

# S O C I A L I S M.

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BY W. P. BLACK, ESQ.

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The problem of society—how to dispose the relations of men so as to secure that highest practicable good which is the right of each—is an old and vexed one. Philosophers have dreamed and written, and poets have sung of it, with loving earnestness and lofty enthusiasm. And yet, the men who wield the power of the world have, as a rule, refused to give audience, and have pronounced these dreams Utopian; while in our later days a dread import has—in the popular mind—attached to the whole scheme of socialism—so much misunderstood because of the fearful tragedies which have been wrought under cover of its name; or in the name of some movement supposed to have emanated therefrom, and which movements have been characterized by most dire excesses. But let us remember that the excesses of these, in whatever guise they have wrought or ruled, or in the anguish of their overthrow, are

## NOT THE SPIRIT OF SOCIALISM.

They are only the sore travail of that spirit, seeking fruition through faulty human agencies.

What then is this Nemesis of modern civilization, which affrights conservatism throughout the earth? What is this web whose meshes seem spread in the darkness so that it entangles the whole world? What is this fateful shadow coming out of the past, vexing the present, and filling our ears with sad questionings of the future?

The light by which it has chiefly wrought in modern times

## THE INSPIRATION OF SOCIALISM

is the suffering of humanity, and the comparatively low estate which its masses occupy under existing circumstances ; while the occasion of the socialist organization—and that which gives it the wonderful cohesive force which it so often manifests in the face of overwhelming opposition, is the actual existence of oppression and hardship resultant upon, or incident to, the present state of general society ; hardship that is without adequate means of relief—oppression which can neither be escaped nor redressed. The spirit of Socialism proper, as displayed by its advocates and apologists, is fitly embodied in its grand motto, "*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.*"

I have said that Socialism is the protest of the oppressed against, the impeachment by the suffering of, the existing order, and advisedly ; for while many of the great apostles of Socialism have not felt in their own persons the oppressions of a selfish society, nor suffered "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," they have been men of such quick and ready sympathies that, looking upon the poor and the wretched with a sublime sense of brotherhood, they have entered into their sufferings, and made their wrongs their own—"remembering them that were bound as bound with them." Hence it is that the writers who have advocated Socialism have manifested such

## PASSIONATE EARNESTNESS

in their warfare upon, such vehemence in their accusations against, existing society and its organization and methods ; the legacy of a long past, during which we are glad to believe the world has been surely, if slowly, progressing toward a coming noonday of light, justice and peace. Yet, when we have made due allowance for the exaggeration of vehemence, the prejudice and blindness of passion, which doubtless affect much of the complaint preferred, we must all acknowledge that society as now ordered, does not meet any ideal, and that therefore this impeachment and protest are entitled to patient consideration ; at least by all who desire to seek the best. And particularly when the passion of the outcry demands excuse because of the groans and travail of myriads of our brothers, and the vehemence is quickened at the portrayal of distress confessedly widespread, and alleged to be consequent upon injustice. Let us be patient, therefore, in our consideration of these matters ; for in order to estimate rightly the potency of Socialism as a factor in our own social evolution—in our society and politics,

has been the torch, revolution; and the gleam of its destructions has come so near to our own doors that our ears have grown used to the clamor of the denunciation it has evoked. And sitting as we do, within the environment of this civilization which Socialism attacks, we are prone to join in the outcry against what seems its impious assaults, till the voice of reason is drowned, and we condemn the whole movement unheard, regarding it as fitly typed by that incarnation of despoiling force which blackened Paris with the smoke of its sad ruin—as if to hide the blood stains of violence unrestrained—that anguish of

WRETCHEDNESS IN POWER.

But, that we may be just, that we may be aided to wise judgment, let us for once think rather of this spirit as a suppliant than an enemy; maddened at times to unjust violence, by a prayer long denied, but a suppliant still, urging the plea of the moaning multitude. And let us consider that plea, framed as a charge against existing wrong.

Socialism is defined by Webster as “a theory of society which advocates a more precise, orderly and harmonious arrangement of the social relations of mankind than that which has hitherto prevailed.” He gives as the synonym, “communism,” which he defines as “the reorganizing of society, or the doctrine that it should be reorganized, by regulating property, industry, and the sources of livelihood, and also the domestic relations and social morals of mankind; especially the doctrine of a community of property, or the regulation of individual rights in property. In the American Cyclopaedia Socialism is declared to be “the name given to the philosophy or doctrine which teaches that the social relations of mankind are susceptible of a more precise, orderly and harmonious arrangement than that which obtains in existing society.”

It is not correct to speak of communism as an exact synonym for socialism; for while it is true that all communists are socialists, it is far from true that all socialists hold the distinguishing tenet of communism—that community of all goods

which involves the total abolition of all individual property rights. Communism and communal organization are but methods adopted, or theories advanced, by certain members of the great socialist order for the accomplishment of the common purpose; and while it is probably true that most socialists are communists in principle, yet communism is not an essential element of the socialist creed.

STEPHEN PEARL ANDREWS,

an earnest socialist of our own country, says:—

“Socialism proclaims that the individual has an inalienable right to that social position which his powers and natural organization qualify him, and which his tastes incline him, to fill; and consequently, to that constitution or arrangement of the property relations, or other relations of society, whatsoever that may be, which will enable him to enjoy and exercise that right—the adaptation of social conditions to each individual, with all its peculiarities and fluctuations of taste, instead of the moulding of the individual into conformity with the rigid requirements of a preconcerted social organization. . . . Socialism demands the proper, legitimate and just reward of labor. It demands that the interests of all shall be so arranged that they shall co-operate, instead of clashing with and counteracting each other. It demands economy in the production and uses of wealth, and the consequent abolition of wretchedness and poverty.”

While John Stuart Mill tells us, as a result of his study of this subject, that:

“Socialism by no means excludes private ownership of articles of consumption; the exclusive right of each to his or her share of the produce when received, either to enjoy, to give, or to exchange it. . . . The distinctive feature of Socialism is not that all things are in common, but that production is carried on upon the common account, and that the instruments of production are held as common property.”

Socialism is the protest of the oppressed against the existing social order, using the term social in its broad sense, as including all the inter-relations of mankind, coupled with the purpose to substitute for that which is condemned such system as will most perfectly effectuate the highest development, usefulness and happiness of all, by securing the utmost liberty, power or influence of each member of the human brotherhood. It is the impeachment, by the suffering, of a society so arranged that it tolerates, if it do not in fact produce, the hardships and inequalities whence suffering results; while its advocates urge a recasting of society upon a new basis, with a view to alleviating, and ultimately altogether obviating, the grounds of present complaint.

as yet but in infancy—we must not only know the general features of this movement, but must acquaint ourselves measurably with the particulars of its complaint, that we may determine how far it is just in its warfare. For so far as its contention is just, it is assured of eventual triumph—when, or by what processes, who shall yet venture to predict? So far as the indictment can be fairly sustained, we must seek and find a remedy, or we must look for the punishment which finally attends as certainly upon the supine toleration of confessed wrong as upon its deliberate commission.

Nor is it a sufficient answer to these charges of Socialism to prefer counter charges, or to question the wisdom or efficiency of the measures of reform it proposes. We may with truth charge upon Socialism, or at least upon socialists, much

#### UNCALLED FOR VIOLENCE,

much intolerance of opinion, much laxity upon certain moral questions, much that is grotesque and chimerical. And at the same time we may fairly question the wisdom or practicability of many of the reformatory measures urged upon our consideration. To all this it is a sufficient reply, that if the world's wisest have been so long in learning so little, and if their best results confessedly need amending, it is irrational to meet a just complaint from the lips of those in humble life, or enthusiasts become their advocates, by saying: Because your views are not the wisest, your moral teaching the most strict and correct, your plans of reform the most practical, and obviously adapted to the proposed reforms, we will cast you out and refuse your prayer. If wrongs exist

#### IT IS OUR DUTY

to attempt their righting, and not to say: "We will stand by the old because the sufferers propose nothing manifestly better, or because, mixed in their plan is much of evil." For after all, in a case of this kind, methods are a secondary, though vastly important consideration. The primary question is: Does Socialism make out a case for relief as against American society—the social organization of the Republic?

The chief charges brought forward by socialists against society in general, are: 1. That as a result of the present organization of society, the present customs of civilized nations, and of the principles which society has adopted for its government, there is an utterly disproportionate amount of poverty. That the wealth of the world, by which is meant the surplus of pro-

duction over actual cost, is now held by a comparatively small number, and that number now decreasing rather than increasing, when compared with the increase in the total population. That as this process of cumulating the world's surplus goes forward, it is becoming more and more difficult for one to emerge from the ranks of the laboring poor and capture a place among the rich. That while the rich grow richer the poor grow poorer, and their opportunities are becoming fewer. That thus the world's power is being concentrated, or is now vested in a few hands, determined not by merit and industry, but increasingly by chance, the accident of birth, or the fortune of superior acuteness, (accompanied by a lack of that real and rare honesty which scrupulously observes the unguarded and unenforceable rights of others, particularly the ignorant and confiding,) and these alike often united with unfitness for authority; so that, by reason of the money power drifting largely into unworthy hands, there is an increasing tendency to the oppression of the laboring poor, and the defrauding of the industrious by denying to them a fair share in the legitimate fruits of their own production, allowing to them but a minimum price as the result of their unremitting toil. That thus more and more the workman toils not for his own, but for another's profit; and, while nominally a freeman, becomes in fact a slave. That as a result of this condition of affairs, the laborer, robbed of all the essentials of liberty, is also denied hope, and deprived of the most effective incentives to noble and progressive life.

5. It is charged as a result of this increasing poverty of the many, whereby the wealthy few are enabled to control the laboring masses, that there is an increasing amount of

#### ENFORCED IDLENESS,

not because of an increase of those averse to labor, but because of a lack of fairly remunerative occupation for all of those desiring to work. That while this grievance is not felt in times of general prosperity, nor in sparsely settled localities, in which cases the demand for labor generally equals or exceeds the supply, so that there is sufficient and remunerative work for all workers, yet in the great centres of population, and particularly in times of great financial stringency and business depression, there is so hard a result of the present social order, that, while the volume of money remains confessedly undiminished, and adequate to the needs of all, yet large numbers of would-be laborers are compelled to become dependents or "tramps;" to become spiritless or vicious.

A third charge is, that as a direct result of these grievances, undue poverty and enforced idleness, there is an

INCREASE OF CRIME,

and an awful abounding of suffering, which are sapping at once the virtue and strength of society—for virtue and enduring strength in society are inseparably conjoined—and that the prime responsibility of all this is fairly chargeable against society itself; as also the responsibility for that widespread ignorance which must always exist among the very poor, and among those whose whole time is demanded by the exactions of hard employers, to enable them to earn the mere necessaries of life.

And it is claimed that this condition of things is not unavoidable, a “necessary evil,” a state resulting inevitably from the structure of the world or the orderings of nature, and therefore beyond remedy. There is enough produced in the world to keep all and each from suffering—to furnish each and all with reasonable abundance. It cannot be the highest form of human society, nor one that can be tolerated, they say, which permits a few to sit at ease as spectators of the strife, while the many are thrown into the arena to engage in combat with the wild beasts :—

WANT, IGNORANCE, VICE, CRIME AND DESPAIR!

And that adjustment or reformation of society, which not only permits but insures the superfluity enjoyed by a few, who usually are not producers in the world’s industries, at the expense of the many who labor wearily—in want and without hope—is arraigned as essentially vicious and radically unjust.

Put briefly, the charge of the socialist is, that it is the direct and inevitable tendency of the present system of society wrongfully to deprive the laboring population of their fair share in the world’s surplus, turning that surplus into the hands of a selfish few, who thus become masters by money, and not by merit; making of the masses slaves of the best and most favored, and of the rest either idling vagabonds or criminals—while vicious, idle, and oppressed alike suffer unceasingly, and the cry of the Human voices increasing woe!

The one feature or principle obtaining universally among modern civilized peoples, which socialists hold responsible for most of these evils, and of which it is claimed they are all in large measure a direct result, is the principle of competition. It is argued that this principle is vicious in tendency and unjust in operation. Competition, of course, whether among laborers for employment, capitalists for the prizes of speculation and in-

vestment, tradesmen for patronage, or manufacturers for their success, as well as in all branches of human industry, is universal in this age. And we have been accustomed to regard it as "the life of trade," the occasion of excellence, and the source of success. Yet the socialist challenges this principle as the root-evil of the social order. The argument is, that under the operation of competition at all times, but particularly in times when the labor market is overstocked, the burden of the whole struggle falls, directly or remotely, on the laborer—the effort being to force down the cost of production, or, in other words, the price of labor; and labor itself is thus put up for sale, the prize of the desired and needed employment being awarded to him who offers the most work for the least sum. That as a result of this, labor comes to be esteemed contemptible, and there is an increasing struggle to escape from the labor-fold, either through hard, and often dishonest, practices, leading to the selfish accumulation of means, or more often, as the former becomes more difficult, through downright vice and crime. And that even when the temptations to actual dishonesty are resisted yet the tendency of this system is to the degrading of the virtuous. That the holiest and noblest of the human motives are made, under the stress of necessity, subservient to those less worthy—as a needy man's love of family will compel him to the most extreme competition as against his fellow workman, and to resort to the most selfish, if not actually dishonorable, practices, in order to secure that which will enable him to minister to those directly dependent upon him—love stimulating selfishness, and fraternal obligation being sacrificed to domestic need.

Concerning the operation of this principle of competition, Mr. Mill has well written :

It is grounded on opposition of interests, not on harmony of interests, and under it every one is required to find his place by a struggle, by pushing others back, or being pushed back by them. Socialists consider this system of private war (as it may be termed) between everyone and everyone, especially fatal in an economical point of view, and in a moral. Morally considered, its evils are obvious. It is the parent of envy, hatred and all uncharitableness; it makes everyone the natural enemy of all others who cross his path and everyone's path is constantly liable to be crossed. Under the present system hardly any one can gain, except by the loss or disappointment of one or many others. In a well-constituted community, everyone would be a gainer by every other person's successful exertions; while now we gain by each other's loss, and lose by each other's gain, and our greatest gains come from the worst loss of all, from death—the death of those who are nearest, and should be dearest to us.

If this be a fair picture of the natural operation of the prin-



principle of competition; (and despite the fact that to competition we owe many of the best results of modern civilization, and the highest excellence of production, can any fair minded person deny that the general features of this picture are true?)—what shall we say of the tendency and results of this principle when introduced among the poor, and stimulated at once by love, the highest power of the soul, and necessity, the most absolute force in life? Let us look at the picture of these results among the poor, as drawn by one of the world-famous socialist writers, Louis Blanc; and though there are special features of his picture attributable to the particular institutions of French law and society, let us ask if it is overdrawn, or at least beyond what is naturally to be expected from the coöperation of these agencies under circumstances conducive to their extreme development? He says:

“Competition is for the poor a system of extermination. Is the poor man a member of society or an enemy to it? We ask for an answer.

All around him he finds the soil preoccupied. Can he cultivate the earth for himself? No, for the right of the first occupant has become a right of property. Can he gather the fruits which the hand of God ripens on the path of man? No, for, like the soil, the fruits have been appropriated. Can he hunt for fish? No, for that is a right dependent upon the government. Can he draw water from a spring enclosed in a field? No, for the proprietor of the field is, in virtue of his right to the field, proprietor of the fountain. Can he, dying of hunger and thirst, stretch out his hands for the charity of his fellow-men? No, for there are laws against begging. Can he, exhausted by fatigue, and without a refuge, lie down to sleep upon the pavement of the street? No, for there are laws against vagabondage. Can he, flying from the cruel native land where everything is denied him, seek the means of living far from the place where life was given him? No, for it is not permitted to change your country except upon conditions which the poor man cannot fulfill.

What, then, can the unhappy man do? He will say, ‘I have hands to work with, I have intelligence. I have youth, I have strength. Take all this, and in return give me a morsel of bread.’ This is what the workingmen do say. But even here the poor man may be answered, “I have no work to give you.” What is he to do then? \* \* \*

What is competition from the point of view of the workman? It is work put up at auction. A contractor wants a workman.

Three present themselves. How much for your work? Half a crown; I have a wife and children. Well, and how much for yours? Two shillings; I have a wife but no children. Very well, and how much for yours? One and eight pence is enough for me, I am single. Then you shall have the work. It is done, the bargain is struck. And what are the other two workmen to do? It is to be hoped they will die quietly of hunger. But what if they take quietly to thieving? Never fear, we have the police. To murder? We have the hangman. As for the lucky one, his triumph is only temporary. Let a fourth workman make his appearance, strong enough to fast every other day, and his price will run down still lower; then there will be a new outcast, a new recruit for the prison perhaps!

Will it be said that these melancholy results are exaggerated; that at all events they are only possible when there is not work enough for the hands that seek employment? But I ask in answer, Does the principle of competition contain, within itself, any method by which this murderous disproportion is to be avoided? If one branch of industry is in want of hands, who can answer for it that, in the confusion created by universal competition, another is not overstocked? And if out of thirty-four millions of men twenty are already reduced to thieving for a living, this would suffice to condemn the principle.

But who is so blind as not to see that under the system of unlimited competition the continuous fall of wages is no exceptional circumstance, but a necessary and general fact? Has the population a limit which it cannot exceed? . . . It is an industrial system by means of which the working classes are forced to exterminate one another." \* \* \*

So writes Louis Blanc in that work "*Organization du Travail*," called by Villetard, "That detestable and fatal pamphlet." Fatal to selfish ease and heartless indifference amid the miseries of others, it may be, and detestable to those timid souls who consider that the existing order represents the highest practicable good.

But to those who realize the truth that society has only grown to its present measure of justice and beneficence through centuries of travailing of the suffering ones, and who believe that, while under the present order, probably a number less than one in twenty of the civilized populations of the globe hold the entire surplus of wealth, the remainder having no more than the bare necessaries of life at best, and a large portion of them compelled often to suffer from hunger, lack of fit and sufficient clothing, and attendant diseases and ills, the ultimate of possi-

ble good has not even been approached. Nor, in the light of such an arraignment of the present evils and tendencies of society, will it seem strange to the thoughtful and unprejudiced that socialists are not content to abide the slow evolution of further ages, but demand with vehement earnestness, the introduction of a new order, based on radically different principles, which, it is claimed, will speedily secure the highest well-being of society, by opening to each individual all the avenues of advancement and happiness.

It is worthy of note that in Europe many of the best thinkers, even while opposing the theories proposed by the socialists for the renovation of society, yet admit that European society is substantially

OPEN TO THESE CHARGES.

They argue of course that the socialist's picture is drawn too exclusively in the shade—that the laws are being constantly modified in the interests of the masses—that governments are growing more appreciative of their humble citizens—and that, above all, the tone of modern society is tinged with mercy, and informed by justice toward the poor, so that the tendencies of the times are favorable toward the worthy laboring classes rather than hostile to them.

In our own land, by reason of our economic conditions, there is as yet but little food for communism, but little territory for its present occupancy, but little occasion, comparatively speaking, for its activity, and little ground for its complaints. Yet, while with us it is a comparative stranger to the soil, still our national traditions are most favorable to promulgation, and our forms of government offer it scope for proving its activity and power. Nor are there wanting in its ranks thinkers, who, while admitting that it is, as to European society, a remedial or revolutionary force, called forth by existing wrongs, yet maintain that it should, in our new land, and in our developing civilization, play its part benignly as a preventive power. There are grounds for the hope cherished by such that under the inspiration of our national traditions, society may be so constructed as to escape many of the occasions of complaint, and not settle into final evil shape, so crystalized that change can only follow breaking. No socialist will ask a better general wording of his creed than he finds in the opening passage of the Declaration of Independence: "That all men are created equal—that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights—that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights governments are instituted among

men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed—that whenever any form of government (or society) becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.” But as I have said before, the inspiration of all Socialism is in the sufferings of the masses, while the occasion of its organization and activity is the hardship and oppression of the lower orders of society. And inasmuch as in our land there is comparatively little of extreme poverty, enforced idleness, or induced crime and suffering, while our political institutions have at least a tendency to prevent rigid class distinctions, or real hardship and oppression of any large body of our citizens—for these reasons Socialism has as yet taken but little root in our own land, and found but few adherents among our own people. Still, even in this exceptionally favored country there are great centres of population where the very poor abound, and there are times of financial distress when willing workers find no employment; when want and idleness are joined in a malign trinity, in the working of misery we only guess at, by dark-browed crime.

#### OUT OF THE SHADOWS

of such a time we are but just emerging as a people. But from many the shadows of these years will never pass away; for the strong men have bowed under the beatings of adversity's long storm; the children have cried in vain for food; the mother, though ready, like the pelican, to stay her young with her own blood, has found no way to keep the wolf from the door, and the grassy barrows of the uncomplaining dead—are the lasting memorials of a time and a society where, with no decrease either in the volume of money or the means of subsistence, and where and when there has consequently been enough for the needs of all and to spare, there has yet been such a failure of the social system in existence that society has cast many of her helpless children into the Potter's field, while she has driven yet others into the paths of vice as tramps and vagrants, or has caged them behind prison bars. The organic law of the socialist movement, the fact that its purpose is to remedy social malformation producing poverty and distress, brings this result: In times of great prosperity, with the consequent amelioration of the condition of the labor classes, socialism wanes and almost disappears. Whenever and wherever, therefore, the burden of adversity is even measurably lifted from the working classes,

the order languishes and its activity declines. It cannot have escaped the attention of close observers that with the return of prosperity within the recent past, the vigor of the socialist movement has disappeared, while the party as such, has seemed to lose its cohesiveness and all aggressive power. So long as the present favorable financial and labor conditions continue, this effect upon socialism will also continue, at least measurably. But with the return of times of depression and financial disaster, felt all the more severely in proportion as our trade and labor centres multiply in numbers and grow in population—and all experience assures us that such times will come again—we must expect the revival of socialism, with the advantage of at least a nucleus of organization, which will be preserved, without doubt, despite the prosperous times.

Nor can it be denied that in American society, even when its conditions are most favorable to the wage class, there exists in a marked degree many of those evils which are the subjects of socialist complaint. We must admit, for example, that there is a sad disproportion between the affluent and impoverished, accompanied by a lamentable lack of apparent hearty sympathy for, and a disposition substantially to aid, the poor, on the part of those who are the fortunate winners in the lottery of life; for the general tendency of the acquisition of riches is to the intensifying of that selfishness of purpose without which wealth can rarely be amassed. \* \* It is a fact beyond question that in the present ordering even of our own society, there is a standing struggle between labor and capital; and that though in times of prosperity the laborer is so far fairly rewarded that he asserts no ground of complaint, yet as a rule he does not so share in the results of his labor as to be able, especially if he have a troop of little ones about him, to accumulate a store to succor him in the days of adversity. In no direction, however, does the socialist complain so bitterly, even in American life, as in that which, by allowing, compels the entering of children into the sharp struggle for the necessaries of life. That

#### CHILDREN OF TENDER YEARS

should be constrained to engage in laborious and exacting pursuits, whereby the child is debarred the opportunity of being much in the open air, of proper education, of proper child-life, is a misfortune which borders closely upon crime. Yet this principle of universal competition, which obtains in our labor system, not only allows the entering of such children in the lists, but as before stated, by allowing compels it. And for such compulsion society is directly responsible. The laborer whose

little ones multiply upon him, and whose wages have by competition been forced down to the lowest possible point, must press some of those children into service to eke out the scanty dole of arbitrary and exacting capital; and thus the lists are swelled of those who enter the arena in the life struggle that the few may more abundantly gather their mighty stores of wealth. And employers encourage this! It is cheaper than adult service, and the child can soon attain a skill enabling it to do the work almost if not quite as well as the man. Besides, by taking this much work from men and committing it to children, a number of men are thrown or kept out of employment, who at once enter into competition for the remainder of the work, and this brings wages for such portion down; while for that assigned to children there are countless applicants, and the employer fixes at his own will upon a salary often so low that he would blush to tell it to you, if he could not at the same time assure you that the little workers were children of his operatives, helping out the father's wages, or that several children out of the same family were employed together, whose aggregate earnings would not be altogether contemptible. In nearly every branch of mechanical industry, as in mercantile pursuits, this system,

PREGNANT WITH FUTURE MISERY,

obtains to a great extent. A writer in a Cincinnati paper says:

"There are 25,000 Massachusetts children, between the ages of 5 and 15, who have never been to any sort of school whatever. The practice of putting tender children into factories, defrauding them at once of their childhood and their education, is constantly growing. Parents are the ones most to blame for it. There is a terrible struggle for life in the Massachusetts factory towns. Over-competition has forced wages down to the lowest notch above the starvation point. In average cases it requires the combined labor of a father and two children to earn over \$600 a year. The feeble strength of every child above 10, sometimes below it, represents so much bread and meat in the family. Rents near the mills are extravagantly high. The unnatural method of making bread-winners of babies reacts ruinously in other directions. It brings wages down all around. Employers will not pay men a dollar when they can hire children at fifty cents. So adults must cheapen their prices in order to get work. More children must be thrown into the mills in order to get money to live on, and so the baby-devouring monster grows by what it feeds on."

Of the general charge of selfish injustice toward employes, I may be pardoned for presenting

## ONE OTHER ILLUSTRATION

given me by a socialist some months since, and which is of tragic import. It is true beyond question that in many stores and shops in our city, during these hard years past, and doubtless the same is true of other cities, employers have grown rich while behind their counters stood all day long weary young girls, who could not live honestly and honorably on the salary paid them, and this fact was known to their employers; and our people have tolerated this without rebuke! Vice could not but increase in such a case; and the same socialist made to me this sad and dreadful comment—that in these adverse times there had been woeful increase in the number of women of the street, more to be pitied than blamed, who beset even the laborer's path in their desperate struggle for bread!

Another charge of the socialist must be confessed as to our own society—viz., that, under the existing order, there is a frightful amount of crime, with its attendant evil consequences. And can the further charge be successfully refuted, that, in even the highest and middle walks of life, there is a growing debauchment of moral sentiment and laxity of conduct in the social relations which tend to show that the existing system is not adequate to the conservation of society against the assaults of vice and crime?

Socialism proposes

## REFORM THROUGH REORGANIZATION.

The methods suggested are many and diverse. All contemplate the recasting of society upon a different basis from that which now exists, and attempting its regulation by laws absolutely diverse from those which have hitherto obtained. Their proposals involve experiments as yet comparatively, if not wholly, untried—utterly untried upon any national scale—and mankind essays experiment cautiously and with much hesitation. The forcing of some of these experiments, as of the commune in Paris, has proved full of dreadful consequences, because of which all the more the spirit of conservatism in us holds by the past. But in the presence of admitted evils, the agitation for reform must be recognized as of value, even when not unmixed with ill. Better the tempest, with its disaster and wreck, than the dead calm with its miasm and pestilence! The presence of admitted evils in American society is the excuse for the existence of socialism, even with us, and demonstrates that it is a legitimate, and may hereafter prove a potent, factor either in the evolution or the revolution thereof. Let us hope that it may prove a help in the evolving of a higher type of society wherein

shall be a proper recognition of the needs and rights of all, and whereby shall be obviated wholly the occasion for revolution with its attendant disaster and experiment. And to this end let us be ready to consider fairly and patiently every charge of hardship or injustice involving the welfare of our fellows, with a purpose to aid in the right, for its peaceable triumph, and abiding dominion, that at the last we be not overwhelmed by its terrible uprising, which will surely come if we enthrone the wrong.

That we should become advocates of social reform in our recognition of the evils demanding speedy remedy, and thus should become

SOCIALISTS IN A TRUE SENSE,

does not involve our adoption of the special schemes urged by the order which has taken this name. That tenet, for instance, which is held by the great body of socialists in some form or other, communism, I cannot accept as either right in principle or calculated to permanently secure the object in furtherance of which it is advanced. While there are inequalities and differences of natural powers in different men, there will be differences and inequalities in their accumulations, the material results of their living. If the whole world could start upon an absolute property and social equality, within the first generation that equality would be displaced, and would disappear if society were left to liberty of individual action. And even if an effort were made, in violation of the socialists' fundamental maxim, to curtail the liberty of the individual, and to require the more able to strive, not for individual preferment, but for the advantage of all, under the constraint of arbitrary laws, the result could not but prove disastrous to the general welfare of society. The tendency would be to limit production, by taking away from the active and ambitious the incentives of selfish advantage, and at the same time removing from the improvident, the thriftless and the inert, the spur of necessity; so that while at first the leveling process might raise the plane of the life of the masses, after that there would follow a general and rapid subsidence of activity in production, with an inevitable drifting toward want and eventual barbarism. The world is not ready for such a system; and it may well be doubted if humanity will ever assume such a mold as to support it. If introduced by force now, it could not endure. Those who are qualified by nature to achieve successes would soon revolt at the burden put upon them, and against the divestiture of their liberty, even though sanctioned by the claim of the general good. The sen-



timent of fraternity is not yet strong enough to secure submission to the attempted enforcement of social equality, in the broad sense in which that word is used by the socialist, at the sacrifice of personal liberty; and not until the fraternal sentiment becomes so universal and so strong that it will be a delight to work for others, rather than for ones' own good, can communism be established consistently with the preservation of that individual freedom which is absolutely essential to the accomplishment of those best social results which alone can prove enduring. The doctrine of the commune seems to me to be the dream of visionaries, beautiful as a sentiment, yet utterly chimerical and impossible of present realization. But there is

A FAVORITE PROJECT OF SOCIALISTS,

akin to communism yet different from it, which to me appears to be thoroughly practicable, and worthy of steady and enlightened encouragement, and which is now being advocated quite generally among intelligent socialists—I refer to coöperative industry. Coöperation, not only between operatives in their work, but between capital and labor, is thoroughly practical and is commended by its justice. That the capitalist should invest his money in the great industries of the age, and should then accord to his operatives shares in the enterprise, upon an equitable basis, mutually satisfactory, is a course that can be adopted without injustice, and that, I believe, would prove mutually beneficial, securing to the capitalist always a fair return for his investment, and to the operatives a fair share in the products of their own industry. This is not a wholly untried experiment. Its results in England have proved highly satisfactory. The workman works in hope and a quickened vitality, for nothing so electrifies life as a sure hope—secures increased excellence of production and amount of return. Few capitalists, however, are at once sufficiently unselfish and enlightened to embark in such a venture, preferring to take all the proceeds of the industry above the lowest cost of production. Upon this principle, according to the dictates of natural justice, should be carried on, it seems to me, the great corporate enterprises of our day. Whether we shall come to this through the education of public sentiment, or the interference of government taking these enterprises into public charge, is a question which the event alone can determine. It is obvious that the world has often been afflicted with too much government, all government involving a measure of interference with absolute personal liberty. But while society remains as it is, experience and reason alike demonstrate the necessity of much governing, and

## THE QUESTION IS

in what direction shall government interfere in the relation of its citizens? Hitherto we have found in practice no better principle by which to determine the solution of this problem than that of subserving the greatest good of the greatest number. And, under the operation of this principle of government, which is perhaps of no higher origin than the mere power of the majority—the right of might—it seems to me inevitable that these corporate enterprises must at some time in the future be to a great extent popularized in their management, that is, brought under the control of the people, so that it shall not be in the power of a few men of great means by combination to make the whole country, in all its producing industries, tributary to these corporate money kings and magnates; because it appears to be, or likely to become, a necessity of the situation of the people. However this may eventuate, the socialist idea of coöperation in the various enterprises of modern society is surely destined to exercise a great and growing influence. We can not stop further to discuss the possibilities of this idea, nor its limitations, but must pass on.

Another demand of socialism which commends itself generally to the enlightened is that of compulsory education. In connection with this two other measures are proposed, both of which meet my approval. One is the substantial prohibition to children to become competitors in labor during the years in which they should be in school; the other is the shortening of the hours of labor. All of these measures I believe in. The state should see that its children have the means and the opportunity to acquire a substantial education. To this end it should forbid the employment of those children during the ordinary school year; from being employed during school hours in any manual labor, and should also require that these children be sent regularly to school, allowing no invasions of the law. This would oblige capitalists to give to those who should do the world's work, to adults, the labor now performed by children, and so would furnish occupation to many now forced into idleness and vagabondage or crime. At the same time the education thus secured to the children, while preserving to them the sacred gift of their childlife, would produce in them a better growth alike of body and mind, make them more intelligent, and so better workers when their turn comes, as come it will soon enough, to share in life's labor, and make of them also better citizens, and men and women of a nobler type. While as to the reduction of the hours of labor, the result would cer-

tainly be to improve the quality of the work done, and at the same time, by requiring an increased number of men to accomplish the exacted quantity of labor, the now disproportionately large returns upon capital would be measurably diminished, so that more might be distributed to the growing army of intelligent and happy, because neither impoverished nor overworked, laborers.

The projects above considered and commented on are of obvious practical importance, and have commanded no small share of the attention of the practical thinkers of our time; and I believe the positions I have taken upon these points will meet with the general concurrence of sincere and unprejudiced people, who will give these matters that earnest attention which their importance justifies. To incorporate these confessedly wise purposes of socialism in the popular thought, and secure their fruition through the agency of wise public sentiment, is the purpose of the philosophers of a broad humanitarianism; while to effect these ends, and the other purposes cherished by them, by the prompt and efficient means of legislative action, is the object of the socialist party.

#### SOCIALISM CLAIMS

that, inasmuch as men must be governed, it is the legitimate province of government to deal with the social relations of its citizens, and to regulate their conduct toward one another in these vital matters, rather than to confine itself to questions of revenue, the relations of citizens to the government, foreign relations, etc.; that is the true purpose and office of government to provide for, and secure, so far as possible, the life of its citizens, including the processes of the obtaining of a livelihood; their liberty, including the protection of the lowly from the oppressions and injustice of the rich, and the pursuit of happiness by them, which it is claimed can only be secured by such legislation as will make it possible for the humblest to secure a fair share of the comforts of life. Their claim is that in any rightly ordered state there should be ample legislation upon social problems; and socialism has organized its party in our midst upon this basis. From some personal acquaintance I can say that among these socialist leaders are some men of remarkable characteristics, whose earnestness makes them heroic, and to be respected. The French have a saying: "The man of one idea is terrible." Such are these men—workmen who earn by manual toil their daily wages, and are at the same time building themselves up by increasing knowledge and intelligence; and who, above all, are gaining power by their passionate devotion to what they believe to be the best interests of their fellow-

workmen, and, through them, of the whole country; men who hold with absolute loyalty to their motto: "Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!". Such men can not but be men of power in local politics while they remain as they now are. In times of prosperity their following will fall off, but in times of adversity it will increase, till with them will probably rest, in our municipal struggles, the balance of power. Will they stand true, or will the taint of the lust of office, the pride of power, the gain of corruption, infect and pervert them? We can not tell; we can only hope! But of this we are sure: That, even if these should fall by the way, so long as the existing evils of society grow, and in their growth press with increasing hardship on a special class, so long will that class, in any democratic country, have a representation in politics,—justified and *insured* by those evils—for evils call forth remedies eternal. Let us not be alarmists,

NEITHER LET US SHUT OUR EYES

to the signs of the times, our ears to the mutterings of the multitudes. The miserable man whose rags will scarcely shut out from his quivering flesh the splashing of the millionaire's barouche, as it dashes by him filled with richly-attired people, all unmindful of his distress and sore need, the very horses kept in a comfort surpassing anything he can ever hope for, and who creeps to his tenement home, in garret or basement, it may be, to see his wife and children suffer for lack of sufficient food and warmth, albeit he may have toiled all day or sought vainly for employment, will listen with heart-bitterness to the whisperings (is it of fiend or angel?) which tell him that these things proclaim a wrong in urgent need of righting. The wind that buffets him, the cold that pinches, and the hunger that gnaws at his flesh, and at that of those he loves, will emphasize this theme; and if it can at the same time be truly said to him there is no hope for him from above,—that earth's mighty ones will yet more and more use their power to fortify their pride and establish their arrogance,—and that the alone source of his deliverance is in his own right arm, put forth to shake the pillars of the state where his poverty is so mocked and made light of, he may prove indeed but a blind Samson, seeing no way clearly before him to deliverance, and sure to perish in the overthrow he precipitates; but with the wailing of his babe in his ears, with the picture of his hopeless and enduring misery about him, he will one day join his comrades in anguish in the travail and carnival of utter despair, in which will perish the thrones of a power malign to him, that the people may learn the necessity, in the ordering of life, of a loving consideration for and helpfulness to the poor, who are earth's multitudes.