

# THE LITERARY DIGEST

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## WHO WILL PAY THE BILLS OF SOCIALISM?

Mr. E.L. GODKIN, of *The Evening Post*, New York, is the most pitiless opponent of Socialism on the American Press. Next to assailing Tammany Hall, his chief delight is in assailing the Socialistic school which he intimates, is subject to hallucinations of a sort with those of the demented man who makes up his mind to live in a spacious mansion when he has no money to pay for anything but a hovel. Admitting that the Socialists' plan is all very attractive, Who Will Pay the Bills? he asks in *The Forum* for June:

“When a man is about to move into a larger house and change his whole manner of life, he is, sure to ask himself what the change will cost, that is: what will be the increase in his expenditures? If sane, he will also follow this question with another: “Have I got the money?” Now, in reading these stories to which I have referred, of the Social evolution through which modern communities are soon to pass, I find no allusion to cost.”

He insists that all previous Social evolutions have meant an improvement in production and an increase in income, but the peculiarity of the Socialistic program is that “it is to be not a money making, but a money-spending evolution,” in which “everybody is to live a great deal better than he has been in the habit of living, and to have far more fun.” If labor were to receive *all* the profit on the capital of the entire country, he figures out that each family of five would receive six per cent on \$5,000 or an increase of income of but \$300 a year. “It is evident that he could on this make no material change in his style of living.”

“The notion that there is a reservoir of wealth somewhere, either in the possession of the Government or the rich, which might be made to diffuse ‘plenty through a smiling land,’ is a de-

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lusion which nearly all writings of the ethical economists tend to spread and it is probably the most mischievous delusion which has ever taken hold of the popular mind. It affects indirectly large numbers of persons, who, if it were presented to them boldly and without drapery, would probably repudiate it. But it steals into their brain through sermons, speeches and pamphlets.

Mr. Godkin's main contention is that, in order to bring about this Social Revolution, it would be necessary to increase the wealth-producing agencies without increasing the population. He says: "I think, on the whole, it would be an exaggeration to say that such a Social evolution as the ethical economists have planned could not be accomplished, even for a single year, without doubling the wealth of every country which tried it, while making no increase in the population. And this arrest of the growth of population is just as necessary as the increase of wealth. For it is the exertions of mankind in keeping up and increasing their numbers which have prevented the poor from profiting more by the recent improvements in production. Statistics show readily that, thus far, subsistence increases more rapidly than population, and this does much to cheer up the optimists and the revilers of Malthus. But to make a man of any use to civilization, he must in some manner be able to pay for his board. If wheat costs only ten cents a bushel, the man who has not, and cannot get the ten cents, is clearly a bit of surplus population. He has to depend on someone else for his support, and is thus a burden to his community. Employing him at the public expense does not change the situation, for his neighbors are the public. If they really wanted the work done, he would have something to exchange. If they do it in order to keep him from starvation, the demand for his labor is not legitimate and is only a thin disguise for charity.