

and serves to restrain its demands when the moment of over-production and great apparent prosperity at length comes. Capital increases in the hands of the few, because it has been taken completely out of the hands of the many. This arrangement whereby the over-population becomes a direct method for increasing wealth, and the increase of wealth and machinery tends to increase the over-population, is a see-saw quite peculiar to the capitalist system of production from its earliest growth, and is unknown under other conditions. The very excess of labour dragged from those who are employed, in order to raise the rate of surplus value taken from each worker, increases the numbers of the over-population, whilst the competition from without serves to keep down the rate of wages among the employed. Whilst some are over-worked to give extra profit, others are condemned to forced idleness who would gladly work were they permitted to do so. Thus, as a general result, the law by which an ever-increasing amount of wealth can be produced with an ever-lessening expenditure of human labour-force—this law which enables man, as a social being working in concert with others, to produce more and more wealth with less labour, is turned by our capitalist system, where the means of production are not at the disposal of the labourer, but the labourer is at the mercy of his means of production, directly to his disadvantage. As an immediate consequence, the more power and resources placed at the command of labour, and the greater the competition of the labourers, the more precarious becomes the position of the wage-earner, and his chances of selling his labour.*

But all this escapes notice, or is accounted for in slipshod fashion, because few of the educated classes care to examine

* Marx, "Capital," chapter xxv.