks most useful for himself. All that science can say in examining the present economic question, is this: that in Europe certain claims to the land and the tools of workmen are made, in consequence of which, for some of these

workmen (but by no means for all of them), the proper conditions of production are violated, so that they are deprived of land and implements of labour and compelled to work with the tools of others. But it is certainly not established that this accidental violation of the law of production is the fundamental law itself. In saying that this separate consideration of the factors is the fundamental law of production, the economist is doing the very thing a zoölogist would do, if on seeing a great many siskins with their wings cut, and kept in little cages, he should assert that this was the essential condition of the life of birds, and that their life is composed of such conditions. However many siskins there may be, kept in paste-board houses, with their wings cut, a zoölogist cannot say that these, and a tiny pail of water running up rails, are the conditions of the birds' lives. And however great the number of workpeople there may be, driven from place to place, and deprived of their productions as well as their tools, the natural right of man to live on the land, and to work with his own tools, is essential to him, and so it will remain forever. Of course there are some who lay claim to the land and to the tools of workmen, just as in former ages there were some who laid claim to the persons of others; but there can be no real division of men into lords and slaves—as they wanted to establish in the ancient world—any more than there can be any real division in the agents of production (land and capital, etc.), as the economists are trying to establish. These unlawful claims on the liberty of other men, science calls “the natural conditions of production.” Instead of taking its fundamental principles from the natural properties of human societies, science took them from a special case; and desiring to justify this case, it recognized the right of some men to the land on which other men earn their living, and to the tools with which others again work; in other words, it recognized as a right something which had never existed, and cannot exist,

and which is in itself a contradiction, because the claim of the man to the land on which he does not labour, is in essence nothing else than the right to use the land which he does not use; the claim on the tools of others is nothing else than the assumption of a right to work with implements with which a man does not work. Science, by dividing the factors of production, declares that the natural condition of a workman—that is, of a man in the true sense of the word—is the unnatural condition in which he lives at present, just as in ancient times, by the division of men into citizens and slaves, it was asserted that the unnatural condition of slavery was the natural condition of life. This very division, which science has accepted only for the purpose of justifying the existing injustice, and the recognition of this division as the foundation of all its inquiries, is responsible for the fact that science vainly tries to explain existing phenomena and, denying the clearest and plainest answers to the questions that arise, gives answers which have absolutely no meaning in them. The question of economic science is this: What is the cause of the fact that some men, by means of money, acquire an imaginary right to land and capital, and may make slaves of those who have no money? The answer which presents itself to common sense is, that it is the result of money, the nature of which is to enslave men. But economic science denies this, and says: This arises, not from the nature of money, but from the fact that some men have land and capital, and others have neither. We ask: Why do persons who possess land and capital oppress those who possess neither? And we are answered: Because they possess land and capital. But this is just what we are inquiring about. Is not deprivation of land and tools enforced slavery? And the answer is like saying, “A remedy is narcotic because its effects are narcotic.” Life does not cease to put this essential question, and even science herself notices and tries to answer it, but does not succeed, because, starting

from her own fundamental principles, she only turns herself round in a vicious circle. In order to give itself a satisfactory answer to the question, science must first of all deny that wrong division of the agents of production, and cease to acknowledge the result of the phenomena as being their cause; and she must seek, first the more obvious, and then the remoter, causes of those phenomena which constitute the matter questioned. Science must answer the question, Why are some men deprived of land and tools while others possess both? or, Why is it that lands and tools are taken from the people who labour on the land and work with the tools? And as soon as economic science puts this question to herself she will get new ideas which will transform all the previous ideas of sham science—which has been moving in an unalterable circle of propositions—that the miserable condition of the workers proceeds from the fact that they are miserable. To simple-minded persons it must seem unquestionable that the obvious reason of the oppression of some men by others is money. But science, denying this, says that money is only a medium of exchange, which has no connection with slavery of men. Let us see whether it is so or not.

CHAPTER 18 What is the origin of money? What are the conditions under which nations always have money, and under what circumstances need nations not use money? There are small tribes in Africa, and one in Australia, who live as the Sknepies and the Drevlyans lived in olden times. These tribes lived by breeding cattle and cultivating gardens. We become acquainted with them at the dawn of history, and history begins by recording the fact that some invaders appear on the scene. And invaders always do the same thing: they take away from the aborigines everything they can take—cattle, corn, and cloth; they even make prisoners, male and female, and carry them away. In a few years the invaders appear again, but the people have not

yet got over the consequences of their first misfortunes, and there is scarcely anything to take from them; so the invaders invent new and better means of making use of their victims. These methods are very simple, and present themselves naturally to the mind of all men. The first is personal slavery. There is a drawback to this, because the invaders must take over the entire control and administration of the tribe, and feed all the slaves; hence, naturally, there appears the second. The people are left on their own land, but this becomes the recognized property of the invaders, who portion it out among the leading military men, by whose means the labour of the tribe is utilized and transferred to the conquerors. But this, too, has its drawback. It is inconvenient to have to oversee all the production of the conquered people, and thus the third means is introduced, as primitive as the two former; this is, the levying of a certain obligatory tax to be paid by the conquered at stated periods. The object of conquest is to take from the conquered the greatest possible amount of the product of their labour. It is evident, that, in order to do this, the conquerors must take the articles which are the most valuable to the conquered, and which at the same time are not cumbersome, and are convenient for keeping—skins of animals, and gold. So the conquerors lay upon the family or the tribe a tax in these skins or gold, to be paid at fixed times; and thus, by means of this tribute, they utilize the labour of the conquered people in the most convenient way. When the skins and the gold have been taken from the original owners, they are compelled to sell all they have amongst themselves to obtain more gold and skins for their masters; that is, they have to sell their property and their labour. So it was in ancient times, in the Middle Ages, and so it occurs now. In the ancient world, where the subjugation of one people by another was frequent, personal slavery was the most widespread method of subjugation, and the centre of gravity in this compulsion,

owing to the non-recognition of the equality of men. In the Middle Ages, feudalism—land-ownership and the servitude connected with it—partly takes the place of personal slavery, and the centre of compulsion is transferred from persons to land. In modern times, since the discovery of America, the development of commerce, and the influx of gold (which is accepted as a universal medium of exchange), the money tribute has become, with the increase of state power, the chief instrument for enslaving men, and upon this all economic relations are now based. In “The Literary Miscellany” there is an article by Professor Yanjoul in which he describes the recent history of the Fiji Islands. If I were trying to find the most pointed illustration of how in our day the compulsory money payment became the chief instrument in enslaving some men by others, I could not imagine anything more striking and convincing than this trustworthy history—history based upon documents of facts which are of recent occurrence. In the South-Sea Islands, in Polynesia, lives a race called the Fiji. The group on which they live, says Professor Yanjoul, is composed of small islands, which altogether comprise about forty thousand square miles. Only half of these islands are inhabited, by a hundred and fifty thousand natives and fifteen hundred white men. The natives were reclaimed from savagery a long time ago, and were distinguished among the other natives of Polynesia by their intellectual capacities. They appear to be capable of labour and development, which they proved by the fact that within a short period they became good workmen and cattle breeders. The inhabitants were well-to-do, but in the year 1859 the condition of their state became desperate: the nation and its representative, Kakabo, were in need of money. This money, forty-five thousand dollars, was wanted as compensation or indemnification demanded of them by the United States of America for violence said to have been done by Fijis to some citizens of the American Republic. To

collect this, the Americans sent a squadron, which unexpectedly seized some of the best islands under the pretext of guaranty, and threatened to bombard and ruin the towns if the indemnification were not paid over on a certain date to the representatives of America. The Americans were among the first colonists who came to the Fiji Islands with the missionaries. They chose and (under one pretext or another) took possession of the best pieces of land on the islands, and established there cotton and coffee plantations. They hired whole crowds of natives, binding them by contracts unknown to this half-civilized race, or they acted through special contractors and dealers of human merchandise. Misunderstandings between these master planters and the natives, whom they considered almost as slaves, were unavoidable, and it was some of these quarrels which served as a pretext for the American indemnification. Notwithstanding their prosperity the Fijis had preserved almost up to that time the forms of the so-called natural economy which existed in Europe during the Middle Ages: money was scarcely in circulation among them, and their trade was almost exclusively on the barter basis—one merchandise being exchanged for another, and the few social taxes and those of the state being paid in rural products. What could the Fijis and their King Kakabo do, when the Americans demanded forty-five thousand dollars under terrible threats in the event of nonpayment? To the Fijis the very figures seemed inconceivable, to say nothing of the money itself, which they had never seen in such large quantities. After deliberating with other chiefs, Kakabo made up his mind to apply to the Queen of England, at first merely asking her to take the islands under her protection, but afterwards requesting definite annexation. But the English regarded this request cautiously, and were in no hurry to assist the half-savage monarch out of his difficulty. Instead of giving a direct answer, they sent special commissioners to make inquiries

about the Fiji Islands in 1860, in order to be able to decide whether it was worth while to annex them to the British Possessions, and to lay out money to satisfy the American claims. Meanwhile the American Government continued to insist upon payment, and as a pledge held in their de facto dominion some of the best parts, and, having looked closely into the national wealth, raised their former claim to ninety thousand dollars, threatening to increase it still more if Kakabo did not pay at once. Being thus pushed on every side, and knowing nothing of European means of credit accommodation, the poor king, acting on the advice of European colonists, began to try to raise money in Melbourne among the merchants, cost what it might, if even he should be obliged to yield his kingdom into private hands. So in consequence of his application a commercial society was formed in Melbourne. This joint-stock company, which took the name of the "Polynesian Company," formed a treaty with the chiefs of the Fiji-Islanders on the most advantageous terms. It took over the debt to the American Government, pledging itself to pay it by several instalments; and for this the company received, according to the first treaty, one, and then two hundred thousand acres of the best land, selected by itself; perpetual immunity from all taxes and dues for all its factories, operations, and colonies, and the exclusive right for a long period to establish banks in the Fiji Islands, with the privilege of issuing unlimited notes. This treaty was definitely concluded in the year 1868, and there has appeared in the Fiji Islands, side by side with the local government, of which Kakabo is the head, another powerful authority—a commercial organization, with large estates over all the islands, exercising a powerful influence upon the government. Up to this time the wants of the government of Kakabo had been satisfied with a payment in local products, and a small custom tax on goods imported. But with the conclusion of the treaty and the formation of

the influential “Polynesian Company,” the king’s financial circumstances had changed. A considerable part of the best land in his dominion having passed into the hands of the company, his income from the land had therefore diminished; on the other hand the income from the custom taxes also diminished, because the company had obtained for itself the right to import and export all kinds of goods free of duties. The natives—ninety-nine per cent. of the population—had never paid much in custom duties, as they bought scarcely any of the European productions except some stuffs and hardware; and now, from the freeing of custom duties of many well-to-do Europeans along with the Polynesian Company, the income of King Kakabo was reduced to nil, and he was obliged to take steps to resuscitate it if possible. He began to consult his white friends as to the best way to remedy the trouble, and they advised him to create the first direct tax in the country; and, in order, I suppose, to have less trouble about it, to make it in money. The tax was established in the form of a general poll-tax, amounting to one pound for every man, and to four shillings for every woman, throughout the islands. As I have already said, there still exists on the Fiji Islands a natural economy and a trade by barter. Very few natives possess money. Their wealth consists chiefly of raw products and cattle; whilst the new tax required the possession of considerable sums of money at fixed times. Up to that date a native had not been accustomed to any individual burden in the interests of his government, except personal obligations; all the taxes which had to be paid, were paid by the community or village to which he belonged, and from the common fields from which he received his principal income. One alternative was left to him—to try to raise money from the European colonists; that is, to address himself either to the merchant or to the planter. To the first he was obliged to sell his productions on the merchant’s own terms (because the tax-collector

required money at a certain fixed date), or even to raise money by the sale of his expected harvest, which enabled the merchant to take iniquitous interest. Or he had to address himself to the planter, and sell him his labour; that is, to become his workman: but the wages on the Fiji Islands were very low (owing, I suppose, to the exceptionally great supply of labour); not exceeding a shilling a week for a grown-up man, or two pounds twelve shillings a year; and therefore, merely to be able to get the money necessary to pay his own tax, to say nothing of his family, a Fiji had to leave his house, his family, and his own land, often to go far away to another island, and enslave himself to the planter for at least half a year; even then there was the payment for his family, which he must provide by some other means. We can understand the result of such a state of affairs. From his hundred and fifty thousand subjects, Kakabo collected only six thousand pounds; and so there began a forcible extortion of taxes, unknown till then, and a whole series of coercive measures. The local administration, formerly incorruptible, soon made common cause with the European planters, who began to have their own way with the country. For nonpayment of the taxes the Fijis were summoned to the court, and sentenced not only to pay the expenses but also to imprisonment for not less than six months. The prison really meant the plantations of the first white man who chose to pay the tax-money and the legal expenses of the offender. Thus the white settlers received cheap labour to any amount. At first this compulsory labour was fixed for not longer than half a year; but afterwards the bribed judges found it possible to pass sentence for eighteen months, and even then to renew the sentence. Very quickly, in the course of a few years, the picture of the social condition of the inhabitants of Fiji was quite changed. Whole districts, formerly flourishing, lost half of their population, and were greatly impoverished. All the male

population, except the old and infirm, worked far away from their homes for European planters, to get money necessary for the taxes, or in consequence of the law court. The women on the Fiji Islands had scarcely ever worked in the fields, so that in the absence of the men, all the local farming was neglected and went to ruin. And in the course of a few years, half the population of Fiji had become the slaves of the colonists. To relieve their position the Fiji-Islanders again appealed to England. A new petition was got up, subscribed by many eminent persons and chiefs, praying to be annexed to England; and this was handed to the British consul. Meanwhile, England, thanks to her scientific expeditions, had time not only to investigate the affairs of the islands, but even to survey them, and duly to appreciate the natural riches of this fine corner of the globe. Owing to all these circumstances, the negotiations this time were crowned with full success; and in 1874, to the great dissatisfaction of the American planters, England officially took possession of the Fiji Islands, and added them to its colonies. Kakabo died, his heirs had a small pension assigned to them, and the administration of the islands was intrusted to Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor of New South Wales. In the first year of its annexation the Fiji-Islanders had no self-government, but were under the direction of Sir Hercules Robinson, who appointed an administrator. Taking the islands into their hands, the English Government had to undertake the difficult task of gratifying various expectations raised by them. The natives, of course, first of all expected the abolition of the hated poll-tax; one part of the white colonists (the Americans) looked with suspicion upon the British rule; and another part (those of English origin) expected all kinds of confirmations of their power over the natives—permission to enclose the land, and so on. The English Government, however, proved itself equal to the task; and its first act was to abolish for ever the poll-tax,

which had created the slavery of the natives in the interest of a few colonists. But here Sir Hercules Robinson had at once to face a difficult dilemma. It was necessary to abolish the poll-tax, which had made the Fijis seek the help of the English Government; but, at the same time, according to English colonial policy, the colonies had to support themselves; they had to find their own means for covering the expenses of the government. With the abolition of the poll-tax, all the incomes of the Fijis (from custom duties) did not amount to more than six thousand pounds, while the government expenses required at least seventy thousand a year. Having abolished the money tax, Sir Hercules Robinson now thought of a labour tax; but this did not yield the sum necessary to feed him and his assistants. Matters did not mend until a new governor had been appointed—Gordon—who, to get out of the inhabitants the money necessary to keep him and his officials, resolved not to demand money until it had come sufficiently into general circulation on the islands, but to take from the natives their products, and to sell them himself. This tragical episode in the lives of the Fijis is the clearest and best proof of the nature and true meaning of money in our time. In this illustration every essential is represented. The first fundamental condition of slavery—the guns, threats, murders, and plunder—and lastly, money, the means of subjugation which has supplanted all the others. That which in an historical sketch of economical development, has to be investigated during centuries, we have here, where all the forms of monetary violence have fully developed themselves, concentrated in a space of ten years. The drama begins thus: the American Government sends ships with loaded guns to the shores of the islands, whose inhabitants they want to enslave. The pretext of this threat is monetary; but the beginning of the tragedy is the levelling of guns against all the inhabitants—women, children, old people, and men—though innocent of any

crime. "Your money or your life,"—forty-five thousand dollars, then ninety thousand or slaughter. But the ninety thousand are not to be had. So now begins the second act: it is the postponement of a measure which would be bloody, terrible, and concentrated in a short period; and the substitution of a suffering less perceptible, which can be laid upon all, and will last longer. And the natives, with their representative, seek to substitute for the massacre a slavery of money. They borrow money, and the method at once begins to operate like a disciplined army. In five years the thing is done—the men have not only lost their right to utilize their own land and their property, but also their liberty—they have become slaves. Here begins act three. The situation is too painful, and the unfortunate ones are told they may change their master and become the slaves of another. Of freedom from the slavery brought about by the means of money there is not one thought. And the people call for another master, to whom they give themselves up, asking him to improve their condition. The English come, see that dominion over these islanders will give them the possibility of feeding their already too greatly multiplied parasites, and take possession of the islands and their inhabitants. But it does not take them in the form of personal slaves, it does not take even the land, nor distribute it among its assistants. These old ways are not necessary now: only one thing is necessary—taxes which must be large enough on the one hand to prevent the workingmen from freeing themselves from virtual slavery, and on the other hand, to feed luxuriously a great number of parasites. The inhabitants must pay seventy thousand pounds sterling annually—that is the fundamental condition upon which England consents to free the Fijis from the American despotism, and this is just what was wanting for the final enslaving of the inhabitants. But it turns out that the Fiji-Islanders cannot under any circumstances pay these seventy thousand pounds in their present state. The

claim is too great. The English temporarily modify it, and take a part of it out in natural products in order that in time, when money has come into circulation, they may receive the full sum. They do not behave like the former company, whose conduct we may liken to the first coming of savage invaders into an uncivilized land, when they want only to take as much as possible and then decamp; but England behaves like a more clear-sighted enslaver; she does not kill at one blow the goose with the golden eggs, but feeds her in order that she may continue to lay them. England at first relaxes the reins for her own interest that she may hold them tight forever afterwards, and so has brought the Fiji-Islanders into that state of permanent monetary thralldom in which all civilized European people now exist, and from which their chance of escape is not apparent. This phenomenon repeats itself in America, in China, in Central Asia; and it is the same in the history of the conquest of all nations. Money is an inoffensive means of exchange when it is not collected while loaded guns are directed from the sea-shore against the defenceless inhabitants. As soon as it is taken by the force of guns, the same thing must inevitably take place which occurred on the Fiji Islands, and has always and everywhere repeated itself. Men who consider it their lawful right to utilize the labour of others, will achieve their ends by the means of a forcible demand of a sum of money which will compel the oppressed to become the slaves of the oppressors. Moreover, that will happen which occurred between the English and the Fijis—the extortioners will always, in their demand for money, rather exceed the limit to which the amount of the sum required must rise, so that the enslaving may be earlier. They will respect this limit only while they have moral sense and sufficient money for themselves: they will overstep it when they lose their moral sense or even do not require funds. As for governments, they will always exceed this limit—first, because for a government there

exists no moral sense of justice; and secondly, because, as everyone knows, every government is always in the greatest want of money, through wars and the necessity of giving gratuities to their allies. All governments are insolvent, and involuntarily follow a maxim expressed by a Russian statesman of the eighteenth century—that the peasant must be sheared of his wool lest it grow too long. All governments are hopelessly in debt, and this debt on an average (not taking in consideration its occasional diminution in England and America) is growing at a terrible rate. So also grow the budgets; that is, the necessity of struggling with other extortioners, and of giving presents to those who assist in extortion, and because of that grows the land rent. Wages do not increase, not because of the law of rent, but because taxes, collected with violence, exist, with the object of taking away from men their superfluities, so that they may be compelled to sell their labour to satisfy them—utilizing their labour being the aim of raising the taxes. And their labour can only be utilized when, on a general average, the taxes required are more than the labourers are able to give without depriving themselves of all means of subsistence. The increase of wages would put an end to the possibility of slavery; and therefore, as long as violence exists, wages can never be increased. The simple and plain mode of action of some men towards others, political economists term the iron law; the instrument by which such action is performed, they call a medium of exchange; and money is this inoffensive medium of exchange necessary for men in their transactions with each other. Why is it, then, that, whenever there is no violent demand for money taxes, money in its true signification has never existed, and never can exist; but, as among the Fiji-Islanders, the Phœnicians, the Kirghis, and generally among men who do not pay taxes, such as the Africans, there is either a direct exchange of produce, sheep, hides, skins, or accidental

standards of value, such as shells? A definite kind of money, whatever it may be, always becomes not a means of exchange, but a means of ransoming from violence; and it begins to circulate among men only when a definite standard is compulsorily required from all. It is only then that everybody wants it equally, and only then does it receive any value. And further, it is not the thing that is most convenient for exchange that receives exchange value, but that which is required by the government. If gold is demanded, gold becomes valuable: if knuckle-bones were demanded, they, too, would become valuable. If it were not so, why, then, has the issue of this means of exchange always been the prerogative of the government? The Fiji-Islanders, for instance, have arranged among themselves their own means of exchange; well, then, let them be free to exchange what and how they like, and you, men possessing power, or the means of violence, do not interfere with this exchange. But instead of this you coin money, and do not allow anyone else to coin it; or, as is the case with us, you merely print some notes, engraving upon them the heads of the tsars, sign them with a particular signature, and threaten to punish every falsification of them. Then you distribute this money to your assistants, and, under the name of duties and taxes, you require everybody to give you such money or such notes with such signatures, and so many of them, that a workman must give away all his labour in order to get these notes or coins; and then you want to convince us that this money is necessary for us as a means of exchange! Here are all men free, and none oppresses the others or keeps them in slavery; but money appears in society and immediately an iron law exists, in consequence of which rent increases and wages diminish to the minimum. That half (nay, more than half) of the Russian peasants, in order to pay direct and indirect taxes, voluntarily sell themselves as slaves to the land-owners or to manufacturers, does not at all signify (which

is obvious); for the violent collection of the poll-taxes and indirect and land taxes, which have to be paid in money to the government and to its assistants (the landowners), compels the workman to be a slave to those who own money; but it means that this money, as a means of exchange, and an iron law, exist. Before the serfs were free, I could compel Iván to do any work; and if he refused to do it, I could send him to the police-sergeant, and the latter would give him the rod till he submitted. But if I compelled Iván to overwork himself, and did not give him either land or food, the matter would go up to the authorities, and I should have to answer for it. But now that men are free, I can compel Iván and Peter and Sidor to do every kind of work; and if they refuse I give them no money to pay taxes, and then they will be flogged till they submit: besides this, I may also make a German, a Frenchman, a Chinaman, and an Indian, work for me by that means, so that, if they do not submit, I shall not give them money to hire land, or to buy bread, because they have neither land nor bread. And if I make them overwork themselves, or kill them with excess of labour, nobody will say a word to me about it; and, moreover, if I have read books on political economy I shall be quite sure that all men are free and that money does not create slavery! Our peasants have long known that with a ruble one can hurt more than with a stick. It is only political economists who cannot see it. To say that money does not create bondage, is the same as to have asserted, fifty years ago, that serfdom did not create slavery. Political economists say that money is an inoffensive medium of exchange, notwithstanding the fact that its possession enables one man to enslave another. Why, then, was it not said half a century ago that servitude was, in itself, an inoffensive medium of reciprocal services, notwithstanding the fact that no man could lawfully enslave another? Some give their manual labour, and the work of others consists in taking care of the physical and

intellectual welfare of the slaves, and in superintending their efforts. And, I fancy, some really did say this.

CHAPTER 19 If the object of this sham pseudo-science of Political Economy had not been the same as that of all other legal sciences—the justification of coercion—it could not have avoided noticing the strange phenomena that the distribution of wealth, the deprivation of some men of land and capital, and the enslavement of some men to others, depend upon money, and that it is only by means of money that some men utilize the labour of others—in other words, enslave them. I repeat that a man who has money may buy up and monopolise all the corn and kill others by starvation, completely oppressing them, as it has frequently happened before our own eyes on a very large scale. It would seem then that we ought to examine the connection of these occurrences with money; but Political Science, with full assurance, asserts that money has no connection whatever with the matter. This science says, “Money is as much an article of merchandise as anything else which contains the value of its production, only with this difference—that this article of merchandise is chosen as the more convenient medium of exchange for establishing values, for saving, and for making payments. One man has made boots, another has grown wheat, the third has bred sheep; and now, in order to exchange more conveniently, they put money into circulation, which represents the equivalent of labour; and by this medium they exchange the soles of boots for a loin of mutton, or ten pounds of flour.” Students of this sham science are very fond of picturing to themselves such a state of affairs; but there has never been such a condition in the world. This idea about society is like the fancy about the primitive, prehistoric, perfect human state which the philosophers cherished; but such a state never existed. In all human societies where money has been used there has also been the oppression by the strong

and the armed of the weak and the defenceless; and wherever there was oppression, there the standard of value, money, whatever it consisted of, cattle or hides, skin or metals, must have unavoidably lost its significance as a medium of exchange, and received the meaning of a ransom from violence. There is no doubt that money does possess the inoffensive properties which science enumerates; but it would have these properties only in a society in which there was no violence—in an ideal state. But in such a society money would not be found as a general measure of value. In such a community, at the advent of violence, money would immediately lose its significance. In all societies known to us where money is used it receives the significance of a medium of exchange only because it serves as a means of violence. And its chief object is to act thus—not as a mere medium. Where violence exists, money cannot be a true medium of exchange, because it is not a measure of value—because, as soon as one man may take away from another the products of his labour, all measures of value are directly violated. If horses and cows, bred by one man, and violently taken away by others, were brought to a market, it is plain that the value of other horses and cows there, when brought into competition with stolen animals, would no longer correspond with the labour of breeding them. And the value of everything else would also change with this change, and so money could not determine values. Besides, if one man may acquire by force a cow or a horse or a house, he may by the same force acquire money itself, and with this money acquire all kinds of produce. If, then, money itself is acquired by violence, and spent to purchase products, money entirely loses its quality as a medium of exchange. The oppressor who takes money and gives it for the products of labour does not exchange anything, but obtains from labour all that he wants. But let us suppose that such an imaginary and impossible state of society

really existed, in which money is in circulation, without the exercise of general violence—silver or gold serving as a measure of value and as a medium of exchange. All the savings in such a society are expressed by money. There appears in this society an oppressor in the shape of a conqueror. Let us suppose that this oppressor claims the cows, horses, clothes, and the houses of the inhabitants; but, as it is not convenient for him to take possession of all this, he naturally thinks of taking that which represents among these men all kinds of values and is exchanged for everything—money. And at once in this community, money receives, for the oppressor and his assistants, another signification, and its character as a medium of exchange therefore immediately ceases. The measure of the values will always depend on the pleasure of the oppressor. The articles most necessary to him, and for which he gives more money, are considered greater value, and vice versa; so that, in a community exposed to violence, money at once receives its chief meaning—it becomes a means of violence and a ransom from violence, and it retains, among the oppressed, its significance as a medium of exchange only so far as that is convenient to the oppressor. Let us picture the whole affair in a circle, thus: The serfs supply their landlord with linen, poultry, sheep, and daily labour. The landlord substitutes money for these goods, and fixes the value of the various articles sent in. Those who have no linen, corn, cattle, or manual labour to offer, may bring a definite sum of money. It is obvious, that, in the society of the peasants of this landlord, the price of the various articles will always depend upon the landlord's pleasure. The landlord uses the articles collected among his peasants, and some of these articles are more necessary for him than others: he fixes the prices for them accordingly, more or less. It is clear that the mere will and requirements of the landlord must regulate the prices of these articles among the payers. If he is in want of corn, he will set a high

price for a fixed quantity of it, and a low price for linen, cattle, or work; and therefore those who have no corn will sell their labour, linen, and cattle to others, in order to buy corn to give it to the landlord. If the landlord chooses to substitute money for all his claims, then the value of things will again depend, not upon the value of labour, but first upon the sum of money which the landlord requires, and secondly upon the articles produced by the peasants, which are more necessary to the landlord, and for which he allows a higher price. The money-claim made by the landlord on the peasants ceases to influence the prices of the articles only when the peasants of this landlord live separately from other people and have no connection with any one; and secondly, when the landlord employs money, not in purchasing things in his own village, but elsewhere. Only under these two conditions would the prices of things, though changed nominally, remain relatively the same, and money would become a measure of value and a medium of exchange. But if the peasants have any business connections with the inhabitants surrounding them, the prices of their produce, as sold to their neighbours, would depend on the sum required from them by their landlord. (If less money is required from their neighbours than from themselves, then their products would be sold cheaper than the products of their neighbours, and vice versa.) Again, the landlord's money-demand would cease to influence the prices of the articles, only when the sums collected by the landlord were not spent in buying the products of his own peasants. But if he spends the money in purchasing from them, it is plain that the prices of various articles will constantly vary among them according as the landlord buys more of one thing than another. Suppose one landlord has fixed a very high poll-tax, and his neighbour a very low one: it is clear that on the estate of the first landlord every thing will be cheaper than on the estate of the second, and that the prices on either estate will depend only upon the

increase and decrease of the poll-taxes. This is one effect of violence on value. Another, rising out of the first, consists in relative values. Suppose one landlord is fond of horses, and pays a high price for them; another is fond of towels, and offers a high figure for them. It is obvious that on the estate of either of these two landlords, the horses and the towels will be dear, and the prices of these articles will be out of proportion to those of cows or of corn. If to-morrow the collector of towels dies, and his heirs are fond of poultry, then it is obvious that the price of towels will fall and that of poultry will rise. Wherever in society there is the mastery of one man over another, there the meaning of money as the measure of value at once yields to the will of the oppressor, and its meaning as a medium of exchange of the products of labour is replaced by another—that of the most convenient means of utilizing other people's labour. The oppressor wants money neither as a medium of exchange—for he takes whatever he wants without exchange—nor as a measure of value—for he himself determines the value of everything—but only for the convenience it affords of exercising violence; and this convenience consists in the fact that money may be stored up, and is the most convenient means of holding in slavery the majority of mankind. It is not convenient to carry away all the cattle in order always to have horses, cows, and sheep whenever wanted, because they must be fed; the same holds good with corn, for it may be spoiled; the same with slaves; sometimes a man may require thousands of workmen, and sometimes none. Money demanded from those who have not got it makes it possible to get rid of all these inconveniences and to have everything that is required; and this is why the oppressor wants money. Besides which, he wants money so that his right to utilize another man's labour may not be confined to certain men but may be extended to all men who require the money. When there was no money in circulation each landlord

could utilize the labour of his own serfs only; but when they agreed to demand from the peasants money which they had not, they were enabled to appropriate without distinction the labour of all men on every estate. Thus the oppressor finds it more convenient to press all his claims on labour in the shape of money, and for this sole object is it desired. To the victim from whom it is taken away money cannot be of use, either for the purpose of exchange (seeing he exchanges without money, as all nations have exchanged who had no government); nor for a measure of value, because this is fixed without him; nor for the purpose of saving, because the man whose productions are taken away cannot save; neither for payments, because an oppressed man always has more to pay than to receive; and if he does receive anything, the payment is made, not in money, but in articles of merchandise in either case; whether the workman takes his goods from his master's shop to remunerate his labour, or whether he buys the necessaries of life with his earnings in other shops, the money is required from him, and he is told by his oppressors that if he does not pay it they will refuse to give him land or bread, or will take away his cow or his horse, or condemn him to work, or put him in prison. He can only free himself from all this by selling the products of his toil, his own labour, or that of his children. He will have to sell this according to the prices established, not by a regular exchange, but by the authority which demands money of him. Under the conditions of the influence of tribute and taxes on prices—which everywhere and always repeat themselves, as much with the land-owners in a narrow circle, as with the state on a larger scale (in which the causes of the modification of prices are as obvious to us, as the motion of the hands and feet of puppets is obvious to those who look behind the curtain and see who are the wire-pullers): under these circumstances, to say that money

is a medium of exchange and a measure of value, is at least astonishing.

