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Money and the Taxing Power

BY W. H. ASHBY.

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BOOK 2.—Chapter XXIV.

The power to coin money, thus actually exercised by congress, instead of being, as at present, abdicated in favor of the gold trust, would put an end to usurious debts both public and private, by giving the products of the people the power to perform required beneficial service, and to such commodities as all the people can produce, authority to pay tax levies and judgments.

It would abolish poverty among the people; develop to the utmost all the resources of the country; give to each citizen the power to realize the price of his products or service, and usher in an era of universal prosperity and human happiness, such as the world has never seen. The gold trust would dissolve, and every other injurious combination for gathering profits from human toil unjustly, by means of monopoly of things universally necessary, would likewise vanish.

This is neither "an utopian dream," nor a dream of any kind.

It has already been partially, but imperfectly, tried once, and not found wanting.

The plan here suggested is simply the application, on a vaster scale, upon a grander theatre, of the same principles which brought world-wide prosperity to a small and essentially barbarous body of freebooters, inhabiting those insignificant and barren sand islands at the head of the Adriatic sea.

Their only resource was their possession of two metals, which the superstitious ignorance of mankind has permitted to be clothed by infamous statutes with a purely artificial power to perform beneficial service for man.

Under the same system, extended so as to include all that vast array of commodities endowed with real power for beneficial human service, produced in this country, America would become and remain the clearing house of the world.

That inexpressible infamy, constituting the master injustice of human history, called "free coinage," and the compulsory use of another man's commodity to supply an imperious and universal statutory need, at a price fixed by statute and stamped upon it by your government, which coldly refuses the like favor to you, would cease to torment and make miserable the human race, in order that the gold trust, by exercising the taxing power, may own and plunder the world.

Under the proposed system mankind, at present condemned to a worse servitude than Israel suffered in Egypt, would cease to be bondmen and bondwomen, toiling through a hopeless life of death to pay to the gold trust the usury upon the bonds of the nations, payable in one sole commodity, which they cannot produce, and every ounce of which, when driven by the bayonet or the knout to obtain, they must procure from the gold trust, its indefeasible owner, by means of bonds of all nations which hold it in a vulture's clutch.

Under the proposed system, whatever a man possesses, if taxable, will pay that tax or any judgment. It should be tried without fear of making things worse, because if Satan had devised a system with a view to make mankind miserable, he could not have made it to exceed the present scheme in injustice and horror. Its far-reaching consequences manifest themselves in the multitude of combinations in all departments of industry, by which each useful vocation seeks to protect itself from the ruinous competitive battle to get the gold trust's gold, the only means by which they can satisfy the enormous tax levies against their wealth, and meet the vast sums required to be expended in their operations.

The competitive system begot the gold trust; and it in turn begets a brood after its kind.

A tax is the just tribute the citizen pays to government as a return for its protection of his person and property. Surely he should be permitted to

pay that tribute in something which is his, and not another's.

Let us now in closing view again, in panorama, the matters involved in this investigation, so that the various points set forth may not be seen as "through a glass darkly," but stand out distinct and clear and definite as the white peaks of the Sierras against a clear twilight sky.

When we define utility, in the abstract, we can only say that "it is the capability to be compelled to perform beneficial service for man." This power is found as an endowment of a multitude of things, each of which selfish, greedy man, following the narrow system of beasts and plants, seeks to reduce to subjection to his own exclusive, individual will. Each thing endowed with this power he endeavors to bring under his exclusive individual dominion, and make subservient to his personal control.

As man himself is endowed in a superior degree with this power, the cannibalistic methods of the plants and lower animals, retained by man, impel the greedy to seek dominion over others of their own species, as a means of commanding that power to perform beneficial service for themselves. Hence, has resulted, first, cannibalism; then chattel slavery; then the modified form known as feudalism; and last, the present system of wage slavery.

The incessant struggle between men for exclusive individual possession, adverse to all others, of things susceptible to exclusive possession, thus endowed, the struggle being carried on under governments restraining violence, transforms human energy, being expended in that struggle, into the force of demand for those things.

"Value," in the abstract, is quantity or degree of intensity of that force of demand, just as "length," in the abstract, is quantity of linear extension; and as "weight," in the abstract, is quantity or intensity of the force of gravitation.

Definite quantity of linear extension is ascertained by the employment of some concrete implement, and comparison, by means of that concrete implement, of other concrete things with each other, enables us to determine relative quantities of linear extension.

Definite quantity of the force of gravitation is ascertained by the employment of a concrete appliance, called balances or scales, and comparisons made by its means enable us to determine relative quantities of the force of gravitation.

But such is the peculiar nature of the force of demand that no concrete appliance can be employed to ascertain its quantity. We accomplish this end by a mental process of "valuation" or "appraisal," and so, in the only possible way, determine quantity of that force. Necessarily, all comparisons of relative quantities of the force of demand are mental acts. No physical appliance is conceivable.

When we have ascertained, by the employment of the yard-stick, a determinate quantity of linear extension, a means of expressing that definite quantity is necessary. We employ for this purpose the term "yard," as a symbol selected to express—not a yard-stick—but that fixed quantity of linear extension.

When by the employment of balances we have ascertained a determinate quantity of the force of gravitation, a means of expressing that quantity becomes necessary. We employ for this purpose a device consisting of the term "pound" as the symbol selected to express—not a pound-weight—but that fixed quantity of the force of gravitation.

So, likewise, when by the intellectual act of "appraisal" or "valuation," we have ascertained a determinate quantity of the force of demand, a means of expressing that quantity, becomes necessary. We employ for that purpose a device consisting of the term "pound sterling" or "dollar," as the symbol chosen to express—not that mental act, nor a coin, nor any other physical object—but that fixed quantity of the force of demand.

(Continued Next Week.)

Lost

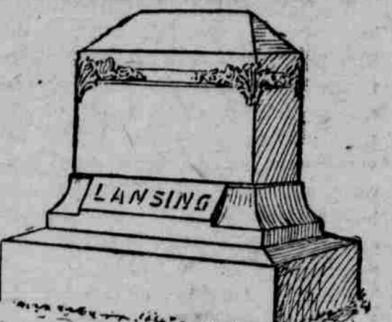
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