THOMAS HUN.

RECENT SOCIAL THEORIES.

CONSIDERATIONS

ON SOME

RECENT SOCIAL THEORIES.

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THIS little book has been written from a sincere desire to help the progress of sound judgment and right principle. It is the plain expression of earnest convictions.

The position which we as a people hold, is such, that questions in social and political philosophy and practice have an immediate claim on our careful attention. On the opinions we adopt, depend not merely our personal interests, but those of our country.

April 15, 1853.

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"I do not assert that I have brought forward any specific, or any new remedy of a partial nature, for the evils I have enumerated. Indeed, I have not feared to reiterate hacknied truths. . . . . As to the facts, too, on which I have grounded my reasonings, they are mostly well known, or might be so; for I have been content to follow other men's steps, and so assist in wearing a pathway for the public mind."

THE CLAIMS OF LABOUR.

I.

THE PEOPLE.

"Flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver: and adulation is not of more service to the people than to kings."

BURKE.

THE confusion of thought which, of late years, has pervaded every portion of philosophy on the continent of Europe, which has shown itself in religion, in morals, and in the lightest as in the most profound works of literature and art, has been especially manifest in the speculations and the practice of social and political science. Extravagancies of the most opposite nature have found strenuous supporters. On the one hand, a short-sighted selfishness has defended prescriptive errors and falsehoods;

on the other, a blind enthusiasm has been willing to do battle for some misty vision or some unattainable reality. Experience has been neglected, and passion or fancy has been chosen as guide through the most difficult passes.

Clear, vigorous, and truthful thought was needed to direct aright the awakening energies and the fresh powers of this time of rapid changes. But such thought has been greatly wanting. The period has been marked by the assumption with which theories, unsupported by facts, have been put forward; by the boldness with which fallacies have been propounded, and the readiness with which they have been accepted as truths.

No errors of thought have been more common, and none more dangerous, than those relating to the principle of Liberty and to the forms of Government. The reformers who have adopted and put them forward have seemed to occupy themselves with no considerations of circumstances or possibilities. The actual condition of affairs,

and the immutable laws of nature by which the world is governed, have alike been disregarded in their speculations. Without considering the differences in nations, both in character and in natural and material position, — differences which render necessary different applications of principles and different forms of institutions suited to the special development of each people, — they have, throughout Europe, raised an almost simultaneous cry for Universal Liberty, for the establishment of Republics, and for the direct government of the people by itself.

The proposal is a seductive one. To nations that have labored under the oppressions of absolute monarchies, it affords a dazzling hope; to the visionary and the dreamer, it offers the gayest promise; and it excites the enthusiastic support of all those whose love of liberty and of humanity is a passion, and not a principle. But the wise lover of the great cause of human progress views with regret and dismay this universal and eager demand for popular liberty. The advance of freedom, and the elevation of

the oppressed and suffering, are delayed and endangered by rashness and inconsideration.

It is easy for the men who declare themselves lovers of the people, and who are at the head of what is called the Democratic party, to denounce all those who oppose their action as the friends of absolutism and the maligners of the people. But, among those who are thus denounced, there are some who, while they acknowledge with readiness the self-sacrificing fervor, the strong hope, and faithful zeal, of many of the men whose course they regard as most dangerous, claim for themselves an equal spirit of self-denial, a zeal as earnest, a hope as strong, and a more perfect trust, that, in the long stretch of time, the progress of the world is assured. They believe that progress to be slow; and they have learned "the better fortitude of patience," alike to labor and to wait. They believe that imprudence and violence oppose it; and they love the cause of the people too well to endanger it by following the counsels of inexperience and folly. Unseduced by words and shows of things, with

constancy unbroken by disappointment, with unwavering confidence, they hold to their faith that the rights of all men will at last be vindicated and acknowledged, because they believe those rights to be the care of divine as well as of human power.

The difficulties and errors of some points of the popular political creed may be best shown by exhibiting the opinions of certain individuals who have been the most prominent in the recent revolutions. But it should be remembered, in reference to these opinions, that they represent, not so much the views of single men as of parties, and that the individual who has expressed them may sink into obscurity and neglect, while the force of these ideas, and the danger concealed in them, is little affected by his fate.

Kossuth, Mazzini, and Louis Blanc, are now the foremost leaders of the republican cause in Europe. Differing widely from each other in character and in minor points of opinion, they coincide in many of their more important political views. Neither of

them belongs to what is termed the most advanced section of the Democratic party of Europe; neither of them are red republicans of the darkest hue; and, though the logical consequences of the views which they profess would lead them at last to stand on the same ground with the wildest democrats, their actual position is hardly more than midway between the fanatics on the one side and on the other. All of them men of remarkable powers of mind; all of them having devoted themselves, from early youth, to what they esteemed the service of their country; all of them having suffered for the cause of Liberty; all possessing the ability to move and control other men; all now exiles, but recognized leaders of the opinions of a party, which, though for a moment crushed, is by no means extinct, — they hold a position which demands, in addition to a sincerity and devotion that we may allow them, such wisdom and foresight as they do not possess.

The fundamental principles of their political philosophy — principles which are the

groundwork of action — are such as would lead only to confusion, and would destroy the hope of progress; for their political system is founded upon the assumption that wisdom and power are derived directly and immediately from the people, — that is, from the great mass of any nation; and, consequently, that political liberty is an inherent right of mankind, and that a republic is necessarily the best form of government. On these points, Kossuth has not always expressed himself with distinctness or consistency. The character of his eloquence is, for the most part, declamatory rather than logical, and abounds with the fine artifices of oratory; so that it is often difficult to arrive at his real opinion. There can be no doubt, however, that the basis of his political system is such as has been stated. In his speech at Birmingham on the 12th November, 1851, he said: "My belief is, that it is the instinct of the people which is the true revelation of mankind's divine origin. It is therefore, I was saying, that the people is everywhere highly honorable, noble, and good."

From his first speech to his last in America, he showed that he set the people above the government which they themselves had chosen and established; and he appealed from the constituted authority to popular passion. "I know that I have the honor," he said when he landed in New York in December, 1851, "to be in a country where the Sovereign is not the Government, but the People;" and this insult, unintentional but real, was received with applause and with satisfaction by the foolish crowd of fickle followers, by whom he was then flattered with unworthy adulation. And again, in his lecture on the state of Europe, delivered some months later in New York, he declared that "Democracy is but the embodiment of freedom."

It would be easy to multiply such examples, and to carry out into detail the illustrations of these opinions.

Mazzini has expressed himself with more distinctness on the same points. In one of his late works he writes: "To the dogma of absolute, immutable authority concentred

in a single individual or in a determinate power, is substituted the dogma of the progressive authority of the people, — the collective, perpetual interpreter of the law of God." * And again, in the same work, in a passage of offensive declamation, he says: "Humanity declares to-day, GOD IS GOD, AND THE PEOPLE IS HIS PROPHET. God flames at the summit of the social pyramid: the people studies, collects, and interprets his will at the base." †

The same extravagance, under a little different form, is to be found in frequent passages throughout the writings of Mazzini. In a pamphlet written in 1835, but first printed in 1850, he states his doctrine thus: "And as we believe in HUMANITY the sole and only interpreter of the LAW of God,

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* "Le Pape au Dix-Neuvième Siècle." Paris, 1850. p. 21.

† "L'humanité répond aujourd'hui, DIEU EST DIEU, ET LE PEUPLE EST SON PROPHETE. Dieu flamboie au sommet de la pyramide sociale; le peuple étudie, recueille, interprète ses volontés à la base." Id. p. 44. — The same passage is to be found in "Pio IX. Lettera di Giuseppe Mazzini al Clero Italiano." Italia, 1850, p. 10.

we believe for each state in the PEOPLE, sole master, sole sovereign, sole interpreter of the law of Humanity which decides the national missions." *

In a letter addressed to the Italian Clergy in 1850, the doctrine appears more concisely. "This, then, is our doctrine: GOD first, the people afterwards; and the people, interpreter of the laws of God." †

But it is in an address to the Peoples ("Aux Peuples"), issued by Ledru Rollin, Mazzini, Albert Darasz, and Arnold Ruge, in the name of the Central Democratic European Committee, that these views receive their final development of extravagant absurdity. "Every man," says this address, "who pretends, by the isolated labor of his understanding, however powerful it may be, to discover now a definitive solution for the problems which agitate the masses, condemns himself to error through incomplete-

* "Foi et Avenir." Paris, 1850. p. 85.

† "E questa è pure dottrina nostra: DIO prima, il popolo poi; e il popolo interprete delle legge di Dio." — *Pio IX.* p. 13.

ness, since he renounces one of the eternal sources of truth, — the collective intuition of the People in action. The definitive solution is the secret of victory. Placed to-day under the influence of the medium that we wish to transform; agitated, in spite of ourselves, by all the instincts, by all the reactionary sentiments, of the struggle between persecution, and the exhibition of selfishness that a factitious society, founded upon material interests and mutilated in its noblest faculties, presents to us, — we can ill comprehend what there is most holy, most vast, most energetic, in the soul of the People. Our systems, drawn in the recesses of our closets from the teachings of traditions, deprived of the power which bursts from the cry of actuality, from the *me*, from the conscience of humanity, can be in great part only an anatomy made upon dead bodies, revealing the disease, analyzing death, and powerless to feel and understand life. Life! it is the People roused: it is the instinct of the multitudes elevated to an exceptional power by contact; by the pro-

phetic feeling of great things to be done; by the spontaneous, sudden, electrical association of the public square: it is action overexciting all the faculties of hope, of devotion, of enthusiasm, and of love, which to-day slumber; and revealing man in the unity of his nature, and in the plenitude of his realizing powers. The grasp of the hands of a workman, in one of those historical moments which initiate an epoch, will perhaps teach us more with regard to the organization of the future than can to-day the cold and discouraged labor of the understanding, or the science of the illustrious dead of two thousand years ago."*

Nor does the creed of Louis Blanc differ much from this. In one of his latest works

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* For this address, see "Le Proscrit: Journal de la République Universelle." Août, 1850. p. 48. It is dreary work to read so much folly, so much obscurity and confusion of thought; nor would it be worth while to quote at such length, were not this passage a striking illustration of the vagueness and rashness of men chosen by their companions in exile to keep alive the spirit and to rouse the hopes of the democratic party in Europe.

The close of the extract that has been translated above

he says: "I have endeavored to prove . . . that the sovereign, comprising all the citizens without exception, would not be unjust; for one is not so towards oneself." *

And again, in the same pamphlet: "I am the pioneer of a route, which leads to a world where what it is to *command* and to *obey* will not be known; insolent expressions, drawn from the vocabulary of human folly! The doctrine of fraternal equality admits the diversity of functions based upon that of aptitudes; but, in this doctrine of immortal essence, all men are kings, all are priests." †

It appears from these quotations, that the old doctrine of the divine right of kings has been supplanted by one not less absurd, — the divine right of the people. "Vox populi

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runs as follows in the original: "Le serrement de mains d'un ouvrier, en un de ces moments historiques qui initient une époque, nous apprendra peut-être plus sur l'organization de l'avenir, que ne le peuvent aujourd'hui le travail froid et découragé de l'intelligence, ou la science des morts illustres d'il y a deux mille ans."

* "La République Une et Indivisible." Paris, 1851. p. 58.

† Id. p. 74.

vox Dei" is the literal rendering of the creed of these modern reformers. It would be of little consequence if such a doctrine were put forward by a few foolish and powerless men; but, when it is held by those who give expression to the opinions of a sect, and who may become, as they have already been, the leaders in action of a great party, it becomes a matter of concern that the dangerous tendency of their system should be recognized. And this is the more important, inasmuch as there is a certain deceitful and attractive glitter about these notions in regard to the claims and the character of "the people." They address with peculiar force all those — and it is a large class — who are discontented with a hard and laboring lot, and are suffering under an undefined sense of imaginary wrongs, as well as those who are bearing the real wrongs which tyrants of one kind and another may inflict; and they find still more adherents among those —

> "Who praise and who admire they know not what,
> And know not whom, but as one leads the other."

What is this people which is declared to be the prophet of God, — this people that studies and interprets God's will? What is this people, whose intuitive impulses are wiser than the thoughts of the wise; whose passions are nobler than the principles of the virtuous? What is this people, of which each man is a king, and each man a priest? Is it a chosen nation of God, enlightened by his spirit, and guided by his will? "The people" of these writers is simply the mass of mankind. The absurdity and impiety of such expressions as have been quoted, when reduced to simple words, is too manifest for exposure. Is there any one who will assert that "the people" in any country is so wise that it can know, or so calm that it can choose, what is best for itself? Does it not everywhere need counsel, restraint, and education? Is the wisdom which is to advance the world to be found in any multitude? Is evil no longer in possession of any heart? Is misery, that knows no care and foresight, for ever banished; and ignorance, that knows no choice between right and wrong, for ever

defeated? Is God's will so plain that all the world can read it, and so enforced that all the world will obey it?

There is no intelligible meaning in declarations like those which have been quoted. If the people are intuitively wise, and inspired with the divine breath, it would follow that the world must of necessity be all which these wild theorists desire it should become. If the people is the prophet and the expounder of God's will, it would follow that, as that will is one, the will of the people could be but one, and there could be no dissension or discord on earth. But, as discord exists, where is the line to be drawn between those who pronounce and those who contradict God's decrees? All men may be kings, all may be priests; but some are tyrants, and some are priests of a false God.

The inextricable confusions to which this doctrine leads, and the false assumptions on which it is based, need not be further pointed out; but it may be well to show to what contradictions its authors and supporters are brought. In a letter written in

1847, Mazzini says: "The Italians are mere children, but with good instincts. They have not a shadow of intellect or political experience. I speak of the multitude, and not of the few leaders." * And this is the people who are to interpret the will of God for Italy!

In a pamphlet of Louis Blanc's, printed in 1849, he confesses how impossible it is to realize this dream of popular wisdom and virtue as the world now exists: "How long, great God! is the infancy of the people!" And again he declares: "As for myself, I have always thought, always written, that, in the state of dependence and of ignorance in which the rural population vegetates, it would be folly to hope immediately for intelligent and free choice." † But, however ignorant, "all men are kings, all are priests"!

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* Parl. Doc. Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Italy. 1849. p. 223.

† "Pour moi, j'avais toujours pensé, toujours écrit, que dans l'état de dépendance, d'ignorance, où végètent les populations rurales, il y aurait folie à espérer tout d'abord des choix intelligents et libres." — *Appel aux Honnêtes Gens*, p. 35.

Leaving any further attention to these extravagancies, let us consider what "the people" is, and what in reality are its rights.

In all historical times, the great mass of men have been exposed to physical and moral evils, sometimes of one kind, sometimes of another, but always of such a sort as to hinder them from the attainment of more than a small measure of earthly good, and to prevent the full development of their spiritual powers. And this poor, oppressed, laboring, and suffering assembly of men, bound together in every age by the tie of a common misery, — this, in the language of the present times, is "the people." It has been the people who have ministered to the ambition, and who have borne the cruelties, of kings; who have suffered from the misgovernment and the mistakes of rulers; who have ignorantly worked, under false direction, for their own sorrow; who have fought against their own good; who have been captivated by fatal delusions; who have been scourged by pestilence and famine

and war; who have obeyed false prophets, and have killed the prophets and the servants of God. And now, eighteen hundred years after the divine preaching of the religion whose substance and whose authority were the doctrines of immortality and of love, — and which, as a consequence from these doctrines, announced the kingdom of Heaven upon Earth; declaring the eternal connection of man with man, and the responsibility of man to man; intrusting those children of God who were poor in earthly or in heavenly possessions, to those who were rich, — even now, "the people" sit in the dark night of ignorance, and know little of the light of love and faith, catching only a feeble glimmer of the dawning of the day of human brotherhood upon earth.

It is not, then, to this people that we are to look for wisdom and intelligence. It is not to them that we are to trust the progress of improvement. They could not, if they would, rescue themselves from evil; and they have no help for others. But their progress must be stimulated and guided by

the few who have been blessed with the opportunities, and the rare genius, fitting them to lead. Nor is their advance to depend on the discovery of any new remedies. There are now at work in the world, principles of virtue and strength enough for all the trials and exigencies of progress. The improvement which is certain must come from the gradual spread of these old principles; from their taking possession of the hearts and ruling the lives of men; and the way for them is to be cleared and made easy by the efforts of the wise and the good everywhere. These principles are not named Equality, nor Communism, nor the Solidarity of Peoples: they are Love, and Truth, and pure Liberty.

It is the will of God — a will we may not understand nor question — that progress should be very gradual; not visible from year to year, and only with difficulty to be seen from century to century. But this is no reason for discouragement. In all ages there have been martyrs who have died for the sake of the people, and who in death

have trusted that their labor would be blessed, though they could not gain the assurance while they lived. And their work was not performed nor their blood offered in vain; for their example has given animation to the efforts of a constant line of followers. The cause of the people always claims undiminished effort. It appeals to the heart of every man to rescue from suffering and degradation such fellow-men as his help can reach. It appeals to the conscience of every man to do the work which has been intrusted to him. The people in many places are misled, troubled, and exasperated. They are seeking for help. It is for us to help them, that they may help themselves. We cannot keep things as they are. The world may be regenerated by us not less than by others. In our impatience, we may long for more rapid and wider results than with our best efforts we can reach; but even our faintest exertion will count in this work of ages. We can do something at least to lessen human suffering; and, though successive centuries may pass

away before the people shall be enlightened and free and happy, yet we shall have helped the coming of that time, and God will remember, though man may forget.

II.

LIBERTY.

"Esteeming happiness to be in Liberty, and Liberty in excellence of soul." — *Pericles to the Athenians.*
THUCYDIDES, ii. 43.

"Of Liberty there are two kinds: the false, as where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, as where a man is free to do what he ought." KINGSLEY.

THE false notions concerning "the people" which have been for some time past, and are now, common among the democrats of Europe, have as their natural sequence the doctrine that Liberty is an inherent right of mankind, and, consequently, that every nation has a claim to its unlimited possession.

Without entering upon the broad and perplexed question of rights, it is necessary to examine a little into the nature of

Liberty, in order clearly to understand the character of this doctrine.

The word "Liberty" is often used very vaguely, with little comprehension of its true meaning, and sometimes indeed with significations contradictory to it. This proceeds from, and gives occasion to, much obscurity of thought and much misdirected zeal. A mist of words has obscured and hidden the fair reality. "Certain it is," says Lord Bacon, "that words, as a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment; so as it is almost necessary, in all controversies and disputations, to imitate the wisdom of the mathematicians, in setting down in the very beginning the definition of our words and terms." And in nothing is this more necessary than in the discussion of a topic where a mistake of understanding may lead to an error or a wrong in action. What, then, is the definition of Liberty?

The simplest, and as it may be called the original, meaning of Liberty is — that

state in which a man is free from restraint of whatever kind. There is no reference in its signification to the nature of this restraint, whether adapted to promote or to impede the true development of his character.

But this definition, although the only one correct for certain uses of the word, becomes very incorrect the instant that we connect with the term Liberty any moral idea; the instant that we make it the object of desire, of enthusiasm, or of hope; the instant that it becomes to us the expression of all the good which we believe attainable in human government, and the aim of our highest and steadiest pursuit on earth. A definition, then, must be found, which, based on the primitive meaning of the word, shall give to it all the extension of which it admits, and shall answer to that Liberty for which the best men of all time have lived, toiled, and died; to that Liberty whose distant radiance has given light in the darkest dungeons; to that Liberty in whose defence Milton lost his sight, content to have lost

it in so noble a task; and which could animate the imprisoned but still loyal Lovelace to sing, —

> "Stone walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage:
> Minds innocent and quiet take
> That for a hermitage.
> If I have freedom in my love,
> And in my soul am free,
> Angels alone, that soar above,
> Enjoy such Liberty."

Liberty, then, in its nobler signification, is the being free from all restraints which may prevent the doing of what is right. In other words, Liberty is the possession of the power to do the will of God.*

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* It was after writing the above passage, and giving the foregoing definition to Liberty, that the writer met with the following striking passage in Tyndale's noble book, entitled, "The Obedience of a Christian Man," which was first printed in 1527: —

"Notwithstanding, to follow lusts is not freedom, but captivity and bondage. If God open any man's wits to make him feel in his heart that lusts and appetites are damnable, and give him power to hate and resist them, then is he free even with the freedom wherewith Christ maketh free, and hath power to do the will of God."—*The Works of the English Reformers, William Tyndale and John Frith.* London, 1831. Vol. i. p. 217.

Much confusion has arisen from the not clearly distinguishing these two legitimate meanings of the word. Much has been written about Liberty, as if the mere being free from all involuntary restraint were necessarily a desirable and excellent thing. What has been called Natural Liberty, meaning by this term a state of barbarous wildness and separation from the interests of other men, has been exalted as more admirable than the state of highest civilization. But the only Liberty worth having is not that where a man is free from every restraint, but where he is free from wrong restraint. Nor is the Liberty of the savage entire, even in the absence of restraint. A savage is free from the bonds of law or custom, from every check upon the performance of his own will; but at the same time he is tyrannized over by his very savageness and wildness, which render impossible the full development of his character, and often interfere with the enjoyment of physical life. He is not free in any worthy sense. A man in civilized society, if brutalized by misery and ignorance, however

unchecked he may be by law, however destitute of tender care and gentle restraint, yet can neither possess nor acquire any true Liberty; for ignorance and misery are the most terrible of oppressors. Neither the savage nor the ignorant have the power to perform the will of God.

But, as the world exists, it is not possible for any individual or society or nation to possess complete and perfect Liberty. It can be possessed only in a limited degree; for no individual or society or nation has the power to perform the complete will of God. Ignorance is the chief obstacle to the possession of this power; and as ignorance is driven out from her successive strongholds, Liberty will come to take her place. But with ignorance are allied evil passions and bad human institutions. All that is wrong in a single heart, or in society, or in the laws, is opposed to Liberty. But, on the other hand, every advance in intelligence; every evil overcome; every new spread of sound, upright thought; every gain, however slow or however small in the progress of right

principle, is the gain and the fresh strength of Liberty. As long as human nature remains as God has created it, a struggle between good and evil must exist in the world. Restraint of what is wrong will be needed, and not until men become perfect will full and perfect Liberty be known. Such Liberty is the heritage of angels, and not of men. But as men become more and more enlightened and virtuous, Liberty will more and more gain possession of the world. Her progress will be slow, for the improvement of mankind is very gradual; but her progress is certain, because that improvement is assured.

But there is another consideration to be attended to here. It is that what is right, and consequently what is the will of God, under some circumstances, may not be right, or the will of God, under other circumstances. To take a broad example: if there were but one family upon earth, many things would be right for that family to perform, which would be wrong were it surrounded by a society. In forming a part of society, a man's duties are very different from

what they would be if he stood alone. There is, however, nothing in the change of relations necessarily to deprive him of Liberty; that is, to interfere with his performance of the will of God. But as there are in society many bad men, and as there happen to be, as the result of the lives of these men, many bad institutions, it becomes obvious that these bad men and bad institutions will interfere with the pursuit of Liberty. This condition introduces a new limitation in the use of the word; so that in speaking of Liberty, in its social or political relation, there is meant *that state in which a man is not deprived of the power of doing what is best for himself or others by the interference of another.* *

Now, the final object of government — an object, indeed, which has never been stead-

* The phrase "political liberty" is often used as if it meant the possession of political power. A nation is said to enjoy political liberty where each individual has a share of political power. Such a use of words is incorrect and deceitful. The phrase generally bears this meaning when the inherent right of every individual to political liberty is maintained.

fastly pursued, but has usually been lost sight of behind selfishness and carelessness — is to secure the fullest enjoyment of this power to those who are governed. According to the different degrees of enlightenment and virtue of nations, so will one form of government or another be best fitted for this object. It is not impossible for more political Liberty to be enjoyed under a despotism than under a republic; and it is to be clearly recognized that universal Liberty, under any form of government, is no more possible than universal happiness.

As government, however, is established to secure and promote Liberty, as Liberty should be its beginning and end, it follows that laws proceeding from government should be the rule of Liberty, and its broadest expression. The law of God is the rule and expression of perfect Liberty; and human law approves its claim to be the rule and expression of such Liberty as may be enjoyed on earth, so far as it is harmonious with the law of God.

But, leaving these considerations, let us turn to the actual state of the world. It is only in a very small portion of it that Liberty is enjoyed to any extent. As we direct our attention to one country after another, we see that beside the moral principles which affect the growth of Liberty for good or for evil, there are certain physical principles inextricably interwoven with them, and that the two are constantly producing a reciprocal effect. These two sets of principles are at work in all the affairs of the world. Their limits cannot be clearly divided. The influence of the one continually assists or opposes that of the other. The fact of their union and mutual effect is not the less certain that it is often to be traced only in the results of long courses of action, and is not to be recognized in each separate event.

Whether we consider a man or a nation, this relation between external circumstances and moral characteristics is equally to be observed. Virtue and vice, progress and decline, liberty or tyranny, depend not alone on moral peculiarities of constitution, but

also on the features of surrounding nature, and the character of surrounding material circumstances.

This fact has been generally overlooked in the recent speculations of popular political theorists, and has been completely neglected in the setting up of the claim for universal Liberty. It has not been recognized, that the existence of the spirit of Liberty and the possibility of free institutions depend in great part upon the physical condition of a nation. The truth is a sad one; but Liberty, to be permanent, must be founded on material abundance sufficient to secure a people against slavery to material want. And, on the other hand, a lavish abundance of the gifts of a prodigal Nature, or the collection of vast heaps of wealth in a state, are almost equally fatal to the establishment and continuance of Liberty.

France, to-day, offers a curious illustration of material want and material abundance leagued against Liberty, and struggling for despotism. Throughout a great part of the country, and in certain districts of her cities,

property is divided into such small portions, and poverty is so common, that the majority of the inhabitants have little care for any thing beside securing for themselves the means of subsistence from year to year on earth, and of salvation hereafter. They are not well enough off to be educated to know how to gain a free government. Every step in their material prosperity will lead them toward Liberty. Meanwhile there is in the cities a class whom long habits of luxury and the indulgences of prosperity have enervated, and unfitted for the austere demands of Liberty; while dependent upon this portion of the community is a still larger class, ministering to their tastes and pampered necessities. Both these latter classes prefer any thing to political Liberty; for the prejudices, the privileges, and the partialities, which are the foundation of their position in the world, would dissolve before the coming of Liberty like mist before the sun.

There is no portion of the world where political Liberty can be enjoyed, except in very limited measure; but there are, on the

other hand, many countries where even such measure of Liberty as is immediately possible does not exist. That vast and outrageous oppressions are practised, that men are deprived of many of the choicest gifts of Heaven, and that these oppressions and injustices might be done away, is, however, no argument that universal Liberty could be substituted in their place. The destruction of an abuse is progress toward Liberty, not Liberty herself. Liberty is to be gained only by slow and arduous training. She is not to be seized by force: she is not to be compelled to unwilling service. Her presence may be decreed by ruler or by people, but she will not obey the decree. The efforts of men to gain Liberty, the struggles of the oppressed to overthrow tyranny, the aspirations and the exertions everywhere for freedom, are to be cheered, encouraged, and aided. But encouragement and aid are not always to be given where the shout for freedom is the loudest. The name of Liberty is one of the disguises of tyranny; and many a government has been overthrown to

give place to a worse, by those who fought under a banner upon which Liberty was inscribed; but who, unknowingly to themselves, were serving in the army of oppression. "Vingt nations heureuses," said the clear-sighted Mallet du Pan, "Vingt nations heureuses ont reçu des chaines en cherchant un gouvernement parfait, et pas une seule ne l'a trouvé."

Liberty has had few defenders thus far. Her name has been profaned in all ages. Popular despotisms and single tyrants have alike abused it. It was in the name of Liberty that the horrors of the first French Revolution were perpetrated; it was in her name that the rulers of Europe deceived their people in the arrangements of 1815; it was in her name that the follies of 1848 were committed; and it is in the name of Liberty that Louis Napoleon has riveted chains on the neck of an unresisting nation: and that Mazzini and Kossuth have attempted to stir up the people of Europe to the most horrible of civil wars.

But her true apostles are not the hot

leaders of contending factions; not those who excite a dull and suffering people to mad violence and war; not those who claim subsidies from foreign nations for the expenses of the struggle; not those who pronounce the wild doctrines of excited fancies; not those who would overthrow all existing institutions, hoping to find her form beneath their ruins: but they who are the true and faithful preachers of God's word, teaching it by the example of their lives; they who are engaged in spreading knowledge among the ignorant, in giving succor to the oppressed, in comforting the miserable, in reducing the inequalities of man's condition, in forwarding every work of benevolence and charity. It is these men who are bringing Liberty to earth, and weakening the power of oppressors. And with these are joined the statesmen and the leaders who know how to temper passion with judgment; who despise flattery and selfishness; who feel neither extravagant hope nor faithless despair; who seek for power, not to gratify a personal ambition, but to possess

the ability of doing good; who out of defeat, as out of victory, gain fresh strength; who know the evil that is in the world, and neither disregard it nor rely upon it in their counsels. Such are the apostles of Liberty.

It will only be when nations learn that Liberty depends not on forms, but on the personal character of the individuals who compose them; that it rests on the virtue, the power of self-government, of each one of the people; that the disadvantages of physical condition must be overcome by continual effort, and not by any sudden impulse or impetuous and quickly exhausted burst; and that freedom is to be preserved only by moral excellence, — it is then alone that they will possess Liberty, for then they will have learned that "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty."

III.

THE UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC.

"Je sais bien qu'il n'en coûte rien à une poignée de bavards, que je caracteriserais bien en les appelant fous, de vouloir la république universelle." — BUONAPARTE, 1797.

THE establishment of a universal republic — that is, of a republican form of government in every country — is the practical conclusion from the theory of immediate universal political liberty. "The direct government of the people by itself" is the form of expression adopted by most of the democratic leaders. This is the final result of their systems of politics. It is claimed as a right of every nation; and a republican form of government is assumed to be the

solution of all political difficulties, and a remedy for all political evils.

This opinion has not been put forward alone in words. It has borne bitter fruit in action. Among the many causes which led to the failure of the struggle in 1848 to free Italy from Austrian dominion, to restore to her beautiful northern provinces a national government, and to give them an increased liberty, none was more fatal than the blind obstinacy of the leaders of the republican party, who chose to divide the efforts of the people, to excite the jealousy of neighboring cities, and to break hope after hope of driving the Austrians from the country, rather than yield their impracticable convictions, and unite all strength in the one great object of freeing Lombardy and Venice from the heavy yoke under which they had labored so long. The success of Charles Albert was dreaded by them more than that of the Austrians. If they could not have a republic, they would have a foreign and oppressive despotism; and they destroyed the chance of a constitutional monarchy in Northern Italy, for the

love of an impossible and idle dream. Mazzini has written his own condemnation in his "République et Royauté en Italie." Radetski had no better allies than he and his companions. Nor is this the only example which the few last years have afforded of the miserable consequences resulting from the adoption of these extreme views.

The fallacy of the idea of universal liberty has been shown in the preceding section. It has appeared that limited liberty is all that is possible on earth. But it may be shown farther to be an assumption unfounded in truth, that a republican form of government is necessarily the best fitted to secure to its subjects the enjoyment of that freedom which they are capable of possessing. To show this, it will be necessary to recur to some of the original principles of government, and to repeat a portion of the argument which has been already used in relation to liberty.

Human government, of whatever kind, is a mere matter of expediency. There is not, nor can there be, in any individual or in any

collection of individuals, an inherent authority or right to govern. All right to govern is a delegated right. In a perfect state of society, — that is, in a state of society where each individual conformed his life to the principles of Christianity, — there would be no human government. It is impossible to connect the idea of human government with such a society. The only authority would be the law of God, and the law of God is perfect freedom.

But, society being only in small part Christian, the need of government exists. Its only legitimate object is to promote the good, that is, the liberty, of its subjects. But, in different ages and in different portions of the world, men exist under different degrees of development; and their good is not always to be promoted in the same manner. One form of government is not in itself necessarily better than another; and the form which is best for one nation may be the worst for another. "Without piety," says a writer distinguished for clear good sense, "there will be no good govern-

ment." * An absolute monarchy with piety is better for a people than a republic without it.

The reason of this is very plain. The progress of liberty does not depend upon any form: it may be impeded, or it may be helped, by any government whatsoever. The spirit of liberty may grow in spite of a bad government, or it may become extinct under a good one. The Romans, under despotic kings, grew up to freedom; under their republic, they slowly sank into the basest servitude. The Greek states in old times found that a republic was no safeguard against tyranny; and in South America today, it is not the republican but the imperial form of government under which the most liberty is enjoyed. This argument is no defence of tyranny. Tyranny is equally bad, and equally possible, under a republic as under a monarchy.

There can be no doubt that a republican form of government, such as we enjoy, is the

* "Friends in Council." Book ii. p. 167.

most productive of happiness to our people; but this depends alone on the fact of their general moral and intellectual education. If we become as a nation corrupted and ignorant, no worse form of government can be imagined than ours must then become; for it would be the irresistible despotism of a majority of corrupt and ignorant men. No greater evil could fall upon India than the establishment of a Hindu republic. It would bring no good, no liberty, but would burthen the people with intolerable calamities and oppression. Even were the present absolute government of the country by the English as bad as its enemies assert, it would be vastly preferable to a native democracy. And yet, in these violent, unthinking times, a government in which all power is vested in the hands of the people is declared to possess an inherent and divine virtue.

But it is urged, every man can judge what is best for himself better than it can be judged for him, and in a republic every man has, or should have, a voice in the government. Let us, however, look a little

into this last assertion. Every man, it is true, may have a vote under a republic; but there must be a majority and a minority, and every republic is founded on the principle of the rule of the majority. Universal suffrage is claimed by the doctrinaires of republicanism as being the means of giving the fullest expression to the will of the majority. Without entering into the question whether universal suffrage is the best means to this end, which is very doubtful, it is desirable to examine into the right of a majority to rule, and to see whether it has any natural virtue; or whether it is, like all other human rule, a simple expedient, good under some circumstances, bad under others.

Suppose, for instance, that a question were to arise in a state, where an absolute majority was the ruling power, of the highest consequence to the welfare of the community. Two parties exist, opposed to each other. The vote is taken, and the numbers are found to be exactly equal. A majority of numbers being required, neither of these parties can enforce their will upon the other.

But suppose that, instead of being balanced, two-thirds of the votes are given on one side, and one-third on the other; but the smaller party is composed of the wise and intelligent men of the state, while the larger is made up of the unreflecting and passionate mass of the people. Is there any inherent right, any real authority, save that of conventional prescription, which is to enforce the dictates of folly over the convictions of wisdom?

The case has been well stated by an able writer: — "A mere preponderance of numbers by no means implies preponderance either of capacity, of good intention, or even of strength. Wisdom generally lies with the minority; fairness often, power not unfrequently. There is, and can be, no law of nature, no axiom of eternal morals, in virtue of which three foolish men are entitled to bind and overpower two wise men, or three weak men two strong men." *

* Mr. W. R. Greg, in an article on "The Expected Reform Bill." — *Edinburgh Review*, No. CXCIII. Jan. 1852. p. 258.

Nor is this the testimony only of abstract reasoning: it is the practical conclusion of even the most ardent supporters of the most democratic theories. In the famous "Declaration of the Rights of Man," Robespierre declares: "Aucune portion du peuple ne peut exercer la puissance du peuple entier." And in a speech before the Convention, on the 28th of December, 1792, he broke forth with the words: "La vertu fut toujours en minorité sur la terre." *

It was the act of the majority which doomed Socrates to death, and Aristides to banishment. It was the act of the majority which has established the present arbitrary ruler in France. Of all tyranny, that of the majority has been the most fearful.

And, in truth, the rule of a majority in a state can be tolerable only when the people has reached such a degree of intelligence and self-control that it is guided in its decisions by a sense of justice, and recognizes

* "Histoire Parlementaire de la Revolution." Tome xxii. p. 122.

its responsibilities to be commensurate with its authority. Otherwise, all good is left to chance, while much evil is certain.

The conclusions, then, upon which we must rest, are, that no form of government possesses any inherent virtue; that liberty may be developed under one, as under another; that that government is to be preferred which best secures to its subjects the means of progress in liberty; that these means may be secured under any form, but would be for the most part absent from a universal republic.

IV.

SOCIALISM.

"Cum enim par habetur honos summis et infimis qui sint in omni populo, necesse est ipsa æquitas iniquissima sit."

CICERO.

NO one, who looks seriously at the existing social condition of the greater part of the civilized world, can derive much pleasure from the contemplation. He will see ignorance, inefficiency, and selfishness, in a league against the happiness of mankind. He will see the free gifts of Heaven unequally shared and unjustly confined. He will see false opinions in religion, in morality, and in politics, exercising a tremendous influence in rendering the differences in the condition of men more odious and intolera-

ble. He will see sufferings that might be alleviated, sorrows that might be lightened, misery that might be relieved, poverty that might be diminished. On every side he will see the darkness of wrong, and only in broken rays the light of justice and truth shining in upon the general gloom. And he might turn away disheartened from the spectacle, did not these scattered rays give promise of the coming of a brighter and a happier time.

The earth is divided between two great classes of men. One, far greater in numbers than the other, have not the means to provide for their best physical or spiritual interests. The other, a small minority, possess this power.

Although this disparity of circumstances amongst men may be regarded as the will of God towards them, yet, as he has placed us upon earth with powers of influencing others for good or for evil: as he has made good attainable by human exertion, and has subjected evil to control by human means; and especially as we know that he desires the

happiness of all his creatures, — the inference is clear that he has imposed upon every man the duty of doing a part, according to his ability to make the condition of others more conformable to their capacities for improvement. And hence each evil that may be overthrown, every wrong that exists, is a motive for exertion, and a suggestion of duty.

The world is not so advanced that there is no need of effort. It is still far behind the wise, clear thought of the lovers and the leaders of its progress. Without yielding to the dreams of enthusiasm, without hoping for ideal and unreal Utopias, there is enough within the possibility of attainment to give scope to the most strenuous efforts, and strength to the purest and noblest ambition. And though there is still so much to be done, the past affords reason for hope that gradually it will be accomplished. The state of society is better now than it has ever been in past ages. Each century has made some advance, and the progress will continue. Our golden age is not in the

past: the old legend is reversed; it lies far forward in the future. Even in the midst of the confusion of the times in which we ourselves live, we may distinguish the signs of the slow onward march of the world.

The political revolutions which have followed each other in rapid succession in Europe during the last seventy years, have been the result, more or less immediate, of a social revolution, which seems only in its commencement. They have been the sign of the rottenness of the existing condition of society. They have failed in producing any greater improvement in this condition, because as yet the truths upon which society can alone securely and happily rest have been recognized and acknowledged by very few; and, consequently, efforts have been misdirected and strength wasted. The great mass of those who are suffering from social evils are too ignorant to know where the remedy for them is to be found, or how it is to be applied; and this ignorance on the part of those who suffer has been connected with the equal extravagance and foolishness

of many of those who have assumed the character, and gained the position, of social reformers.

Still, something has been won in these years of disappointment. Many failures have been steps forward; for every failure may shorten the way to success. Contrast the condition of the people of Europe now with what it was before the first French revolution, and the manifest gain will be seen. Many old fictions in theory, and wrongs in practice, have been swept away. Some new evils, indeed, have sprung up; but by their side has sprung up new good. The quick succession of violent changes has awakened a conscience among those who before had thought themselves secure in worldly privileges and prescriptions. They have begun to learn the true tenure of such possessions, and to understand that no selfish claim to them is sufficient; that no exclusive right to them can be sustained; and that no title to earthly advantages, however ancient and hedged round it may be, is valid, unless it be supported by clearly acknow-

ledged responsibilities and well-performed duties.

But let us regard more particularly some of the special obstacles which have interfered to prevent a more rapid social reform during this time of revolution.

One of the chief difficulties has been that which may be seen more or less in the history of all reforms, — a too eager haste on the part of those engaged in the work to attain the object of their wishes. It is natural, indeed, for all men, in view of the near and uncertain end of life, to desire a quick result from any course of action in which their interests or their affections are engaged. Those who suffer from a wrong, and those who struggle against it, long for its speedy remedy; and if the means at hand, though finally sufficient, seem slow to produce the desired result, others more violent, or more untried, are apt to be preferred. Such has been the case in these years. Not content to improve society, the hasty enthusiasts of progress have proposed to reconstruct it

altogether. Not content with the means afforded by experience, they have sought those offered by fancy. The period has been one of theories of social progress; and these theories, flattering and unsubstantial, have been supported with bigoted earnestness, and contemptuous disregard of facts.

Another frequent error has been the confounding of what is not essential to social progress with what is essential. The form has been put in the place of the spirit; and that improvement has been looked for from a change in the arrangements of society which could only come from a change in the characters of the individuals who compose it. The means have been placed on a level with the end. Institutions and organizations have been looked to as an immediate remedy for evils which lay far deeper than any influence of this kind could quickly reach. System has succeeded system, each equally based on this false idea. Within a short memory, St. Simon, Fourier, Pierre Leroux, Robert Owen, Cabet, Louis Blanc, and many others, have, one after another, offered

their panaceas to the world. Each has proposed some formal and conventional rearrangement of society. Communism or equality, the right to labor, the destruction of individual property, the overthrow of all authority, have been forms under which these propositions have been brought forward, and have served as the bases of plans by which society should be renewed, and wrong banished from the earth. But, although they have succeeded in unsettling men's minds, and in giving false lustre to vague fancies, the old truth yet remains, — sad it may be to some, but, if viewed rightly, full of hope, — that no new system, no change in the economical relations of men, will alone bring about a better state of society than that which now exists. All the world may call itself free, equality may be professed and ordained, property may be divided among all; but society will not necessarily be improved, the misery of physical suffering will not necessarily be done away with, nor happiness given to the unhappy.

It has been a remarkable feature in many of the most prominent of these schemes for social reorganization, that they have been developed in a manner so obscure as to be unintelligible in great part to common apprehension. Instead of approving themselves at once by the simplicity of their statements and the directness of their deductions, they have repelled sound-thinking men by the mystical and affected method of their declarations and formulas; while, from the same cause, they have deluded the weak and thoughtless, who often fancy that unintelligibleness is the result and the proof of deep superior wisdom. Such was the system of St. Simon, impiously named the New Christianity (Le Nouveau Christianisme); the idea of which, according to its author,* was the establishment of a new religion, fitted to unite for one end — under the influence of a power endowed at the same time with an exquisite sentiment, a

* Louis Blanc. "Histoire de Dix Ans." Bruxelles, 1847. Tom. i. p. 392.

profound science, and an indefatigable activity — the artistic, the scientific, and the industrial classes; in other words, all men. Such were the series, the harmonies, and the attractions of Fourier; such were the Triad and the Ternaries of Pierre Leroux. It would be foolishness to detail and dwell on such follies, were it not that they have been connected with serious realities, and with sincere earnestness in the pursuit of human advancement. It is well also to consider how often extravagance takes the place, and assumes the authority and command, of truth.

The truths upon which social science rests, like those upon which all other science rests, are in themselves simple, and fitted to be expressed in plain, intelligible words. They are not the possession or the discovery of any specially illuminated class. The observations which lead to them may often be complex, and they may demand the highest powers for their investigation; but the result from them is always free from obscurity. It may task the highest skill to

find out the mystic influences of world upon world; but, when these influences are once discovered, their universal laws may be stated with a precision and clearness open to any understanding. So, too, in social science. Its study leads through all the intricacies of men's actions one upon another, and through the various infinite relations of nature and circumstances toward men; but, as these are by degrees unravelled and understood, it is more and more plainly seen that the final laws which they obey are few and simple.

The first step proposed by these systems of reform is, however, easily distinguishable, notwithstanding the obscurity which veils their details. It is to destroy the inequality which exists among men, and chiefly the inequality in the distribution of property.

The inequality in this respect is, as all will acknowledge, the immediate source of the greatest social suffering. The contrasts between wealth and poverty, between luxury and misery, are close and terrible. Their existence to such a frightful degree is the

reproach of our civilization, of our humanity. There is no difference with regard to the need of a remedy; the only difference is with regard to what the remedy is, and how it is to be applied.

The inequality in the distribution of property arises from two sets of causes: the one, the natural created differences in human character, and the variety of God's dispensations to men; the other, the injustice of human institutions of past and present times, by which some men have been favored to the disadvantage of others. It is plain that the first of these causes are unalterable by any human arrangements. It is only the second class which can be changed by them. But this obvious distinction has been overlooked by the popular modern theorists. It has been their great and fatal error to propose by their systems to alter the action of God's laws, and to change the operations of the decrees of Divine Wisdom. They have attempted to destroy, by an artificial organization, the indestructible and unchangeable elements of human nature. Their efforts

might well have been directed to do away with the wrongs which blot the earth; for all wrong is to be done away by human efforts. But they have dashed against the wall of God's providence, and their fancies have shivered into atoms at the base.

These schemes are now, for the most part, classed together under the general term of Socialism. This word, however, although it serves as a general term embracing many systems, is as yet without any very clear signification. Its definitions have been as numerous as the writers upon social reform. Varying in meaning with the theories which have been included within its name, it has been made to cover many propositions, which, if carried to their legitimate conclusions, would be destructive to all society; while, at the same time, it has included many principles whose development would go far toward removing some of the difficulties which most impede the progress of the world. And from this it happens, that those whose position renders them satisfied with

the existing state of things, look with aversion and distrust upon all the projects which bear the name of Socialism; while those who have nothing to lose in any change, regard the word as the indefinite promise of a better state, and cherish too high and too indiscriminate a hope.

Putting aside the consideration of minor points, the leading idea which presents itself under various modifications, as the groundwork of most of the systems of Socialism, is that of Association. This principle is asserted to be sufficient, when properly understood, to produce the desired equality in the circumstances of mankind, and to bring about the new condition of society. The principle of association itself is no novelty in the world. It is as old as the time when two men first joined together to accomplish what one alone could not effect. As we examine the whole scope of men's relations with each other, we see this principle of association in them all. No civilization can exist without it. The difference between barbarism and civilization is the difference between more or less

association among men. All labor, commerce, art, literature, and even all languages, rest upon this fact of association.

But, universal as it is, such association as the world has known has been insufficient to prevent the growth of evils, — it has proved often the union of the strong against the weak, of force against right, of power and violence against liberty. What, then, is the new element in the old principle, or the new development given to it, which is to unite all men in the pursuit of common interests?

In one of the numbers of "Le Peuple Constituant," * the following passage, written by the Abbe de Lamennais, is to be found:

"If by Socialism is meant any one of those systems which, since the time of St. Simon

* At the time of the Revolution of February, the noted Abbé de Lamennais, in connection with M. Pascal Duprat, established at Paris a daily paper under the above title. For a time it had great success; for Lamennais employed his striking and popular style in setting forth doctrines, of which the chief was, "The people is every thing; and from it all justice and truth emanate." — *Les Journaux Rouges*. Paris, 1848, p. 120.

and Fourier, have multiplied everywhere, and whose general character is the explicit or implicit negation of property and of the family relation, — no — we are not Socialists, as is well enough known.

"But if by Socialism is meant, on the one hand, the principle of association acknowledged as one of the principal foundations of the order which is about to be established, and, on the other hand, the firm belief that under the immutable conditions of life itself, of physical and moral life, this order will constitute a new society, to which nothing in the past can be compared; — yes — we are Socialists, beyond any one else, as shall be well seen."* In this passage, "association" is declared to be one of the foundations of the new order: but what is to be understood by association is not apparent.

Five years before, in 1843, the paper called "La Réforme" was established by some of the most ardent and sincere Repub-

* "Les Journaux Rouges," p. 120.

licans of Paris, and its programme commences as follows:—

"All men are brothers.

"There, where equality does not exist, liberty is a lie.

"Society can live only by inequality of aptitudes, and diversity of functions; but superior aptitudes ought not to confer greater rights: they impose greater duties.

"This is the principle of equality: association is its necessary form.

"The final end of association is to arrive at the satisfaction of the intellectual, moral, and material wants of all, by the employment of their different aptitudes, and the concurrence of their efforts." *

Although this is apparently a definition of "association," it affords in reality no intelligible explanation of what is meant by it in its new use. Nor is it easy to find anywhere such an explanation. The idea with which the word is now used, and which gives to it

* "Histoire de la Révolution de 1848, par Daniel Stern." "Documents Historiques." p. 277.

its modern acceptation, seems, however, to be, that, by carrying the principle of association into all the relations and details of life, and by doing away more or less with separate individual action and interests, co-operation might be substituted everywhere for competition, and the inequalities which divide men be done away. This idea, carried to its farthest conclusion, is Communism: modified and varied, it appears in all the theories of Socialism.

Now, there is no one who will deny, that to bring about a hearty and loving co-operation among men is the end of the purest religion. It can be accomplished only by the power of religion. To propose to bring it about by any system which offers no motive but a worldly one, and possesses no sanction but a human one, is to propose an impossibility.

Let us attend to a few simple considerations. The association which is proposed must either be voluntarily entered into by all, or else some must enter willingly, and others only through compulsion. We will

suppose a case where a whole society should voluntarily enter into one great association. No one should have any separate cares; all private interests should be consolidated into the general interest of the society; and each associate should perform his part for the good of all, with no idea of special and personal gain. This world does not offer a fair place for the trial of such a plan; nor is it possible to suppose such an association, composed of human beings. In order that it should go on harmoniously, some of the ruling passions of mankind must be blotted out from it. It must be a society of beings, free from selfishness, ambition, envy, and emulation; while a thousand delicate and precious portions of human nature must be lost in the destruction of individual development. The motives which have been in force since the beginning of the world must be changed. The only foundation of society would be the existence of a sentiment, — a foundation too unstable even for a dream. A bright fancy may picture a glorious and happy Icarie, where there are no heavy toils,

no dividing interests, no injustice among the inhabitants; but poor, persecuted, imaginative Cabet finds in Texas or at Nauvoo the hard difference between the realities of men's intercourse with each other, and the illusions of his Icarian speculation.

But let us suppose a case in which the equality in the circumstances of the individuals of a society is not positive and absolute, but in which the association is one only of comparative equality. Such a system has been summed up by Louis Blanc in a famous formula, —

> "From every one according to his aptitudes.
> To every one according to his needs."

In plainer words, every one shall be required to give to the association all that his powers of whatever kind enable him to give; and every one shall receive from the association all that his wants need for their satisfaction. The man with most ability shall give most: the man with least ability shall receive most.

In the way of such a proposed state as this, there seems to be one insurmountable difficulty. To distribute to each and to demand from each his due proportion, must be the work of some authority. No authority but an omniscient one can perform the task, — and omniscience does not belong to any human authority. Proudhon, who has a shrewdness in detecting the fallacies of others, which deserts him when he argues for his own, asks well in regard to this scheme, "Who will make the valuation of capacity? Who will be the judge of wants? You say that my capacity is 100: I maintain that it is only 90. You add that my need is 90 : I affirm that it is 100. We differ by 20 as to the need and the capacity. Who will judge between the society and me?" If the society, he goes on to say, enforces its opinion, I quit it, and the association ends; or, if it obliges me to accept its judgment and constrains me to remain, the principle of fraternity and mutual interest, upon which it was founded, is at an

end.* Wherever the association is a forced one, the relation between the associates is that between masters and slaves.

But there is another difficulty very obvious in regard to any such arrangement of society. It is in its character an artificial arrangement; and, in so far as it is artificial, it implies its own inefficiency. A system not founded on the natural characteristics of mankind can be of advantage only in peculiar and temporary circumstances. It has no universal value. It is not a possible system for the world. In an association founded on the principle of equality, there is no possible guarantee that every member shall perform his assigned part of the labor. It has been asserted, that, in the adaptation of the work to the capacity and the inclination of each individual, such a guarantee may be found. But this is to answer an objection by a false assumption. The work best suited to a

* "Idée Générale de la Révolution au XIX Siècle. Par P. J. Proudhon." Paris, 1851. pp. 104–5.

man's capacities is not always agreeable to him. Nor is there any rule or measure of the capacity for, or the value of, different kinds of labor. Hard work to one is easy to another. A man may be apparently idle, and yet may be doing more than any of his busier associates. In such a society, it must be finally left to the conscience of every one to do his part, and the conscience is often a very unenlightened, and always a very fallible counsellor. Judging from experience, it must happen that an association of this kind would often prove only an encouragement to idleness. The least industrious would reduce their associates to their own level: they would not be raised to the level of their better companions.

In an admirable little pamphlet published by the Marshal Bugeaud in 1848, when theoretical fancies of this sort were producing most dangerous effects, an account is given of a community established by himself under highly favorable circumstances for its success, on this principle of common interests and fraternity. The experiment was

made in Algeria, and was fairly tried. The result was decisive, and he closes his account of it as follows: "Absolute equality does not belong to this world. It is God himself who has determined this, since he has created men so different in power, in intelligence, in activity, in inclinations. The Socialists, afflicted at seeing misery often at the side of ease, and even of riches, pursue the chimæra of perfect equality. They believe to have found it in association; they are deceived; they will obtain only an equality of misery." *

A fixed system of whatever sort that attempts to regulate all human relations, and to restrict the variety in human circumstances which results from the differences in individuals, can only end in a tyranny. A partial system of this kind was tried of old in Sparta. "The second law," says Plutarch, "that Lycurgus made, and the boldest

* "Les Socialistes et le Travail en Commun. Par M. le Maréchal Bugeaud d'Isly." Paris, 1848. p. 25.

and hardest he ever took in hand, was the making of a new division of their lands. For he saw so great a disorder and inequality among the inhabitants, as well of the country, as of the city Lacedæmon, by reason some (and the greatest number of them) were so poor that they had not a handful of ground, and other some being least in number were very rich, that had all: he thought with himself to banish out of the city all insolency, envy, covetousness, and deliciousness, and also all riches and poverty, which he took for the greatest and most continual plagues of a city or commonweal. For this purpose he imagined there was none so ready and necessary a mean, as to persuade his citizens to suffer all the lands, possessions, and inheritance of their country to run in common together; and that they should make a new division equally in partition among themselves, to live from thenceforth, as it were, like brothers together, so that no one were richer than another, and none should seek to go before each other, any other way than in virtue only; thinking there should be no

difference or inequality among inhabitants of one city, but the reproaches of dishonesty, and the praises of virtue." * The scheme of Lycurgus prevailed; and Plutarch, who gives the account of it in full detail, is unable to hide under a veil of eulogy, that it was the establishment of a most oppressive domestic tyranny, and proved utterly incompatible with any rapid progress or high advance in civilization. "There is no slavery," said one who spoke from experience in our own times, — "there is no slavery so hard as communism in action." †

Men are not placed in this world to sacrifice their individual characters and interests to the fancied advantage of other men, who form what is called "society." The good of one man is the good of all. The injury of one individual nature, under the pressure of an arrangement proposed for the general

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* Plutarch's Lives. Translated by Sir Thomas North. Lycurgus.

† This was the testimony of one of the Texan Icarians, as quoted in "Les Socialistes depuis Février. Par M. Jules Breynat." Paris, 1850. p. 197.

good, involves the injury of many, and implies the defectiveness of the system. The true idea of society is a collection of individuals, each endowed with a different character, each seeking his own improvement after his own manner; and each, in securing his own happiness, promoting directly or indirectly the good of all within the limit of his influence. The impulse coming from his own natural inclinations, more or less controlled by moral restraint, will be the means of securing his constant advance. The progress of society is simply the progress of the individuals who compose it; and any scheme which rejects the aid of human inclinations, or even of human passions, is a scheme which rejects one of the chief sources of human progress. But, among the desires which may be termed natural to men, there are few more constant than the desire of the acquisition of property. The love of property, gained by personal exertion for personal use, is of great and unvarying force in promoting the development of much of what is best in character. Nor is it a low and

ignoble means for this result. The power to do good with one's own possessions, and after one's own manner, is a pure motive and end of exertion. Property, as it now exists, may be wrongly divided; it may be wrongly used; it may be beyond the attainment of most men: but a system which would destroy individual property is a system which confounds the distinctions between good and evil, and would destroy an essential good for the purpose of getting rid of evils which have no necessary connection with it.

Equality in property, if it could be obtained, would not secure a general equality of condition. Equality in circumstances is not possible, even if it were desirable. Fraternity, the brotherhood of men, must depend on their advance in virtue. It is not to be gained by any artificial and arbitrary regulations. It will be the late and gradual result of years, perhaps ages, of trial, change, and suffering. It will spring not from the glowing fancies, but from the deep, hearty, religious convictions of mankind.

The subject of social improvement spreads like a vast plain in every direction before one who enters upon it. But perhaps enough has been said to point out the character of the chief errors upon which most of the schemes of modern Socialism have rested. These very errors may be received as lessons for the future. They teach the necessity of moderation in expectations, in desires, in hopes: of submission to what is inevitable: and of content with partial remedies, and tardy and imperfect results. They show that the improvement in the condition of men is to proceed, not from hasty changes in the constitution of society, but from the constant, fresh growth of the good which may be found in its present form. Above all, they prove that progress can come, not from the unaided efforts of human ingenuity and strength, but only from those efforts helped and supported by the favor of God, because undertaken with faith in his overruling providence, and carried on in conformity with his laws.

And with this belief we may heartily adopt the definition of Socialism, as given by one of the bravest of modern social reformers. "Socialism," says Raspail, "is the constant and disinterested study of all that may serve to ameliorate the moral and physical state of human society." *

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* "Almanach démocratique et social pour 1849."

V.

CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATIONS.

"Unum debet esse omnibus propositum, ut eadem sit utilitas uniuscujusque et universorum."

CICERO.

THE preceding section has shown that the recent projects of social reform have, in great part, rested upon three mutually dependent errors, — those, namely, of perfect equality among men, of the destruction of individual property, and of universal association. It has appeared, that, whether regarded in their moral, their political, or their economical relations, these ideas are equally erroneous.

These ideas, however, though erroneous, are plausible and attractive. Plausible, be-

cause they are the exaggerations of right principles and the extravagancies of good feeling. Attractive, because they are vague, promising largely, and requiring little; deluding to misery, and flattering to selfishness and discontent. They belong to an ideal state of society; and perhaps most men believe, that, in the attainment of such a state, more must be done for them than by them.

But, though universal equality is impossible and undesirable, though the destruction of individual property would be simply the destruction of civilization, and though such universal association as has been proposed would end in universal despotism and stagnation; yet it is not to be forgotten, that there is much unjust inequality to be remedied; that the abuses of property are what have chiefly led to the idea of its destruction; and that the free association of men in the pursuit of their own interests, under every different form, is one of the securities for progress, which has been often checked and hampered with unreasonable restraints.

The only one of these ideas which could from its nature be brought into the field of experiment, has, during the few past years of revolutionary excitement, received special attention and development. In all the recent revolutions, "the right of association" has been one of the most prominent watchwords of the popular party. Wherever that party has for any time prevailed, this right has been exerted in positive action. From association as a theory of general reform, associations for special purposes have arisen. Association, which was to unite all mankind, has begun in the co-operative associations among workmen of the same trade, or the operatives of a single workshop; and in this humbler way has shown, and is still showing, the real value of its principle.

It is the object of the present section to inquire into the nature of these experiments, and the results which they have afforded.

Association for co-operative purposes is obviously of more direct and immediate

value to the poor than to the rich, and the fresh exhibitions of the principle have been almost entirely in associations among the laboring classes. Thus far, in the history of society, the class of laborers, to use this word in its common technical sense, has been in a state of comparative dependence. When above the condition of slaves, they have, for the most part, been obliged to rely upon the recompense of their labor for their sole support. They have had no reserved means to fall back upon when that dependence failed. They have lived only by hire, and this hire has generally been too small to afford much more than the necessities for material comfort, and too precarious to give leisure or means for the attainment of the higher objects of life. It has often been insufficient even for the supply of necessity. It has seemed as if labor were ill remunerated in proportion to its share in production; as if it stood at a disadvantage with the other elements which combine in this work.

Two causes have been pointed out as the

manifest source of most of this apparent, and in many cases real, injustice. The first is the weakness of labor as compared with the power of capital. Capital consists, in great part, of accumulated labor; and gives power to those who possess it, beyond that of the many who have only their daily labor for a possession. The second cause of the depression of labor has been declared to be competition, and this principle has been denounced as the great enemy of the working classes. Its evil influence is experienced not more in the competition for profits between the employers of labor, which leads them continually to reduce the price offered for it more and more, than in the competition between laborers themselves for labor, or, in other words, for the support of life, by which they are led to accept wages constantly decreasing in proportion to their increasing want. In dwelling upon the evils of competition, many have become blind to the fact of its necessary existence, and to the good which results from it. They have denounced the river whose fer-

tilizing stream pours along the rapid current of prosperity, because in its overflow it leaves the marks of desolation behind it. Instead of building dykes and canals, by which this overflow might be prevented, they would attempt, as if the thing were practicable, to stop its course altogether. In denouncing competition, it should be well understood, that they denounce buying and selling, trade and commerce, and the civilization which follows them. The effort should be, not that tried by most reformers, to get rid of the principle itself, but to get rid of the evil connected with it.

With the growing intelligence of the laboring classes, some of them have come to perceive that a union among themselves might, if properly organized and conducted, be the means of freeing them in some measure from the evils of competition; and that, if, in addition to a union of their labor, they could unite the small sums of money which each might possess or be able to obtain, so that many small might form one large sum to be used for the common advantage, they

would be relieved from the evil of dependence upon the possessors of capital. They now work for wages; but, understanding the course of their trade and possessing the necessary capital, why should they not unite the parts of workman and master, and secure, in addition to the amount of their wages, the master's share of the price received for the article of production? They would reduce to action the principle by which "every one who contributes to a work, whether by labor or pecuniary resources, may have a partner's interest in it proportionally to the value of his contribution." * Such a system as this they think would be one of obvious justice; and, the interests of each individual being bound up with those of all, it would secure, so far as the strong motive of self-interest prevailed, efficiency of labor and economy of materials, in production. By it also consumers might be brought into direct relations with the producers, without the interference of any middle class; and thus, it is said,

* Mill's "Political Economy," book iv. chap. vii. § 5.

economy would be secured to the purchaser, and a suitable remuneration to the laborer.

The attractive character of these doctrines, the truth contained in a portion of them, and the plausibility of all, have led to their adoption, not only by many of those who might expect to be immediately benefited by their operation, but also by philosophical inquirers into social and political science. The able political economist, Stuart Mill, brings forward the principle of making the work of production the common concern of all, giving to all laborers and employers a partner's interest in it, as the chief means of "healing the widening and embittering feud between the class of laborers and the class of capitalists." * The "Christian Socialists," headed by Kingsley and Maurice, more led by earnest feeling than by sound judgment, proclaim the doctrines of co-operation as the foundation of a new and Christian order of things.

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* "Political Economy," book iv. chap. vii. "On the Probable Future of the Laboring Classes," § 6.

We are not wholly without facts which may assist us to determine the correctness of such anticipations, and the real importance of co-operative associations to society as at present constitituted.

In France, where all the problems of social science have been more studied, and where social theories have been more applied to the test of experiment, than elsewhere, many trials of different schemes of association and co-operative union have been made. As early as 1834, an association of jewellers was formed in Paris. It was at first a partnership of two individuals; but the number of associates gradually increased to thirteen. The chief principle of their association was that of mutual confidence, founded on a general conformity of sentiments and similarity of judgment. The members had the same rights, and all were under the authority of a chief elected from among themselves. The salaries or wages were not equal; and, in the yearly division of the profits, each associate received a share in proportion to the amount of his annual wages. There

was an inalienable and indivisible capital contributed by the different members. The number of members was increased by the election of new associates from among the workmen who had been employed for not less than six months in the workshops of the society. They were not chosen until the members had had full experience of their good conduct and character, and were assured that they held the Roman Catholic faith.* This association, which, from its long existence and continued prosperity (for it was at a recent period in prosperous existence), has been brought forward by the supporters of the system as a proof of the good results of co-operation, does not seem to differ in any essential respect from a common partnership of numerous partners. There is certainly nothing in it which can be looked to as promising any special advantages to the great body of workmen,

* "Des Associations Ouvrières, par M. Villermé." Paris, 1849. pp. 48—50.

even of a single trade; and it may be well to observe, that, although called an "association of workmen," it is rather an association of masters, — the united capital of the associates enabling them to employ workmen who have no share in the profits of the concern. That an association of this kind, established under favorable circumstances and conducted on equitable and sensible principles, may secure the comfort and independence of its members, does not admit a doubt; but the limits of its usefulness are very narrow.

The establishment of M. Leclaire, a house-painter in the Rue St. Georges at Paris, has been widely celebrated as a successful experiment of another kind of association. M. Leclaire, reserving to himself the whole direction and management of his business, has given to those of his workmen who deserved reward for the fidelity and excellence of their work a certain annual share in the profits of the concern, in addition to their regular wages. He has, to this degree, associated their interests with his

own; and the result has been of advantage to himself, as well as to those whom he employed.* The system is one which might well be extended, and from which excellent effects might flow; but it hardly deserves the name of an association, inasmuch as it is an arrangement depending on the will of the master alone. However widely similar arrangements may be extended in the future, they can be applicable only to those trades in which apprentices are required, and must depend on a peculiar combination of qualities in the master and the workmen. In those circumstances where the good quality of labor is not so important as its cheapness, an increase of wages must be looked for, if it is needed, not from a division of profits with the master, but from a general rise in the value of labor. Most of the hardest work, such as the making of roads, the dig-

* The account of M. Leclaire's establishment, given by Mr. Mill ("Pol. Econ." book iv. chap. vii. § 6), is, in some respects, too favorable. Compare with his statements M. Leclaire's own account, as quoted by Villermé, "Des Associations Ouvrières," p. 44.

ging of canals, the gathering of crops, and other similar labor, comes within the limit of these circumstances. The system may be a help: it is no general reliance for the future elevation of labor.

But it was in 1848, when the bridles that rein in the wild fancies of men seemed to be broken, and when vague desires and strange delusions burst into the field of busy practical life, that new and hasty experiments in associations were tried, and on a wider scale than had ever before been attempted. The most complex questions in the relations of labor were solved by a decree. The Revolution was declared to be made in favor of the working classes. The gloomy and terrible cry of the insurgents at Lyons in 1834 — "Vivre en travaillant, ou mourir en combattant" — was to be inscribed in the constitution of the new republic.* The organization of labor was to be its chief object. But the measures taken to secure this orga-

* See the speech of Ledru Rollin before the National Assembly on the 13th September.

nization, only served to complete the confusion of the times. No one, who remembers the course of those four months from February to June, has forgotten the stagnation of trade, the suffering of the poor, the alarm of the rich; the weak, conflicting acts of the government, driven this way and that by the changeable breath of popular feeling; the daily increasing mob of ignorant and idle workmen, gathered together to receive a payment guaranteed by the state; the suspense; and, at last, the bloody civic battle, when the roar of the cannon through the streets, and the rattle of the musketry, told the end of one more false dream of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

During this period, the idea of co-operative association as a remedy for old evils was spread diligently, and took rapid hold of the minds of the laboring classes. The expectation of freedom from the control of masters, of liberty in work, and of fellowship in profits, was well suited to catch the fancy of the poor and the indolent. The advantages of the plan were brilliant and obvious; the

difficulties of its application were not easily to be seen, and were not of a kind to be appreciated by men burning with the fervid and unreflecting excitement of the times.

The first association established was that of the tailors. It was under the direct auspices of government. The Debtors' Prison of the Rue de Clichy was given it as a workshop: forty thousand uniforms were ordered from it by the state. There was no selection of associates. It soon numbered from one thousand five hundred to two thousand workmen, each receiving two francs a day, and all sharing profits or losses equally. The hot sun of state favor produced quickly a rank, unhealthy growth. It became, from an association for labor, one for the discussion of politics, and fell under the control of demagogues. So it went on till the days of June. After that time it shrunk in dimensions, went into another workshop, and became really an experiment in co-operation.

As this association was founded under the immediate oversight of Louis Blanc, the great promoter of the system, and as, not-

withstanding various chances, it had power to subsist, and was very lately still existing, it is of importance to note the most prominent peculiarities of its constitution. It appears that it might consist of an unlimited number of members. It was governed by a Council of Direction annually elected, which made all contracts, and represented the association towards the public. This council occupied the place of a master. New members were admitted on the approval of the council following the recommendation of two existing members, who were obliged to certify that the candidate "unites such moral qualities as are indispensable in order to form part of an association." The profits were divided into thirds: one-third was shared by the members in proportion to the number of days' work done by each; one-third went to the general fund or capital; and one-third to the mutual-relief fund. This latter fund was destined to assist sick or infirm members; to aid the widows and children of past associates; to supply retiring pensions to the old, who had been mem-

bers for five years at least; and, in fine, to provide as far as possible for any imperious or exceptional wants of the members. The distribution of this fund was intrusted to a "Family Council," chosen by the general meeting.*

The plan, of which these are the main provisions, offers many features of excellence; but it wants any guarantee of success. There is nothing in it to obviate the tendency to irregularity in work, to reliance on the exertions of others, and to insubordination among the associates, which must necessarily be experienced in the operation of such a scheme upon a large scale. Under favoring circumstances, and with well-instructed and few associates, it might serve a good purpose. But of the difficulties to which in common with other similar plans it is exposed, when tried with any wide extension, we will take note hereafter.

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* See "Tracts on Christian Socialism. No. IV. The Working Associations of Paris." [By J. M. Ludlow, Esq.] London, 1850.

The popular current, after the battle of June, still set so strongly in favor of associations, that, on the 5th of July, the Assembly voted a law by which a credit of three millions of francs was opened with the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, to be shared in the form of loans among associations composed of workmen simply, or of workmen and masters combined. A Council of Encouragement, selected by the minister and presided over by him, was to regulate the conditions of the loans, to examine the character of the associations demanding assistance, and to choose from among them those most worthy of encouragement.

The chance of getting money from the public treasury added fuel to the flame already burning. Speculators and sharpers quickly got up mock associations, and sent in their claims for assistance. Honest laborers, hoping to get rich at once by means of capital gratuitously afforded them, formed half-concocted schemes, and in good faith proposed impracticable companies. In addition to these false claims and impossible

designs, the Council was flooded with petitions from associations worthy of support. They soon found that the labor of examination was a very difficult task, and they made but slow progress in the distribution of the fund. They determined, therefore, in order to simplify their work, to arrange two models or types of statutes, — one for associations of workmen alone, the other for those of master and workmen, — and to require the adoption of one set of these rules as a step preliminary to the granting of a loan.

The establishment of the loan-fund was originally a great error. It could do little good in removing difficulties from the way of a few associations; and it could do nothing but harm in putting these associations on a false footing, giving them unnatural encouragement and an unjust support. It could only favor such as might be selected to receive any part of it, at the cost and to the disadvantage of the vast majority, who could receive none; and such favor was like lifting a burden from one shoulder to place it dou-

bled in weight upon the other. Still, the fund being established, it was clearly the duty of the Council of Encouragement to distribute it in the fairest and freest manner, so that its full benefit might be reaped, and an unimpeded experiment in the system of co-operation be carried out. But the Council was composed in great part of men little favorable to the idea of association; and some of the regulations which they enforced seem as if purposely directed to restrict the good effects of the loan. The establishment of two unvarying models for the statutes of associations, which must differ, not only in the circumstances of their foundation, but also in the character of the associates, appears, at the first glance, to counteract much of the good proposed by the loan, and to limit its value as a social experiment. It was determined, moreover, that loans should be made to associations of workmen, only on condition of the unlimited liability of each associate for the full amount of the loan. For this regulation it is difficult to see any justification. Partnerships

and associations, carried on upon the principle of the limited liability of the partners, are common and universally understood in France. There would be no novelty, as in England, in the application of the principle to the proposed societies. The adoption of the rule of unlimited liability, while it afforded little additional security for the return of the loan, was virtually an encouragement of speculation and of reckless association. No honest and thoughtful laborer would join a society in which he might become liable for more than the earnings of his lifetime, and thus run the chance of being deprived, through the mistakes or dishonesty of his associates, of the little gains of years of labor.

It was, on the other hand, wisely decided by the council, that the inequality of wages, and of shares in profit, should be carried out in all the associations. A *gérant* or manager was to be annually chosen in each, to take the place of master, and to be assisted by an elected council.

In regard to profits, a portion, which was

on the average forty per cent, was to be reserved every year for possible future wants; as, for instance, to cover the losses by bad debts, or to purchase new stock. Another portion of ten per cent was to be a reserved indivisible fund, the proposed object of which is not clear. In case of the breaking up of the association, this was to fall to the government to increase the public fund for the encouragement of associations; or, if this fund no longer existed, it was to be applied in aid of benevolent institutions for the amelioration of the working classes.

Interest was to be charged on the loans of the government, at the rate of three per cent annually, on sums under 25,000 francs, and five per cent on sums above that amount. Three-fourths of one per cent was to be annually paid to cover the expenses of two public inspectors; and whatever portion the association might repay, so long as it held any capital from government, this sum of three-fourths of one per cent was to be charged on the full amount of the original loan.

Notwithstanding the restrictive character of some of these regulations, six hundred petitions for shares in the fund, from associations representing perhaps fifty or sixty thousand individuals, were received by the Council of Encouragement. It was impossible to give to all; and, after consideration of the claims, 890,500 francs were divided among thirty associations in Paris, and 1,700,000 were given to twenty-six associations in the departments. The amounts of the loans varied from 3,000 to 250,000 francs.

Of the associations in Paris, twenty-seven were of workmen alone, and three of workmen and masters. In the departments, eleven were of workmen alone, and fifteen of workmen and masters.

The greater part of the loans were made in the first six months of 1849. The succeeding year was one in which all trade was recovering from the blow of 1848, and was a period of considerable commercial activity and success. The associations, however, do not seem to have shared in the general

prosperity. After a year, eighteen of them, representing 589,000 francs of the loan, had ceased to exist. The causes of failure were various: sometimes there was a complete abandonment of the society by all the associates; sometimes there was fraud on the part of one; there were mistakes on the part of the managers; there was want of work; and sometimes there was dissatisfaction among the associates with each other, or with the conditions of the loan, or, in general, with the whole system.

There were in many instances, both among the associations that were broken up in the first year, and among those which still continued to exist, constant changes in the management, with great internal confusion and many difficulties. Out of the thirty formed in Paris, only four were successful in obtaining private credit, in addition to that which they had obtained from the government. In the departments, not a single association of the workmen obtained loans of money from private individuals.

One of the inspectors of the finances of

the associations in the departments, wrote: "It does not appear, in general, that the workmen have taken the association seriously, or that they have acted as if interested in it, by bringing to their labors more activity and care since it was formed; for the products are neither more abundant nor of better quality." This is the tone of many of the reports. Others, however, speak of the zeal, the patience, and the improved character of the workmen under the new system. Both representations were undoubtedly correct.

In July, 1852, but seven or eight of the associations in Paris, and but five or six of those in the departments, continued to exist. It is especially to be noticed, that, during the whole period since 1849, France has been enjoying a season of prosperity and of activity in her trades and manufactures.*

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* The account given above of these associations is abridged from a "Memoire sur les Associations fondées avec une Subvention de l'Etat. Par M. Louis Reybaud." It is to be found in the "Compte Rendu de l'Académie des Sciences Morales. Juillet et Août, 1852." M. Reybaud, the well-

But, besides these associations, which received aid from the government, there sprang up in Paris many others, which were entirely dependent on the exertions of their members. Their characters and objects were extremely various. Some embraced only a few members, while others were composed of hundreds of associates. Almost all were designated as "Associations Fraternelles;" and between many of them a system of mutual aid was established, by which each association was bound, as far as possible, to give preference in all dealings, to the other associations. Thus an associated shoemaker was to employ an associated washerwoman to wash his linen, and she in return was to get her shoes from the shoemakers' association; and, while she washed at a cheaper rate for the shoemaker, he, on the other hand, was to supply her with cheaper

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known author of "Jérome Patûrot," was one of the members of the Council of Encouragement. He has given further details, in regard to the workings of these and other associations, in the "Compte-Rendu" for November and December, 1852.

shoes than she could get elsewhere. The preamble to the regulations of the associated masons and stone-cutters set forth, "that they had resolved to form an association, and to unite their interests, in order, by this means, to proceed towards the end of humanity, — universal brotherhood." * And, in general, in regard to the associations, there was too much of this cant about brotherhood and equality, — a cant difficult to be borne with, since it tends to bring into disrepute the noblest principles, and to weaken their authority over the world.

In some trades, two or more rival associations were formed; and it did not appear that the principle upon which they were formed was able to extinguish a disastrous competition. In other trades, single individuals set up the sign of "Fraternal Association," in the hope of reaping some little gain from increase of custom. Some of the associations, however, included more than

* "Tracts on Christian Socialism," No. IV. p. 16.

half of all the workmen in a trade: that of the hatters, for example, was said at one time to embrace nine hundred out of the fourteen hundred hatters of Paris.* Most of these co-operative societies commenced upon the system of complete equality of wages and profits: but very few continued it after a short experience, for it was found that either equality or association must be given up.

One regulation, which appears in different forms in the rules of many of the societies, deserves particular attention. It is that with regard to the qualifications of candidates for membership. The standard of qualification varied; but it seems always to have been necessary to fix some standard. Among the masons, two members must "guarantee the morality and laborious habits of the candidate."† Into the association of workers in leather and skins no member was to be admitted, unless he were a good

* "Villermé. Des Associations Ouvrières." p. 82.

† "Tracts on Christian Socialism," No. IV. p. 15.

workman in his own line, and paid into the general fund, either in money, tools, or materials, the sum of a hundred francs.* Such examples as these might be multiplied, but a few serve to show the character of the whole.

At one time, toward the end of 1848, these associations became so numerous as to give cause for serious alarm, lest the course of trade in Paris should be disturbed, and lest, uniting under a general head, they might assume the character of a great political organization. But their number decreased as their novelty wore off, and the alarm diminished as rapidly as it had grown. Since then, there have been fluctuations in their numbers and in their success. Many still exist, and some are said to be prosperous. But it is difficult to obtain any trustworthy accounts of their condition.†

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* "Tracts on Christian Socialism," No. IV. p. 16.

† In April, 1852, there were a hundred and ninety-seven working-men's associations in Paris. See "Edinburgh Review," No. CXCIV. p. 439.

In England the experiment of such associations, as a remedy for the evils of the system of competition, is being tried, at the present time, in various quarters, and with various means. The founders of "Christian Socialism," as it is called, have promoted the establishment of working-men's associations in London, in the hope that these societies may afford some permanent relief to the present evils in the working-men's condition. The first opened was that of the tailors. It commenced in January, 1850, and was recently in what was said to be a flourishing condition. Other similar associations have sprung up since; but they are all of somewhat forced growth, supported carefully by the aid of friends, and kept much in the light and heat of notoriety. Nor is this to be considered undesirable. For the sake of human progress, if the plan is good, if it can remove or relieve the evils under which so many laborers suffer, let it have all the aid, all the encouragement, all the care, which the most assiduous watchfulness can bestow; but let it be understood, that, under such

guardianship, present success is no proof of its universal or future value.

Till within a very recent period, all such associations in England have labored under great difficulties on account of the restrictive character of the laws of partnership; but, during the year 1852, co-operative associations received the benefit of a special act, and many now enter upon a rapid course of development.* There have already been formed some establishments conducted upon the system of M. Leclaire, and some co-operative stores have been organized similar to those not uncommon in some parts of our own country, supported by working-men to supply themselves with good articles at fair prices, and to divide among themselves the profits that may accrue from the undertaking. There seems now no reason why similar institutions should not be widely extended throughout England, if their operation is found to be beneficial.

* This act is entitled "Industrial and Provident Societies Act." It will enable working-men "to work together with every fair facility."

Such are some of the facts respecting past and existing co-operative associations. Two different sets of conclusions may be drawn from them: one favorable, the other adverse, to the system. The societies have not had such success as to prove the fallacy of the views of those who regard them as attempting impossibilities, nor have they met with such failures as to lead their supporters to distrust their final prevalence. The experiment is but half tried. It must go on for a long period before its result can be completely known. But, though this be the case, there are certain points already ascertained, and some general considerations to be attended to, in forming an opinion with respect to the final question, — the power of these associations to improve the condition of the laboring class.

In the first place, then, it would appear that the advocates of co-operation claim too much in putting it forward as the chief means to remedy the evils of the laborer's condition, because these evils are dependent in great part upon moral and physical causes, on which

association, however extended, can have only an indirect effect. Moreover, almost every man desires freedom in the pursuit of his own interests. This desire is not confined among the poor: a poor man wishes to feel that he has the power to exercise his individual will. It is true that you may be able to prove that in association his interests would be promoted, and that the voluntary joining the society is an exercise of his free will: but not every man is capable of understanding a demonstration: and to suppose the poorest and most distressed laborers intelligent enough to see their own interest, and self-controlled enough to follow it, is to suppose what does not exist. A formal, preconceived plan for the improvement of society must inevitably fail in a universal application. A small portion of the needy may be attracted by it: the majority will not find any help in it. The scheme of co-operative association is expressly adapted to the better and more intelligent class of workmen. It appears from the past experience, that, to secure success, the associates must submit to a

complex and stringent code of regulations, and that they must be bound together by a moral as well as a social or industrial tie. Now, all this goes to render such associations exclusive in their character. The most idle, immoral, and ignorant, that is, the portion of the laboring classes most needing to be elevated, are left out or kept out. We have seen the regulations to this effect among the Parisian associations. The second article of the fourth chapter of the Code of Laws for an Association, published by the promoters of Christian Socialism, relates to candidates for admission, and reads as follows: "He must be of good reputation and a competent workman." Mr. Babbage, who has very ably stated the advantages which might result from the extension of the principle of association to manufacturing industry, expressly refers to the small capitalists, and the higher class of workmen, as those to whom the matter is of chief importance. Indeed he says: "None but workmen of high character and qualifications could obtain admission into such establish-

ments." * The success of the association of working jewellers in Paris has depended on this fact. It has been an association of picked men; a partnership, and nothing more, between its members. M. Leclaire made his successful experiment (which, as we have seen, is hardly to be called an experiment in association) by rewarding his best workmen with a share in his gains. It is, undoubtedly, a very desirable and excellent thing to increase the wages and to extend the prospects of the higher class of laborers, — and indirectly, this is a great good for those lower in the scale, — but until it shall be shown that association may be applied with immediate advantage to the needs of the majority of laborers, till then, it cannot claim to be the most important means for the elevation of the working classes.†

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* "Economy of Machinery and Manufactures." Third edition, chap. xxvi., quoted in Mill, book iv. chap. vii.

† In the first Report of the Society for promoting Working Men's Associations, published at the close of 1852 in London, occurs the following passage: "The Society has for some time

Even within the narrow limits by which its application in the present condition of society must be confined, the operation of the principle of association does not seem to be a complete remedy for the evils against which it is directed. Co-operation is declared to be the substitute for competition, and to be able to prevent the evils which are attributed to unrestrained rivalry in trade. But it does not appear evident how this result is to be effected. If all the laborers in a trade were to unite in one association,

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past determined to discourage advances of money to bodies of working-men about to start in association, unless they have first shown some sign of preparedness for the change from their old life, and have subscribed some funds of their own. This has been done, because it has been found very necessary to have some proof that men have foresight and self-denial before they should be encouraged to associate. Working-men in general are not fit for association. They come into it with the idea that it is to fill their pockets and lighten their work at once, and that every man in an association is to be his own master. They find their mistake in the first month or two, and then set to quarrelling with everybody connected with the association, but more especially with their manager; and, after much bad blood has been roused, the association breaks up insolvent, or has to be re-formed under very stringent rules, and after the expulsion of the refractory members."

or in many under one directing head, the end would indeed be gained. But there are few trades in which this is possible, even for a single country; and it must be supposed, in order to compass in this manner the destruction of the evils of competition, that there would be no struggles for superiority between different countries, or that associated industry would so prevail as to drive out all other from the field. Now, neither of these events can be anticipated. But, even supposing that all trades should be carried on everywhere by associations, what is there to prevent these associations from competing with each other as separate individuals? Absolutely nothing: on the contrary, competition must exist then as it does now. A plan for organizing labor, of whatever kind it may be, will never put a stop to competition. Association may help to control it. It will not necessarily by itself succeed in doing so.

There is a danger also attending the present schemes of associations, which demands careful watch. It is that, unless they are

established with great care, they may prove the means of shifting misery from one set of men upon another. This danger lies immediately before those associations which are commenced where population is crowded, and there are more laborers than labor. For instance, there are in the great cities many hands waiting, ready to seize the veriest crumbs of wages. Take fifty men from the workroom of a *sweater*, and form them into an association, — they may be relieved, but they will have only made room for fifty others, eager for their miserable places. And if the association succeeds, if its competition is found to be disastrous by the master, his new laborers will suffer for the success of the old.

There is yet another point. In some trades, the combination of the offices of master and man, and the union of the general management with the business of the workman, may be of advantage in securing economy and efficiency of production. But interfering as this union does, more or less, with that division of occupation which the

experience of all times and all countries has agreed in treating as the means of obtaining those advantages, it is hardly to be expected that this combination should be found to be usually attended with gain. To secure the good of the various classes of those engaged in work, their occupations should be brought into a harmonious combination, not forced into an artificial amalgamation. Diversity of occupation does not imply diversity of interests.*

While these prominent difficulties lie in the way of the realization of the large hopes of those who expect most from co-operative associations, there is, however, but little to be feared, and much to be hoped, from the progress and multiplication of these societies. The hindrances which they must overcome are such that they are not likely to succeed, except where the advantages derived from them are positive and practicable. So far

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* See article by Mr. Greg, on "Investments for the Working Classes." Edinburgh Review, No. CXCIV., April, 1852. p. 452.

as they extend, they will be the means of spreading the virtues of self-control and self-reliance. Modified as they may be to suit various needs and capacities, they may more or less escape the objections which lie against them in theory. The more men associate together for the sake of their interests, the more are they likely to associate from higher motives and for generous ends. Associations are one of the means — not the chief, not the most effective nor most desirable — for the elevation of the laboring poor; but still a means to that end, and as such not to be slighted. We have seen that they are now of most advantage to the highest class of workmen, — to the most intelligent and the most virtuous. Their influence may thus be beneficial in stimulating the formation of good habits among all. And this very limit to their immediate usefulness points out the most direct object of exertion for those who would take their part in social progress. It is the education of the poorer classes. Educate them, and they will then associate if they need; and

association will carry on their education. Make them beings capable of understanding their own interests, and desirous to promote those of others. The first duty, the first necessity, is to help them to gain possession of their intellectual and moral natures. Till this is attained, liberty, fraternity, equality, association, are impossible. Then will labor be honored and rewarded as it ought; and, till then, no organization whatever will avail to secure its due regard. Education is the hope for the future of the laborer.

NOTE TO PAGE 94. — It appears from M. Reybaud's paper in the "Compte-Rendu" for November and December, 1852, that the constitution of the association of tailors underwent some modification after the removal from the Rue de Clichy. The most important change appears to have been that the members gave up the idea of equality in wages, and were paid for their work by the piece.

VI.

THE FUTURE.

"The progress of mankind is like the incoming of the tide, which, for any given moment, is almost as much of a retreat as of an advance; but still the tide moves on."

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

THE difficulty of forming a true estimate of the character and tendency of one's own times has increased in proportion to the rapid development of modern civilization. With the opening of new interests, the exploring of wider fields of knowledge, the establishing of more complex relations among men, and with the growth of new modes of thought and action, it becomes continually greater. The considerations which were formerly bounded by a single

country, or by a regard to one or two neighboring states, have now to embrace the wide extent of the world. "To obtain a correct judgment of an age," said Count Joseph de Maistre, "we must take into account, not only its knowledge, but its ignorance." Nor is this all: we must also estimate aright how long before its knowledge will become comparative ignorance, and how long before its ignorance will be transmuted or dispersed. It is this difficulty, in understanding the present and in discerning the future, which gives to the affairs of nations so much of the appearance of a game of chance played by unskilful hands, and which invests them with a certain sadly humorous character. The nicest speculations, the finest anticipations, are overset by some utterly misunderstood or unexpected circumstance. The careful plans of statesmen, the projects from whose success they had looked for fame, the objects of their ambition, the alliances made with infinite trouble and elaborate detail, one after another break with a breath, and leave scarcely a trace behind. And things far

deeper and more important than these — matters upon which progress or decline depend, on which the welfare of whole future generations hang — are scarcely noticed, till, rising from a little speck in the horizon, they have become the cloud that covers the heavens.

There is, indeed, no prevision by which the distant special results from any course of policy may be foreseen, and but little wisdom sufficient to trace even its immediate consequences with much accuracy. But, while the special consequences are in the dark to us, it is to be remembered that with the progress of civilization we have made progress in the knowledge of those laws by which the general results from any course of human action are determined and guided. With extending experience comes extended acquaintance with these over-ruling and universal truths. For experience enlarges, repeats, renews, her familiar teachings: she never falsifies or alters them. Good follows good; bad always comes close upon bad; and our gain from larger experi-

ence is, that with slow, uncertain, but continually firmer hand, we are enabled to unweave the tangle of bad and good; to discriminate between them more closely and delicately; and at last, out of the confusion, the complexity, and the changing appearances, to form a judgment which shall not be far distant from the truth.

The bitterest part of history, the part on which succeeding years look with most contempt and pity, is that which is rendered gloomy by deeds committed in neglect or in denial of these truths established by experience. It is because this denial or neglect springs often, not so much from ignorance as from selfishness; because it is found, not alone, where it might be expected, among the poor, the miserable, and the unfortunate; but among the rich, the powerful, and the prosperous. Sometimes, for long series of years, it appears as if a government or a nation had recklessly committed themselves to an audacious disregard of the stern warnings of the past, of every sign of danger in the future; but never yet did such nation

or government escape the crash of final retribution.

The present miserable state of the continent of Europe is the natural result of the past. Severe as the instruction which our own and the preceding generation has received, the lessons still seem to be but half understood. The violence which has defaced country after country,—the successive wars, insurrections, discontents, struggles, successes, defeats, have brought about a state of affairs which affords almost as little promise of better results, and seems as little likely to be permanent, as any that has preceded it. Everywhere prevail discontent, anxiety, and uncertainty. Nowhere is any confidence of stability. Austria and Prussia lie insecure, though hemmed in and traversed by a glittering network of bayonets. France, weary of change, seeks quiet for a season, even though it be the quiet of a despotism. Spain, too distracted, too feeble for effort, is apparently dragging out another century of civil discord and religious bigotry. Italy, goaded to madness, takes

refuge from the violated oaths and the dungeons of a Bourbon king, or the lash and the fines of an Austrian governor, in drunken attempts at insurrection, and hopeless appeals to her people for union amongst themselves. There is not a government which rests upon any more substantial foundation than that of force; and such a foundation, though it may seem enduring, has no strength to resist the slow advancing tide of change.

The system of centralization, which has interwoven itself into the policy of every great continental state, forms the complete embodiment of the idea of monarchial absolutism. It is Louis XIVth's famous maxim reduced to practice; it is the doctrine of the Catholic church in religion applied to politics. And, while this system remains in force, — while all authority and office are derived from the monarch, — while education, religion, trades, social and even domestic affairs, are regulated by the head of the state, there can be neither permanent contentment, nor immediate prospect of any government but a despotic one. The peo-

ple are unfitted by such a system for self-government; they have learned from it to rely upon another power than their own, — to seek for aid from the state, instead of to help themselves: they have been taught dependence, and cannot at once spring to independence. It is this that gives one of its sombrest tints to the future.

The cruelties in Naples, the tyranny in Lombardy and Hungary, the deportations to Cayenne, are the fruitful seeds of revolt and red republicanism. Every act of injustice perpetrated by the officers of the existing governments is an appeal against them, and an appeal which in time will be answered. The wind that is sown will be reaped the whirlwind. Europe appears scarcely to have begun her period of trouble. It requires no prophet to foretell the sufferings and struggles to come, — not in our time perhaps, but before the balance will be made even, and power in the one scale swing level with right in the other. And if the time shall come when the existing state of things shall be overthrown; when —

"Sceptre and crown
Shall tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade,"—

it is then that the worst evils of present tyranny will appear; it is then that the tyranny of kings will for a time be paralleled in the tyranny of peoples; centralization will bear its legitimate fruits; and the people, long constrained, as if unworthy of confidence, will show that such constraint but made them what was feared. It may be said such a picture is too dark; but it is only the reflection of the present reality.

It may be — God grant that it may be! — that, without violent convulsions, but gradually, under wise guidance and prudent counsels, by the judgment, the honor, the devotion of the rulers of the continental states, the nations may be led to and helped along the way of steady, true improvement; that improvement may come from foresight and wisdom, and not be gained from the bitter experience of suffering; that, by degrees, one abuse after another may be done

away; that unjust privileges may be abolished; and that equal opportunities for obtaining those advantages which should be common to all may be universally enjoyed. But, at the present moment, few signs are apparent which can afford a reasonable hope that this is to be the near history of the future. The great weight of rank and power is against it. It is only at scattered points, and with broken efforts, that wise, earnest, but feeble individuals are striving with the vast difficulties which close around them, and spending every exertion to open a brighter prospect.

England is the single great country of Europe, where, notwithstanding many obstacles in the way of healthy advance, — obstacles which elsewhere might be considered almost insurmountable, — there is ground for hoping that necessary reforms may be made, and a course of improvement pursued, without violence and without sudden and alarming alterations. There can be little doubt that the need of progress, of satisfying the changing demands of the

times, is a need so widely felt, that it will be fairly met; and the example of some among her great statesmen in the past may well inspire confidence for the future. There are great dangers before her. Beyond all others is that which arises from the ignorance of the mass of her people, — an ignorance which is the disgrace as well as the danger of the land. The separation of classes is aggravated by it, so that success and splendor themselves become appeals to revolution, and testimonies to the wrong which is permitted in the midst of such prosperity and enlightenment. The church, whose bigotry throws clogs in the way of education; the rich, whose carelessness neglects it; the aristocracy, whose selfishness keeps it for themselves, shutting it up from others, — are the enemies who are sapping the strength, and blighting the hope, of their country. The destitution and physical suffering which exist side by side with fabulous wealth and modern luxury, derive their existence, in great part, from this source. They are to be removed, and the classes

called dangerous, because they are destitute, brought back to civilization and comfort, by dispelling the ignorance, not only of the poor, but the ignorance of the upper classes, which prevents them from seeing that their interest, as well as their duty, is in this work.

The prospect before our own country, bright as it is on many sides, opening before the view the noblest field of progress, is yet darkened by some threatening clouds. The prosperity that we have enjoyed may continue, and may extend with every year. But the rapid gains in material wealth which have been made during late years; the new fields of adventure, enterprise, and speculation, which have been opened, have given to the period a character of haste and excitement which leads to inconsiderateness and irreflection. It is time to pause, to draw breath at least, and look around to see whither we are hurrying. It is for us to remember that national prosperity depends on national character, and that long-continued prosperity may have the effect of

weakening and of finally depraving that character. The popular declamation of the present day — the talk about "manifest destiny," "natural boundaries," "geographical extension," and such other topics — is one sign that this effect has already been in part produced. There is no such thing as destiny in the affairs of a nation. The fate of every nation depends, under God, upon its own acts; and if its acts partake of that wild, reckless, and unprincipled spirit which such language indicates, its fate is no longer uncertain. Strength may be diminished, and prosperity decreased, by unwieldy stretch of territory. The natural boundaries of a country are those, wider or narrower, within which the people may be best governed; and if to increase in territorial size is to diminish the chance of good government, then that nation is suicidal which chooses to add land to land, and state to state. The principle of self-government will not allow this to be done with safety, for the power of self-government is not to be intrusted to the whole human race. The half-savage descen-

dants of the Spanish conquerors and the conquered natives of America are no fit depositaries of this power; the semi-civilized people of the Sandwich Islands are little worthy to be trusted with it.

But within our existing borders there are questions whose solution is pressing upon us. The great difficulties are those of so dealing with slavery as to bring good out of evil; and of so providing education for the poorer classes, that the destruction of the experiment of republicanism, which is here beng tried on a scale commensurate with its importance, shall not be brought about by the ignorance of a portion of our own citizens.

These questions are too complex to be entered upon here.

The view we have now presented would be incomplete, without the addition of another series of considerations.

Amid all the disquietude and disappointments of our times, through the confusion and changes of the actual state of society, a clear view may yet discern the

signs of the gradual progress of the world. Notwithstanding the re-establishment of old and worn-out forms, and the re-assertion of old creeds, — notwithstanding the immense distance between the actual state of men and their possible condition, it requires but little wisdom to see that evils are being one by one weakened and done away. It is not any ten years which will show this, — hardly any fifty; but the comparison between one century and another will bring the truth plainly into sight. It is, indeed, true that the signs of apparent progress, upon which congratulation has been founded, have proved, in many instances, fallacious. The greatest and most rapid conquests over physical powers, unbounded gains in material wealth and in knowledge, have turned out to be no sure reliance for real improvement in what is most important. Time and again the conviction has been re-enforced, that even the possession of wisdom, and the desire to establish the truth and the right, may exist side by side with folly, falsehood, and wrong, and be unable to restrain and control

them. If, then, in view of this, it should seem at any time doubtful whether the world is in fact making advance, — if to our dim eyes there should appear no progress, we may still believe that it is our dulness of vision alone which creates the apparent darkness; remembering that, spite of all human opposition, and through passages inexplicable to human powers, the course of the world is guided by a Divine Providence whose ways are not as our ways. Our faith is worthless, unless it rests too firmly to be overthrown by our ignorance or our disappointments. Because we are in a dark room, we do not deny the sun; and, though the whole earth should seem to us to stand still, it is for us to say, knowing our own ignorance, "E pur si muove," — Yet it *does* move.

Believing, then, in this gradual improvement, we must necessarily also believe, that to promote or impede it depends upon each present generation; that is, upon ourselves. The uncertainty which rests over the future is sufficient ground for our concern with it.

Its events cannot be foreseen; but they are greatly within the control of men for good or for evil. The ideal state which lies before us — the highest good that we can conceive to be attainable by human effort — is the limit for our exertion. Slowly the limit now visible is to be gained; but, with each step, a farther limit rises. The very upheaving of society in these days, — the questionings of established things, the wild social theories, the ready proselytes of every new scheme, are all, from this point of view, encouraging signs. They show the desire and struggle for something better than the present affords. Misdirected gropings they may be; efforts leading backwards, rather than forwards, many of them are; but still gropings and efforts after good. "Everywhere," says Guizot, in a fine passage, — "everywhere the moral thought of men rises and aspires very much above their lives. And take care how you believe, that, because it does not immediately govern their actions, and because practice incessantly and strangely gives the lie to theory, this moral

thought is null and of no value. It is much, as the judgment of men upon human actions: sooner or later it will become efficacious."

In the endeavor after social progress, there is one quality, of which every man who desires to be of use must attempt to possess himself: it is the quality of patience. It is rarely found among those who call themselves social reformers, and seems to be fully possessed only by the noblest and most unselfish men. The men who labor for their own immediate gain can hardly acquire it; and it is only from those who devote themselves honestly to the service of God, by serving others, that its exercise may be expected. There is a natural tendency among men, chiefly from want of imagination, to forget the very small proportion which any one generation bears to the long succession of centuries, and hence to look for too great results in too brief a time. The social speculations which we have already considered have been in nothing more extravagant than in the expectation upon which

many of them were founded, that their adoption was to produce an instant change, by which the world should be set right. But moral progress must, under any circumstances, be very slow. Nor is there any thing more opposed to real advance than hasty attempts to secure it. Such attempts are universally measured by external signs, and may for a time wear a deceitful look, — the result of excitement and enthusiasm. But, as these pass away, as the stern, solid difficulties one by one appear, the reaction of disappointed hopes and anticipations sweeps back with a damaging and disastrous wave. Impatience of an old wrong is apt to mislead into the commission of a new one. We are apt to forget that an evil is often very apparent, while the means of doing away with it, without creating other evils in its stead, lie hidden in the confusion of conflicting rights. With almost every social wrong some social right is interwoven, and hardly to be extricated from it. But the wrong is often attacked, as if no right were with it.

Patience, then, with slow improvement; patience which shall prefer the best to the quickest means of getting rid of a wrong; which shall take a long view of the future; which shall not waver before the hurry and the rush around it, but shall stand firm, consistent, just, and faithful, — such patience is an unfashionable virtue in our times; but it is, above all, the quality which is needful in a period so full of schemes, vague hopes, and excited anticipations.

Such patience is far from indifference: it is, indeed, its very opposite. The indisposition to join in the loud outcry against an evil, when the outcry can be followed by no proposal of a sufficient remedy, is no sign of indifference to the evil. It is easy and tempting to get up a short-lived reputation for humanity and magnanimity by the fervor of attacks upon wrong: it is hard, and offers no allurement of notoriety, to devote oneself quietly, soberly, and patiently, to the study of the means of removing it, and the attempt to apply them. The reformer who promises a quick result, an instant improvement, is the

one who is listened to eagerly. But the durability of a reform is generally in inverse proportion to its rapidity. The progress which is permanent is made step by step, and not stride by stride. The great moral changes among men are like the great physical changes in the earth. Quiet, slow, unobserved, through age after age, a continent is built up, a mountain washed away, and rocks crumbled into dust. Nature takes her own time. Age after age passed before the world assumed its present form; age after age will pass, and gradually all will change. No one generation will see it, no one will be able to discern the particular and special alterations during its time; but the change goes steadily on. Nor is the analogy between this change in the physical world and that in the social world a merely fanciful one. In the one case, it is, indeed, only change; in the other, we believe it to be improvement. But, in both, the periods in which it operates are indefinitely long; and, in both, the processes are unobtrusive, often invisible, but directed by Him to whom

a thousand years are but as a day to produce at last the complete result.

There is another and very different set of thoughts which connect themselves with the preceding reflections, and which belong to the consideration of the future progress of men.

A new element was introduced by Christianity into all considerations of social questions, — that of the religious responsibility of men, according to their enlightenment, to live not alone for themselves, but also for others. Without a foundation in religion, the duty which is embraced in this principle has an uncertain existence and a very limited operation. It requires to be enforced by Divine authority. And, notwithstanding that this authority was supplied by Christianity, it is quite true that, during these last eighteen hundred years, it has made but comparatively little progress, and has affected society only partially, and with results disproportioned to its power. But, in all anticipations of the future, it is to be taken

into account as an element of constantly increasing force.

It is through this principle that the apparent contradictions between the doctrines of some schools of political economy and the doctrines of high morality are to be reconciled. Political economy, when properly understood and studied, cannot be separated from the philosophy of morals. It is not merely the science of material wealth. The investigation of the laws of the acquisition and distribution of wealth necessarily connects itself with that of those laws by which the actions of men are regulated, that is, of the moral laws in obedience to which every man acts. Political economy treats of one branch of the relations between man and man; and there is not a single action of man, by which others may be affected, which is morally indifferent. If, then, its conclusions on any point should seem adverse to morality, its apparent conclusions thereby prove themselves to be false. Its accordance with the teachings of enlightened moral judgment is the final test of its truth.

It is, of course, impossible to fix the standard of this morality. Each successive age will, we believe, have a clearer and nobler view of the moral relations of man. But, though the standard varies by being continually raised higher, its value as a test always remains the same. And it is to be considered, that, although morality constantly extends its territories, yet the line and direction of its advance are already known, and fixed immutably. Catholic may differ from Protestant, one country from another, as to special questions of right and wrong. Such difference must always exist among men. Doubt is one of the trials and modes of discipline of finite creatures. But increasing experience at length shows on which side the right or the wrong is to be found, and takes away all shelter from those who would avoid a decision on the ground of the uncertainty of moral teaching.

From this connection between the laws of morality and those which regulate the material concerns of men, it follows that the self-interest by which men are supposed

to be urged in the pursuit of material satisfaction must be coincident, when rightly understood, with that self-denial which is the requirement of morality, and which Christianity, above every other form of religion, establishes as the necessary discipline of virtue.

The object of each man's life is to attain happiness; and, because the satisfaction of material wants is the first step towards happiness, because it is the necessary occupation and the universal impulse of mankind, and because the means of its attainment lie possible before every one, this has, by a natural but evil illusion, come often to be regarded more or less as being happiness itself. It is in this pursuit that self-interest is first engaged. But the possession of comfort and the gratification of every material desire are not happiness. Happiness is not to be found in any earthly gratification separated from virtue. It is to be found in the union of the two. The practice of virtue demands self-denial; and that self-interest is short-sighted and imperfect which does not see

that the pursuit of material comfort is a folly, when disjoined from the practice of virtue. The self-interest that secures happiness is that whose vision is purified by self-denial. Hence all those systems which have for their final object simply the satisfaction of wants are not the systems by which happiness is is to be spread on earth. To effect this, the consideration of the supply of wants must be united with that of the performance of duties.

There is nothing vague or indefinite in this statement. It is true, whether considered in respect to a single individual or a state. The old proverb, that "Honesty is the best policy," is a narrow illustration of the assent which common sense gives to the truth, that the most consistent virtue is the most refined self-interest. In the long-run, in the history of the prosperity and fall of nations, it is everywhere to be read that virtue is the only true guide of interest, and that selfishness continually disappoints itself.

The practical conclusion to which this

doctrine leads is plain. It is, that to diffuse the satisfaction of material wants as widely as possible is the duty of every man, — is the end of the teachings of all correct social science. It is necessary to practise self-denial, in order to be able to share prosperity with others; to seek material advantages for the sake of the spiritual power which they bring; to fight against misery, to help poverty to relieve itself, and to bring all the suffering and the degraded to such a state that they shall not, through the craving of animal wants, be withdrawn from the influence of all nobler desires.

Never was there more need that men should be conscious of this truth than now. The course of society has been, for some time past, in two directions. One portion has advanced, with unexampled rapidity, in prosperity, in all the delights of life, and to a state of intellectual cultivation, and here and there of moral elevation, beyond what was ever known before. But, with this advance of one part, there has been an almost corresponding decline of the other portion,

of civilized society. Never before was to be seen a contrast more terrible, a gulf more wide, between the lowest and the highest. The height of material prosperity is the measure of opposite debasement and slavery. The pure morality of the purest religion serves by its light to show the blackness of that immorality which exists by its side. It is not to be believed that this is the necessary result of our civilization. Such a belief would be atheistic and intolerable. With such a belief, one would have no refuge but in an inert despondency. It is for the future to prove that these evils are dependent, not on the form of our civilization, but on wrongs that may be done away without involving in their destruction any important good, without the overthrow of all which the best labor of centuries, enlightened by a divine wisdom, has built up. And, as the future exists in the present, it becomes the part of those who can work to-day to labor under the guidance of those Christian principles which are sufficient, if faithfully acted upon, for all the task, how-

ever overwhelming it may appear. There is no evil to be removed which does not need the application of those principles, and which may not furnish an illustration of their connection with social progress. Take, for instance, the great, penetrating, physical evil of dirt, with the long train of moral evils that follow from it. Dirt is one of the chief miseries of the poor. It wastes their hard-earned gains, it feeds them on wretched food, it shuts them up in pestilential homes, it wears out their spirits, it ruins their health, it drives them to crime, it persecutes them to death. But this evil can be remedied; and the exertion, the labor, and the expense of the remedy must be borne by those who are prosperous and powerful, acting under the impulse of motives supplied by a sense of moral duty; and here, as always, duty coincides with self-interest. The fever or the cholera which rises from the dirt in the back lane, creeps into the wide street; and the pestilence which feeds on the poor strikes at random among the rich. The law of retribution is coincident, even in this

world, and with no reference to that future world where all acts are to be brought into judgment with the law of responsibility.

It requires little knowledge of history to see, that hitherto, whether in ancient or in modern times, the possession of power by a nation, or by a class in a nation, has been frequently — one is tempted to say usually — abused for the purpose of self-aggrandizement, at the expense of the weak. In many countries, by a long and tedious process, a system of international and constitutional checks has grown up, intended, but often insufficient, to restrain the wrong and injustice which have thus seemed to be the natural accompaniments of power. But it requires only a slightly more complete acquaintance with history to perceive, that this abuse of power has been, under different modes, but with invariable results, the source of corruption and the cause of decline. The East is full of the wrecks of power, shattered by its own excesses. Greece and Rome were ruined by themselves. There is no exception to the rule, no escape from the

law by which present injustice is made the synonym of future weakness, and wrong the forerunner of punishment.

Look at the modern institution of slavery. It affords the plainest illustration of this truth. Ever since the first small beginning of what was to become so monstrous an evil, it has seemed as if the compensation were being exacted in full proportion to the wrong. Nowhere has slavery extended, without sowing the seeds of weakness and decay. It has often associated with itself many of the finest exercises of human virtues; it has given opportunity for the display of many of the noblest and most precious qualities of character; it has interwoven itself with the interests, the affections, and the religion of men. But, viewed broadly, with reference, not to special instances, but to its general effects upon national and individual character and fortunes, there is but one inevitable conclusion to be beheld. It is spoken of often in our own country as a necessary evil. But an evil that may be affected for better or worse,

by human agency extended through one generation after another, can hardly be considered a necessary evil. The power of affecting it at all implies the power of finally removing it altogether. It is necessary only so far as that it must last for a time, and must leave its consequences long after its own extinction. If we should ever become possessed, in some future state of being, of that clear vision, which, looking before and after, will enable us to distinguish the course and sequence of the events of earth, which we now can so imperfectly discern, may it not be matter of amazement to us to see how closely retribution followed upon wrong, how often it came in punishments that were warnings as well as penalties, and yet to behold how long it was before men discovered the means of escaping from the scourge? It is, indeed, to be considered, that, in a case like that of slavery, although the wrong abstractly may be admitted, and the evil consequences in the long current of affairs fully acknowledged, yet the difficulty of applying a remedy is vastly in-

creased by the real or seeming interest of individuals being often contrary to that of the nation, — to that of posterity. It is this which frequently renders the remedy of a prevailing evil not merely difficult, but distressing. Those who have been exposed to it through no fault of their own, those who may have done all within their power to bring good out of it, are, in its removal, subjected to sufferings which have no connection with their personal conduct. They suffer under the penalty attached to the violation of justice: but the violation was committed by others; the penalty falls upon them. "There is a vanity," said the Preacher, "which is done upon the earth; that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked." In looking forward to that period, which must come sooner or later, when slavery will be done away in our country, the reflection that the troubles which must accompany the event will fall upon very many who are most innocent of the wrong, cannot but alloy the satisfaction with which it might otherwise

be contemplated. But, whenever it shall arrive, and when slavery becomes an historical instead of a present evil, it will then be more clearly seen than it can be now, that it has been always an instance of the truth, that morality founded in religion is the guide of interest, even in the affairs of this world.

Upon the general recognition of this truth, and on the conformity of men's actions to their belief in it, depends the future progress of mankind. It is the spirit of Christianity applied to life. But very little of what is called Christianity is so in truth. Churches, forms, creeds, and doctrines, may assert their right to the appellation of Christian, while the spirit of the religion is absent. It is necessary, then, to distinguish between the teachings which possess divine authority, and those which have no other than a human claim to respect. Where the spirit of the religion is found displaying itself in action, there is Christianity, whether it be found under the name of Catholicism or Protestantism, of one sect or another. As this

spirit spreads, as man after man becomes inspired with its gracious and benign influences, will the improvement of the world go on.

It may be said, "These are old truths: no one disputes them." — But no new truth of essential importance to the moral progress of the world remains to be discovered. The means of all possible future elevation are already possessed: the scope of all possible future effort is already defined. The special remedies for special evils may be hidden: but we know where to search for them. The blackness of a great wrong may for a time overhang the world; but above and around is the clear light of a sun, whose rays will by degrees pierce through and dispel the seemingly illimitable gloom. It is this belief which is enough to console one who beholds present sufferings, wrongs, and misery; to stimulate him to exertion; and to give the right direction to his attempts.

The conclusions from all the preceding sections of this book have brought us to this point as their end. It has been seen that

the People must be taught, helped, succored with physical and moral aid of every kind, to become what the demagogues of the day declare them to be, and what all thoughtful men desire them to become. The only power by which this result can be obtained is the power of Christian principle. It has been seen that Liberty is a mere jest and illusion, unless it is founded in moral excellence; that a Republic is but a name for a Tyranny, unless it is secure in the virtue of its people; that the most skilfully devised schemes of social reorganization have failed, one after another, in the attainment of their object, through their disregard of the moral laws by which men are governed, or through their being based upon the supposition of the existence of qualities among men which can only be the result of a long moral discipline. And with this conclusion we might well end; but there remains yet one consideration for our regard.

It is that the authoritative introduction, by Christianity, of the principle of individual moral responsiblity, as a guide for human

action, opened to every nation the possibility of indefinite duration and perennial prosperity. The privilege of our modern civilization is thus to possess within itself the means of overcoming the dangers which assail it, and to be secure against conquest by them, if it understands and exercises its own powers. One after another of the ancient empires rose and sank, without ability to avoid the fatal end. It seems almost as if their history had been worked out, to show to later generations the impossibility of the permanent existence of any power dependent upon mere human knowledge and virtue, without that sanction which they can receive only from a divine revelation. "What god," said a Roman orator, regarding the evil chances which might befall the state, — "what god can we believe could succor the republic, even if he would?" * The necessary foundation for public virtue, for social morality, did not exist. Patriotism,

* "Oratio pro M. Marcello," § vii.

magnanimity, honor, wanted any firm support; and their exercise was an affair of chance and doubt. Many noble men lived, and devoted themselves, with no selfish purpose, to the welfare of others; but their example was inadequate to prove the excellence of self-denial, or to establish the existence of a recompense for self-sacrifice. The introduction of Christianity was the beginning of the greatest of social revolutions; but it is a revolution whose course, like that of every other, depends on the acts of men. The principles which it reveals, and which, if acted upon, are sufficient to insure the continued existence of a state, do not force themselves upon the world. One modern empire after another may rise and fall, even as the old, and the cause of their fall will be the same. Christianity, if made the rule of national policy and conduct, is sufficient to preserve any empire from decay; but the nation that calls itself Christian, while it is not so in fact, has no better security against decline than those which flourished in the early ages of the world.

It may be the will of God that our own country should give another example of the insufficiency of material prosperity to preserve a people from decline. But such a result would be a warning more terrible than any which has been known before. The faults, the weaknesses, the faithlessness of men will have ruined the most splendid undertaking and the fairest prospect ever open to any people. The hope of the world will be broken, the faith of men in themselves and in each other will be shaken, and the progress of mankind be indefinitely delayed.

Such must be our fate, unless we feel that our responsibilities are equal to our privileges, and that our only safety is in endeavoring, with constant effort, to fulfil them. Taking no low standard of duty, satisfied with no partial performance, no incomplete attainment, dazzled by no show of outward success, deluded by no selfish plans, turned aside by no popular enthusiasm, yielding to no fatigue or indifference, — it is for each one of us to do his best, feeling that not

only his own happiness, but that the fortunes of his country, depend upon his deeds. The trust committed to the hands of the intelligent and the prosperous classes here is the future of their country. It is for them to provide against the evils which threaten it, by spreading and improving education; by laboring to throw open freely every opportunity for advantages that may be shared by all; by checking every injustice and every corruption; and, above all, — including all, — by endeavoring to carry into daily life and into common actions the spirit of Christianity.

If this be the spirit of our people, the liberty which we now enjoy will continue and increase; the republic will be the firmest, as well as the best, of governments. There will be no need of theories of social regeneration; for the principles of Christianity are the principles of social justice, of equality such as is possible before God, and of a true fraternity among men.

THE END.