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THE
SOCIALISM OF TO-DAY

BY
ÉMILE DE LAVELEYE,
MEMBRE OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF BELGIUM, ETC., ETC.

Translated into English by
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TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF
SOCIALISM IN ENGLAND
BY THE TRANSLATOR



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

No apology is needed for bringing before English readers a translation of a work by so eminent a writer and so profound a thinker as M. de Laveleye, upon so important a question of the day as Socialism. The term Socialist is an exceedingly elastic one. It has been used to include a revolutionary anarchist, like Bakunin, who seeks to destroy, by any and every means, all States and all institutions, and to eradicate utterly the very idea of authority, as well as a constructive statesman of the conservative type, like Prince Bismarck, whose aim is to concentrate much power and many functions in the hands of a paternal government. There are Tory and Radical Socialists, State and Communal Socialists, Christian and Atheist Socialists, Socialists who are Collectivists, Communists, or Anarchists, Socialists of the Chair, and "Socialists of the Pothouse." Other shades and subdivisions might easily be added, but under one or other of its numerous forms, Socialism is daily gaining fresh adherents in almost all civilized countries. The recruits of even the more extreme sections are, moreover, no longer confined to the ranks of the uneducated or the non-propertied classes. Even in England, among persons whom it would be misleading to call Socialists, there is an increasing dissatisfaction with our present industrial system, a growing feeling that the old principle of *laissez faire*

has in some cases been pushed too far, and that the conflict of individual self-interests cannot always be relied upon to produce the welfare of the whole. These ideas are more in the nature of a feeling or sentiment than of a reasoned conviction. A critical survey of the socialistic thought of Europe, such as M. de Laveleye has made, is certainly well calculated to assist the formation of a rational judgment.

There are, however, Socialists of several types in England too, and, accordingly, I have ventured to add to M. de Laveleye's account of European Socialism, a chapter on contemporary Socialism in England. In this chapter I have endeavoured to give a faithful account of the three main socialistic movements at present stirring amongst us, viz. the movement for the Nationalization of the Land, which has taken more forms than one, but which is mainly associated with the name of Henry George; the Christian Socialist movement, of which the Guild of St. Matthew, marching far beyond the position taken up by Maurice and Kingsley, represents the van; and the thorough-going Collectivist agitation of the Social Democratic Federation, which aims at the complete overthrow of the existing social, economical, and political order, and the concentration of the land, and all the instruments of production of the country in the hands of a democratic State. These movements may as yet be small in comparison with some of those on the continent described by M. de Laveleye; nevertheless, as a German writer, speaking of another matter, once said, "Sirius may be larger than the Sun, but he does not ripen our grapes," and in the same way to English readers, an account of what is going on, perhaps without their knowing it, in their midst, comparatively slight as the movements may be, ought to be of some interest.

The time is indeed at hand when England, as well as other democracies, if she is in any way to control her destinies, must make up her mind not only as to the true goal of social

organization to be kept in view, but also as to the best and surest way of reaching that goal; and every citizen who cares for the good of his fellow-men, who wishes to form an intelligent opinion on the political proposals of the day, who desires to exercise, in however humble a way, a wholesome influence on the social development of his country, should endeavour to understand at least the bearings of the problem. Beside this problem, all questions touching the extension of the Franchise, the abolition of the House of Lords, or even the reformation of the House of Commons, sink into insignificance. The decision of these latter points will merely answer the question, what sort of servants shall the nation employ? The more fundamental questions are: what sort of duties shall the nation entrust to its servants? what sort of commands shall the nation give?

GODDARD H. ORPEN.

1, STONE BUILDINGS, LINCOLN'S INN.

INTRODUCTION.

THE PROGRESS OF SOCIALISM.

WHEN Louis Reybaud, in 1853, wrote the article in the *Dictionnaire de l'Économie Politique* on "Socialism"—a term to which he first gave currency—he believed that we had heard the last of the disordered hallucinations of Socialists. "Socialism is dead," he exclaimed; "to speak of it is to pronounce its funeral oration." This was, in fact, the general opinion some years ago. Systems of Socialism were then studied only as curious examples of the aberrations of the human mind.

To-day we have fallen into the opposite extreme: we see Socialism everywhere. The red spectre haunts our imaginations, and we fancy ourselves on the eve of a social cataclysm. What is certain is, that Socialism has recently spread, under various forms, to an extraordinary extent. In its violent form, it is taking possession of the minds of almost all mining and manufacturing operatives, and at this very moment it is beginning to invade the rural districts. The agrarian movement which lately agitated Ireland, which has just been suppressed in Andalusia, and which is brewing in other places, is plainly inspired by socialistic ideas. In scientific garb, Socialism is transforming political economy and is occupying the greater number of professorial chairs in Germany and Italy. Under the form of State Socialism, it sits in the council-chamber of sovereigns; and finally, under a Christian form, it is making its influence felt in the hearts of the Catholic clergy, and still more in the hearts of the ministers of the different Protestant denominations.

In the debate which took place on the 23rd May, 1878, in the German Parliament, when the Anti-Socialist Bill was introduced by the Imperial Government, Deputy Joerg, one of the most distinguished orators of Catholic Germany, very justly said, "A movement almost imperceptible at its outset has spread with unprecedented rapidity. This extraordinary development of Socialism can only be accounted for by considering it as the consequence of the profound modifications which have taken place in economic and social conditions. Yes, modern civilization has its dark side, and that dark side is Socialism. It will not disappear so long as civilization continues to be what it now is. Socialism is not a plague peculiar to Germany. It has taken up its head-quarters here, and has received in our country its philosophical and scientific education, but it is to be met with everywhere, it is a universal evil." England alone seemed to be free from it; but the extraordinary success which has attended the schemes for the nationalization of the land, and the publications of Mr. Henry George and Mr. A. R. Wallace, prove that this immunity is a thing of the past.

What is Socialism? I have never met with either a clear definition or even precise description of the word. Every one is a Socialist in somebody's eyes. Since his agrarian legislation for Ireland, Mr. Gladstone is considered by the Irish Conservatives as a Socialist of the worst type. Prince Bismarck, the friend of Lassalle and Schæffle, the author of the terrible proposal for establishing, by means of the tobacco monopoly, a superannuation fund for invalid workmen, can hardly defend himself from the charge of being a Socialist; and, for the matter of that, he readily avows that he is one. The statesmen in France, who recently wished all the railways to be taken up and worked by the State, were assuredly Socialists. Finally, since the famous pamphlets of Bastiat, every out-and-out free-trader and every rigid economist is firmly convinced that whoever does not admit the wisdom of full freedom of commerce is infected with Socialism and Communism. Proudhon, far from wishing to strengthen the action of the State, called for its abolition under the name of "Anarchy." Was he not,

then, a Socialist? After "the Days of June," in 1848, Proudhon said to the magistrate who examined him, that he went to contemplate "the sublime horrors of the cannonade." "But," said the magistrate, "are you not, then, a Socialist?" "Certainly." "Well, but what, then, is Socialism?" "It is," replied Proudhon, "every aspiration towards the improvement of society." "But in that case," very justly remarked the magistrate, "we are all Socialists." "That is precisely what I think," rejoined Proudhon.

Proudhon's definition is too wide; it omits two characteristics. In the first place, every socialistic doctrine aims at introducing greater equality into social conditions; and secondly, it tries to realize these reforms by the action of the law or the State. Socialism is an equalizer and a leveller; and it does not admit that mere liberty can usher in the reign of justice. All sensible economists recognize the existence of many evils and iniquities in society; but they think that these evils will decrease under the influence of "natural laws" and the beneficial results of *laissez faire*. Christianity condemns riches and inequality with all the vehemence of Socialism; but it is not to the State that it looks for the establishment of the reign of justice. The Socialist is a pessimist. He places in full relief the bad side of the social state. He points to the strong crushing the weak, the rich making gain out of the poor, inequality becoming harsher and more pronounced. He aspires to an ideal where well-being will be allotted in proportion to desert and to services rendered. The economist is an optimist. He does not go so far as to pretend that all is perfect; but he thinks that man, in pursuing his individual interests, advances the general weal as much as possible, and that from the free play of all his self-regarding instincts there will result a better order of things. Consequently, according to him, the only thing to be done is to get rid of all shackles, to reduce the action of the State to a minimum, and to interfere in the way of government as little as possible.

Let us endeavour to point out the causes of the origin and growth of modern Socialism.

As soon as man had attained sufficient culture to be

impressed with social evils, and at the same time to rise to the idea of a more perfect order of things, dreams of social reforms must have arisen in his mind. Accordingly, in all epochs and in every land, after primitive equality had disappeared, socialistic aspirations are to be met with, now under the form of a protest against existing evil, now under that of Utopian plans of social reconstruction. The most perfect example of these Utopias is that wonderful work of Hellenic Spiritualism, the Republic of Plato. But it was from Judæa that there arose the most persistent protests against inequality and the most ardent aspirations after justice that have ever raised humanity out of the actual into the ideal. We feel the effect still. It is thence has come that leaven of revolution which still moves the world. Job saw evil triumphant, and yet believed in justice. Israel's prophets, while thundering against iniquity, announced the good time coming. In the Gospel, these ideas are expressed in that simple penetrating language that has moved and transformed all who have heard and understood it. "The Glad Tidings" (Εὐαγγέλιον) are announced to the poor: the last shall be first and the first last; blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the earth; woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation; the kingdom of Heaven is at hand; this generation shall not pass away till ye shall see the Son of Man coming with power and great glory. It was on this earth that the transformation was to take place. The early Christians all believed in the millennium. Instinctively, and as the natural consequence of their faith, they established a system of communism; and in the *Acts of the Apostles* may be found the touching picture of the disciples of Jesus living at Jerusalem "with all things in common."

As time passed, and the idea of a "kingdom" on earth had to be abandoned, men turned their eyes towards "another world" in Heaven; nevertheless, that love of justice and equality common to the Prophets and the Gospel still found ominous utterance in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Whenever the people have taken up the Bible, and allowed their minds to be thoroughly imbued with its teaching, they

have come forth strong with the spirit of reform and equalization. Whenever the religious sentiment involves a belief in divine justice, and a longing to see it realized here below, it leads of necessity to the condemnation of the iniquity which reigns in existing social relations, and, by a natural consequence, to aspirations at once levelling and socialistic. During the Middle Ages, the communistic ideas of the Millenarians were perpetuated by the Gnostics, by the disciples of Waldo, by the Mendicant Orders, by the Taborites in Bohemia, by the Anabaptists in Germany, and by the Levellers in England. It was these ideas, too, that inspired all those dreams of a perfect society, such as the *Everlasting Gospel* of Joachim, Abbot of Fiore in Calabria, the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More, the *Civitas Solis* of Campanella, the *Oceana* of Harrington, and the *Salente* of Fénelon. As Dante says, St. Francis of Assisi raised up and espoused Poverty, abandoned since the death of Jesus Christ. The convent, banishing all source of discord and all distinction between "mine" and "thine," appeared, as it were, the realization of the Christian ideal. The canonical law itself says, *Dulcissima rerum possessio communis*, and all sects animated by a lofty spiritualism have always aspired to transform society into a community of brothers and equals.

We find these ideas clearly expressed in a Flemish poem of the thirteenth century written by Jacob Van Maerlant (1235), and entitled *Wapene, Martyn!* where, alluding to the Sachsen-Spiegel, he says:—

"Martyn, die deutsche Loy vertelt
Dat van onrechter Gewalt
Eygendom is comen."

("Martin, the German law relates that from unrighteous violence, ownership is come.")

Further on Maerlant exclaims:—

"Twee worde in die werelt syn
Dats allene *myne* ende *dyn*.
Mocht men die verdriven,
Pays ende vrede bleve fyn;
Het ware al vri, niemen eygin,
Manne metten wiven;
Het waer gemene tarwe ende wya."

("Two words in the world there be, these simply *mine* and *thine*. Could one take them away, peace there would be and freedom. All then would be free; none enslaved, nor man nor woman; both corn and wine would be in common.")

Whenever these ideas, borrowed from Christianity and monasticism, reached the masses at a time when their sufferings had become intolerable, they provoked risings and massacres, such as those of the Shepherds and the Jacquerie in France, the insurrection of Wat Tyler in England, and that of John of Leyden in Germany.*

Let us now examine how Socialism, abandoning the mystical region of communistic dreams and aspirations after equality, has become the creed of a political party. Ideas and microbes are in this respect alike, that they must find favourable surroundings before they can thrive. These favourable surroundings have been produced by a variety of causes, chief among which are the beliefs and aspirations of Christianity, the political principles embodied in our constitutions and laws, and the changes in the methods of production. Of all the influences favourable to the development of Socialism, the most potent has been the religious influence; for it has produced in us certain sentiments which have long formed part of our very nature, and in these sentiments the claims of Socialism find at once a kind of instinctive origin and a rational justification.

No one can deny that Christianity preaches the raising up of the poor and the down-trodden. It inveighs against riches as vehemently as the most radical Socialist. Need we recall words graven in the memory of every one? Even after her alliance with absolute monarchy, the Catholic Church uttered these words by the mouth of Bossuet "The murmurs of the poor are just. Wherefore this inequality of conditions? All are made of the same clay, and there is no way to justify inequality unless by saying that God has commended the poor unto the

* See^o The History of Socialism, *Die Socialisten*, by M. Quack, unfortunately not finished; also that by M. B. Malon.

† See his sermon, "*Sur les dispositions relativement aux nécessités de la vie.*"

rich, and assigned to the former the means of living out of the abundance of the latter, *ut fiat equalitas*, as St. Paul says.*

Bossuet has merely reproduced what may be read on every page of the Christian Fathers. "The rich man is a thief" (St. Basil). "The rich are robbers; a kind of equality must be effected by making gifts out of their abundance. Better all things were in common" (St. Chrysostom). "Opulence is always the product of a theft, committed, if not by the actual possessor, by his ancestors" (St. Jerome). "Nature created community; private property is the offspring of usurpation" (St. Ambrose). "In strict justice, everything should belong to all. Iniquity alone has created private property" (St. Clement).

Those ideas and sentiments which have given birth to Socialism were thus deeply engraven upon our hearts and minds by Christianity. It is impossible to read attentively the prophecies of the Old Testament and the Gospels, and at the same time to cast a glance at the existing economic conditions, without condemning the latter in the name of the Christian ideal. Every Christian, who understands and earnestly accepts the teaching of his Master, is at heart a Socialist; and every Socialist, whatever may be his hatred against all religion, bears within himself an unconscious Christianity. Followers of Darwin, and those economists who maintain that human societies are governed by natural laws to which a free course should be given, are the real and only logical adversaries at once of Christianity and of Socialism. According to Darwin, there is a tendency towards improvement among living beings, because only those survive in the struggle for existence which are best adapted to their circumstances. The strongest, the bravest, the best armed slowly eliminate the weaker, and thus are evolved races more and more perfect. This optimism of the naturalist is the foundation of all orthodox political economy. In societies of men the goal is the greatest good of the greatest number, but this is to be attained by allowing free scope to natural laws, and not by trying to introduce any plans of reform of human invention. "*Laissez faire, laissez passer.*" (Leave things alone,

* 2 Corinthians viii. 14.

Let them go on as they are doing.) In free competition the most able succeed, and this should be our desire. Nothing could be more absurd than to endeavour, by misdirected charity, to preserve those whom nature has condemned to disappear, and thus place obstacles in the way of progress. Yield place to the strong, for might makes right.

Christianity and Socialism hold quite another language. They declare war against the strong, that is to say, the rich, and aspire to raise up the poor and the down-trodden. They subordinate these so-called natural laws to the law of Justice. Let there be full liberty, but only under the guidance of right. In the words of the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." It is impossible to understand by what strange blindness Socialists adopt Darwinian theories, which condemn their claims of equality, while at the same time they reject Christianity, whence those claims have issued and whence their justification may be found. At all events, we may conclude that the religion which has shaped us all, advocates as well as adversaries, has formulated in the clearest terms the principles of Socialism, and that it is precisely in Christian countries that socialistic doctrines have taken deepest root.

Let us now consider the way in which religious Socialism has become the political Socialism of our day. When the Declaration of Independence in the United States, and the French Revolution, proclaimed the sovereignty of the people, and inscribed the equality of men among the articles of the constitution, the principle of the brotherhood of man descended from the heights of the ideal and from the dreams of Utopia to become thenceforth the watchword of the radical party in every country to which the ideas that triumphed in America and Paris have spread. Equality of political rights leads inevitably to the demand for equality of conditions, that is to say, the apportionment of well-being according to work accomplished. Universal suffrage demands as its complement universal well-being; for it is a paradox that the people should be at once wretched and sovereign. As Aristotle and Montesquieu so continually insist, democratic institutions presuppose

equality of conditions, for otherwise the poor elector will use his vote to pass laws for the increase of his share of the good things of life at the expense of the privileged classes.

M. Paul Janet, in his *Origines du Socialisme*, and M. Taine, in his book on the Revolution, show how, after 1789, as with Rousseau, the idea of political equality led to that of a greater social equality, even without any reconstruction of society after the manner of Babeuf. The excellent Abbé Fauchet exclaims, "Where is the wretch who wishes to see a continuation of this atrocious régime, where the miserable are counted by millions amid a handful of arrogant persons who have done nothing that they should possess all?" In the "Four Cries of a Patriot," the question is asked, What is the good of a constitution for a nation of skeletons? and "a terrible insurrection of twenty million indigent persons without property is announced." Chaumette says, "We have destroyed the nobles and the Capets, there remains still an aristocracy to overturn, that of the rich." Chaliier of Lyons, whose enthusiasm was so seductive to Michelet, says, "All pleasure is criminal as long as the sans-culottes suffer." Tallien desires "an equality full and complete," and he proposes to send "to the bottom of the dungeons" all proprietors, whom he styles public robbers. One member of the convention, Fr. Dupont, reproduces the doctrine of St. Paul, and maintains that "no individual in the Republic should live without working." "Oblige every one to do some work," says Saint-Just. "What right in the country have those who do nothing in it?" In a tolerably moderate paper, *L'Ami des Lois*, is met the fundamental doctrine of contemporary Socialism, namely, that to each should belong the full fruits of his labour. In an article by the proconsul Fouché, published at Antwerp on the 2nd of September, in the year II., we read these words: "Whereas equality should not become a deceitful illusion, and all citizens ought to have an equal share in the advantages of society." Already Necker had appreciated the gravity of the social question; for he says to the landowners in his book on the Corn Laws, "Are your title deeds inscribed in the Code? Have you brought your land from a neighbouring planet? No; you enjoy your pos-

sessions by virtue of an agreement only." Elsewhere he thus sums up the conflict between the rich and the poor: "It is an obscure but terrible combat, in which the powerful, shielded by the law, oppress the feeble, and where property crushes labour by the weight of its prerogative. The capitalists have the power of giving only the minimum salary in exchange for labour. They always impose the law; the labourers are obliged to receive it." The idea which Montesquieu borrowed from Aristotle, namely, that democracy should have for basis a grand equality of conditions, is reproduced on all sides. Rabaud Saint Etienne desires that equality of wealth should be established, not by force, but by law, and should be maintained by laws calculated to prevent future inequalities. "In a well-ordered republic, no person would be without some property" (Report of Barrère, 22 Floréal, year II.). "Wealth and opulence should both disappear before the reign of equality" (Order of the Commune of Paris, 3 Frimaire, year III.). "A real equality is the ultimate aim of social science" (Condorcet, *Progrès de L'Esprit Humain*, II., 59). "We wish to apply to politics the same equality that the Gospel grants to Christians" (Brudot, quoted by Quinet, *Révolution Française*, II., 407). "Opulence is infamous" (Saint-Just). "The richest Frenchman should not have an income of more than 300 livres" (Robespierre). "*Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis,*" is the motto of Marat's paper. The idea of the French Revolution, freed from the extravagances of the contest, is exactly summed up by the philosopher Joubert, when he says, "Men are born unequal. It is the great benefit of society to diminish this inequality as much as possible, by granting to all security, a competency, education, and help" (*Pensées*, XIV., *Du Gouvernement et des Constitutions*, XXXVIII.).

At the very time that equal rights were granted to all men, a change in the methods of production brought about a profound alteration in the condition of the workers. By losing their ancient guarantees they became more dependent; and while raised to the rank of sovereign in the political régime, in the economic order they fell to the condition of hirelings.

This should be clearly understood, as it is from these altered circumstances that the Socialism of to-day has sprung.

The economic conditions of civilized societies have been completely changed since the end of the last century. The "capitalistic" régime has been introduced. Capital, ever growing, has indeed increased the power of the means of production and the aggregate of products tenfold, but at the same time it has enslaved labour. The machine multiplies its wonders, but it does not belong to the worker; he is its slave, not its master. Formerly it was not so. Thanks to the privileges of the trade guilds, labour was in olden time an actual property. Now it has become an article of commerce, the price of which rises or falls according to the demand, and which sometimes fails to find a purchaser. Wages are now often higher than formerly, but they are always uncertain and changeable. When a stoppage of work, resulting from a crisis which the labourer can neither foresee nor prevent, deprives him of all means of subsistence, no person is obliged to maintain him. He is free; his wages have been paid; and he must look out for himself.

The lot of the agricultural labourer and the portion of the fruits of his labour which he might keep for himself were formerly regulated by custom. The metayer system of co-operation farming, the customs of perpetual leases, and of payment of rent in kind, were not liable to change, and the future of the peasant was thus secured. His existence did not depend upon the stern law of competition. Rent, like wages, is to-day determined by the law of supply and demand. No doubt the serf was bound to the soil, but he had the right to live and die upon it. To-day no legal tie binds the tenant to the land which he improves. The landlord can remove him at the end of his term, or he can raise the rent according as the value of the land increases.

Formerly the commune was, as it were, a protecting parent to the peasant; it furnished the wood for building, repairing, and heating his house, pasturage for his cattle, and also the land from which he drew his sustenance. Every family or community of families had their portion of the soil in considera-

tion of certain fixed duties. The commune was far more than a mere political division of the territory. It was an economic institution administered by those who constituted it. In the towns, his trade guild was to the handicraftsman what the commune was to the peasant; it assured him work, a market, and the means of making his living. The administration of their joint interests, their social gatherings, and their festivals formed a strong bond of union among workers of the same trade.

For them also "their to-morrow" was assured. In the city as in the country the producer retained in his own hands the instruments of production. It was labour that then owned capital. Such a thing did not then exist as a mere wage-earner, a man without bonds of interest either with his fellow-workmen or with the land, without guarantee or security of any kind, living from day to day on what capital might grant him. To-day this is the typical form under which labour, the principal factor of production, appears.

In short, while formerly the condition of those whose arms create all wealth was guaranteed by custom, it depends to-day on the fluctuations of the market and on the force of competition, that is to say, in appearance at least, on the will of landowners and capitalists.

We live under the régime of complete freedom of contract; but in every contract, he who supplies that which is essential to a man to live by labour, namely, the land and the capital, will dictate the terms of the bargain and will cause rent to be brought to a maximum and wages to a minimum. Now that all those traditional and customary barriers, which once protected the weak and helpless, have fallen, the Darwinian law of the "struggle for existence" reigns supreme in the economic world. The strongest wins the day, and the strongest, in this case, means the richest.

Now if we consider the changes which industrial progress has introduced among social conditions, we see that the same economic influences which make men more equal, create, at the same time, an antagonism between master and workmen, and that thus the causes which bring about the triumph of

Democracy are likewise favourable to the advance of Socialism.

Consider how the industrial work of the Middle Ages was carried on. Take, for example, the woollen trade, which in England and in Flanders exported its produce to all parts of the world, and which created powerful and populous towns. We can see the home life of the artisan with the help of some graphic records. Seated at the loom, he weaves the cloth while his children prepare the distaff by his side, and his wife spins at her wheel. In this way the whole work was performed at his domestic hearth. The master worked with his own hands, aided by his family and some apprentices. He needed but a trifling capital. The education, the social position, the way of living and thinking of the master and his men were very similar. The privileges of the guilds might produce some discontent, but not such as would ever degenerate into class antagonism, for both workman and employer belonged to the same social stratum. No doubt towards the end of the Middle Ages the increase of wealth and inequality introduced some strife into the communes of Flanders, and still more into those of Italy. The struggle, however, between the great and the small, the *fat* and the *lean*, was only a rivalry between trade guilds disputing certain political privileges among themselves; it was not the radical antagonism of capitalist and labourer, nor the claim for equality of social conditions.

To-day production is carried on by large industries presenting completely different characteristics. The operatives are obliged to leave their homes and desert their families. They must crowd into vast factories, collecting around the motive power which drives those innumerable and wonderful engines that multiply human strength ten and an hundred fold. The factory hand, having only to use his muscles automatically, has sunk below the journeyman and the apprentice of former days, while at the same time the director-in-chief of the factory is raised far above the master-workman. Whether the factory belongs to him or he is merely the manager of it, he disposes of an enormous capital, and, like a general, he commands an army of workmen; he is either rich or he is richly paid; he must

possess great technical knowledge, and have the will necessary to make himself obeyed by his numerous employé's; he must know the needs of foreign countries, the extent of the market, and the vicissitudes of commerce, not only in his own immediate neighbourhood, but over the entire globe. For to-day all countries are mutually dependent, and a crisis occurring even over the seas, in either hemisphere, re-echoes everywhere in ruins and failures. By his education, his position, his way of life, by the very necessity of exercising his authority, the head of a factory belongs to quite another world from that in which the operatives move. His Christian feelings as a man may lead him to regard them as brothers; nevertheless, he has nothing in common with them, they are strangers to each other. In vain he may wish to increase their wages or improve their condition, he cannot do it. Competition forces him, in spite of himself, to reduce the cost of production as much as possible.

The relations which the present industrial system has established between capitalist and labourer have been detailed with perfect exactness by the celebrated mechanical engineer and manufacturer, James Nasmyth, in his evidence before the committee appointed in England to inquire into trades-unions. He showed that it was for the advantage of trade that large numbers of workmen should be seeking employment, because the price of labour is thus lowered and with it the cost of production. He added that he had frequently increased his profits by putting apprentices to work in the place of grown-up workmen. When asked what he supposed had become of the workmen thus dismissed, and their families, he replied, "I do not know; I can only leave it to the action of those natural laws which govern society." In speaking thus, Nasmyth formulated the purely economic doctrine. Christianity, however, would have used other language.

Thus, while perfecting its methods and extending the use of machinery and division of labour, the large system of manufacture has improved the condition of the lower classes by giving them cheaper goods, but at the same time the gulf that separates capitalist and labourer has been increased. The

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handicraftsman, the small contractor, and the petty manufacturer are being crushed out of existence by the great factories. Those who have been called the lords of finance and industry have become the masters of the economic world.

There is also another cause which gives rise to socialistic aspirations, namely, the general instability of position, with the anxieties and unmeasured expectations resulting therefrom. This instability is produced by civil equality and free commerce. In the Middle Ages every one was indeed tied to his place, but at the same time his future was assured to him. The workman was protected against competition by the privileges of his trade. There were no crises, no stoppages of work. Labour had a certain known patronage which remained always the same. The position of the shopkeeper was as secure as that of the artisan, generations succeeding each other behind the same counter and living in the same manner. The merchants who traded with foreign countries, such as Jacques-Cœur in France, or the great Italian bankers, the Peruzzi—first the friends and afterwards the unpaid creditors of Edward III. and of England—were the only persons engaged in trade who had greater means of moving about and enriching themselves. Far above these, the feudal nobility, protected by its arms, its castles, its wealth, and its caste prejudices, lived in a world apart and unapproachable.

Society was thus completely bound up in the complicated network of its own traditional customs. It was stationary indeed, but it was stable. It was a system of classes, one above another, similar to that which gave to ancient Egypt a basis so solid and a duration so long, and which left there, as well as here, such stupendous monuments. Our mediæval town-halls and cathedrals, in their indestructible massiveness, recall the pyramids and temples of the valley of the Nile.

The material condition of men is incontestably better to-day. Formerly the sufferings of individuals were at times extreme, because the violence of the great was not restrained by the guiding and all-powerful arm of the State, nor were commerce and science at hand to combat famine and disease.

Society was continually harassed by local wars, and periodically decimated by dearth and the plague; but in ordinary times men's minds were calm, and, in the day of trial, resigned. All those institutions of the Middle Ages, which were at once impediments and protections, have disappeared. The proclamation of liberty and equality for all has levelled the ground upon which universal competition is now let loose.

This general competition is the cause of all progress, the mainspring of our industrial activity, the source of all our power; but it produces also incessant agitation, permanent unrest, and general instability. Nobody contented with his lot, nobody certain of his future. He who is rich strives to amass more wealth; he who lives by his labour trembles lest he lose even his livelihood. Every one is free to create his own destiny; there are no longer close trades nor classes; equality of right is complete; but inequality of fact remains, to irritate all the more because nothing is beyond the aspiration of anybody. There are more deceptions because more hopes are awakened. All may succeed, but all do not succeed; and those who remain below envy and hate those who have risen above them.

Formerly men were not so tormented by the desire to change their condition, because they did not see their way to do it. They had neither the ambition to rise, nor the thirst for riches, because all this was beyond their reach. Their destiny being settled here below, it was towards the other world that they directed their hopes. To-day they wish to be happy in this world, and are bent on destroying everything which offers an obstacle to the realization of the equal distribution of terrestrial blessings.

At the same time, men nowadays seek after wealth with far more avidity than formerly, because it forms the principal class-distinction and procures far more enjoyment than heretofore. Wealth supplies home comforts as well as the most refined luxury, the pleasure of travelling over the wide world, summers spent on breezy Alpine heights, and winters by the enchanting shores of the Mediterranean; all this instead of the monotonous existence of the feudal

baron who could employ his surplus resources only in maintaining a large band of followers. To-day the old friendly feelings between master and servant, landlord and tenant, have disappeared. Owner and capitalist have but one object in view, to increase their revenue, and in this they only conform to the principles of orthodox economy; for it is evident that from this eager pursuit of money, each day becoming more universal, springs the rapid increase of the general wealth. On the other hand, tenants and working men of all kinds are beginning to be more and more imbued with the truth of the terrible proverb, "Our master is our enemy." The class struggle which lately raged in Ireland in all its horror is still an exception; but everywhere in Europe similar sentiments are silently stirring the rural population. Go to Russia, Germany, Spain, Italy—everywhere you will hear in the country districts words of suffering, hatred, and revolt.

Landed property has taken a new character without precedent in history. In primitive times, the land, being the collective property of the tribe, furnished each family with the means of living by its own work. In feudal times, considered theoretically as belonging to the sovereign, land became the reward for having fulfilled certain functions, and it implied the rendering of certain services, amongst others those of bearing arms and of dispensing justice. To-day, freed from all bonds and duties, it has become a mere source of enjoyment to its possessor. The classes which work and those which enjoy have thus become more and more strangers to each other, and with us, as in Rome, stranger (*hostis*) has come to mean enemy.

It is the much-vexed wages question which in our times gives to Socialism the character of an acute inflammatory disease. Formerly wages were regulated by custom, and often even by official tariff. To-day they are fixed by free competition, that is to say, by the proportion which exists between the number of hands and the quantity of capital seeking employment. Here the law of Ricardo, that "iron law" as the German Socialists term it, in accordance with which wages tend to decrease to that fatal point which permits

the workman merely to live and perpetuate his kind, comes too often into operation. As soon as this law, formulated by economists, began to be understood by working men, they said, "Since our wages depend upon the supply of our labour, let us cease to work until we get higher wages." Hence those strikes and coalitions on the Continent, in America, and especially in England, which almost daily interrupt work and interfere with every trade. Masters and men are in a state of constant warfare, having their battles, their victories, and their defeats. It is a dark and bitter civil war, wherein he wins who can longest hold out without earning anything; a struggle far more cruel and more keen than that decided by bullets from a barricade; one where all the furniture is pawned or sold, where the savings of better times are gradually devoured, and where, at last, famine and misery besiege the home, and oblige the wife and little ones to cry for mercy.

In the course of this volume it will be seen how freedom of trade with foreign countries, joined to free competition at home, gave rise to the International League of labourers. As a consequence, this struggle between capital and labour is extending everywhere. It may be said that among the industrial nations, who now form one vast market, two armies stand facing each other; on the one side, the capitalists, on the other, the labourers.

The International, no longer in existence as a regular organization, still finds devoted and fanatical apostles to spread its doctrines. It is due to their propaganda, either secret or avowed, that Socialism has invaded all countries. It has become a kind of cosmopolitan religion. It oversteps frontiers, it obliterates race-antipathies, and, above all, it eradicates patriotism and tries to efface the very idea of it. Fellow-countrymen are enemies if they are employers, foreigners are brothers if they live by wages. From the moment that the Republic was proclaimed in France, the German Socialists declared against their own armies, and working men of London, Pesth, Vienna, and Berlin applauded the struggles and excused the crimes of the Commune. Economic conditions being nearly the same in all countries, Socialism finds

everywhere the same grievances, the same aspirations, and the same inflammable elements. Social agitations, unlike political revolutions, are not local. They are universal, like religious upheavals, because they address themselves to needs that are generally felt, and to that covetousness which is everywhere dormant in the human mind. Socialism, no less than religion, inspires proselytism, has its theorists and apostles, and fills the hearts of its followers with a fanaticism sometimes mystical, sometimes savage. Let us not be deceived by the seeming calm which reigns to-day. The hatred is not extinguished which so lately set fire to the four corners of Paris, crying, "Down with all the monuments which remind us of inequality."

To sum up, this is the situation created in modern societies by economic progress. It has freed working men from all bonds and has rescued them from the grasp of the guilds; it has increased their wages and their welfare, but at the same time it has made of them a class apart, grouping them in masses in vast factories and in particular districts; it has created in them new wants, and, above all, it has awakened in them boundless aspirations, and has exposed them, without protection or guarantee, to all the fluctuations of trade, so often upset by changes of processes, by commercial crises, and by stagnation of business. The peasant is freed from forced labour, is no longer bound to the soil, and his condition is often better, but the liability to having his rent raised is for him a source of constant disquietude, and a cause of enmity between him and his landlord. The real peril which menaces our democratic societies will appear when the country labourers and small farmers shall have learned to envy the lot of the rich and to curse their own, as the industrial working men have already done. In a word, herein lies the danger: the power of choosing legislators and, through them, of making laws, is given to men who have no property and whose wages are inevitably reduced to the lowest point. Equality of rights is proclaimed, while inequality of facts continues to exist, causing more sufferings and becoming all the more irritating.

De Tocqueville, the most clear-sighted theoretical writer

on Democracy, in his study of it in America did not perceive this danger, which, in truth, did not then exist; but another French writer, M. Dupont-White, who unites profoundness of thought with a brilliant and original style, makes the danger clearly appear by citing a letter of Macaulay's, which reads like a prophecy.

In this letter, dated the 23rd of May, 1857, and addressed to an American, Macaulay says, that though for the moment the immense tracts of unoccupied land in America may serve to stave off the evil day, yet the time would come when the rapid increase of population would produce the same economic conditions there as here, the same crises, stoppages of work, lowering of wages, and strikes, and that then the democratic institutions of America would be put to the test. What will the issue be? "It is quite plain," he says, "that your Government will never be able to restrain a distressed and discontented majority, for with you the majority is the Government, and has the rich, who are always a minority, absolutely at its mercy." And then he adds:—

"The day will come when, in the State of New York, a multitude of people, not one of whom has had more than half a breakfast, or expects to have more than half a dinner, will choose a Legislature. Is it possible to doubt what sort of Legislature will be chosen? On one side is a statesman preaching patience, respect for vested rights, strict observance of public faith; on the other is a demagogue ranting about the tyranny of capitalists and usurers, and asking why anybody should be permitted to drink champagne and to ride in a carriage, while thousands of honest folks are in want of necessaries. Which of the two candidates is likely to be preferred by the working man who hears his children crying for more bread? I seriously apprehend that you will, in some such season of adversity as I have described, do things which will prevent prosperity from returning. Either some Cæsar or Napoleon will seize the reins of Government with a strong hand, or your Republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth; with this difference—that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country and by your own institutions."

Macaulay wrote this twenty-seven years ago. We must not forget that the Greek democracies passed through similar trials and perished.

The right of inquiry which questions and doubts everything, impatience or contempt of all authority, and the shattering of all religious beliefs, have combined to embitter the social conflict, and to destroy everything that could moderate it. Broken by the oppression of ages, labourers formerly considered themselves born to maintain the great by the fruits of their labour. "That they should be oppressed by the strongest, the richest, the cleverest, or the most influential, they considered as inevitable as that they should suffer from rain and hail."* "Belief and obedience were an inheritance," says Taine; "a man was a Christian and a subject, because he was so born. The Revolution came, saying, Arise! you are the equals of your masters. Quickly follows the question, Wherefore this iniquitous division: opulence to the idle, and destitution to the workers?"

Christianity, which had introduced into the West ideas of equality and fraternity, at the same time enjoined patience and submission, saying to the oppressed, This life is only a period of probation; obey those in power; endure all privations without murmuring, for they will be reckoned to you above, where lies your real treasure. Iniquity triumphs on this earth; but the kingdom of Heaven is the inheritance of those cast out here below. Thus the Gospel, which, by arousing in all a thirst for justice, sowed the seed for social revolution, at the same time averted the explosion, by opening a prospect for the oppressed of endless felicity beyond the tomb. To-day, according as faith dies away, the people, ceasing to believe in these heavenly compensations, demand their share of happiness now. Not in Paradise, but in their present life do they require the realization of the promises of the Gospel. If they do not receive what they think their due, or if they are wretched, they can no longer console themselves by the reflection that their sufferings, accepted with resignation, will be rewarded with an hundredfold recompense. Were you to demonstrate to them that the justice they dream of is a chimera, and that the actual distribution of wealth is determined by inexorable natural laws, then, utterly desperate, they would exclaim with the Mille-narians, "Perish a society founded on iniquity, so that from

* Montigny, *Mémoires de Mirabeau*.

its ruins may arise a new world." Thus would be propagated the Nihilists' creed. If those who foment violent revolutions try to extirpate every religious sentiment, it is because they know that the best way of arousing a people is to take from them the hope of finding in another world the justice denied to them on earth.

It is not that the workers are worse off than formerly. But, on the one hand, as capital constantly accumulates under the form of stocks, bonds, or interest, paid by municipality or state, the number of idle people rapidly increases, while, on the other hand, it is precisely as men leave the extremest misery behind them that they become most clamorous. As De Tocqueville so admirably expresses it, nations revolt, not when they are most oppressed, but, on the contrary, when the yoke which weighed them down begins to grow lighter. In speaking of the end of the eighteenth century, he says, "According as prosperity began to dawn in France, men's minds appeared to become more unquiet and disturbed; public discontent was sharpened; hatred of all ancient institutions went on increasing, until the nation was visibly on the verge of a revolution. One might almost say that the French found their condition all the more intolerable according as it became better. Such an opinion might cause astonishment were it not that history is filled with similar spectacles."* Is not this an accurate picture of what is going on under our own eyes?

It was at one time imagined that the means of combating Socialism would be found in the teachings of Political Economy; but, on the contrary, it is precisely this science which has furnished the Socialists of to-day with their most redoubtable weapons. Instead of rejecting the conclusions of Economists, as was done by their predecessors, they accept them without reserve and make use of them to demonstrate that present social conditions are at variance with the principles of justice and right. Economists have proved that all value and all property are derived from labour; it clearly follows, say the Socialists, that wealth should belong to those who by their labour created it, and that the entire value, that is to say the

* *L'Ancien Régime*, ch. xvi.

entire produce, should be the reward of him who brought it into existence. Ricardo, Mill, and all the representatives of the orthodox science, show that, under the sway of free competition, in a country where wealth and population are both on the increase, the rent of the owner must continually augment, while the wages of the labourer are reduced to the lowest possible point. Socialists ask if such a partition of wealth, resulting from the pretended natural laws of society, is conformable to the principles of equitable distribution. It is therefore Political Economy which has furnished a scientific basis to Socialism, enabling it to leave the region of communistic aspirations and Utopian dreams.

Another thing that largely contributes to the spread of Socialism is that it is gradually gaining ground amongst the upper and more educated classes. Many novels, much poetry, along with books, lectures, and newspapers, are its unconscious organs, although their authors are by no means Socialists. Among those favoured by the present order of things, the number who maintain that "natural law" rules all for the best in the best of all possible worlds is daily diminishing. Nearly all now admit that "something should be done" for the labouring classes, and those who would say with Gambetta that there is no social question, are very few. In England, Germany, or Italy mark the words uttered both in private and on solemn public occasions alike by sovereigns, ministers, and party leaders; they are the first to commend the social question to the study of legislators. The King of Italy and Prince Bismarck at almost the same moment proclaimed it as the first duty of the crown, to ameliorate the condition of the labouring classes. It is, in fact, difficult to maintain that he who uses the spade in the country or the tool in a factory receives a sufficient reward. In olden times the privileged classes could enjoy their wealth without remorse, and calmly contemplate existing inequality, because with Aristotle they said, "There are in the human species individuals as inferior to others as the body is to the soul, or as animals are to men. Adapted for corporeal labour only, they are incapable of a higher occupation. Destined by nature to slavery, there is nothing better for them to do than

to obey.* * In the Middle Ages, the teachings of Christianity being still misunderstood, the feudal lord saw in the serf a beast of burden divinely predestined to work for him. Now that the principle of the equality of all men according to nature and right has penetrated men's hearts and minds, we must shut ourselves up in inhuman egoism or profound ignorance, if we would remain unmoved by the claims of the labouring classes.

The great difference between the actual position of affairs and anything history shows us, lies in the fact that the diffusion of Socialism is enormously favoured by the press and by schools. Education offered to all, even forced upon them, schools everywhere open, and cheap books, pamphlets, and newspapers spread throughout the country ideas of radical reform. In the Middle Ages the revolts of the peasants against oppression were merely local and passing events; and the same may be said of those of the sixteenth century. Once they were crushed, these aspirations towards equality disappeared as though drowned in blood. To-day, however, this is no longer the case. The energetic repression of the Revolution of June, 1848, and of the Commune of 1871, served only to spread far and wide the principles sought to be extinguished, and to make them sink deeper into the hearts of the working classes. Socialists of all countries celebrate the 18th of March, the anniversary of the proclamation of the Commune. If Socialism is to be exterminated, it must be attacked in its origin and in its methods of diffusion. It will be necessary to proscribe Christianity, burn the Bible, teach with the ancient philosophers that natural inequality justifies slavery; above all, no more primary education and no newspapers. If the existing inequality of conditions is permanent and necessary, then to spread the Gospel, to open a school, to establish a printing press, and to extend the suffrage, are in so many ways to attack the social order.

The rivalry, the wars, and the enormous armies of our continental states hasten the progress of that very Socialism which they were specially intended to combat; and this they do in two ways. In the first place, they maintain and increase

* *Polit. i. 3.*

inequality both by devouring a large portion of the produce which might go to improve the lot of the labourers, and by enabling an increasing number of independent persons to live on the interest of loans necessitated by wars and armaments. In the second place, forced service draws into the large towns, always more or less active centres of socialistic ideas, all the young men from the country districts, and through them these ideas penetrate into the hamlets where lately the feelings and beliefs of the past were preserved intact. I do not believe that, up to the present, the majority of soldiers have anywhere been gained over to Socialism; far from it; but evidently here lies the great danger for the existing order of things, which depends, after all, upon the support of bayonets. If this last rampart were carried, frightful convulsions would inevitably ensue.

Let us now endeavour to separate what is true in Socialism from what is false.

The foundation of all socialistic claims is the assertion that the effect of the present social system is to increase inequality, the condition of the labourers becoming daily worse, while the wealth of the capitalists and landowners is always augmenting. This assertion is only in part true. It is, no doubt, incontestable that capital is constantly increasing in all industrial communities in proportion to their progress, and that the number of those living upon their private incomes is also increasing, albeit the rate of interest as well as of profits tends to decrease. Since the improved processes of modern production are executed more and more by means of machinery and fixed capital of every kind, and as the holders of this capital draw an income from it, it follows that the sum total of interest and profits obtained by the upper classes is rapidly increasing. To be convinced of this it is enough to glance at the enormous spread of comfort and luxury in all countries among the well-to-do classes. But it is not correct to say that the condition of the labourers gets worse. They have profited to some extent by the cheapness of manufactured goods. Except in the great towns they are better lodged. They are everywhere better clad, they have more pieces of furniture of every kind,

and their food is more varied. Their diet has, however, become almost everywhere too exclusively vegetarian, because, the increase of animals fit for food not having kept pace with the increase of the population, meat has become too dear. We can no longer say of our working classes as Cæsar said of the Germans, "Their food mainly consists of milk, cheese, and meat."* What is, unfortunately, well founded among the grievances set forth by the Socialists, is that the condition of the labourers has not improved in proportion to the increase of production, that the share obtained by them in the unexampled development of wealth during this century is too small. In support of this assertion I shall cite only three witnesses, whose evidence is unimpeachable and who belong to the country where capital has increased most rapidly. Mr. Gladstone said in the House of Commons on the 13th February, 1843, "It is one of the most melancholy features in the social state of our country that a constant accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, and an increase of the luxuriousness of their habits and of their means of enjoyment" should be accompanied by "a decrease in the consuming powers of the people, and an increase of the pressure of privation and distress" among the poorer classes. Professor Fawcett uses language to the same effect: "Production has been stimulated beyond the expectations of the most sanguine, and supplies of food have been obtained from even the most distant countries in much greater quantities than could have been anticipated; still, however, so far as the labourer is concerned, the age of golden plenty seems as remote as ever, and in the humble homes of the poor a not less constant war has to be waged against penury and want. From the bitter disappointment thus engendered there has not unnaturally arisen a feeling of deep distrust of the fundamental principles on which society is based."† Professor Cairnes speaks even more forcibly than Mr. Fawcett: "The conclusion to which I am brought is this—that, unequal as is the distribution of wealth already in

* *De Bel. Gal.* vi. 22.

† "Essays and Lectures on Social and Political Subjects," by Henry and Millicent G. Fawcett (1872), p. 5.

this country, the tendency of industrial progress, on the supposition that the present separation between individual classes is maintained, is toward an inequality greater still."*

When, viewing from a distance and without bias the distribution of the good things of this world, one sees, on the one side, the workers reduced to the bare necessities of life—not obtaining even them at the least crisis—and, on the other, the idle and independent classes, in increasing numbers, enjoying more and more refined comfort, it is impossible to pronounce this state of things conformable to justice, and we are forced to exclaim with Bossuet, "The murmurs of the poor are just. Wherefore, O Lord, this inequality of conditions?" Doubtless it may be answered that it has always been so, and cannot be otherwise; but this argument satisfies those only whose privileges are thus confirmed.

Socialism demands that the labourer should reap the whole fruits of his labour, and nothing seems more just. Still, if the produce is obtained with the help of two other factors, land and capital, and if these do not belong to the labourer, he cannot retain the entire product. Each factor must be rewarded, otherwise it will refuse its aid. The solution consists in uniting the three factors in the same person.

Socialism says, "At present, labour is subordinate to capital; the contrary should be the case; capital should, properly, be subordinate to labour." That is, no doubt, desirable; but in order that it may be so, the requisites of production must belong to him who works, the soil to the cultivator, the tool or the machine to the artisan. That was the case formerly to a great extent; but how to attain it now, under the system of production on a large scale—this is the problem to be solved.

Socialism demands that wealth shall no longer be the privilege of idleness, and that he that sows not shall not reap. This is exactly what St. Paul so emphatically says: *Qui non laborat nec manducet*: "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." Man, like all living beings, has wants and certain means of satisfying them. If he satisfies his wants without using the

* "Leading Principles of Political Economy" (1874), p. 340.

appropriate means, it can only be by contravening natural law, and owing to certain artificial laws, which allow some to live at the expense of others. This appears evident; but these facts are the consequence of private property and the right of inheritance, and, until better are found, these institutions are indispensable for stimulating industry. What must be discovered is how to bring it about that, according to the desire of St. Paul, and conformably to right and the ordinary course of nature, the well-being of every individual may be in direct ratio to his activity, and in inverse ratio to his idleness.

Machinery, say the Socialists, should emancipate the labourer, and shorten his hours of work. The contrary is nearer the fact. Machines enrich those who own them, but render harder and more enslaving the task of those whom they employ. The larger the capital sunk in the modern factory, the more urgent it is that there should be no stoppage of work, for, when work stops, interest is eaten up. Formerly night brought sleep to all, and Sunday brought rest. Now, on the railway, on the steamer, in the mine, the factory, or the office, work admits of hardly any truce or intermission. In the words of Hamlet:

“What might be toward, that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day?”

Machinery will not fulfil its promises, nor bring men more leisure, until it belongs to the workers who set it in motion. On this point Socialists may quote the opinion of J. S. Mill, who says: “It is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day’s toil of any human being.”

Socialists maintain that the means of production are already great enough to furnish all men with a sufficient competency, if only the produce were more evenly divided; and indeed, if the number of things are reckoned up which are either useless or superfluous, or even harmful, but which monopolize so large a portion of the working hours, it may well be thought that were those hours exclusively employed in the creation of useful things, there would be enough to satisfy largely the needs of all. Inequality gives rise to superfluity and luxury which divert

capital and labour from the production of necessaries; hence the destitution of the masses. "Were there no luxury," said Rousseau, "there would be no poor." "The fact that many men are occupied in making clothes for one individual, is the cause of there being many people without clothes."

Supported by the rent theory as set forth by economic science, Socialists reproach the actual system with having poured into the hands of the landowners all the advantage accruing from social improvement, in violation of the principle, generally admitted, that labour is the source of property. Here, again, they could cite the opinion of J. S. Mill, for he asks that every increase of rent which does not result from the efforts of the owner—the *unearned increment*, as he calls it—should be handed over to the State.

Of all the economical phenomena of the present social order, the one most vehemently attacked by Socialists is free competition. This, they say, reduces the pay of the workman to the lowest point, lowers the quality of the articles sold, creates hostile interests, and does not even assure the promised compensation of cheapness; for the large manufactories ruin the small ones, and thus acquire a monopoly of which they take advantage to raise the prices.

Mill admits that while competition is the best security for cheapness, it is by no means a guarantee of good quality. But he proves clearly that if at times competition has the effect of lowering wages when the offer of hands is excessive, it also results in raising wages when capital increases faster than the population, and at all times it has the incontestable advantage of reducing the price of manufactured articles, and, consequently, as these are bought out of wages, it does, in effect, increase the remuneration of the labourer. If there were no competition, the very thing for which Socialists like Marx upbraid machines would happen, namely, the whole benefit they confer would revert exclusively to their owners, while now, thanks to competition, the public profit by the cheapness of goods. Competition is merely liberty on economic soil. It is competition that brings into play the most powerful

• Montesquieu, *Esp. des Loix*, vii. 6.

and only really efficacious incentive to all productive activity, all good economic administration, and, above all, all improvement. No doubt laws and regulations might modify the conditions under which competition acts, so as to place competitors more upon an equality, and to effect that, each man possessing the requisites of production, no one should be obliged to accept insufficient wages through fear of starvation. True freedom of contract in that case existing, competition, which is the indispensable mainspring of the economic world, would be freed from the greater part of the disastrous effects now laid to its charge.

Ranke, the historian, has shown how Protestantism, by its very attacks upon the Papacy, provoked a reform in the bosom of the Romish Church whereby new life was infused into her. In the same way, the wisest Economists of our time have recognized that the exaggerated, but often well founded, criticisms passed upon our social system by Socialists, have been the means of producing undoubted progress in Political Economy. Thus Economists used to affirm that our social organization was the result of "natural laws," and itself constituted "the natural order of things." It followed, as Cairnes observes, that the well-to-do classes gathered from the writings of the Economists the comfortable conviction that the existing world was not far off from perfection, and were thus led to reject without examination any idea of a better organization as chimerical. Nowadays most Economists recognize that everything concerning the distribution of wealth is the result of laws and customs which have varied at different times, and that, consequently, a more strict application of justice might introduce a great improvement. Formerly Economists occupied themselves principally with the increase of production, while they merely described the distribution of wealth without examining if it was conformable to justice, and studied labour merely as the natural agent of production. To-day we recognize more and more that the question which overshadows all others is that of distribution, that every problem must be considered especially in its moral and juridical aspect, and that the just-reward of the workman is what is most important when con-

sidering labour. Professor Schoenberg, one of the most distinguished Economists of Germany, says, "Socialism has obliged Political Economy to recognize that it is not merely the natural science of human egoism, but that it should formulate a system of moral administration (*Ethische Wirthschaft*) for the interests of society."

The fundamental error of most Socialists is not taking sufficient account of the fact that individual interest is the indispensable incentive to labour and economy. It is true that minds purified by the elevated principles of religion or philosophy act upon sentiments of charity, devotion, and honour; but for the regular production of wealth the stimulus of personal interest and responsibility is needed. Hence a communistic régime will always be an exception. But, on the contrary, an organization realizing this desideratum of all Socialists, "to the labourer the full enjoyment of the produce of his labour," would ensure to economic activity the most powerful stimulant and the most equitable reward.

Another error of the Socialists, and one far more disastrous to their cause, is the belief that a successful insurrection would lead to a new social organization being established by law. No doubt a revolutionary assembly can easily destroy many things, confiscate property, cut off heads, or absorb all rent under the form of a land tax. But to introduce a collective mode of carrying on industry, or to make a co-operative enterprise succeed, would be beyond its capabilities, because such reforms, as J. S. Mill so admirably points out in his "Chapters on Socialism," presuppose among workmen a higher degree of moral and mental culture than they now possess, and which they can acquire only by degrees. The impotence in the matter of economic reforms of even successful Socialist revolutions, was clearly demonstrated by the absolute sterility, in this respect, of the Paris Commune of 1871, and of the Spanish Communes of Carthagen and Seville of 1873.

If the progress of humanity is not a chimera, if it is, like the progress of democracy according to De Tocqueville, "the fact the most continuous, the oldest, and the most permanent in history," it follows that greater equality must eventually be

established among men ; but social transformations are not to be accomplished by violence. Attempts at assassination and insurrections can have but one result : that of provoking a desperate repression, and restoring despotism. What an amount of harm have the German regicides, Hœdel and Nobiling, not done to the cause of which they professed themselves the champions ! If Socialists would set forth their ideas persistently but moderately, using those powerful arguments which economic science has placed in their hands, as was done by J. S. Mill, and the former Austrian minister, Albert Schœffle, the governing classes would listen to them, for they cannot divest themselves of the sentiments of even-handed justice planted in their hearts by the Gospel. The Irish Land Laws wrested by Mr. Gladstone even from the House of Lords, show what decisive victories Socialism may obtain by peaceable means. It is probable that it may be gradually introduced into our laws by the increasing influence of what we call State Socialism. Its weakness results from the fact that, being chiefly confined to the labouring classes, it seldom finds exponents among enlightened men such as Lassalle and Marx undoubtedly were. If, as formerly in Israel, there should arise prophets burning with a righteous thirst for justice, Christian Socialism, taking possession of men's minds, may bring about profound changes in the economic world. But the enduring triumph of a violent Socialist revolution is impossible. Nevertheless, as Nihilism, like burning lava, seethes throughout the underground strata of society, and there keeps up a sort of diabolic destroying rage, it is possible that in some crisis, when authority is powerless and repressive force paralyzed, the predictions of the poet Hegesippe Moreau and M. Maxime du Camp may be realized, and we may see our capitals ravaged by dynamite and petroleum in a more ruthless and a more systematic manner than even that which Paris experienced at the hands of the Commune.