

# **THE EVOLUTION OF INDUSTRY**



THE  
EVOLUTION OF INDUSTRY

BY

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"This that they call 'Organising of Labour' is, if well understood, the Problem of the whole Future for all who in future pretend to govern men."—CARLYLE.

"Government and co-operation are in all things the laws of life, anarchy and competition the laws of death."—RUSKIN.

"Privilege, if rightly interpreted, is a call to special devotion. Fellowship in labour is the condition of happy and lasting peace. We want an organisation of industry which shall stir enthusiasm like the military organisation of the Middle Ages."—BISHOP OF DURHAM.

"The actual final rights of man lie in the far deeps of the ideal. Every noble work is at first impossible."—CARLYLE.

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## PREFACE

GOETHE prophesied that the great problems at the end of the nineteenth century would be the organisation of mechanical industry and the social and economic questions connected therewith. This prophecy has been abundantly fulfilled. The disputes and struggles connected with labour, and the conditions of the poorest classes of the community, have directed the attention of many thoughtful men and women to the social and economic problems of the day, and in all parts of the world these are presenting themselves to educationists, social reformers, politicians and statesmen, as the matters which above all others are urgently demanding careful study and investigation. M. de Laveleye put the dominant thought into words when he said: "The message of the eighteenth century to man was, 'Thou shalt cease to be the slave of nobles and despots who oppress thee: thou-art free and sovereign.' But the problem of our times is, 'It is a grand thing to be free and sovereign, but how is it that the sovereign often starves? How is it that those who are held to be the

source of power often cannot, even by hard work, provide themselves with the necessaries of life?"<sup>1</sup>

From a survey of the chief conditions of industry which have been brought about by the great development of machinery and of the applications of science, it is evident that the present century is in a large sense a probationary epoch, an era of beginnings. Indeed, it is not at all a question of whether the existing social order shall be changed, but of how the inevitable change shall be made. For ages the soil was being cleared, ploughed and harrowed, and for the past century the seed has been springing up, and in some cases coming to maturity before men were properly prepared to take advantage of it. The results have been that, while great advances have been made, there has been great turmoil in social conditions, and strife and stress in industrial relations, and we are now face to face with many problems of a very difficult nature.

The whole fields of economics, education, and even of religion have been revolutionised, and these have reacted on social conditions. Hence have arisen the demands of labour for a larger share of its products, and for their more equable distribution. It is long since Carlyle pointed out that "this that they call 'Organising of Labour' is, if well understood, the Problem of the whole Future for all who will in future pretend to govern men," but it is only now that politicians are beginning to recognise that it is the most important piece

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, March 1890.

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of work which lies immediately before them. Like the Bishop of Durham, I believe "that the unique heritage which we enjoy, containing as it does the common enjoyment of the highest forces for inspiring and disciplining a generous character, not only prepares us to face the problem of the organisation of industry as a fellowship of service, but lays on us the obligation of doing so. The life of nations is a mission no less than the life of men, and unless the teaching of history misleads us, this is part of the mission of England. May the will answer to the call. Men upon the whole are what they can be—nations what they would."

The modern industrial community is a very complicated organism, and the interaction of cause and effect takes place in a way which is not easy to follow, either in fact or in thought. Hence the necessity for the careful study of the various factors of the problems involved, and for the elimination as far as possible of all disturbing elements. It is necessary to educate the democracy in the duties and rights of citizenship, so that their political action may be that of patriots and not of partisans. Too often men and women become social and political reformers and philanthropists because they have been caught by a cry of suffering or an urgent plea of wrongs to be righted; but they have seldom formed any adequate idea of the complexity of problems with which they attempt to deal, or of the delicacy of the social machine on which they depend. If these problems are to be solved in a satisfactory

manner, all their factors must be taken into account, and the different aspects fully considered.

Hitze, in his suggestive book<sup>1</sup> on social questions, has truly said that the problem of the day is, "To find a social organisation corresponding to the modern conditions of production, as the social organisation of the Middle Ages corresponded with the simple conditions of production then existing both in town and country"; and it is this problem in its industrial aspects of which I have attempted to indicate what I believe to be the nature of the solution. Both history and science show us that social and economic changes to be permanent must be gradual, and fitted to the mental and moral conditions of the people. I believe, therefore, that the solution of the problem I have mentioned will not be brought about by a revolution, or a brand-new organisation, but by the evolution of movements at present going on, and by the development of intellectual and moral training.

In the following pages I have attempted to estimate the value of the various factors in the industrial problem, and to co-ordinate or integrate their effective components, so as to be able to form some idea of the resulting organisation. The limits which have been placed to the size of the book have prevented anything like a complete analysis or description of the different elements in the labour movement; all that has been attempted has been a very brief outline of their most distinctive features. General readers have neither time nor patience for

<sup>1</sup> *Die Quintessenz der Socialen Fragen.*



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minute accounts, and moreover it is not desirable that a survey of the whole question should be overburdened with details. The historical and economic aspects of the different parts of the subject have been dealt with in a very brief manner, and reference must be made to special works for particulars of their development. The object kept in view has been to show that the various parts of the labour movement have common components, and that they are developing an organisation of industry which will meet the conditions necessary for efficiency, and for the welfare of the community.

While I cannot hope to have pleased all my critics, either as regards my treatment of the subject or the results at which I have arrived, the book will have served its purpose if it has helped individual thought, and indicated the manner in which social problems should be studied before changes in administration and legislation are attempted. I have, however, not been so anxious to give, in a dogmatic manner, my own opinions, as to show the tendency of thought among those who are studying the problems connected with labour, and who may be considered authorities regarding them. At the same time it must be remembered that the organisation of labour is only one element, although no doubt a very important one, in the more general problem of the organisation of society, which I shall consider in another volume.

I have to thank my friend Dr. R. M. Wenley for his kindness in reading the proof-sheets as they passed

through the press, and for many suggestions which have helped to make my meaning clearer. He is, however, in no way responsible for any of the opinions expressed in the book. I have also to thank many friends connected with different phases of the labour movement, as employers and workers, for the information which they have given me, and for the opportunities which they have afforded me of discussing the various aspects of the work in which they are engaged.

DOWANHILL, GLASGOW,  
*February 1895.*

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