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A SURVEY OF SOCIALISM



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A SURVEY OF SOCIALISM

ANALYTICAL, HISTORICAL, AND CRITICAL

BY

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"DEMOCRACY AND LABOUR," ETC, ETC

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PREFACE

FOR nearly forty years I have been interested in socialism. I first felt its fascination in the early nineties, when it came into prominence as the inspirer of the "new unionism" in the struggle to secure a living wage and tolerable conditions of labour for dockers, match-makers, and other depressed groups of manual workers. Never can I forget the profound emotion with which I, in common with an immense company of undergraduates—assembled in the hall of King's College, Cambridge—heard Mr. Tom Mann depict the way of life of the unskilled labourers in Lancashire, and plead on their behalf for a larger liberty, a greater security, a loftier humanity. Vivid, too, in my recollection is the reading, about the same time, of a Minority Report on Unemployment, prepared under the auspices of a number of leading Fabians. I felt the force of its appeal to the sense of community, as opposed to the apparent selfishness of individualism; I was attracted by its obvious solicitude for the welfare of the poor and the oppressed, dwelling forlorn amid the multitude of rich and callous pleasure-seekers; I appreciated its zeal to provide a better environment for the young and for the weak; I was impressed by its arguments for public ownership and control as against the competitive wastefulness of private enterprise. I never, it is true, formally enrolled myself as a member of any socialistic organisation: I do not remember that I was ever invited to do so.

I do, however, think that if at that period I had been called a socialist, I should not—at that period—have felt myself insulted.

Since those remote nineties I have read many socialistic works from the pens of English, American, French, German, Italian, and Russian writers; and many works opposed to socialism. I find that I have on my own shelves, at the moment of writing, an accumulation of some couple of hundred volumes dealing with the subject, and many more have come my way from the shelves of my friends, from the stores of the London Library, and from the inexhaustible vaults of the British Museum. Nineteen notebooks, running to over 1,500 pages in all, embody the results of my miscellaneous reading in socialistic literature, and they are supplemented by a vast collection of newspaper and magazine cuttings.

I frankly and at once confess that the effect of my forty or so years of study, observation, and reflection, has been radically to alter my view of socialism. While still alive to the good work which it has done in calling attention to grave industrial evils, and in rousing the communal conscience by passionate appeals for their removal, I have reluctantly but decidedly been compelled to come to the conclusion that its diagnosis of the diseases of the body politic is so entirely wrong, and the remedies which it proposes so dangerously pernicious, that it is necessary to denounce it as a public peril.

In the following pages I have used the contents of my notebooks in such a way as, first, to analyse the nature of socialism and arrive at its essence; secondly, to trace its origin and development; and, thirdly, to criticise its main principles and conclusions. The work has had to be done in the scanty leisure

PREFACE

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moments of a very busy life, and I am aware of many imperfections. I hope, nevertheless, that, although in more favourable conditions it might have been done much better, it contains sufficient authentic material to make it of some service to the large body of British electors who wish to have definite information concerning one of the vastest and vaguest, but at the same time most important, of the great political questions of the day.

F. J. C. HEARNshaw.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON,
KING'S COLLEGE.

February 2, 1928.

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