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THE
SOCIALIST MOVEMENT.

BY
ANNIE BESANT.

[REPRINTED FROM THE "WESTMINSTER REVIEW".]



LONDON:
FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY,
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THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT.

SOME good-hearted people must have felt an uncomfortable thrill when they heard Professor Huxley declare that he would rather have been born a savage in one of the Fiji Islands than have been born in a London slum. The advantages of civilisation, from the slum point of view, must appear somewhat doubtful; and as a considerable part of the population of every large city live in the slums, the slum view has an importance of its own as a factor in the future social evolution. For it must be remembered that the slum population is not wholly composed of criminals and ne'er-do-weels—the “good-for-nothings” of Herbert Spencer. The honest workman and struggling seamstress live there cheek by jowl with the thief and the harlot; and with the spread of education has arisen an inclination to question whether, after all, everything has been arranged quite as well as it might be in this best of all possible worlds. The question, Whether on the whole civilisation has been an advantage? has been a theme of academical discussion since Rousseau won the prize for an essay on “Has the restoration of the Sciences contributed to purify or to corrupt Manners?” and laid down the audacious thesis that riches gave birth to luxury and idleness, and from luxury sprang the arts, from idleness the sciences. But it has now changed its form, and has entered the arena of practical life: men are asking now, Is it rational that the progress of society should be as lopsided as it is? Is it necessary that, while civilisation brings to some art, beauty, refinement—all that makes life fair and gracious—it should bring to others drudgery, misery, degradation, such as no un-

civilised people know; and these emphasised and rendered the bitterer by the contrast of what life is to many, the dream of what it might be to all? For Professor Huxley is right. The savage has the forest and the open sea, the joy of physical strength, food easily won, leisure sweet after the excitement of the chase; the civilised toiler has the monotonous drudgery of the stuffy workshop, the hell of the gin-palace for his pleasure-ground, the pandemonium of reeking court and stifling alley for his lullaby: civilisation has robbed him of all natural beauty and physical joy, and has given him in exchange—the slum. It is little wonder that, under these circumstances, there are many who have but scant respect for our social fabric, and who are apt to think that any change cannot land them in a condition worse than that in which they already find themselves.

The tendency to think of complete social change as a possible occurrence has come down to the present generation as an inheritance of the past. Old men still dwell fondly on the hopes of the “social missionaries” who were preaching when the men now of middle-age were born. Some even remember the experiments of Robert Owen and of his personal disciples, the hopes raised by New Lanark and Arbiston, the chill disappointment of New Harmony. The dream that glorified their youth has remained a sacred memory, and they have told how all might have been different had society been prepared in Owen’s time for the fundamental change. And the great and far-reaching co-operative movement, born of Owen’s Socialism, has kept “his memory green”, and has prepared men to think of a possible future in which co-operation should wholly replace competition, and Owen’s dream of universal brotherhood become a living reality. Such part of the energy of the Owenite Socialists as was not merged in co-operative activity was swamped in the sudden rush of prosperity that followed the repeal of the Corn Laws and the English triumph of Free Trade. Now that that rush is long over, and the old misery is on the workers once more, their minds turn back to the old schemes, and they listen readily to suggestions of a new social order.

The abnormally rapid multiplication characteristic of the very poor is at once constantly rendering the problem to be solved more difficult and more imperatively pressing.

Unhealthy conditions force the young into premature nubility; marriage takes place between mere lads and lasses; parenthood comes while father and mother are themselves legally infants; and the dwarfed, peaky little mortals, with baby frames and wizened faces, that tumble over each other in the gutters of the slums, are the unwholesome and unlovely products of the forcing-house of extreme poverty.

The spread of education and of religious scepticism has added the last touch necessary to make the poor ripe for social change. Ignorance is a necessary condition for prolonged submission to remediable misery. The School Boards are teaching the children the beauty of order, cleanliness, and decency, and are waking up in them desire for knowledge, hopes, and aspirations—plants unsuited for cultivation in the slums. They are sowing the seeds of a noble discontent with unworthy conditions, while at the same time they are developing and training the intelligence, and are converting aimless, sullen grumbling into a rational determination to understand the Why of the present, and to discover the How of change. Lastly, religious scepticism has enormously increased the value put upon the life which is. So long as men believed that the present life was the mere vestibule of an endless future, it was possible to bribe them into quiescence in misery by representing poverty as a blessing which should hereafter bring in its train the "kingdom of heaven". But now that many look on the idea of a life beyond the grave with doubt, and even with disbelief, this life has taken giant proportions in their eyes, and the human longing for happiness, which erstwhile fed on hopes of heaven, has fastened itself with passionate intensity on the things of earth.

Such is the soil, ploughed by misery, fertilised by education and scepticism, ready to receive and nourish the seed of social change.

While the soil has been thus preparing, the sowers who are to scatter the seed have been fashioning. Thoughtful persons have noted the regular cycle of alternate depression and inflation trodden by industrialism during the last century. At one time industry progresses "by leaps and bounds", employment is plentiful, wages high (as wages go), prices of coal and iron high, profits increase, and

fortunes are rapidly built up. This inflation after a while passes away, and is succeeded by depression; "short time" is worked, wages are reduced, profits diminish, the "market is overstocked". This in its turn passes away, and temporary prosperity returns, to be after a while succeeded by another depression, and that by another inflation. But it is noticeable that the depressions become more acute and more prolonged as they return time after time, and that there is less elasticity of revival after each. The position of England in the world's markets becomes yearly one of diminished advantage; other nations raise their own coal and their own iron instead of buying from us, and as the competition of nations becomes keener, English trade can no longer monopolise the custom of the world. The radical weakness of our industrial system is thus becoming patent—no longer veiled, as it was during the first half of the century, by a monopoly which brought such enormous gains that the drain of wealth into a few hands was comparatively little felt. Now that there is so much less to divide, the unfairness of the method of division is becoming obvious.

Nor can we overlook, in tracing the fashioning of those who are to sow the seeds of change, the effect on English thought of the greatly increased communication with foreign countries, and especially with Germany. English religious thought has been largely influenced by the works of Strauss and Feuerbach; philosophic thought by those of Hegel, Kant, and Schopenhauer; scientific by the speculations of Goethe, the practical labors of Vogt, Büchner, and Haeckel. English insularity has been broken down in every domain of theoretical and speculative thought; it was inevitable that it should also be broken down in the domain of practical sociology, and that German proposals for social change should win the attention of English students of social problems. The works of Marx, Bebel, Liebknecht, and Engels have not reached any large number of English people; neither have those of Strauss, Hegel, and Kant. None the less in each case have they exercised a profoundly modifying influence on religious, philosophical, and sociological thought respectively; for, reaching a small band only, that band has in its turn influenced thought in the direction taken by itself, and has modified the views of very many who are unconscious of the

change thus wrought in their own attitude towards progress. At the same time the German graft has been itself modified by the English stock, and English Socialism is beginning to take its own distinctive color; it is influenced by English traditions, race, habit, and methods of public procedure. It shows, at its best, the influence of the open-air of English political life, the tolerance of diversity of thought which is bred of free speech; it is less arrogant, less intolerant, than it is with Germans, or with those English who are most directly under German influence. In Germany the intolerance of oppression has caused intolerance of revolt; here the very power of the democracy has a tendency to sober its speech, and to make it take its own way in the quiet consciousness of its resistless strength. This peculiarity of English life must modify Socialism, and incline it to resort to methods of legislation rather than to methods of dynamite.

Nor has the effect of foreign thought been confined to the influence exerted by thinkers over thinkers, through the medium of the press. A potent worker for the internationalisation of thought has been silently busy for many years past. At first insular prejudices were broken down only for the wealthy and the nobles, when the "grand tour" was a necessary part of the education of the fine gentleman. Then the capitalist broke down national fences for his own gain, feeling himself nearer in blood to his foreign colleagues than to the workers in his own land; for, after all, common interests lie at the root of all fellow-feeling. And the capitalist abolished nationalism for himself: he hired Germans and Frenchmen for his counting-house work, finding them cheaper and better educated than English clerks; when his English wage-workers struck for better wages he brought over foreigners to take their place, so that he might live on cheap foreign labor while he starved the English into submission. The effect of foreign immigration and of foreign importation has not in the long run turned wholly to the advantage of the capitalist; for his foreign clerks and his foreign workers have fraternised with the English they were brought over to displace. They have taken part in club discussions; they have spread their own views; they have popularised in England the ideas current among workers on the Continent; they have made numbers of Englishmen acquainted

with the solutions suggested abroad for social problems. Thus, the internationalism of the luxurious idle and of the wealthy capitalist has paved the way for the internationalism of the future—the internationalism of the proletariat, the internationalism of Socialism.

From this preliminary sketch of the conditions which make for a Socialist movement in England at the present time we must turn to an examination of the doctrines held and taught by the modern school, which claims to teach what is known as Scientific Socialism. The allegation, or even the proof, that modern civilisation is to a large extent a failure, is obviously not sufficient ground for a complete social revolution. Appeals to the emotions by means of word-pictures of the sufferings and degradation of the industrious poor, may rouse sympathy, and may even excite to riot, but can never bring about fundamental changes in society. The intellect must be convinced ere we can look for any wise movement in the direction of organic improvement; and while the passion of the ignorant has its revolutionary value, it is on the wisdom and foresight of the instructed that we must rely for the work of social reconstitution.

The first thing to realise is that the Socialist movement is an economic one. Despite all whirling words, and revolution fire, and poetic glamor, and passionate appeal, this one dry fact is the central one—Socialism rejects the present industrial system and proposes an exceedingly different one. No mere abuse can shake the Socialist; no mere calling of names can move him. He holds a definite economic theory—a theory which should neither be rejected without examination, nor accepted without study.

The preliminary stock objection which is often held to be sufficient to wave Socialism out of court is the statement that it is “against the laws of political economy”. No statement could be more erroneous; though it may be pleaded in extenuation that the abuse levelled by ignorant Socialists at political economy has given excuse for supposing that it is in antagonism to Socialism. With political economy, as the science which deals with the nature, the production, and the distribution of wealth, Socialism can have no quarrel. Its quarrel is with the present industrial

system, not with the science which points out the ascertained sequence of events under that system. Suppose a *régime* of avowed slavery: political economy, dealing with the production of wealth in such a state, would lay down how slaves might be worked to the best advantage—how most might be got out of them with least expenditure. But it would be irrational to attack political economy as brutal under such conditions; it would be the slave system which would be brutal, and blame of the science which merely dealt with the existent facts would be idle. The work of political economy is to discern and expound for any type of social system the best methods of producing and distributing wealth *under that system*; and it can as easily study and develop those methods under a *régime* of universal co-operation such as Socialism, as under a *régime* of universal competition such as the present. Socialism is in antagonism to the present system, and seeks to overthrow it; but only the ignorant and the thoughtless confound in their hatred the system itself, and the science that deals with its phænomena.

In truth, Socialism founds part of its disapproval of the present industrial system on the very facts pointed out by orthodox economists. It accepts Ricardo's "iron law of wages", and, recognising that wages tend to fall to the minimum on which the laborer can exist, it declares against the system of the hiring of workers for a fixed wage, and the appropriation of their produce by the hirer. It accepts Ricardo's theory of rent, with such modifications as are adopted by all modern economists. It assents to, and indeed insists on, the facts that all wealth is the result of labor applied to natural agents, that capital is the result of labor and abstinence, that in all save the most primitive forms of industry capital and labor—that is, the unconsumed result of past labor and present labor—are both necessary factors in the production of wealth.

Nor does Socialism challenge the accuracy of the deductions from the "laws of political economy" in a competitive system drawn by the trading community. That a man who desires wealth should buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; that he should drive the hardest possible bargains; that in selling he should be guided by the maxim, *caveat emptor*; that in buying he

should take advantage of the ignorance or the necessities of the seller; that the weakest should go the wall; that feeling should not interfere with business; that labor should be bought at the lowest possible price, and as much got out of it as may be; that trade morality differs from the morality of private life—all these maxims the Socialist regards as the evil fruits of the perpetuation among men of the struggle for existence; a struggle which, however inevitable among brutes, is from his point of view unworthy of human civilisation.

Recognising thus the unsatisfactory results which flow naturally and inevitably from the present system, Socialism proceeds to analyse the way in which wealth is produced and accumulated under it, to seek for the causes of the extreme wealth and extreme poverty which are its most salient characteristics.

Applying ourselves, then, to the study of the production of wealth, we find taking part therein three things—natural agents, capital, and labor. These, under the present system, are represented in England by three types—the landlord, the capitalist, and the proletarian. The transitional organisms need not detain us: the landlord who tills his land with his own hands, the capitalist who works in his own mill—these are exceptions; and we are concerned with the normal types. Abroad, the landlord pure and simple is comparatively rare. Of these three, the landlord owns the natural agents; no wealth can be produced without his consent. John Stuart Mill ("Principles of Political Economy", bk. ii., ch. xvi., sec. 1) remarks that "the only person, besides the laborer and the capitalist, whose consent is necessary to production, and who can claim a share of the produce as the price of that consent, is the person who, by the arrangements of society, possesses exclusive power over some natural agent". Given a person who, by possession of the natural agents from which wealth can be produced, can prevent the production of wealth by withholding the raw material, and you have a person who can successfully claim part of the wealth to be produced as a condition of allowing production to take place. He gains, by virtue of his position, wealth which one less fortunately placed can only acquire by prolonged labor. Nay, more; since many capitalists will compete for the raw material when it is advantageously

situated, he will be able to obtain an ever higher price from the most eager bidder; as towns increase and trade develops, competition will drive the price up still higher; and this ever-mounting "rent", paid to the owner of the natural agents, will enrich the lucky possessor, however idle, ignorant, or useless he may be. Thus is produced a class which has a vested right to tax industry, and which taxes it in proportion to its success. Not an improvement can be effected, nor a railway constructed, nor a road made, without toll being first paid to the owner of the soil. The whole nation is at the mercy of a comparatively small class, so long as it consents to admit that this class has a right to own the ground on which the nation lives. Here is a point at which Socialism finds itself in direct antagonism to the present system of society. Socialism declares that natural agents ought not to be private property, and that no idle class should be permitted to stand between land and labor, and demand payment of a tax before it will permit the production of wealth. Socialism holds that the soil on which a nation is born and lives ought to belong to the nation as a whole, and not to a class within the nation; that the soil should be cultivated by individuals, or by co-operative groups, holding directly under the State—the "State" here meaning central organising body or district organising body, according as the organisation is communal or centralised. And here, among different Socialist schools, difference in detail manifests itself. All agree that the soil must in some fashion be controlled by the community, and the benefits derivable from it spread over the community. But some Socialists would have each commune practically independent, with the soil on which it lives vested in each; the agriculturists of the commune would form an organised body for cultivating the soil, and the agricultural products would be collected in the communal store, and thence distributed as each member of the commune had need of them. Nothing would here be recognised as "rent", since the total produce would pass under communal control. Other Socialists favor a system of more centralised management. But all agree that individual property in land must disappear, and that in the future land must not be used as an investment which is to bring in a profit in the shape of rent to some speculator or

idler, but must be used for purposes of production for the general good, yielding food and raw materials for clothing and other necessaries of life, but profit in the shape of rent to no individual.

The extreme Radical school of politicians accepts the Socialist theory of land, and denounces private property in the soil as vigorously as does the Socialist. In fact, the Radical is a half-fledged Socialist—indignant as many would be at the description: he is in favor of the State being the landowner, but he boggles at the idea of the State being the capitalist. His attitude to the land is, however, an important factor in the Socialist movement, for it familiarises the national mind with the idea of the State absorbing the functions hitherto belonging to a class. The establishment of Land Courts, the fixing of judicial rents, the legal restrictions put on the "rights" of landlords—all these make for Socialism. M. Agathon de Potter, a well-known Continental writer, rejoices over the introduction of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh's Bill for expropriating landlords who keep cultivable land uncultivated, and for vesting the forfeited lands in the State, as a direct step towards Socialism. The shrinking of English politicians from the name does not prevent their advance towards the thing, and the Liberty and Property Defence League is justified in its view that politics are drifting steadily in a Socialist direction.

Pass we from the landlord who holds the natural agents to the capitalist who holds the means of production. What is capital, and how has it come into existence? Capital is any wealth which is employed for profit. On this there is no dispute. As Senior says: "Economists are agreed that *whatever* gives a profit is properly called capital". Now, as all wealth is the result of labor applied to natural agents, capital, being wealth, must have been so produced. But another factor has been at work; as Marshall says: it is "the result of labor *and abstinence*". Wherever there is capital there has been labor, and there has also been abstinence from consumption. But in studying the origin and the accumulation of capital, this remarkable historical fact stares us in the face—that capital is not found in the hands of the laborious and the abstemious, but is obtained by a process of confiscation of the results of labor and the imposition of privation on

the laborious. On this John Stuart Mill has the following pregnant passage :

“ In a rude and violent state of society it continually happens that the person who has capital is not the very person who has saved it, but someone who, being stronger, or belonging to a more powerful community, has possessed himself of it by plunder. And even in a state of things in which property was protected, the increase of capital has usually been, for a long time, mainly derived from privations which, though essentially the same with saving, are not generally called by that name, because not voluntary. The actual producers have been slaves, compelled to produce as much as force could extort from them, and to consume as little as the self-interest or the usually very slender humanity of their taskmasters would permit. (“ Principles of Political Economy”, bk. i., ch. v., sec. 5).

Capital always has been, and it always must be, obtained by the partial confiscation of the results of labor ; that is, it must be accumulated by labor which is not paid for, or by labor of which the payment is deferred. In slave communities the slave-owner becomes a great capitalist by appropriating the total results of his slaves' toil, and returning to them only such small portion of it as suffices to keep the wealth-producers in capable working order. That is, the wealth produced *minus* the amount consumed by the producers, goes to the owner, and that part of it which he does not consume is laid by to be employed as capital. And it is worth noting that no considerable accumulation of capital was made, and no rapid progress in civilisation was possible, until slavery was introduced. In a low stage of evolution men will not deny themselves present for the sake of future enjoyment, nor incur present toil for the sake of future ease. But when, as was neatly said to me, the barbarian discovered that he could utilise his conquered enemy to much greater advantage by making him work than by merely eating him, civilisation had a chance. Slavery was, in truth, a necessary stage in social evolution ; only by forced toil and forced privation was it possible to accumulate capital, and without capital no forms of complex industry are realisable. At the present time that which was done frankly and unblushingly in the slave *régime* is done under a veil of fine phrases, among which free contract, free laborer, and the like, play a striking part. But

in reality the proletarian is "only a wage-slave" as wage such portion of the product of his labor as enables him to exist at the standard of living current for his class at the time, and the remainder he must produce for his employer. And too often the wage of his labor is insufficient to keep him in capable condition, as is shown by the sombre fact that the mortality rate among the hard workers at death is far less than among the idlers. For the truth the slave of the past had no voice over the wage-worker of the present—that the master's interest to keep the slave in high production, and the employer's interest to get as much work as possible in a short time, tend to fling him to flag, and turn him into a young competitor, to be wrung out and thrown away. Before coming to the Socialist, the proletarian, his necessary correlative, is a person who is possessed of labor-force, and of nothing else. He is the incarnation of the "labor" necessary for the production of wealth, the third factor in our trio. This type, in our modern society, is numerous, and is rapidly increasing. He is the very antithesis of the really free laborer, who works on his own raw material with his own instruments of production, and produces for his own subsistence. In the country the proletarian is born on somebody else's land, and as he grows up he finds himself owner of nothing except his own body. The raw material around him is owned by the landlord; the instruments of production are owned by the capitalist farmers. As he cannot live on his own labor force, which can only become productive in conjunction with raw material and means of production (capital), he must either sell it or starve. Nominally he may be free; in reality he is no more free than is the slave. The slave is free to refuse to work, and to take in exchange the lash, the prison, the grave; and such freedom only has the present proletarian. If he refuses to work, he must take the lash of hunger, the prison of the workhouse, and, on continued refusal, the actual gaol. Nor can he put his own price on this solitary property of his, his body—he must sell it at the market rate; and in some agricultural counties of England at the present time the market rate

is from 7s. to 9s. a week. It is most significant of the bearing of the propertyless condition of the proletariat that many farmers object to the very slight improvement made in the laborer's position by his being permitted to rent at a high price a small allotment which he cultivates *for himself*. The ground of the farmer's objection is that even such small portion of freedom makes the laborer "too independent", and thereby drives up wages. To get the full advantage out of him, the proletariat must be wholly dependent for subsistence on the wages he earns. The town proletariat is in a similar position—neither land nor instrument of production is his; but he also has his labor force, and this he must sell, or he must starve.

We have arrived at the citadel of the Socialist position. Here is this unpropertied class, this naked proletariat, face to face with landlord and capitalist, who hold in their grip the means of subsistence. It must reach those means of subsistence or starve. The terms laid down for its acceptance are clear and decisive: "We will place within your hands the means of existence if you will produce sufficient to support us as well as yourselves, and if you will consent that the whole of your produce, over that which is sufficient to support you in a hardy, frugal life, shall be the property of us and of our children. If you are very thrifty, very self-denying, and very lucky, you may be able to save enough out of your small share of your produce to feed yourself in your old age, and so avoid falling back on us. Your children will tread the same mill-round, and we hope you will remain contented with the position in which Providence has placed you, and not envy those born to a higher lot." Needless to say, the terms are accepted by a proletariat ignorant of its own strength, and the way to profit is open to landlord and capitalist. The landlord, as we have seen, obtains his share of the gains by taxing the capitalist through raising his rent. The capitalist finds his profit in the difference between the wage he pays and the value of the produce of his hired workers. The wage is fixed by the competition for employment in the labor market, and limited in its downward tendency by the standard of living. The minimum wage is that on which the worker can exist, however hardly. For less than this he will not work. Every shilling above this is fought over, and wage rises and falls by competition. At

every stage of their relationship there is contest between employer and employed. If the wage is paid for a fixed day's work—as in nearly every trade—the employer tries to lengthen the day, the employed to shorten it; the longer the day, the greater the production of “surplus value”—*i.e.*, of the difference between the wage paid and the value produced. The employer tries to increase surplus value by pressing the workers to exertion; they lessen exertion in order not to hasten the time of their discharge. The employer tries still to increase surplus value by supplanting male labor with female and child labor at lower wages. The men resist such introduction, knowing that the ultimate result is to increase the amount taken by capital and to lessen that obtained by labor.

Now the Socialist alleges that these antithetical interests can never be reconciled while capital and labor are the possessions of two distinct classes. He points to the results brought about by the capitalist class while it was left unshackled by the State. The triumph of capitalism, and of *laissez-faire* between employers and employed, was from 1764 to 1833. During that time not only adults but young children were worked from fifteen to sixteen hours a day, and the production of surplus value was enormous. The huge fortunes of the Lancashire “cotton-princes” were built up by these overtaxed, quickly worn-out workers. The invention of machinery centupled man's productive power, and its benefits were monopolised by a comparatively small class; while those who made the wealth festered in closely crowded courts, those who appropriated the wealth luxuriated in country seats; one side of industrialism is seen in the Lancashire mansions, pleasure-grounds, and hothouses; the other in the reeking slums within the sound of the factory bells. Under a saner system of production, the introduction of machinery would have lightened toil, shortened the hours of necessary labor, and spread abundance where there was want. Under capitalistic industrialism it has built up huge fortunes for a few, and has reduced thousands to conditions of insanitary living and dreary degradation, worse than anything the world has hitherto known. It has poisoned our rivers, polluted our atmosphere, marred the beauty of our country's face, bestialised large numbers of our people. Improvements in machinery, which should be hailed with joy, are regarded

with dread by large classes of workers, because they will throw numbers out of work, and reduce men, who were skilled laborers with the old machinery, into the ranks of the unskilled. True, the result of the introduction of machinery has been to cheapen—in consequence of competition among capitalists—many commodities, especially articles of clothing. But this effect is little felt among the laboring classes. They can buy perhaps three coats where they used to buy one, but the easily worn-out shoddy, thought good enough for clothes sold in poor quarters, is but a poor exchange for the solid hand-made stuffs worn by their ancestors.

What, then, is the remedy proposed by Socialism? It is to deal with capital as it deals with land; to abolish the capitalist as well as the landlord, and to bring the means of production, as well as the natural agents on which they are used, under the control of the community.

Capital is, as we have seen, the result of unpaid labor; in a complex system like our own it is the result of co-operative—that is, of socialised—labor. It has been found by experience that division of labor increases productive ability, and in all forms of industry numbers now co-operate to turn out the finished product. In each commodity is embodied the labor of many workers, and the socialisation of labor has reached a very advanced stage. But while industrialism has been socialised in its aspect of labor, it has remained individualistic in its aspect of capital; and the results of the combined efforts of many are appropriated to the advantage of one, and when the one has exhausted his power of consumption he retains the remaining results, and employs them for the further enslavement and exploitation of labor. Thus labor constantly adds new links to the chain which fetters it, and is ever increasing the capital which, let out at interest by its owners, becomes ever a heavier tax upon itself. Socialism contends that these unconsumed results of socialised labor ought not to pass into the hands of individuals to be used by them for their own profit; but should pass either into the industrial funds of the several trades that produce them, or into a central industrial exchequer. In either case, these funds created by past labor would be used for the facilitation of present and future labor. They would be available for the introduction of improved machinery,

for the opening up of new industries, for the improvement of means of communication, and for similar undertakings. Thus, in a very real sense, capital would become only the deferred payment of labor, and the whole results of toil would be constantly flowing back upon the toilers. Under such conditions, fixed capital or plant would, like land, be held for purposes of use by the workers who used it. Its replacement would be a constant charge on the commodities it helped to produce. A machine represents so much human labor; that embodied labor takes part in producing the finished commodity as much as does the palpable labor of the human worker who superintends the machine; that worker does not produce the whole value added in the factory to the material brought into it, and has no claim to that whole value. The wear and tear of the machine is an offset, and must be charged on the products, so that when the machine is worn out there may be no difficulty in its replacement. Under such conditions also the distinction between employers and employed would disappear. All would be members of industrial communities, and the necessary foremen, superintendents, organisers, and officers of every kind, would be elected as the officers of trades unions are elected at the present time.

Poverty will never cease so long as any class or any individuals have an interest in the exploitation of others. While individuals hold capital, and other individuals cannot exist unless that capital is used for their employment, the first class will prey upon the second. The capitalists will not employ unless they can "make a profit" out of those they hire to work for them; that is, unless they pay them less than the value of the work produced. But if one man is to have value for which he has not worked, another must have less than the value of his work; and while one class grows wealthy on unpaid labor, another must remain poor, giving labor without return. Socialism would give to each return for labor done, but it recognises no claim in the idle to grow fat on the produce of the industrious.

Interest on capital, paid to individuals, has—as is obvious from the foregoing—no place in Socialism. Strongly as Socialism protests against the whole system of which landlords and capitalists form an integral part, it reserves its uttermost reprobation for the theory which justifies a class

of the latter in living solely on money drawn as interest on investments. If a man possesses three or four thousand pounds he can invest them, and live all his life long on the interest without ever doing a stroke of honest work, and can then bequeath to some one else the right to live in idleness; and so on in perpetuity. Money in the capitalist system is like the miraculous oil in the widow's cruse—it can always be spent and never exhausted. A man in sixty years will have received in interest at five per cent. three times his original fortune, and although he may have spent the interest, and thus have spent every penny of his fortune three times over, he will yet possess his fortune as large as it was when he began. He has consumed in commodities three times the sum originally owned, and yet is not one penny the worse. Other people have labored for him, fed him, clothed him, housed him, and he has done nothing in exchange. The Socialist argument against this form of interest lies in a nutshell: a man earns £5; he gives labor for which he receives in exchange a power of possession over £5 worth of commodities; he desires only to consume £1 worth now, and to defer the consumption of the remaining £4. He buys his £1 worth of commodities, and considers himself repaid for the fifth portion of his work by possessing and consuming these. But he expects to put out his saved £4 at interest, and would consider himself hardly used if, fourteen years hence, when he desired to exercise his power of consumption, deferred for his own convenience, that power had not increased although he had done nothing to increase it. Yet it can only be increased by other people's labor being left unpaid for, while he is paid twice over for his; and this arrangement the Socialist stamps as unjust. So long as capital remains in the hands of individuals, interest will be demanded by them for its use, and will be perforce paid; and so long also will exist an idle class, which will consume without producing, and will remain a burden on the industrious, who must labor to support these as well as themselves, and must produce sufficient for all.

Now, Socialism aims at rendering impossible the existence of an idle class. No healthy adult but will have to work in exchange for the things he requires. For the young, freedom from labor; they have to prepare for life's work. For the aged, freedom from labor: they have

worked, and at eventide should come rest. For the sick also, freedom from labor; and open hospitals for all, without distinction of class, where tendance and all that skill can do shall be at the service of each. But for the strong and the mature, no bread of idleness, no sponging upon other people. With division of labor will come also division of leisure; the disappearance of the languid lady, full of *ennui* from sheer idleness, will entail the disappearance of the overworked slavey, exhausted from unending toil; and there will be two healthy women performing necessary work, and enjoying full leisure for study, for art, for recreation, where now are the over-lazy and the over-driven.

In thus condemning the existence of an idle class, Socialism does not assail all the individuals who now compose it. These are not to blame for the social conditions into which they have been born; and it is one of the most hopeful signs of the present Socialist movement, that many who are working in it belong to the very classes which will be abolished by the triumph of Socialist principles. The man who has inherited a fortune, and has embraced Socialism, would do no good by throwing it away and plunging into the present competitive struggle; all he can do is to live simply, to utilise his position of advantage as a pedestal on which to place his advocacy of Socialism, and to employ his money in Socialist propaganda.

It is feared by some that the success of the Socialist movement would bring about the crushing of individualism and an undue restriction of liberty. But the Socialist contends that the present terrible struggle for existence is the worst enemy of individualism, and that for the vast majority individuality is a mere phrase. Exhausting toil and ever-growing anxiety, these crush out individuality, and turn the eager promising lad into the harassed drudge of middle age. How many capable brains are wasted, how many original geniuses lost to the nations they might illuminate, by the strife for mere livelihood? The artist fritters away his genius in "pot-boilers"; the dramatist writes down to the piece that will "pay", and harnesses his delicate fancy into coarse burlesque full of wretched witticisms; in the stress of the struggle to live, patient study and straining after a great ideal become impossible. Individualism will only develop fully when Socialism has

lifted off all shoulders the heavy burden of care, and has given to all leisure to think and to endeavor.

Nor is the fear of undue restriction of liberty better founded than that of the crushing out of individualism. One kind of liberty, indeed, will be restricted—the liberty to oppress and to enslave other people. But with this exception liberty will be increased. Only the very wealthy are now free. The great majority of people must work, and their choice of work is very limited. The poor must take what work they can get, and their complaint is not that they are compelled to work, but that they often cannot get work to do. In satisfying the complex wants of the civilised human being there is room for all the most diverse capacities of work; and if it be said that there are unpleasant kinds of work that must be done, which none would willingly undertake, it may be answered that those kinds of work have to be done now, and that the compulsion of the community would not be a greater restriction of personal liberty than the present compulsion of hunger; and further, that it would be easy to make a short period of unpleasant toil balance a long period of pleasant; and that it would be far better to have such tasks divided among a number, so that they would press very lightly upon each, than have them, as now, pushed on to a comparatively few, whose whole lives are brutalised by the pressure. The very strictest organisation of labor by the community that can be imagined, would be to the great majority far less oppressive than the present system, for at the worst, it would but control an extremely small portion of each working day, and would leave the whole of the rest of the existence free, to be used at the pleasure of the individual, untrammelled by anxiety and harassing care for the mere necessities of life. The pride in skill, the stimulus of honorable ambition, the pleasure of success, all these would be present, as they are to-day; but instead of being the privilege of the few, they would brighten the life of all.

A profound moral impulse really underlies the whole of the Socialist movement. It is a revolt against the callous indifference of the majority in the "comfortable classes" to the woful condition of large numbers of the workers. It is an outburst of unselfish brotherhood, which cannot bear to sit at ease while others suffer, which claims to share the common human lot, and to bear

part of the burden now pressing with crushing weight on the shoulders of the poor. It detests the theory that there must always be hewers of wood and drawers of water for a luxurious class, and proclaims that human degradation lies in idle living, not in earnest work. It would have all work, that all may have leisure, and would so distribute the necessary work of the world that none may be crushed by it, but that all may be disciplined. And this very outburst of human brotherhood is in itself a proof that society is evolving Socialismwards, and that the evolution of humanity is reaching a stage in which sympathy is triumphing over selfishness, and the desire for equality of happiness is becoming a potent factor in human conduct. The Socialist ideal is one which could not meet with wide acceptance if humanity were not marching towards its realisation.

On one matter the Socialist movement, both abroad and at home, has set itself in opposition to science and to right reason—*e.g.*, on the law of population. It is easy to see how this opposition has arisen, and it may be hoped that when Socialists in general disentangle the scientific statement of facts from Malthus' unwise applications of them, Socialism and prudential restraint will be seen to be indissolubly united. Malthus accurately pointed out that population has a tendency to increase beyond the means of subsistence; that as it presses on the available means, suffering is caused; and that it is kept within them by what he termed "positive checks"—*i.e.*, a high death-rate, especially among the children of the poor, premature death from disease, underfeeding, etc. The accuracy of his statement has been proved up to the hilt by Charles Darwin, who describes with abundant illustrations the struggle for existence—a struggle which is the direct result of the fact stated in the law of population, of the tendency of all animated things to increase beyond their food supply; this has led, and still leads, to the survival of those who are fittest for the conditions of the struggle. Unhappily, Malthus added to his scientific exposition some most unfortunate practical advice; he advised the poor not to marry until, practically, they had reached middle life. The poor felt, with natural indignation, that in addition to all their other deprivations they were summoned by Malthus to give up the chief of the few pleasures left to them, to surrender

marriage, to live in joyless celibacy through the passion-season of life, to crush out all the impulses of love until by long repression these would be practically destroyed. Under such circumstances it is little wonder that "Malthusianism" became a word hated by the poor and denounced by those who sympathised with them. It is true that the advice of Malthus as to the putting off of marriage has been and is very widely followed by the middle classes; but it is perfectly well known that the putting off of marriage does not with them mean the observance of celibacy, and the shocking prostitution which is the curse of every Christian city is the result of the following of the advice of Malthus so far as marriage is concerned. It is obvious that Malthus ignored the strength of the sexual instinct, and that the only possible result of the wide acceptance of his teaching would be the increase of prostitution, an evil more terrible than that of poverty. But the objection rightly raised to the practical teaching of Malthus ought not to take the form of assailing the perfectly impregnable law of population, nor is it valid against the teachings of Neo-Malthusians, who advise early marriage and limitation of the family within the means of existence.

The acceptance of this doctrine is absolutely essential to the success of Socialism. Under a system in which children are forced to labor, they may begin to "keep themselves" at a very early age; but under a Socialist system, where education will occupy childhood and youth, and where old age is to be free from toil, it will soon be found that the adult working members will not permit an unlimited increase of the mouths which they have to fill. Facilitate production as we may, it will always take more hours to produce the necessaries of life for families of ten or twelve than for families of three or four. The practical enforcement of the question will probably come from the women; highly educated women, full of interest in public work and taking their share in public duty, will not consent to spend year after year of their prime in nothing but expecting babies, bearing babies, and suckling babies. They will rebel against the constant infliction of physical discomfort and pain, and will insist on the limitation of the family as a condition of marriage. The sooner this is recognised by Socialists the better, for at present

they waste much strength by attacking a doctrine which they must sooner or later accept.

A glance backward over the history of our own country, since the Reform Bill of 1832 opened the gate of political power to those outside the sacred circle of the aristocracy, will tell how an unconscious movement towards Socialism has been steadily growing in strength. Our Factory Acts, our Mines Regulation Acts, our Education Acts, our Employers' Liability Acts, our Land Acts—all show the set of the current. The idea of the State as an outside power is fading, and the idea of the State as an organised community is coming into prominence. In the womb of time the new organism is growing: shall the new birth come in peace or in revolution, heralded by patient endeavor or by roar of cannon? Who can tell? But this one thing I know, that come it will, whether men work for it or hinder; for all the mighty, silent forces of evolution make for Socialism, for the establishment of the Brotherhood of Man.



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