

Lectures on
Social Questions

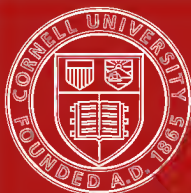
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LECTURES
ON
SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

*COMPETITION, COMMUNISM, COÖPERATION,
AND THE
RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO SOCIALISM.*

BY
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PREFATORY NOTE.

The following lectures were delivered last winter in St. Mark's Church, New York. The order of the lectures has been changed, while occasional amplifications have been introduced, a few notes being added; but the matter as printed is substantially and almost wholly the same as that which was spoken, the freedom of style proper to such addresses being preserved by design.

J. H. R.

NEW YORK, Feb., 1880.

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LECTURE FIRST.

COMPETITION.

THE discussion by a Christian preacher of subjects such as those which I propose to handle in three or four successive lectures, is looked upon with disfavor by some, the pulpit being generally regarded as too sacred a place for the intrusion of secular topics. While, in this instance, the more timid among us might allege, that it is even a dangerous thing for a minister of the Gospel to take part in controversies which sober-minded and conservative men look upon so generally with suspicion or alarm. Leave such questions to professional agitators, it may be said, or to the few who are fit to deal with social and political problems prudently, a task for which preachers, as a class, are not supposed to be very well qualified. But, at all events, when we come to the house of God, let us have peace.

Now, I have no time to make formal reply to such objections, but let me remind those who advance them, that the policy of letting these and like questions alone, which has found so much favor among religious teachers and their disciples, has resulted in a very general depreciation, not to say contempt, of the Christian pulpit. We profess to deplore the wide-spread alienation of "the working classes" from the church, and yet the preacher is forbidden to do more than glance at questions which working men are just now discussing with such a passionate interest, such indifference being construed as evidence of a want of sympathy in our "spiritual pastors" with what are called "the suffering masses," multitudes having come to look upon your priests and preachers as hirelings, paid to flatter the rich, and to distribute the crumbs which fall from their tables to a half-mendicant class, who yield, or affect, a pious subservience in return. I do not say that such imputations are just, but they are partly justified, by the general attitude of the clergy toward questions which Social Science is so eagerly

discussing and trying to solve in our day. For these questions are not foreign, much less are they inimical, to Christianity, seeing that "godliness," according to high authority, "hath promise of the life that now is;" while an intelligent and candid treatment of them by those whose lips ought to "keep knowledge," would do something, I am fain to hope, to soften the asperities which are apt to exist between classes having little contact with each other, and might contribute to a better understanding of subjects vitally affecting the welfare of all, but which are too often left to designing demagogues, or to those whose judgments are perverted by "vested interests," or which are worthily discussed only, or almost exclusively, in treatises inaccessible to the multitude. I hold, then, that the subjects I propose to handle in these lectures are worthy of the best thought and endeavor of the Christian teacher to set them in the light of a sound reason, If, from traditional influences and modes of thought, he feels little concern in such matters, he will eschew them, of course. If he knows little about

them as yet, let him be silent. But I am presumptuous enough to speak. Bear with me, then, for some thirty minutes, or more, in dealing with the question of *Competition*, which society at large practically accepts, not only as a necessary, but as a beneficent power, but which some men are just now bent upon abolishing, as the chief cause of the manifold evils which abound about us. Is there any fair promise of success for these men? Or, if not, do the evils incident to competition admit of any considerable abatement by substantial modifications of the present competitive system?

Frankly let me say, at once, my friends, that I see not, human nature remaining what it is, how the competitive principle can be got rid of, or its action be very much hindered, permanently, and on a wide scale, except at a cost which society will never agree to pay, or run any serious risk of incurring. Such rivalry is inevitable, let theorists say and do what they may. Man is a creature of varied wants; some necessary, others only expedient. Now, for the satisfaction of even

the natural and necessary wants of life, nature affords only a limited and conditional supply of the requisite good, exertion of some sort being required, even from the lowest savage, for the acquisition and enjoyment of most of the bounties of nature. The lowest orders of animals have this price to pay for the satisfaction of their senses. While for the gratification of the artificial or merely conventional wants of men, nature only supplies the raw material, so to speak ; a higher order of exertion being required to meet the demands of appetites and tastes produced in the progress of civilization, the capability of putting forth such higher exertion being confined to the more gifted and more resolute minds in a community. Nor by the best appliances of education, nor by any method of social manipulation, can men be reduced or elevated to the same mental and moral stature, except by the imposition of restraints upon native power which would reduce the highest to the level of the lowest, society sustaining immense loss, of course, from such a suicidal coercion. Nothing is left, in brief, as things

are now, but to allow, and that for the good of all, the free development and play of human faculties, if we would not go back to barbarism. And even then, the strong and the brave would rise above the weak and the cowardly.

Now, this free play of men's powers involves or entails competition, in appropriating the gifts of nature, and in seeking satisfaction of the artificial wants which follow in the course of human progress; competition being sometimes seen and felt, in all ranks of animate life, as a "struggle for existence," becoming more varied, but not less intense, as incitements and demands upon exertion multiply and become more complex. No school of philosophy, nor any generally accepted scheme of human advancement, has ever seriously sought to evade this necessity for struggle or competition. It has been proposed to render it less fierce, and less unequal in its pressure upon men, but it is a sign of insanity to talk of suppressing or of extirpating the competitive principle utterly. What the future may have in store for our

species we cannot conjecture. A very intelligent well-wisher of his kind, lately told me that he cherished the anticipation that the millennium would be here when *electricity* should produce all that man really needs, leaving him leisure to indulge his affections without friction or hindrance, and to employ his powers for higher ends only. But, to my mind, human nature remaining in other respects what it is, such a millennium would be "chaos come again;" such spontaneous abundance would be the curse and the ruin of man. For labor is the best conservator of virtue, and the necessity to labor the healthiest incentive to human progress, the laborer being otherwise free to invent, or to produce, as taste may suggest, or as circumstances may constrain. Restrict the energies of men by external authority, or compel them to operate, on any large scale, along lines other than those which men prefer to follow, and you hamper and cripple their powers; curtailing the supply of means, and hindering acquisitions, upon which the welfare of all depends. For minds are rendered acute by

friction, and more vigorous by occasions of contention, and more productive by the strain put upon them by rivalries, all classes partaking of the consequent enrichment. And it ought surely to be recognized as a just thing, that he who produces more work, or of finer quality, under such instigations, should have better reward for his contributions to the stock of society's wealth and well-being, than the man who produces less work, or work of an inferior quality.

Such are some of the grounds upon which competition asserts its claims to recognition and obedience. Communists expatiate eloquently upon the blessedness to be had by all in a social order from which competition should be debarred, in which no man should be suffered to say "that aught which he possessed was his own;" while they point, very touchingly at times, to the evils inevitably resulting from the present order and action of things; but the discerning are led to doubt, by the very beauty of such pictorial prognostications as Communism puts forth, whether the schemes so commended

are for the present practicable. Self-interest is, and must remain, a powerful motive and an active incentive to human exertion. Kill it, or deny it fair opportunity of seeking its own ends, and you render the average man, at least, tame and apathetic. The time may come when men will rise above the need of such motives; when human welfare will be less dependent than now upon these lower instigations and inducements; yet an authority which Christendom holds to be the very highest, makes self-love the measure of the love we are to exhibit to others, the greatest of the commandments reputed to be divine prescribing no more than this, that a man love his neighbor *as himself*. Upon the highest plane which hope can anticipate for human fellowship and commerce, there must be scope for competitive effort left, and reward be provided for worthy endeavor, or your regenerated society will speedily become a very tame and dreary sort of fellowship. As men are here and now, at least, appeals to self-interest are essential to the vigor and progress of the

race. Wits would grow dull, and genius lose its splendor, while manners would decay, and work would be emptied of zest, and life be bereft of a good deal of blessedness and beauty, but for the whips and spurs supplied by competition.

While aware, then, of the evils and wrongs incident to competition, we are compelled to regard it, I believe, as a necessary and beneficent power, and to esteem all unqualified condemnation of it as foolish and vain. This conclusion will offend those who are looking and working for its extirpation, but the conviction finds support in the best thought of the time in the province of economical science. The late Mr. Mill, for instance, while sympathizing very warmly with workmen in their resistance to acknowledged wrongs, is nevertheless outspoken in condemnation of the errors and extravagances not infrequently found in the pleas put forth in their behalf. Here, for example, is such an utterance of the great economist upon the subject in hand: "While I agree and sympathize with Socialists," says he, "in their prac-

tical aims, I utterly dissent from the most conspicuous and vehement part of their teaching—their declaration against competition. With moral conceptions in many respects far ahead of the existing arrangements of society, they have in general very confused and erroneous notions of its actual working; and one of their greatest errors, as I conceive, is to charge upon competition all the economical evils which at present exist. They forget that wherever competition is not, monopoly is; and that monopoly, in all its forms, is the taxation of the industrious for the support of indolence, if not plunder. They forget, too, that with the exception of competition among laborers, all other competition is for the benefit of the laborers, by cheapening the articles they consume. . . . I do not pretend,” continues Mr. Mill, “that there are no inconveniences in competition, or that the moral objections urged against it by Socialist writers, as a source of jealousy and hostility among those engaged in the same occupation, are altogether groundless. But if competition has its evils, it prevents

greater evils. . . . It is the common error of Socialists to overlook the natural indolence of mankind; their tendency to be passive, to be the slaves of habit, to persist indefinitely in a course once chosen. Let them once attain any state of existence which they consider tolerable, and the danger to be apprehended is, that they will thenceforth stagnate; will not exert themselves to improve, and by letting their faculties rust, will lose even the energy required to preserve them from deterioration. Competition may not be the best conceivable stimulus, but it is, at present, a necessary one, and no one can foresee the time when it will not be indispensable to progress. Instead of looking upon competition as the baneful and anti-social principle which it is held to be by the generality of Socialists, I conceive that, even in the present state of society and industry, every restriction of it is an evil, and every extension of it, even if for the time injuriously affecting some class of laborers, is always an ultimate good."*

* *Political Economy*, book IV. chap. 7.

It is important to observe, further, in mitigation of the condemnation heaped upon competition, that many of the evils from which society suffers, result from some sort of practical denial of competition, or from some sort of interference with its normal action. All undue intrusion of Government in the affairs of industry and commerce is thus eventually hurtful. All monopolies, and all subsidies to private enterprise, have the same effect, though manifestly helpful to some special interest. "Pools," and "corners," and other such stratagems to influence markets, are most mischievous contradictions of the doctrine of competition, interfering with the so-called "law" of supply and demand,* and resorted to only from sinister and selfish designs, always involving robbery of the many for the benefit of a few. Special reasons, of temporary force only, are alleged in support of a so-called "protective" policy, which openly aims to arrest or to limit competition between nation and nation; but the "Free-Trader" contends—and it is difficult to an-

* See Thornton "On Labour," chap. i.

swer him—that all parties would be gainers, if the currents of international commerce were allowed to run as free from check or control as those of domestic commerce. And it really would seem, that the arguments advanced in favor of “protection” are no more valid than those which are so persistently preferred by the interested, in favor of local monopolies.

But a far more hurtful interference with the action of competition has been common in the industrial world. In times long since passed, the prices of commodities and the wages of workers were fixed by guilds, or combinations of producers and traders in the various branches of commerce then existing, no invasion upon the terms so prescribed being permitted, by master, or by servant, by producer or by purchaser; a very comfortable arrangement, it might seem, for all parties, for which the manufacturer or merchant, worried and worn by the exactions of business to-day, might well sigh, supposing that the profit prescribed by the guild were satisfactory. Industrial nations have learned, however, or are learn-

ing, that the less authority of any sort has to do with these matters, the better for all interests involved, provided always that no outside interest is put in peril. We have guilds, however, under other names, in our own time; combinations, that is, of manufacturers and merchants, who conspire to maintain prices at the highest possible level, and to keep wages down at a point which will afford the largest possible profit to capital, oft-times reaching their ends by crooked ways. A good deal more of this thing was done, or it was done more glaringly, before workmen combined to defend their own interests against oppressive power. But it is matter of public notoriety, that the representatives of our great industrial corporations and companies come together, stately or under special emergencies, to decide upon a minimum price, below which business shall not be done, except at the cost of what the parties combining esteem commercial honor; resorting to all sorts of "artificial expedients," some of them very questionable, or bordering upon illegality, to wring a larger

amount of gain out of those dependent upon them, than could otherwise be secured. Hence, the friction and fighting among these conspirators, of which the newspapers tell us almost daily; charges and resentments flying through the air continually, about this or that transportation company "cutting under" prescribed rates; or as to some coal company, or other such association, being detected in selling at less than the price agreed upon at the last monthly meeting. Hence, too, the complaints so rife about alleged wrongs done by these powerful corporations to private interests, and the retaliatory measures adopted, as by the "Granger" societies; all such devices being resorted to in contravention of the teachings of competition, or to escape the demands which competition imposes.

But capitalists are not alone in seeking such ends. Louder complaints are heard from working men as to evils inflicted by competition, similar expedients being very generally adopted among them to evade such consequences. Hence, "Trades-unions," which have everywhere earned for themselves such

an evil name. The extravagance and mischief they have been guilty of cannot be denied. But for the essential principle and policy of Trades-unions as good vindication may be made, surely, as the capitalist can produce in support of his more legitimate-looking combinations. Working men "lay their heads together," and bring their means and energies into helpful coöperation to sustain high wages, or wages which they deem but fair; while capitalists combine to sustain high prices, or prices which *they* deem but fair. And why should the conspiracy of the former class be judged to deserve severer condemnation than the latter? Not only charity, but justice, one might suppose, would say just the reverse. For working men are individually feeble, and have few resources to draw upon when dissension arises between themselves and their masters as to the measure of remuneration due for their work. Standing alone, they are mainly at the mercy of their employers at such times, and especially when business is "dull," and labor "a drug in the market," the employer being nat-

urally bent, at such a crisis, upon saving himself from loss, whatever may become of his hirelings. In such oft-recurring emergencies it is surely reasonable to allow that the voice of Labor ought to be heard in support of its claims, which voice, to be of any consequence, must not come forth in timidly uttered *individual* complaint merely, but as representative of united strength sufficient to command respect. The "Trades-union" is the organ of such a voice, which species of combination filled the hearts of employers and of the well-to-do classes generally, with disquietude and bitterness on its first inception, but it is now recognized not only as just in its constitution and chief design, but as a beneficent organization, exerting a mighty and widely-pervasive educational influence among the toiling millions of Christendom. Readers of Charles Reade's thrilling story, "Put Yourself in His Place," or those who recall the horrible deeds done not long since in this country by "Trades-unionists," may wonder why I speak thus of "Trades-unions." I speak thus because I hold, on general grounds, that every institu-

tion ought to be judged upon its essential merits, and not according to any perversion or abuse done to its principles; and because I hold, upon evidence supplied by experience, that some such measures had become necessary for self-protection among working men, who had been taught, by a very bitter sort of discipline often, not to rely upon a uniform sense of justice in their employers, much less upon kindly dispositions, which are sometimes freaky, and always uncertain.* Such qualities are found in some masters, but a continual calculating of profit and loss has a tendency to make men hard, and grim, and juiceless; the standard by which employers generally estimate their men being that which they apply to spinning jennies, or to power-looms, or to rolling stock, or to steel rails. In the patriarchal age of industry personal attachments were possible, personal obliga-

* "There was hardly ever any section of society, perhaps, so unorganized, more destitute of the mutual attachments by which men hold together, than the working classes of this country (England) would be without trades-unions."—REV. J. LLEWELYN DAVIES, M.A.

tions could be felt, personal affection could be inspired and be drawn out. But what personal relation of any sort can subsist between a master, or masters, and five hundred, or a thousand, or two thousand "hands," other than those of an incidental and purely utilitarian character? Working men being thus left to fend for themselves very largely, and being brought together in masses very often in huge manufactories, common wants began to be known; common thoughts and sympathies began to circulate; schemes for improving the condition of their class began to be shaped. Hence, "Benefit Societies," and other such organizations for mutual help, Trades-unions emerging out of such conditions, the rise of which marked an epoch in industrial history, the rapid development of the institution being counted to-day a prognostic of serious significance by every statesman and student in Social Science. But Trades-unions are another conspicuous attempt to limit the operation of competition, or to cut off some of its cruelest consequences when allowed free play. As temporary expedients such

combinations are necessary, no doubt, and have been found helpful to imperilled or oppressed interests, the most enlightened governments defending and fortifying them to-day, though once regarding them as demoralizing and dangerous. I shall try to show, however, in what I propose to say, that there are means more reliable at the command of working men by which to deliver themselves from what their orators call "the tyranny of capital."

Spite of the partiality I may have seemed to betray in my endorsement of Trades-unions, I am not ignorant of the fact that a great deal of foolish and envenomed feeling has been engendered or nourished by such combinations, the members being generally possessed by the conviction or conceit, that all the evils of competition fall upon working men. Or they have shown little pity, at least, for their employers, in times of stagnation in trade, deeming them abundantly capable of taking care of themselves, or secretly rejoicing, perhaps, that some drops of bitterness had fallen into the cup of their customary

delights, a very mild kind of enmity felt by workmen toward their "masters," compared with some of which recent history tells. Let me remind those of the class before me, however, that there is another side to the story which laborers like to relate. Many envied capitalists have a far harder time of it, under the present competitive system, than the workman who goes home to sweet sleep after his day's toil. There are many weary, aching hearts beneath fine linen studded with diamonds, in our marts and manufactories. Ninety per cent, it is said, of those who embark in business enterprises, come to grief. This, I know, is "sentimental stuff," but sentiment is sometimes helpful to fair judgments. And it is specially incumbent upon working men just now, under all the provocations incident to their lot, that they should be fair even to those who are called "tyrants" by noisy leaders. Let working men learn that "masters" are often as helpless as themselves in regulating prices and in deciding measures of profit, and consequently of remuneration. But the silly conceit would

seem to be general among employés, that the amount of remuneration due to labor, is wholly within the power of the employer, overlooking the fact, that competition holds the master as well as the servant within its pitiless grip; that the one and the other are oftentimes the victims of circumstances. So, too, of the *hours* of labor. Those who contend that *eight* hours are enough for any man to give to toil, and too much for those engaged in exhausting occupations,* assume, as a rule, that the decision of the matter is entirely in the hands of the masters, and that it is nothing but a greedy selfishness which denies the demand of the laborer for the same wages in payment of twenty per cent less work. Now, I do not take upon me to say that the demand is unreasonable *in itself*; but it is folly to suppose that employers, as a

* "They do not wear themselves out with perpetual toil from morning till night, as if they were beasts of burden, which as it is indeed a heavy slavery, so it is the common course of life of all tradesmen everywhere, except among the Utopians; but they, dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, appoint six of these for work."—More's "*Utopia*."

class, can concede the thing demanded purely of their own will. For the terms which competition interposes between them and their customers, are as rigid and refined, often, as those which obtrude between masters and workmen; so that concession to the demand in question, other terms remaining unchanged, would make, in multitudes of cases, the difference between solvency and bankruptcy. In saying these things I am contributing very little, I know, toward the settlement of existing disputes between labor and capital; but it is worth while for working men to ponder these minor matters, which are the occasions of so much bad temper and hot blood in employers and employed. In such exigencies, let working men be careful not to put themselves in the wrong in defending the right. That they sometimes do, however, to the sorrow of their warmest impartial supporters. Let those of the class who hear me, pardon my boldness in this. I have not minced my words in speaking of the wrongs done by capitalists to laborers. Let me be equally frank, therefore, in denouncing

the wrongs sometimes done by laborers to capitalists.* When a favorable occasion has come, how eager and reckless they have been at times to turn it to their own account! Business has been brisk, orders have been plentiful, or heavy contracts have been entered into; and workmen have "got wind" of the fact. And they have said, "Now is our time: let us press our demands: let us wring some of the surplus profit of our toil out of the griping hands of this lordling." And they have done it; sometimes to the destruction and ruin of both masters and men. But hear me: I have no unqualified

* Others have been equally frank before me touching this matter, as witness, John Stuart Mill, the last to be suspected of want of sympathy for working men. "The rich are regarded as a mere prey and pasture for the poor—the subject of demands and expectations wholly indefinite, increasing in extent with every concession made to them. The total absence of regard for justice or fairness, in the relations between the two, is as marked on the side of the employed as on that of the employers. We look in vain, among the working classes in general, for the just pride which will choose to give good work for good wages. For the most part, their sole endeavor is to receive as much, and to return as little in the shape of service as possible."—*Political Economy*, 6th ed., vol. ii., p. 342.

condemnation to utter even against "strikes." They are not always unjust, or inexpedient, any more than "lock-outs" are. They are very mischievous, but they are necessary, or they are inevitable, under the present competitive system. But we may find good augury in the fact that "*arbitration*" is slowly working its way into wider respect in the industrial world. It is surely a shame to our Anglo-Saxon good sense, and love of benevolent enterprise, that France has so long led us in endeavors to conciliate such conflicting interests, or to prevent costly and destructive hostilities between labor and capital.*

"And yet I show unto you a more excellent way." Not a way by which we can wholly dispense with competition, but by which it may be rendered fruitful in good for the

* The *Conseil de Prud' hommes*, which was established by a decree of the French government in 1806, has wrought wonders in the work of conciliation. According to testimony given by the late Lord Brougham, before the House of Lords, in 1859, 28,000 disputes had been heard by the *Conseil* up to 1850, 26,800 of which were satisfactorily settled.—See *Work and Wages*, by Thomas Brassey, p. 273.

many, instead of, as now, for the unequal good of the few. For I still hold, that competition is a beneficent power, to which the world has been, and will continue to be, indebted for its best acquisitions. "It is the nurse, if not the parent, of all the useful arts. Without it there could have been no civilization. Wild through the woods man would still be running, a noble, but unrobed savage; and we who are now peaceably philosophizing about social problems, should have met, if we had met at all, only to fight like hungry dogs for the possession of some wild animal's carcass. And even then we should have been competing, though in hatefullest fashion; for, in some shape or other, competition will always continue to exist. If extinguished in one shape it will reappear in another, and that other not at all likely to be the better for having been artificially moulded. Left to itself, however, and suffered to assume its natural form, competition will not fail to exert a healthy and a helpful influence. Hitherto it has proved the mainspring of every kind of progress. Of all incentives to exertion those

which its supplies are by far the most powerful. Its motives partake largely of selfishness, but if they did not, they would be unsuited to the present condition of human nature. . . . Centuries hence human beings may be found generally willing to labor for the common good as zealously as for their own, and content to work each in proportion to his ability, and for rewards barely sufficient for his wants. Many individuals have lived, and many are living now, who have attained to this pitch of moral elevation, and there is no monstrous extravagance in supposing that all men may one day become what some are already. But if such a day ever come, competition will not cease, but will only change its object. Under the generous guise of emulation it will continue to exist, but will prompt men to vie with each other only in doing each other good. Even to dream of such a time is pleasant, and may help to hasten its arrival, provided we do not take our visions for realities. But it would be futile folly to act as if the dream were already fulfilled, aiming to destroy the competition of

self-interest, before the competition of self-devotion is prepared to take its place." * Meanwhile let working men come closer together, not for any sort of unlawful conspiracy, but for mutual help, refusing to be made any longer the playthings or pawns of political parties. Let them lock hands in efforts to help one another, and each man will find that that is the safest and most effectual way to help himself. Something is done in this direction already by clubs and friendly societies, but the principle of these associations admits of a wider and more remunerative application. Industrial coöperation is the way out of the snarls and the conflicts and the consequent misery of the present competitive system. Let the powers and the skill and the capital of the working classes (for even a dollar put out to legitimate use is capital,) be so combined that all shall share in the fruits of competition. The thing can't be done? So you would have said of the adventure of twenty-eight ill-paid flannel weavers in a certain provincial town in Eng-

* Thornton *On Labour*, slightly changed.

land in the year —44. But those men eventually solved a problem in political economy which had baffled its wisest expounders till then, and to-day coöperation is no longer a philanthropic dream, but a well-authenticated and very fruitful fact, and full of promise of a brighter future for the millions doomed to toil. But I anticipate. Let the subject wait its turn ; for I must first discuss the scheme or schemes which Communists commend as cures for the evils of competition.

LECTURE SECOND.

COMMUNISM.

IN taking up the subject which I am to handle this evening, I pass from the actual to the ideal; or from the consideration of a system of social organization now, and for long, in operation, to the consideration of a scheme suggested as likely to cure the evils consequent upon the competitive system. And here a preliminary remark. It is easy to discover defects in any complex organization with the workings of which we have experimental acquaintance, while it is difficult to anticipate the evils which projects of fair promise as sketched upon paper might possibly reveal, when put to practical tests. It is very natural, however, that men, perceiving or suffering from the unequal workings of the social order under which we live, should turn their thoughts to the invention of social projects which should exclude the consequences

now so generally complained of. Hence, or very largely hence, Communism, which liberal-minded and well-meaning men hold out as the most hopeful of such projects.

It is difficult to speak wisely or to any good effect about this matter, public opinion and feeling have been so biased and embittered, to the extent that attention has been given to it all, by extravagant representations on the one side and on the other. Comparatively few of us know anything more of Communism, I suspect, than the scraps of information which the newspapers give us, with now and then an article in a magazine. With those not better informed, the word communism, or communist, brings to mind the violent doings of Parisian mobs a few years since, which sent such a thrill of horror through the civilized world ; or they think of like outrages done more recently in this country. Yes; *that* is Communism, we are told—robbery, incendiarism, wholesale murder! And most of us rest in the vehement answer, probably, as sufficient and final. But this is a specimen proof of the prejudiced feel-

ing of which I have just spoken, such broad accusations betraying dense ignorance in those who take upon them to decide the merits or demerits of Communism in such a trenchant style. For shall I be believed when I affirm, that the atrocities done in Paris, in 1871, had very little, if anything, to do with Communism in the economical sense of the word? Yet men who ought to know better; men who presume to be public teachers on these questions, habitually confound a peculiarity in the distribution of political responsibility and power in France, with a very generally discussed theory of social organization, "La Commune," of which we have heard and read so much in recent years, being simply the common designation of a township or corporation, with the French. As a matter of fact, the struggle of the Parisians against the Versailles government, in 1871, had for its object, not the assertion of any new or extreme economic doctrine, but simply the establishment of a democratic republic, with the recognition of the *communal* or corporate independence of their city, only *seven* out

of the seventy members of the communal government of the time being communists, in the opprobrious sense commonly put upon the term ; these seven having been " among the most thoughtful and least violent of the party to which they belonged ;" while they were soon thrust aside by their less scrupulous comrades, never having tried to secure ascendancy for their peculiar views, or in any way to disturb the existing social order, except to the extent just stated.* Yet, what a rattling rhetoric we have round us in denunciation of Communism inspired by the wild doings of "*La Commune*," fair-minded men, and otherwise well-informed, being carried away by such ignorant and reckless abuse.† Only the vicious, it is at once decided, can have any sympathy with a system which proposes the spoliation of the industrious and thrifty

* "Encyclopædia Britannica," 9th ed. ; Art. *Communism*.

† "To-day there is not in our language, nor in any language, a more hateful word than Communism. In Paris seven years ago, in Pittsburgh last year, in Berlin this year, it meant, and still it means, wages without work, arson, assassination, anarchy."—Rev. Dr. Hitchcock's *Socialism*, p. 24.

for the benefit of the lazy and spendthrift class. Even the amiable Ebenezer Elliott levels a shaft of bitterest satire against the detestable doctrine,—

“ What is a Communist ? One who hath yearnings
For equal division of unequal earnings.
Idler, or bungler, or both, he is willing
To fork out his penny, and pocket your shilling.”

envy, or covetousness, being generally alleged as the sole animating motive of those who seek the reconstruction of society upon the basis of common property and common privileges. But such caricature, or slanderous imputation, simply exasperates and hardens those whom we profess to be anxious to deliver from “the error of their ways.” It is surely high time to have done with this sort of treatment of men, who, as a rule, are neither knaves nor fools, while crowds of the noblest examples of self-sacrifice attest, that their projects and endeavors have generally been inspired by benevolence and pity, rather than by envy of wealth, or hatred of the wealthy. Or let it be allowed, even, that crimes have sometimes been done in the

name of Communism ; yet, it is not fair, I submit, to judge a doctrine by the abuses which it may have suffered, or by the excesses for which some may have claimed its sanction ; or it would go hard with doctrines which some of us hold to be divine.

Do I mean it to be inferred, then, that Communism admits of some sort of reasonable defence? In answer to which expostulation I may venture to remind you, that wise men have deemed the matter worthy of intense study and of painstaking elaboration, while some of the best men the world has ever seen have been communists, in theory, at least. The greatest of Plato's Dialogues, the "Republic," is occupied with the statement and vindication of a scheme of communism, best suited, as he seems to have seriously held, to secure the peace and well being of a people. Sir Thomas More, a statesman, a scholar, a saint, and a martyr, had the courage to publish his conviction, in the very year in which he was admitted to the privy council of Henry VIII., that "the

setting of all upon a common level is the only way to make a nation happy; which cannot be attained," he adds, "so long as there is property." And these men—Plato and More—were not "vulgar demagogues," or "penniless agitators," you will bear in mind. Nor will any man of honest judgment, sufficiently well informed in these matters, apply such scornful epithets to the leading modern expounders of the teachings and designs of Communism. To such an one as the late Robert Owen, for example, who made a vast fortune by his talents and industry, and spent it, or most of it, in endeavors to mitigate the sufferings of the ill-requited laboring classes, and to whom the social progress of England has been so largely indebted. Communists may be somewhat dreamy in their speculations and designs, but their representative men are neither fools nor charlatans, while their criticisms and assaults upon the present order of things are pointed and supported by too many acknowledged wrongs in Christendom, to be met by the vituperation of a conceited and

selfish conservatism.* The dullest soul will sometimes pause to reflect upon the awful disparities in social condition observable round him, and will ask himself, in a puzzled or doubtful tone, whether such disparities are the results of necessary and normal causes. There are many among the thoughtful and discerning to-day, I suspect, who cannot confidently answer to themselves that they are. But some are ready with a very positive *negative* answer, and with plans to abolish such disparities, with all the disorder and misery which attend them. These men are our communists. Let us, at least, hear them candidly, and examine their projects impartially.

It is alleged, then, in a broad general way, that the social order which obtains to-day is unjust in principle and cruel in operation; that it is the result of the tyranny which the strong have exercised over the weak, privileges and immunities being thus secured to a

* "The present distribution of wealth does not conform to the principles of justice."—Hon. Abram S. Hewitt on *Capital and Labor*.

few, for whom the many have had to toil, and are compelled to toil to-day, for very slight, or for a miserably inadequate reward ; that this unequal distribution of wealth renders the poor permanently helpless in their struggles against the exactions of the rich, and especially against capitalistic combinations, "the free contract, so called, between employer and employed differing little from slavery, as far as the laborers are concerned, since the scourge of prospective hunger is as much an incentive to labor," and as effective in compelling submission to unrighteous demands, "as the whip of the slave-driver" once was. "Capital," in brief, as the case is summed up by Carl Marx, "is the most terrible scourge of humanity, fattening upon the misery of the poor, the degradation of the worker, and the brutalizing toil of his wife and children. Just as capital grows, so grow also pauperism—that millstone round the neck of civilization, the revolting cruelties of our factory system, the squalor of great cities, and the presence of deep poverty seated hard by the gates of enormous wealth." Nor are

these the accusations of would-be social assassins. No less a man than Mr. Gladstone said, in 1863: "The fact is astonishing, and scarcely credible, of this intoxicating increase of wealth and power, confined entirely to the possessing classes . . . Human life, in seven cases out of ten, is a mere struggle for existence." Which testimony is confirmed by Prof. Fawcett, who says: "The rich are becoming rapidly wealthier, whereas no increase can be discerned in the comforts of the laboring classes."

Now, the evils which I have thus only imperfectly indicated, can only be remedied, the communist contends, by the abolition of private property, with all the advantages which it undeniably confers upon some, and the reduction of all men to a common status of duty and privilege; some prophets in the communistic school going so far, as to recommend the levelling of the walls which surround the home and protect the integrity of the family. Some of the more hopeful look for the coming of such an end through the process of social evolution, which has wrought

such wonders already, while others would reach it through violent revolution, if need were. But however attained, in the new social order there are to be no idlers, or men of leisure; but all are to be occupied in some productive or useful industry, the proceeds being fairly divided by officers appointed by a majority of the community, according to the service rendered in their production. Thus, while none will have a superfluity of the means or enjoyments of life, none, on the other hand, will have need, since the scheme contemplates the providing for the wants of the diseased or otherwise helpless, out of the common exchequer. All capable members being producers, or contributors in some way to the general stock of the wealth and welfare of the society, it is confidently counted upon, that the time required for toil will be very much abridged, compared with the seeming requirements of the present competitive system, labor being thus relieved of much of its hardship, while increased opportunities will be afforded for recreation, or for the cultivation of the mind and heart, con-

tentment and peace and sweet affections prevailing through the whole brotherhood! All are to be "of one heart and of one soul," neither is any member to say, that "ought which he possesses is his own," but they are to have "all things common." A very pretty bit of idealism, some of you may be inclined to say, but utterly impracticable, you will probably add with an emphasis, human nature remaining what is. But, let us not be eager to pour satire upon these pleasant pictures. Ideals have ofttimes proved inspirations.

But we may fairly ask: How is it proposed to get the plan into operation? The more moderate of the leaders of Communism say, in effect: By indirect approaches, leaving the old social order very much as it is for a time, but cutting off its more glaring abuses at once, by the intervention of state power. Let the accumulation of wealth beyond a certain limit, these men would say, be thus summarily prevented, the surplus to be applied for the public good, in some way. Let the law of inheritance be utterly abolished, the State coming in as the heir and executor of

all estates. But, as of more immediate practical importance, if possible, than even these measures, it is very commonly demanded by communists, that practical sympathy shall be at once shown by the State toward labor in its struggles against capital, by grants of public lands, where available, and by grants of public money, when needed, thus enabling workmen to combine on terms of equality, against those who now rule trade and commerce for their own interests, as it is charged. The State is thus to supplant, by such indirect process, all private enterprise, capital retiring by degrees, as is predicted, from the unequal contest, till all productive industry, and all the necessary means of distribution of its products, shall be controlled by authority representing and working for the people; the benefits which once inured to the few, being thus secured to the many, or to all, rather; the State assigning each worker to the calling for which he is best adapted, or allowing each to follow his own instinct, as Fourier recommended, since labor, as he predicted, would then be a delight, the productive and distribu-

tive powers of the social organism adjusting themselves without control or restraint, except of a formal or merely functionary character!

Again, idealism, you say; and the question arises, How have men of marked intellectual ability, and of vast research in history and social problems, and of unquestioned integrity and benevolence, as a rule, ever been led to shape such projects as cures for the disorder and ills of society? Partly because History tells such a sad tale of the wrongs done by wealth and organized power against the helpless and needy, and partly because of the dismal facts to which experience still bears witness, and which I have already slightly touched upon. Ignorance looks at these facts with dull eyes, while intelligence is too often indifferent, or merely optimistic in its estimate of them; but there are some men who have exposed the facts in all their ugliness, and who have denounced the iniquity to which they have been largely due; men

“Of grief and anger, grown to fierce revolt,
And hatred of the invisible force which holds
The issue of men’s lives, and binds us fast
Within the net of fate.”

The language of these men has been intemperate at times, while some of their projects have seemed wild. But the calmest historical investigation has shown us of late, that private property, which we all hold sacred to-day, was once public or common, from which the communist concludes, that the people may reclaim that of which force unjustly deprived them; the idea of the absolute ownership of land being "quite unknown to the English law" of to-day.* How this qualified ownership has often been attained in the past, family pedigrees can tell, fortune and station having commonly been the gift of military tyrants, or of despotic rulers, to those who flattered their pride, or served their interests, or ministered to their pleasure; while the common people have been regarded as slaves, or as beasts of burden, such destiny being allotted them by Providence, as priests have taught, all murmuring or repining being held up as treason, not only against their masters, but against God.

* T. E. Cliffe Leslie, *Land Systems*, p. 120; note, as cited by Kaufmann.

Or, on a plane somewhat higher, the many have been "hewers of wood or drawers of water," or tillers of the soil, or hunters of wild animals, for the gain or the gratification of a few. Or, on a plane still higher, they have been made the victims of the most tyrannous and corrupt class legislation, and have been ground down by taxes to supply the exchequers of kings and courtiers, and this through long, long centuries; in England, very generally, down to the Revolution of 1688, and in France—taking specimens of advanced countries only—down to the great crash of 1789.

But these things are passed. Slavery has been abolished; tenants have succeeded to serfs. Constitutional government has come; kings and cabinets have been taught some of the duties which are due to subjects. Education has been extended; the workman has the right secured of disposing of his time and the products of his powers as he chooses. But constitutional government has entailed new, while it has abolished old, evils. Parental or despotic government undertook to care

for all the people and their interests, though the charge was often shamefully neglected; but now, every man is left very much to take care of himself, and for multitudes the change has brought no gain. The tenant makes his own bargain with the landlord; the workman makes his own contract with his employer; both tenant and workman being subject to coercive conditions, however, which place them at a positive and sometimes grievous disadvantage. Industries have multiplied rapidly, and commerce has vastly increased, wealth having accumulated in proportion; while mineral treasures and mechanical ingenuity have added immensely to all other resources; but the share of beneficial result which has fallen to the workman has avowedly been very scanty, pauperism and poor-houses prevailing mid abounding affluence, in the most advanced states to-day. Governments have occasionally come in to arrest the selfish schemes and unrighteous exactions of wealth, or the lot of the laborer had been very much bitterer than it is. Think of the time when men women and

children seldom saw the sun, being buried in coal mines through the live-long day! Think of the horrors which the "Factory Act" was aimed at in England, and which remorseless "vested interests" resisted so long! Or, think of the "gang system" in agricultural regions of the "old world," droves of men, with women and children, being driven about to do work on farms, the owners of which refuse to build cottages for the requisite number of laborers, or whom the tenant farmer does not wish fixedly resident on his land; the soil being cultivated, and the harvests got in cheaper on the "gang system." Or, think of the wrongs done, and the sufferings inflicted, by "absenteeism" in such countries as Ireland and Russia, the revenues of the land, tilled by a half-starved tenantry, being spent for luxury or in pleasure in London, or in Paris, or in St. Petersburg; and then say, if you can, that the complaints of the poor spring only from envy, or that all Socialism is a seditious nuisance, or that Communism is a monster which it is the first duty of society "to

smite with the swiftness and fury of lightning!"

The fact is, when all is allowed which can be claimed for our present social conditions as compared with those of the past, there remain many sore provocations to tempt men to resentment, and to set wits to work in pondering and planning something better than that which most men have hitherto known. We talk very finely of the beneficent results of capital, but as long as self-interest is a ruling motive and instigation in men, the weak will have to suffer in the "struggle for life." It is the interest of the employer, of course, to get as much as he can for the wages he pays, the laborer being estimated according to his productive power or skill. He is a "*hand*," not a heart nor a brain, but a hand; moral or religious considerations being seldom allowed to modify "business" estimates. Humane feelings in capitalists sometimes discriminate in individual cases, while here and there a master will make sacrifices, and run risks, and endure anxieties, and suffer losses, for those depen-

dent upon him. But as a rule, if competition runs things fine in making contracts, the workman bears more than his share of the consequent hardship, absolute want for himself and his family ensuing in times of a severe stagnation in trade. While, when times are brisk, capital always gets the lion's share of the gain. This, it may be said, is right, considering the hazard to investments, and considering the value of an organizing and directing mind in the planting and management of a vast concern. Whether right or not, it is inevitable, as society is now organized, in which the "good old rule" bears sway,

"That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can."

The intervention of philanthropy can do but little to preclude such consequences.* No

* The lady-president of a certain benevolent society, I wot of, on hearing how poorly sewing women were paid in a certain establishment, proposed to send a deputation to the head of the firm, to ask an increase of wages for them! But the lady had given very little attention to what Mr. Carlyle calls "the dismal science." Equally innocent measures are sometimes suggested, however, by leading philanthropists, for the remedy of economic evils.

schemes or measures of government can prevent appalling social disparities appearing as long as men have to struggle for the prizes of life, or as long as social institutions and forces are essentially antagonistic.

But the communist replies, that just here is the occasion or cause of all our social ills. End the struggle, therefore, says he, by removing the active cause. Let men be banded into brotherhoods, instead of envious and hostile factions, as now, and tranquillity and prosperity will succeed to strife and suffering.

I wish I could believe such sanguine predictions to be reliable, but I cannot. Socialistic theories are too beautiful, I fear, ever to be realized on earth. And here I come to the criticism of Communism, in which unwelcome work, as some may esteem it, I must be allowed to be as frank as I have tried to be fair, in the statement of the communist's grievances and projects.

Communism, then, expects a great deal too much of human nature, or it requires abundant material for the success of its plans,

of which the world has hitherto had but a very small supply. High intelligence, broad sympathies, pure affections, with large gifts of what we call public spirit ;—these are specimen qualities which are demanded by, or for brotherhoods ; but, unhappily for life in all phases and stages, they are very rare. A little company of men, liberally gifted with such graces, may retire apart and shape a society which may possibly succeed for a time. But life, even for such men, becomes tame and somewhat dreary, as has been found, when long denied the inspirations and incentives which human society as now fashioned supplies. Even “ Brook Farm ” failed, though stocked with all the excellences which the best New England culture could afford. While “ New Harmony,” the name which Mr. Owen gave to his colony on the Wabash, soon became a seat of furious discord, the community being largely made up, as Mr. Greeley said, of “ the conceited, the crotchety, the selfish, the headstrong, the pugnacious, the unappreciated, the played-out, the idle, and the good-for-nothing generally, who, dis-

covering themselves utterly out of place and at a discount in the world as it is, rashly conclude that they are exactly fitted for the world as it ought to be." Or small communities of men may be held together in comparative peace and prosperity by *religious* feelings and aims, as has been long seen in certain ecclesiastical orders; or by the wisdom and statesman-like ability of some patriarchal man, such as Pastor Rapp. Or men may be content in socialistic fraternities, because they can there indulge peculiarities of opinion, and taste, and demeanor, which the world would make sport of, or possibly persecute. Hence the "Shakers" and similar associations. Such inducements have had a great deal to do, at all events, in bringing and holding men and women together on terms of a rude sort of equality, enabling them to gratify yearnings after a simpler and closer sort of fellowship than society admits of, except of a very limited kind, to-day. But when Communism undertakes to manipulate our average miscellaneous human nature on a broad scale, it will have put its hand to an

enterprise which will end in speedy and possibly disastrous failure. The stuff of which ordinary men are made is too intractable to yield to sentiment or to philosophic speculation.

But when society is based upon the principles and administered according to the methods of Communism, it is replied, the intractable will be compelled to obey: an answer which hints at what, to my mind, is the most intolerable thing in the whole communistic scheme—this cowardly and idiotic reliance upon the State. Men speak of it, and turn their hopes toward it, as if there were unfathomed wisdom and infinite resources in it, sending up devout implorations for its help in every emergency which arises. But the best political thought of the ages has taught us, that the interests of a free community are safest and best advanced, when the power of the State is curtailed as far as practicable, and its interference kept within the narrowest necessary limits. "The great end of all government," said Fichte, "is to render government superfluous." And it does

seem strange, that men who have been crying out all their lives against despotisms of all sorts, can come to put their trust in a despotism more intolerable than any which history tells of. For what is the Staté, or the directory, to do in the new social order? Fit every man in his place, and hold him there. Assign every man his work, and apportion his wages, and measure out his pleasure, keeping a steady surveillance over him, lest he should fail to accomplish his "tale of bricks." Or, is every man to work when and how he pleases, as Fourier would have it—plenty of food being supplied at the public crib, and clothing to be had, *à discretion*, for the asking? Then will there be found many who will prefer to take things very lightly, having a constitutional dislike for fatiguing exertion of any sort. Then, as to remuneration—is it to be equal? Then Communism will be an organized injustice, as was soon felt in the experiment of the Paris workshops in '48, the principle of equal award being speedily abandoned. Or, is remuneration to be unequal? Then, who shall see to it that

each gets his due, and *only* his due? And how shall such result be secured? Why, the community blessed with the wisest leaders, would soon become a hot-bed of jealousies and enmities mid such embarrassments, which would speedily explode in rebellion.

But I pass to another objection. To the extent that Communism should prove successful as an economy ministering to material wants, its influence would be degrading to the higher and finer qualities and powers of human nature. Plainly put, it would confer a premium upon laziness and dishonesty; would educate men in the skill of skulking; while the best men of a community would be discouraged and disgusted. Pride and a desire to excel would languish and die when robbed of their due reward, as they infallibly would be under the rule of a jealous and envious majority. The late Mr. Mill manifested a discriminating sympathy with Communism in his *opus magnum*, but he felt the force of these objections, which he hints, rather than expresses, in the following passage: "The question is," says he, "whether there

would be any asylum left for individuality of character ;” that is, under the *régime* of Communism : “ whether public opinion would not be a tyrannical yoke ; whether the absolute dependence of each on all, would not grind all down into a tame uniformity of thoughts, feelings, actions. . . . It is yet to be ascertained,” he goes on to say, “ whether the communistic scheme would be consistent with that multiform development of human nature, those manifold unlikenesses, that diversity of tastes and talents and variety of intellectual points of view, which not only form a great part of the interest of life, but, by bringing intellects into stimulating collision, and by presenting to each innumerable notions which he would not have conceived of himself, are the mainspring of mental and moral progress.”* Which words most of us will be inclined to construe, I suspect, as a qualified and cautious condemnation of the whole scheme of Communism, which aims to abolish all social irregularities ; but the method it proposes levels *downward*,

* “ Political Economy,” vol. i., p. 270. Am. Ed.

by subjecting the strong to the weak, the wise to the foolish, and culture to brute force!

But a graver and more vital objection remains, though it has suggested itself again and again in the course of this discussion. The most extraordinary thing to my mind in connection with speculative Communism, is the general obliviousness of its disciples as to the necessity of a marked moral advancement in society, to prepare the way for the launching of their scheme, granting the scheme to be sound in itself, and of a high degree of Christian virtue in men, for its successful working when put in operation. These serious needs have been generally overlooked, force being expected, as I just now charged, to accomplish that which wise men have hitherto looked for education to do. The vicious postulate of Mr. Owen is still in credit—"Man is the creature of circumstances." He is clay, or passive as clay: press him into the right sort of social mould, and he will come out with every lineament of character perfect. Will he? Not necessarily. The hu-

man clay has affections, and passions, and a will. And who shall do the pressing? Government? But men have struggled too long, and paid too dearly, for the liberty of which we make our boast, ever to submit to the process. And how shall we construct the mould but by aid of the Christian morality which communists too generally discard? It was a strange confusion into which men fell, when they talked of a "new moral world," from which moral freedom should be practically excluded. Let the "world-builders" of to-day take account of a need which Sir Thomas More so naïvely speaks of: "*It is impossible for all things to be well unless all men are good*, which, I think, will not be yet for these many years." Communists may suspect, if I speak to any, that I am simply talking professionally; but I will be bold to say, that their trust in social mechanism seems silly to me, while I may venture to add, that their "best laid schemes" will be abortive of good till Socialism pays more respect to Christian ethics; or, till the fact be practically recognized, that "true

religion is the foundation of social morality, and therefore of social happiness." It is said that hopeful signs in this direction have appeared of late; that the scorn and abuse of religion, once so common among socialists, which made socialism a synonym with infidelity, is now discountenanced by leaders of mark.* It is well, if only as evidence that a class of men whose judgments have very generally been upset or distracted, by the fury they have felt against social wrongs, are at length learning discrimination and fairness. I know what sore provocations "priestcraft" has given to the men who have labored and suffered to emancipate and uplift the oppressed; but it is high time that

* Kaufman quotes the following in *Utopias*, p. 265, with approval: "All great social reformers have at all times availed themselves of the religious feelings and convictions of their fellow-men; and as there never was, nor ever can be, a rational system of religion that does not preach the mutual love of all men, the close and intimate relation between communism and religion justifies the endeavors which social reformers have made to harmonize religion with communism.—*Social Architecture*, by "An Exile from France."

such men should cease to malign the religion of Jesus Christ because of such perversion of its spirit and precepts. And it is high time, also, that they learned that the principles of that religion must be placed at the very foundation of the social order, which is to supplant the order which "waxeth old," and is "ready to vanish away," as the sanguine socialist thinks.

Other objections remain, but enough. No one will detect in what I have said any trace or indication of an unfriendly animus, I think, toward communists. Some may possibly suspect that I would fain sympathize with them. In both my statement of their case and in my criticism of their projects, however, I have simply aimed to be fair. I am not blind to the many sorrowful occasions in the working of society as it is, to start men upon such inventions; but the benevolence apparent in the communistic theory will be accepted by few sensible men as an adequate commendation. It must be shown that the scheme is workable; but past failures, apart from essential grounds of ob-

jection, will be taken by most of us, I suspect, as supplying proof that Communism is utterly impracticable ; that it is a dream, a very *amiable* dream, or little more.

There is small likelihood, therefore, I take it, that this shrewd utilitarian American people, or any considerable number of them, will be prevailed upon to show much sympathy with the scheme. Certainly I will not believe that there are those among us, of any creed or nationality, in numbers worth noticing, who are bent upon resorting to violent measures for the attainment of the ends which the communist proper sets before him. For it is nonsense to talk of the reckless doings of men stung to madness by the wrongs done them by political rulers, or by the unjust dealings of capitalistic combinations, as the work of Communism. Let us not yield to foolish fears, nor cease to feel other than kindly feelings for the many who suffer. There has been a good deal of unrest among us in recent years under the pressure of hard times, with some sullen but significant murmuring now and then ; but I

marvel that there has not been a great deal more. Such unrest dies down, however, just as the tide of popular prosperity rises. Meanwhile the discussion of social questions may do some good. Some of those who live at ease and in affluence may possibly learn that privileges entail duties, and that systematically to neglect the latter, may imperil the former. While the downy religionism of the day may be roused to the recognition of the fact, that the church was meant to be something better than a spiritual insurance company; that men need to be told something else than how "to save their souls;" that pulpit warblings cannot silence the questionings and complaints with which the air is thick just now.

But if, while recognizing serious evils in the competitive system of the time, we deny that Communism can afford relief, what else remains? It is hard to say. But I propose to furnish an instalment toward an answer in my next address.

LECTURE THIRD.

CO-OPERATION.

I GAVE, toward the close of my last lecture, some substantial reasons, as I hold, why Communism cannot be looked to for relief by those who complain of our present social organization. Vaguely benevolent, and aimed at many acknowledged evils around us, it may nevertheless be safely affirmed, I think, that communistic projects are impracticable, on a large scale of operation, at least. But what then? Shall things be allowed to drift as they have done from the dawn of the industrial era, carrying the many down to a humiliating dependence, and some to a miserable indigence, while leaving a few on high vantage-ground, possessed of abundance, and in the enjoyment of a luxurious comfort? Surely something is wrong, that the gifts of the earth and the profits of labor should

be so unequally divided. Superior talents, with closer application, and a more prudent use of the consequent gain, may explain the differences in social condition in individual cases. For according to no scheme of social organization can the idler, or the improvident, or the imbecile, be justly maintained upon the same level of advantage and enjoyment, as the industrious, the prudent, and the intellectually gifted. But the frightful disparities in the outward condition of men are largely due to other causes than those which inhere in personal character, or which are operative in personal behavior. The palace of the "merchant prince," and the hovel of the hireling, are comparatively seldom a fair expression of the honest deservings of their occupants. The one started far ahead of the other, possibly, in the race of life. But with two or more men starting fair, and with something like equal endowments, the prizes awarded at the end may be of very unequal value. The men with the golden awards have somehow ordered matters, that others have been compelled or induced to work for them, while

the men with little or nothing have had to rely solely upon their own oft-times precarious earnings. But cannot we conceive of an industrial system under which the awards, whether to body or to brain, shall be more nearly equal? Nay, more; may not capital and labor, which are now so often at enmity, or bitterly hostile, be so harnessed for the attainment of common aims, that all shall be gainers from the consequent increase in production, and from the less costly machinery required in the distribution of their products?

It may be a new thing to some of you, to be told that such a scheme of industry has not only been conceived, but that it has been in successful operation for years, in several of the most advanced states of Christendom; the most sagacious economists and students in Social Science having come to regard it as full of promise for the working classes, and for the reconciling of interests commonly looked upon as essentially alien or antagonistic. I refer to the scheme called Co-operation, the nature of which, with its methods of

working, and the benefits it promises to confer, I am to explain, as best I can, within the brief space of time available for my present address.

Comparatively little seems to be known of co-operation by the present generation of Americans. A certain degree of interest, largely of a sentimental sort, I infer, was once felt in social schemes by the liberally minded of that day, scattered attempts, which speedily proved futile, I believe, having been made toward testing the merits of co-operation here. But very little such endeavor has been put forth in recent years. And that, in part, because just enough of tradition survives among us as to past failures to discourage men; but mainly because the social pressure has been very slightly felt here, which sets the wits of working men in action, for the bettering of their condition. The causes which have led to so much economical discussion and scheming among the more intelligent of the class in Europe, however, are now actively at work in the more populous parts of this country, the conditions which provoke such

discussions promising to be more or less permanent with us. As long as there was plenty of "elbow-room," and labor was at a premium, and a good living could be had with no distressing amount of exertion, it was not strange that workers in the United States cared little for the controversies and struggles in which their brothers were engaged in the "old world." Those who had found a comfortable home here, had wholly escaped, as they thought, from the wrongs and sufferings imposed by "the iniquitous institutions and customs of semi-feudal countries;" when, lo! they are face to face with experiences of the very same sort. "The paradise of the working man," as we have been wont to call this vast and still bountiful home of ours, has been rapidly transformed for many, into a hard and somewhat rough-featured field, in which the old price is demanded—"sweat of the brow" for bread. Nor is the change a passing or a merely temporary change. The stagnation and distress of the last six or seven years, will, to some extent, disappear. Trade is reviving; work is becoming more plenti-

ful; wages will advance—we shall have, in a word, “good times” again. But never as good, or as easy, probably, for either workmen or masters in the future, as in the past. The best lands are already settled, or in the hands of vast corporations, or in those of wealthy private owners. The powers of production have increased to such an extent, that our manufacturers are scouring the world for new markets. The professions are all more than full. Competition has cut down gains and wages to the lowest possible limit. The personal attire and domestic circumstances of our working people, are rapidly approaching to the quality common in England and in Belgium. The “silk dresses and parasols” which Mr. Dickens wondered at as things familiar with the factory girls of Lowell, on his first visit to this country, have passed, or are rapidly passing away, it is said. Pauperism, a word which an American would once have resented as applied to his country, has been domesticated among us, the amount of money required annually for the relief of the distressed having increased at an alarming

rate. In Massachusetts, to wit, one of the best conditioned of our sister States, from \$200,000, to more than \$3,000,000, a year, it is said.* These changes are largely due, I am aware, to exceptional conditions and causes. But the spontaneous prosperity, the easily acquired competence, with the almost universal contentment which once prevailed here, will never be known again, probably, or only to a very much more limited extent. The country is not exhausted; it abounds in undeveloped wealth; while industry and commerce will again reap golden rewards for their exertions. But the lot of the many will never be as easy and as happy as it once was here, if the old competitive forces are to have an unchecked sway.

These social changes have come upon us so rapidly, that no wonder if the immediate effect is a bewildered condition of the public mind, each man having his special panacea ready, which he wonders why the government will not accept as the remedy for the ills of

* "Better Times," by Dr. Douai.

the time. Hence, what seem to some of us, the crazy or semi-insane projects of which we read or hear. Set the printing press to work, and make money, till every man, woman and child shall have enough. Or let the State take possession of all the land, and portion it out in fair allotments, that every man may sit "under his own vine and fig-tree." Or let all capitalistic operations be abolished, the government paying for all vested interests, and working all needful enterprises for the benefit of the people. At least, let the government see to it, *in some way*, that every man, able and willing to toil, has "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work." But our governmental Hercules, it should be remembered, is not a god, but a somewhat feeble and fallible creature of our own making. If we were living under a paternal government, then might we, with some show of reason, invoke the sovereign to set all things right, as peoples in political "leading strings" have been apt to do. But if we prefer freedom to a passive subjection, then we must deal with the evils which may afflict us in a more

roundabout way. For it should be borne in mind, that as a nation we are heirs to institutions and traditions which cannot be set aside by a wave of the congressional hand. Radical reforms must be slow, to be safe, even in republics. It may be that those who come after us shall be blessed with political counsellors who shall be able to shape and to administer a visible Kingdom of God. But such a consummation will not be attained to-morrow. Meanwhile, let our trust in politicians be mild, and modest, and watchful, and let expectation be turned toward something more reliable than "party" projects and promises; toward something more reliable, too, than the eloquent declamations of demagogues, or the stupendous schemes of our "world builders." While the "Internationalists" are working at the problem of a "universal brotherhood," getting kings out of the way as an essential preliminary, it might seem, cannot something be done, in a more modest way, to lift the working classes out of their condition of dependence, which for many is worse than serfdom? The scheme I

am here to expound has proved that a great deal can be done to such end.

Co-operation literally means, joint activity, a working together, as opposed to rival or antagonistic forces. We have long been familiar with certain forms of co-operative industry. In agriculture, for instance ; what is known as the " Metayer " system obtaining in several parts of Europe, under which the farmer pays the landowner for the use of the soil, not a fixed amount of rent, but a certain proportion of the produce, generally one half, as the name imports: but it is sometimes two thirds; self-interest leading the actual cultivator of the land to get the most he can out of it, the same motive working, of course, for the benefit of the owner. But a much more familiar example to us of a certain sort of co-operation, is common in the manufacturing and commercial world, two or more men coming together in partnership, mutually agreeing as to the duties each shall assume, and determining the proportion of gain each shall receive, according to the capital invested, and the estimates put upon the

services rendered by each of the partners. In such instances the combination embraces principals only, all other services required being paid for in fixed wages. All joint-stock companies are co-operative also, on a more extended scale than partnerships. In these combinations all net profit goes to capital, however. Labor has no further tangible interest in the working of such schemes, than the amount and security of the remuneration promised and accepted.

A much more hopeful kind of co-operation, however, has been steadily winning favor in the industrial world in recent years, according to which, workmen are given a certain share of the profits resulting from successful business operations, such awards being generally graded according to the earnings of each man in the course of a quarter, or of a year. By these "industrial partnerships" labor and capital have been brought into happy alliance, to some extent, the moral and material benefits being very marked wherever the principle has been fairly and persistently tested. In 1860 Prof.

Fawcett published, in the *Westminster Review*, an article on "Strikes, their Tendencies and Remedies," which suggested to certain large colliery proprietors in Yorkshire, England, the possibility of improving the relations between themselves and their workmen, which had been previously very unpleasant—"as bad as they could be," said one of the firm—Messrs. Briggs. "All coal-masters is devils," said a miner, in giving vent to the general feeling, "and Briggs is the prince of devils." But in 1865 an experiment was resolved upon which soon wrought wondrous results. The workmen were given an interest in the work done, in the shape of a bonus to each, according to the amount of his earnings at the end of the year, capital receiving ten *per cent* of the net profits, the highest amount that the principals had ever been able to secure under the old system. But, at the end of the first year, under the new system, the profits amounted to *fourteen per cent*, and the next, to *sixteen per cent*, one miner receiving a bonus of \$55 upon his earnings of \$550. While *morally*,

the workmen, before very largely a brutal and an abusive class, were transformed into reasonable and respectful men. Money, which they would previously have spent in liquor, they now spend in the education of their children, and in increasing the comforts of home. "Our village," says Mr. Curren Briggs, as cited by Mr. Thornton, in his work on "Labour," has been transformed from a hot-bed of strife and ill-feeling between employers and employed, into a model of peace and good-will." Evidence to the same effect is furnished also by the Crossleys, the well-known carpet manufacturers of Halifax, England, who, in 1864, converted their immense concern into a joint-stock association in £10 shares; special facilities being afforded to the workmen to become shareholders, \$500,000 of the capital stock being held, according to the latest accessible report, by the company's servants, the directors affirming that the scheme "has more than realized their utmost expectation." While W. H. Smith & Son, the eminent news agents and booksellers, have found the prin-

principle of industrial partnership equally satisfactory and remunerative. Their book-stalls are well known to travellers in England, but the secret of the marked courtesy, and briskness, and attention to business, exhibited by those in charge, is not known by all who have hurriedly thrown down a shilling on such a stall for a little "railway reading." The dullest among us will be able to guess the secret, however, when he is told, that each agent is paid a percentage on all receipts in addition to his regular salary, the commercial value of such impetus being indicated by the increased income of some of these agents, of between 40 and 50 *per cent.*

Another example of the material and moral advantages derivable by both masters and men from such associations of capital and labor, was furnished by M. Leclaire as early as 1842, in Paris, the particulars of which are stated and illustrated at length by Mr. Thornton, pp. 364-367. Mr. Babbage had commended such a combination of industrial forces in 1832, in his valuable little book on the "Economy of Machinery and Manufac-

tures." But why multiply confirmations of a truth so obvious? A very limited knowledge of human nature suggests the practicability of such schemes to diminish, at least, the antagonism between labor and capital. Most masters know something of the costly and vexatious trouble to which they are put, in getting anything like "a fair day's work" out of their men, for what they consider "a fair day's wages." But a very small modicum of moral philosophy would show them a way out of such embarrassments. Give workmen an interest in the products of their skill and industry, and they will do more work, and of better quality, than they ever do under the ordinary instigations of the wage system, capital surrendering no fraction of, but increasing, its previously hardly-earned rewards.* "Long might co-operation have

* "It is human nature, I think, that a man should like to feel that he is to be a gainer by any extra industry that he may put forth, and that he should like to have some sense of proprietorship in the shop or mill, or whatever it may be, in which he passes his days. And it is because the system introduced of late years of co-operative industry meets that natural wish, that I look forward to its extension with so much hopefulness."—

sought in vain to recommend itself as a promoter of the interests of labor, if it had not possessed the further recommendation of conducing to those of capital likewise. This has happily enabled it to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness."

These, at best, however, are only tentative, half-way measures. There is yet "a more excellent way." Co-operation proper is another thing, the word designating, as used by political economists to-day, what Mr. Holyoake calls "a new power of industry;" or, what I should prefer to call, a new *form* of collective industry, "constituted by the equitable combination of worker, capitalist, and consumer; and a new means of commercial morality, by which honesty is rendered productive. It is the concert of many for compassing advantages impossible to be reached by one, in

Earl Derby (then Lord Stanley) in a speech at Liverpool, 1869.

On a similar occasion the Speaker of the House of Commons said, in 1876.—"My opinion is, we shall never have a satisfactory settlement of the question (of wages), until the laborer receives in some shape or other a share, though it may be a small one, of the profit of the business in which he is engaged."

order that the gain made may be fairly shared by all concerned in its attainment." But formal definitions can do little for us in trying to get at a clear and impressive understanding of this question. Co-operation has defined itself *in action*, to the confusion of the sceptical; but to the immense satisfaction and delight of all well-wishers of working men. Listen to a marvellous story.

In the year 1844, in a manufacturing town in the north of England, twenty-eight laborers formed a conspiracy to improve their condition, which was just then well-nigh desperate, by a method of which they had heard, probably; which had been tried, indeed, elsewhere, but which they improved upon and made a success, by the incorporation of a new and very fruitful factor, the nature and worth of which will appear later. These "Pioneers," as they called themselves, agreed to combine their surplus means for the creating of a common fund, wherewith to launch their scheme of distributive co-operation. Such surplus means, or savings, must have been very scanty, since the amount

of subscription decided upon was only *four cents a week*. These trifling contributions slowly accumulated, however, to \$140, on the strength of which the ground floor of an old warehouse was rented for retail trade, the stock of goods embracing *only four articles*—flour, oatmeal, sugar, and butter. The store was opened on two or three evenings in the week only, for two or three hours, workmen serving as salesmen after factory toil was done. Thus timidly was the enterprise entered upon. Business rapidly increased, however, partly from the wide-spread social sympathy just then unusually strong among the lower classes in and about Rochdale, but mainly because of the substantial results in the shape of profits which soon began to appear, converts to the scheme increasing accordingly, and joining the original twenty-eight. In ten years the membership had grown to *nine hundred*, the \$140 had become \$35,860, while \$166,820 represented the business done in the last year of the ten, the profits amounting to \$8,815! I cannot trace the progress of the Pioneer Society

year by year, nor even by decades. Suffice it to say, that the figures corresponding to the items just given, stood as follows in 1867: members, 34,115; capital, \$641,175; business done, \$1,424,550; profits, \$208,095. This business has not all been done from the old "stand," however, by the light of a "tallow-dip" candle, as at the first. A magnificent structure has succeeded to the old warehouse, while a dozen or more branch stores have been planted, the articles dealt in now comprising all the necessaries and comforts of common life. In the central store there is a vast assembly room, a board room fit for the directors of the Bank of England, a reading room well supplied with newspapers, magazines, and reviews, and a library containing many thousands of the best books published; two-and-a-half per cent of the profits having been set aside from the beginning for such educational purposes. The *material* benefits of co-operation, in this, its simplest form, are thus seen to have been very marked. Habits of industry and economy have been begotten in many belonging to a class too gener-

ally indifferent or reckless. Thousands who never knew what it was to be out of debt, have built themselves houses and otherwise provided against "a rainy day." The co-operative store is said to be the virtual savings bank of the town. But the *moral* benefits of the movement have been still more estimable. Pride and a generous aspiration have taken the place of dulness and despair in multitudes. Sobriety and cleanliness and self-respect have been effectively fostered, while honesty and fair dealing have been exemplified on a scale seldom known in the world of traffic. Peace and good-will, with an active desire to serve one another, seem to have pervaded the whole fellowship. The marvellous statement was printed by Mr. Holyoake, some little while ago, that the arbitrators appointed to settle internal difficulties, had never had a case to consider, feeling somewhat discontented that nobody quarrelled. So has the germ planted by those plain, but resolute and high-minded men, prospered. "Such are the sheaves over which those who went forth weeping, bear-

ing precious seed, are now, with good cause, rejoicing,"

I have given you a brilliant and somewhat exceptional example of the benefits created and conferred by distributive co-operation. Like results are attainable by others, however, and have been actually attained in crowds of cases. The Rochdale Pioneers have made for many years more than thirty per cent of profits; but that many other such associations have been doing about as well, or little worse, is clear from the fact, that of the whole number of 577 (in 1868) the average annual rate of profit was reported as twenty-seven per cent.*

Such success has resulted chiefly from ad-

* According to the report of the Registrar-General for 1878, there were then in existence in England, Scotland, and Wales, 1,289 co-operative societies, of which 1,173 made returns, giving the following totals:

Members.....	554,773
Sales.....	\$104,865,795
Stocks.....	12,895,355
Trade expenses, including interest on loans and capital.....	7,361,355
Net Profits.....	9,002,340
Share capital.....	18,292,350
Loans.....	4,288,835

mitting all purchasers to the right of dividends in proportion to the amount of their custom, and from the easy terms upon which members are admitted, a payment of twenty-five cents (one shilling) securing such privilege, accruing dividends being retained by the society till the full cost of a share of twenty-five dollars has accumulated. The subscriber is then a full member, receiving a heavier dividend than the mere purchaser receives. The gain made by simply buying articles of assured quality, at the current market rates, has been the one electric influence, however. Co-operation had been tried on the common joint-stock principle, and had failed. If custom could have been attracted and retained on a large scale, the business had paid the stock-holder well. But the attractions held out proved inadequate. The new factor introduced by the Rochdale men had a magical effect. A customer soon found that the more he paid into a store, the more he received out of it, so to speak. Capital no longer devoured all the gain, but was paid a fixed charge—five per cent—and

its claims were then dismissed. When this, and all other fixed charges were met, the remaining profit was divisible among those who had created it, and the effect, as I have just said, was magical ; but it has continued steady to this hour. Other causes have contributed to the success, however. Co-operative societies, making all their purchases wholesale, and always paying ready money, are allowed a discount on all they buy. "Never selling on credit, they have no bad debts. Never permitting any article to be removed from their shops without being replaced by cash, they are able to turn over their money many times in the course of a twelvemonth, and thus to do with it as much as would be possible with many times the amount under the usual system of slower returns. Possessing in their own shareholders a large body of assured customers, they have no need of any of those heavy expenses which ordinary tradesmen are obliged to incur in order to make themselves and their pretensions known. Their expenses of management are, in consequence, ex-

traordinary small, sometimes not exceeding one or two per cent. on the business done." This brief and rapid statement will explain the *rationale* of co-operative societies, or reveal the principles which have been found so fruitful in beneficent effect wherever they have been fairly and intelligently applied.*

It was natural that such successful efforts in *retail* trade, should suggest the formation of a society for *wholesale* purchasing, by which the local retail societies could be supplied with all necessary goods of the most reliable quality, and upon the most advantageous terms. Accordingly, such a society was formed in 1864, with its headquarters in Manchester, England, having 584 societies in membership to-day, its total sales since its inception amounting to upwards of \$100,000,000, from which profits have been

* Co-operative stores are said to be "spreading fast over some other parts of Europe." In Germany there are between 400 and 500 of them, with from 50,000 to 60,000 members, doing business annually to the extent of at least twenty millions of dollars. In France there are 500, chiefly in the smaller towns. Almost all prosper and give good dividends.—*Proceedings of London Co-operative Congress, 1869.*

realized of \$1,155,340, according to the latest report. Two other societies having the same aims are also in operation, the "Scottish Co-operation Wholesale," and the "Metropolitan and Home Counties."

I have confined my remarks thus far to *distributive* co-operation. Into the larger, or more difficult question of *productive* co-operation I cannot now enter at length. There are facts to justify the general statement, however, that co-operative principles have been duly tested and approved in various fields of manufacturing industry, so that it is no strange sight in France or in England to-day, to see large prosperous concerns owned and operated exclusively by working men, profits being applied, first in payment of fixed charges, the rest going to employés, according to estimates put upon the value of the services rendered in the creation of the profits; "dividends, in some instances, having risen in recent years to fabulous heights." Yet good friends to co-operation have doubted whether very much can be done on such a line of endeavor. "The direction of large

capital," it has been said, "demands freedom from other pursuits, devoted attention, professional training, habits of business; that most complex forms of industry demand for their direction some kind of engineering talent, acquaintance with the markets, long familiarity with an involved mass of details, mechanical, monetary, administrative; that the head of a great production must have scientific knowledge, technical knowledge, practical knowledge, presence of mind, dash, courage, zeal, and the habit of command."*

But some of these aptitudes are the peculiar possessions of working men, of the élite of such class, at least; while all such essentials can be hired, as they are notoriously hired to-day by capitalistic combinations. Productive co-operation will always encounter the evils specially incident to democratic government in all its forms; chief among which are, the difficulty of choosing by popular suffrage, wise and efficient directors, and then, of getting the many to submit steadily to the authority which they themselves have installed. But

* Mr. Harrison, in the "Fortnightly," Jan. 1866.

these things are not unsurmountable, democratic government working in these times of unrest and conflict, with as little friction as some other notable forms. Such movements are educational, and what has been accomplished in some scores of instances, may possibly be accomplished in more. Take a typical case in point. "The Sun Mill Company, at Oldham, has now a share capital of \$250,000, and a loan capital of \$213,250, both owned almost exclusively by working men. It is governed by six directors, all of whom, except the president, are working men in receipt of weekly wages, as the president himself was for thirty years. The company's yarn is now so well known, that it is no longer necessary to send samples of it to Manchester or other markets—buyers relying upon the reputation of the company—and the managers boast that they produce a larger quantity than any other mill in the world; employing only the same number of spindles."*

But enough. My chief aim has been to make the methods and achievements of co-

* Thornton on "Labour," p. 441.

operation more widely known, in hope that they might awaken interest and inspire emulation among workingmen here. The successes I have recounted have been won in a land of traditions and institutions commonly deemed unfriendly to the interests and elevation of the laboring classes; where the land is in the hands of a comparatively small number of persons, and held at prices unapproachable except by the wealthy, and where capitalistic enterprise is more perfectly organized than in any other part of the world. These things have been done, too, by a people trained, as we are apt to think, to sentiments and habits of dependency and subserviency: yet they have done more to vindicate manhood, to redeem labor from a cruel subjection, and to impose restraints upon the selfishness of capital, than all the eloquence and power of Parliaments. Nor are such hopeful signs found in England only; but all over Continental Europe co-operation is making itself widely felt as a power in social regeneration. It has many huge and obstinate hindrances to contend with.

Vested interests of all sorts are arrayed in solid phalanx against the helpless and oppressed in their struggles to rise; while the Christian Priesthood, to its shame, generally locks hands in cordial agreement with the oppressor, blessing "liberty trees" to serve its purpose, and uprooting them with glee when the old tyrannies return to the places whence they had been cast out.

But why is there so little of associated effort along the line I have indicated among "the masses" in this country? Mainly, because, as it seems to me, they are always waiting for Hercules. They would seem to have plenty of wrongs to be redressed; but they are assured again, and again, and again, by the representatives of all the great "parties," that *Congress* will redress them. Is it not high time that the truth began to dawn upon the minds of the multitude, that there are many things which Congress does not do because it *cannot* do them? I do not preach indifference to "politics" after the manner of some of our "ghostly" guides. But there are some things, of a very tangible and helpful

sort, which workingmen can best do for themselves, spite of all hampering conditions, and all seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Let them begin to confer about other interests than those which are discussed in the "caucus," and to ponder questions of less magnitude than new Social Systems. Instead of hurling impotent anathemas against "the tyranny of capital," let them show how capital can be made a very useful servant, compelling the wizard to distribute his bounties among the million, instead of conferring them, as now, upon a favored few. Let them, in brief, husband and combine their little savings, and put them out to remunerative use, saving themselves and their families from the extortions practised by "middle men," and dividing the gain among those who have so earned it. The project is very humble, and will be scouted, very likely, by those who are looking for the millennium which communists promise. But there is a germ of a mighty and beneficent revolution in the modest suggestion. "The housewife who was wont to watch that the kettle did

not boil over, little imagined the part that steam was one day to play : and the heads of poor families, who have joined in buying a chest of tea, and dividing it among themselves, have as little foreseen that they were playing with a power which could turn the worker into his own employer, and rearrange the distribution of wealth among mankind." * Recollect the twenty-eight members, and the \$140 of capital of the Rochdale Pioneer Co-operative Society, and think of the harvest of blessing which has sprung from that handful of corn, sown in a somewhat stony soil, under a somewhat inclement sky, and the faintest may take heart again for the future of the working man. The movement may be fairly esteemed "marvellous in our eyes." It arose "without glamour, it has grown without friends, it has spread without conspiracy, and acquired power without injustice. Stronger than the sword, and loftier than charity, co-operation gives to labor an abiding grasp of its fruits, and supersedes benevolence by rendering the industrious indepen-

* Thomas Hughes.

dent of it. It seeks that organization of labor and intelligence in which it shall be impossible for workers to be depraved, or mean, or poor, except by their own choice; which can bring no scandal and no remorse to society; which provides that neither baseness nor misery shall be any longer a necessity in the social fellowship.* All this cannot come soon; but it will come, surely as thought and courage, patience and perseverance, shall take the place of ignorance and indifference and dissipation, and of an embittered and blind discontent, in the minds and hearts of the millions who toil.

But why do I meddle with these things? Because the time is here when something more is demanded of the preacher than to talk about dead interests, and dead issues, in a decently dull, dead way; when "humanism" may again be deemed fit for the lips of the theologian; when "spirituals," may worthily give place *now and then* to secularities; when the man whose affections are supposed to be set exclusively "upon things

* Geo. J. Holyoke, slightly altered.

above," may be allowed, without incurring the suspicion of infidelity, to take a part in making the pathway of this life a little less rugged for the multitudes who stagger 'neath burdens very bitter to bear, which wring souls with agony, or fill them with despair, and which tempt some to welcome the hospitality of the grave! Not in the way of patronage, or of alms-giving, is this to be done. The workingmen I have in view would scorn your alms. They ask only a fair field for the exercise of their own powers. Oh, that they would combine to clear such a field for themselves in this broad young land! Not by any sort of violence against the rights or the acquisitions of others, but by a wise and manful assertion of their own rights, and by so organizing their now scattered and oftentimes mutually destructive forces, that something like a fair share of the wealth which toil produces, may be legitimately claimed by the toiler. That is the great end of industrial co-operation. "A dream," do you say? Well; better dream such dreams than lie down in a lazy content-

ment with things as they are. I know the obstacles which lie in the way of such endeavors. Human selfishness is the chief, which is often strong in those who have least; "every man seeking his own, and not the good of his neighbor." Here, then, I may assume my proper vocation, and insist that Christianity shall come in, to inspire men with the feelings and affections of brotherhood; that they may "provoke one another to love and to good works," the strong lending a helping hand to the weak, and the wise to the ignorant, diversity of gift and acquirement contributing to the healthy harmony of the social organism, so that there shall "be no schism in the body," but that "the members shall have the same care, one for another." Again, do I dream? It was the dream of the greatest of the Christian apostles. Nay; if I dream, I dream with Him of Galilee, who said—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

LECTURE FOURTH.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO SOCIALISM.

THE subject I am to deal with this evening is not submitted as a necessary or logical consequent of those I have already discussed. It would have no proper place in the syllabus of the political economist, as he approaches the questions with which I have been hitherto occupied. But as in this case the lecturer happens to be a Christian teacher, and the lecture-hall a Christian temple, and, as my audience is largely composed, I may presume, of those who profess the Christian faith, the inquiry may be regarded as appropriate—What is the attitude of Christianity toward the questions and movements of the time, indiscriminately grouped under the term Socialism?

It is difficult to answer this question; partly because of the vague or indeterminate compass of such term, and partly because of the differing conceptions which men form of Christianity; a good deal of confusing and misleading notions about crowds of things merely incidental to the religion of Christ entering into the expositions put forth by "the scribes." While, with a clear and compact judgment of the essential principles and teachings of Christianity, it is hard to define its relation to opinions widely divergent, or to endeavors mutually hostile, as is notoriously the case in the schools and creeds of Socialism; the word being sometimes used as an equivalent of Communism, while, at other times, it is used in a sense against which the most timid orthodoxy would allege no objection, being little more than a secular way of speaking of what devout people call Christian brotherhood.

As for Christianity, let it suffice for our present purpose to accept the word as a comprehensive designation of the ethical and spiritual teachings of Jesus, as recorded in

the Gospels, and as expanded and applied in the writings of apostles. Now, a very surprising fact, to some minds, is this—that there should be so little discoverable in these authoritative documents, which give us the principles and methods of a religion for humanity, which has any direct or formal bearing upon political or social economies of any sort. Christianity proper has very little of such teaching to offer for the guidance and help of men. The Gospel accepted, and accommodated itself to, the world as it then was, so to speak, so far as its social organization and functions were concerned. It made no rude or studied assault of any sort upon Governments, how unjust or oppressive soever. Jesus recognized the authority of those who sat “in Moses’ seat,” even while they were plotting to take his life, and told some who followed Him to go and “show themselves to the priests,” to such extent sanctioning the ecclesiastical order and rule of the time, while in the matter of the “tribute” money, and in submitting without protest or murmur to the jurisdiction of Pilate, He practically

acquiesced in the usurpation of Rome, as his countrymen generally esteemed it. While His apostles enjoined, again and again, upon those who had joined the new fellowship, the duty of submission to those who "held the sword." Now, I know how these facts have been regarded by reformers of an eager and fiery temperament. Such men have said, in effect, that Jesus was a coward and a trimmer, and that by such compromises with iniquitous rulers, He bequeathed an influence in support of State tyranny, and of all subordinate tyrannies, which made Christianity a weak, timid, subservient thing, thereby hindering, instead of helping, the progress of the human race. But, while sympathizing with such resolute exasperation when provoked, as it has been so often, by wrongs done in the name of Christianity, it is blind folly, I hold, to impute such wrongs to the teachings or bearing of Christ, or of those who spake under His more immediate authority. Yet, of this folly, men of discernment in other matters are habitually guilty. The accommodated attitude and temper of

Christianity toward the institutions and customs which it found in authority at its birth, were not only expedient, but required by the necessities imposed by inherited conditions, against which primitive Christianity might have flung itself in vain, or been broken and dissipated by such ill-timed and reckless assaults. Through all after-time, too, down to our own day, very notably amid the varied political and social conditions now prevailing, Christianity has been required to exhibit this same quality of pliancy; has had to adjust itself to various types and modes of political order and administration; could never wisely have committed itself, or lent an exclusive sanction, to any one type. Try to fancy what the result had been if the first preachers of the Gospel, having heard or read of the specious scheme of Plato's Republic, for instance, had gone forth to proclaim and to insist upon that, as the only organic form in which the kingdom of God could clothe itself, so to speak, or through which it could practically express itself; telling their disciples to conspire and to agitate for its uni-

versal adoption. Is it not probable, if we may speak hypothetically of what religious people call the Divine "plans" or "decrees," that Christianity, bent upon the attainment of such ends, in such ways, would soon have ceased to trouble the world? It may be said, I am aware, that the power which Christianity claims to represent might have given it the victory in all such conflicts, and final supremacy over all the unrighteous systems which it should resolutely have assailed. But that is a sort of talk which a man of discernment would scarcely deem it worth while to reply to. The moral world is not ruled by force, but through the higher intelligence and moral motives. This, at all events, has been the method pursued by the Supreme Ruler, the message which Christ's ambassadors were commissioned to announce to the world, being almost wholly a moral message, which should affect external conditions and temporal interests indirectly, and by consequence mainly. And therefore it was, that Christianity did not enter into competition or provoke any strife with the politi-

cal powers, or schemes of social order, which it found existing on its advent, nor show any partiality toward any one of them, as better, or as fitter to serve its purpose, than the rest ; much less did it originate any rival system of its own. It recognized and sanctioned, and put its benediction upon, the fundamental and necessary relations and obligations of men and women, as grouped and banded together into families, and tribal associations, and in the wider and more complex forms of State confederation ; but we search the New Testament in vain for anything like schemes or doctrines of social science, properly so-called. What it does say, in scattered maxims, or in moral stories, having any such aspect or bearing, is said incidentally, or by the way, mainly. I shall have to show later, however, that the great moral truths and practical principles affirmed by Christianity have a very positive and influential social bearing.

But an exception may have suggested itself to some who hear me, or it may be alleged in positive contradiction of the view

I have just stated as to the attitude of Christianity toward social order and action, that the first disciples of Jesus were *not* thus indifferent to such matters; since it seems to be explicitly stated in the fourth chapter of the Book called "The Acts of the Apostles," that Communism was the Divinely ordained type of social organization, for the Christian world, at least. Yes: to hasty or superficial readers, so it has seemed. The first Christian believers in Jerusalem, under the strange and enrapturing inspirations of the hour, renounced, it would appear, all claims to private property, making a free-will offering of all they had to the Church, that out of the fund so provided, the wants of all "the brethren" might be supplied. But let us hear the glowing and fascinating account as given by the first Christian historian. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common. * * * * Neither was there any among them that lacked; but as many as

were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need." Now, that does seem to be an example of unquestionably genuine Communism. Even Prof. Fawcett, in a lecture recently delivered at Cambridge, England, affirms, that "the social life of the early Christians was organized on Communistic principles," citing a portion of the passage I have just read, in confirmation of his view. But the inference of the Professor is surely broader than his premises will justify. I venture to affirm that there was no organization at all, in the proper sense of that term, at the time and among the people referred to in the passage. A certain elevating and transporting influence had come upon the Christian disciples dwelling in, or visiting, Jerusalem at the season of Pentecost, which stirred tumultuous affections in most of them, probably, and which, annihilating old alienations and prejudices, brought those who were so moved together into an enthusiastic and

self-forgetful fellowship. But the occasion and the active causes were special, and many of the immediate consequences must be naturally looked upon as special, or abnormal, also. No man, having gathered all the materials for a sound and exhaustive judgment of the case, will seriously conclude, I believe, that what was then and there done, was meant to take an organic shape, and to be of permanent and universal prevalence. The men and women into whose hearts the heavenly fire had entered, were in no fit state of mind, if they had possessed the natural ability, to organize, in the white heat of their feelings, a new order of Society for the Christian world, and that for all time. It may be said that the species of Communism in question, was not a creation of the logical intellect, but of the abundant grace which rested on all the disciples. But is it not strange, then, that we have not the faintest anticipation in the recorded utterances of Jesus, that any such radical revolution of the then existing social structure, was to follow the coming of the Paraclete? Is it not strange that in a

certain talk with a rich young ruler, we have no word of condemnation of private wealth as essentially sinful in itself? nor of the acquisition of it as involving robbery? Is it not marvellous that Jesus should have gone about rebuking wrongs and abuses of many sorts, while never whispering or hinting an objection against the social order then existing, nor ever awakening an expectation that it was speedily to end? He talked a great deal about the Kingdom of God, as soon to appear, or as even then "at hand," but none of his disciples ever got the idea, it would seem, that it was to be of a Communistic type and order. He exhorted the rich to give of their abundance, and praised one poor woman who gave "of her penury;" but a personal gift involves personal ownership of the thing given, and Jesus therefore approved claims to personal property.

But more. Christianity went forth to its work in the world at large; but nowhere, as far as we are informed, did it show any hostility, openly or implicitly, toward the social institutions and relations which it found in

existence in Asia Minor, or in Greece, or in Italy. But, on the contrary, the greatest of its preachers seems to have regarded society as he found it, in its structural elements, at least, not as something to be tolerated merely, but as a normal and necessary arrangement of persons and of powers. He spake in the same natural tone to rich men and rulers as he did to parents and children, with no more tinge of resentment toward the one class than toward the other. He warned men against the temptations and abuses of private wealth, while another apostle denounces, in terms which would be considered rude in fashionable pulpits to-day, the tyranny and oppression of the rich; but neither Paul nor James ever suggests that it is wrong, or of doubtful right, for a man to hold as his own, or to dispose of as he will, that which he has righteously earned or inherited, other claims being duly considered and respected. Now, why in all the essays and homilies of the apostles which have come down to us, is there no allusion to the model Communism which we are to suppose to have been already instituted in Jeru-

saalem, as an example for the whole Christian world? There was one conspicuous occasion in the career of St. Paul when some such allusion might naturally have been looked for, if ever. He gave time and energy, as we learn from his letters, to the collecting of alms from disciples in Greece for the relief of "the saints" in the Hebrew capital; such offerings being thrown into a common fund, and distributed according as every member of the impoverished church had need. And so far we have Communism. But not the Communism of modern or of ancient theorists. For the help was asked for as a voluntary bounty, the measure being left to the decision of brotherly love, thus earning the gratitude which St. Paul so cordially sends back to the givers; but which he could never have felt, had he secretly held that private property had been abolished, for Christians, at least, at the Pentecost.

No; Christianity had obstacles and enemies enough before it, as it went forth to its work of evangelization; but there was too much good sense, shall I say, in those who

had the infant church in charge, saying nothing of any higher grace or power, ever to set the world "by the ears" about questions or controversies of external politics of any sort. It had something better to do, and *did* it; something more vital, and more thoroughly revolutionary, and of far more blessed consequence than amending or transforming the conventional arrangements of secular society. I therefore conclude, that it is a mistaken notion to suppose that the warm, loving, self-sacrificing spirit which showed itself for a time among the Christian brethren at Jerusalem, upon that marvellous effusion of "power from on high," was anything more than a phase of experience analogous to those which have often appeared in the history of the church. Most of us will at least agree, I suspect, that the Communism of Pentecost was never meant to be an organic and permanent thing for the collective Christian life in all after time.

But I have bestowed unnecessary pains, perhaps, in the criticism of a conclusion which to my mind, has so little ground to rest upon.

Let no unguarded expression which I may have dropped by the way, however, be construed as sanctioning a much more hurtful notion than the one I have just been combating. If the attitude of Christianity was one of reserve toward questions of social economy, it was not indifferent at heart to the interests which it is the aim of social economy to conserve and to advance. The great truths of the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of men, are ever and everywhere available as material for argument in support of attempts to make the brotherhood of men a reality, and against all exercises of power or of privilege which tend to frustrate such attempts. Christianity does not tell us what peculiar political apparatus is best adapted to secure ascendancy for its doctrine of human brotherhood, nor does it expressly indicate how those who may be denied their just rights can best attain them. A monarchy or an oligarchy, or a democracy; an absolute Government, or a constitutional Government; rulers appointed by all, or only by a limited and specially qualified number of the gov-

erned; may best serve the ends desired in this, or in that, or in the other condition of a people's development and progress; while rights unrighteously withheld or invaded by the ruling powers, may in some cases be justly regained by insurrection, or by revolution, or simply through struggles legitimated by constitutional provisions. But about these things Christianity has nothing to say. It *could* say nothing of lasting avail to the diverse and changing conditions of the many tribes and nationalities of men whom it was sent to bless. But it says a great deal in the broad and pliant truths it affirms, and in the great principles of righteousness which it lays down, affecting all the relations which men sustain, and all the duties they owe to each other as banded together in communities. Christianity has "no respect of persons" in the invidious sense of that phrase, at least; though it enjoins reverence for office. It concedes nothing to caste, or to social status, or to traditional honor, further than the healthy instincts of the heart are free and forward to render. It enjoins prayers "for

kings and all in authority," but only as it would have us pray for the head of a tribe, or for the chief officer of a communistic fraternity, as burdened with special responsibilities, and exposed to peculiar risks. In the code of honor, or of award, prescribed by Jesus Christ, "a man is accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not." The Gospel has consecrated manhood and it sanctions, therefore, and lays its hand of benediction upon all aims and enterprises which labor to abolish all unjust restraints upon men's powers, and to secure the full measure of award which they may righteously deserve.

Nay, more : Christianity itself is a species of Socialism, which, though lightly regarding secular interests, as it might seem, lays down and illustrates the principles essential to all sound social combinations. Jesus was not content to scatter precepts of personal duty by the way, merely, or to inspire individual hearts only with spiritual affections. But he founded a Society, gathered his followers into an organic fraternity, penetrated by com-

mon feelings, and animated by common hopes, and bent upon the attainment of benign and wide-reaching aims. Knowing little of the restraints of law, but ruled by a constraining love; made "free" by "the truth," and equal, as brethren, under one Divine Lord, the members were to "have the same care one for another." At first, obscure and feeble, the society grew, spreading itself over vast areas, and embracing, at length, many peoples. Not a church "invisible," as some talk, but a very obvious and demonstrable "Kingdom of God," bent upon enterprises of "good-will to men," ordained to abolish the old enmities which had divided and embittered the nations, "preaching peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh." For the world had lost very largely the principles which underlie social concord and fellowship, mankind being cut up into alien races and nationalities and tribes. One people indulged in jealousy and hatred of another. One city was bitter and malicious against another. And even within the same community hard lines of social dis-

inction were drawn, across which intercourse might not trespass. There was no higher plane known where men might meet on terms of an absolute equality, forgetting outward distinctions in the recognition of a common origin, nature, and destiny. Heathen life was intensely individual, and therefore intensely selfish, "each one seeking his own, and not the good of his neighbor." Religion itself, so far from drawing men together, by begetting in them common sentiments and affections, was a chief occasion of estrangement and hostility. Into a world thus distracted and alienated, Christianity came on its errand of reconciliation, telling men of a common Father, and enjoining the duties of brotherhood, and inviting all into a fellowship of equal immunities and privileges. And this surely was socialism. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." "Wherefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." "Be ye all of one mind; love as brethren." "That there be no division in the body." "For we are

members one of another." "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." "If ye fulfill the royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well; but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin." "This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also." "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Fragmentary testimonies these, as to the temper and practical bearing of what I have called Christian socialism. Secular socialism is, in many respects, another thing; operating on a lower plane, of narrower aims, and appealing to what devout people commonly esteem feebler motives. But let no man argue from the predominantly spiritual character of Christ's religion, its indifference to secular interests. For moral life is one, and character is moulded by force of circumstances, as well as by forces operating directly upon the heart and conscience. Christianity can look with no unfriendly eye, therefore, upon endeavors to lift men out of demoralizing conditions, or to relieve them of burdens

unrighteously imposed, or to deliver them out of bondage to selfish and tyrannous powers. The secularist is bent upon these things he tells you, while neglectful, perhaps, of what you call the claims of the Kingdom of Heaven. Well ; thank him for calling upon men to "do justice, and to love mercy," even while forgetting to "walk humbly with God."

Yet Christians of all creeds and schools have very generally looked upon socialism, upon socialism of the mildest mien even, with jealousy or with fear ; while socialists have as generally agreed to discard Christianity as an effete thing ; or they detest it as an enemy ; or they denounce it as a corrupt and corrupting invention of priests. And the alienation is daily more marked, the gulf constantly grows wider between the two sections of society loosely denominated "believers" and "unbelievers," and "what will be done in the end thereof," who shall say ? The good and godly will go on as hitherto, I suppose, stimulating piety by the services of the synagogue, going away edified and comforted

with the customary supplies of pulpit rhetoric, and looking upon the vast infidel crowd without, as fit only for "the damnation of hell." While that crowd will constantly grow greater, in all probability, becoming more bitter and more defiant against the hindrances which Christianity interposes, as they judge, against the progress of secular ideas and interests. Now, such a condition of things in what we call Christendom is profoundly sad, my friends, and we ought to be able to render some sort of account as to how it has come or been brought about. The proper relations of Christianity to the legitimate efforts of socialism to improve the condition of the suffering classes will never be understood, or the minds of those now alienated from the religion of Christ, will never be disabused of their antipathy, till the essential claims of that religion be set in fairer and fuller light, all the perversions it has suffered being frankly acknowledged, and the wrongs done in its name, as far as possible, atoned for. Your church histories are full of such perversions, while your most expert

apologists cannot disguise the wrongs. I can only speak very briefly at present of one or two of the lighter occasions of misunderstanding and enmity in the many who have renounced Christian faith.

One fertile cause of such misconception and enmity is the confounding of Christianity with ecclesiasticism. Christianity is, on its human side, the organized expression of truth, justice, generosity, benignity ; but ecclesiasticism has often been a fraud and a tyranny in history. As the church grew in power and wealth it allied itself to power and wealth in the hands of civil rulers and their creatures, and the fruits of the alliance have often been wicked and infamous ; seeing and suffering from which, the dumb down-trodden multitudes began to mutter resentments, and to conspire against their oppressors, among the most remorseless of whom, men in priestly robes, and those wearing mitres, have been found ; and so it has come to pass, that not only unworthy representatives of Christianity have fallen under infidel indignation, but Christianity itself has been charged with

abuses of which it is not only innocent, but which have outraged its spirit, and crippled its power for good in the world. Such confusion has betrayed a strange want of discrimination, no doubt; but discrimination in such concerns is a rare faculty among men. The hot indignation inspired by the wrongs done in the name of Christianity has not been favorable to the exercise of such powers. Nor let us conclude that such seeming recklessness in opinion and feeling has been confined to the ignorant, or the unreflecting; but listen to the startling declaration of an English writer of standing and repute: "The supreme evil," says he, "is religion: not true religion; not that love which is 'the fulfilling of the law;' but that vile, devil-coined counterfeit which the so-called religious world has stamped with its hall-mark, and agrees to receive as legal tender in place of the true metal."* Here, you perceive, is a trace of discrimination; but listen to the trenchant words of another writer, who says: "In our

* *Letters of Edward Denison*, p. 229, as cited by Mr. Greg in "*Enigmas of Life*," p. 41.—Am. Ed.

perplexity we naturally turn to the church, which we have been taught to look up to as our guide and instructor in all our most important concerns. What has been its action on the progress of the world and the happiness of mankind? Startling as the avowal must appear, we can hardly help arriving at the conclusion, that the church has rather been a hinderer than a helper in the great business of humanity; and that she is, in a great degree, responsible for the fact that so small progress has been made."* Now, if such things can be said by men of culture and discernment, can we wonder at the bitterness and abuse of the *ignobile vulgus*? But the occasion or cause of such antipathies and resentments is the same, very largely, in all cases. It is traceable to the illogical identification of Christianity with ecclesiasticism.

But another cause has contributed to prejudice the popular mind against the religion of the time. Christian teachers and writers have created a false antagonism between

* " *The Jesus of History*," p. 13, by Sir R. D. Hanson, Chief Justice of South Australia.

earthly and heavenly interests. This world is "a vale of tears;" life is a pilgrimage through an arid wilderness; the Christian being required to hold himself free from all entanglements here, and to hurry heavenward in stern indifference to whatever would tempt him to linger by the way. Now, I do not forget that such representations of our lot in this life, or that such demands for self-denial, are found in the Bible. But they are one-sided or extreme representations, though abundantly justified by the facts of experience. We are to bear in mind, however, that there are other aspects of human life to be found in the Bible than the gloomy and repellant. There is a great deal about earthly duties, and earthly interests, and earthly joys. But the ascetic temperament delights to revel in a sort of devout despondency, and, unhappily, this ascetic religionism has somehow had undue ascendancy in the past, and prevails to an evil extent to-day, largely through the subtle influence of hymns, I suspect, and other forms of devotional literature. And thus it has come to pass, that men and women who have been

compelled to think a great deal as to how they could live here, and to exert themselves very strenuously to such end, asking ugly questions, at times, as to whether temporal relations and interests were ordered exactly as they ought to be, have, in many instances, grown tired of teaching which seemed to have nothing to tell them but to be content with their poverty and wretchedness. Yes; that is a prevailing feeling, I fear, among hard-headed, horny-handed men, as to what your Christianity is, or can do for them. They will allow that your religion is a pleasant sort of thing for silks and velvets, and for well-filled purses; but it is often a heartless thing, the more out-spoken among them will tell you, to "the desolate and oppressed." While the more suspiciously inclined of the class look upon our whole religious apparatus as constructed to keep the restless and unruly quiet. Nor will any man of observation and honest utterance deny, that there is a good deal in our current religionism to justify such feelings and animadversions. I myself have seen a good and scholarly man look benevo-

lently down from a pulpit, upon a group of specimen paupers in a church, on the occasion of a "charity sermon," while reminding them how unusually favored they were in being very poor, poverty being such an effectual help in the cultivation of piety, and in preparing for heaven! I have heard another "divine," equally good, but not equally learned, tell the story of a poor old woman of his flock, the whole of whose household gear consisted of a demoralized table and a chair lacking a leg, the preacher exclaiming, with an unctuous earnestness in the application of his story: "O, she was so happy! so happy!" Now, such efforts may be well meant, and such stories may be sometimes told to edification, perhaps. But it is the prevalence of such talk from pulpits, or it is such stuff disseminated in "tracts," which is largely responsible for the scorn so general among the "masses" for clergymen and their vocation. Is it not about time that it should be said to the average preaching fraternity: Gentlemen, clear your minds of cant, and try to realize that you have something more to do than to

make little groups of men and women comfortable, by promises of rest and felicity hereafter. What, if you should make them feel very *uncomfortable*, at times, by talking of the hard stern facts in the lives of the infidel millions? Such talk might prove a wholesome moral tonic to the listless and languid who "sit under" your preaching, and might possibly help some of your "dear hearers" to proceed to a practical application of "the plan of salvation" which you have so carefully and laboriously "expounded" to them.

There is urgent need just now, I take it, my Christian brethren, for such criticism and rebuke to be spoken very plainly into the ears of those who rule in our synagogues. We are very busy about theological refinements, and in ordering the punctilios of ritual, and in advancing sectarian interests. Meanwhile, the men who are at the cranks of our social and political machinery are grinding out their projects with small concern for what we do by such endeavors. While wealth betakes itself to its elegant seclusion, and poverty gathers itself in appalling masses in

its neglected and infamous haunts, and dishonesty is undermining the confidence of the community, and crime fills our households with horror, a dainty Christianity looking on from a distance, afraid of soiling its hands in the work of social regeneration! These are not "smooth things" to prophecy, I know; but "am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" When I think of the mission of Christ's religion to this hard, material age, and mark how little has been done to make it a felt presence and power in the world, I marvel that men can be so strenuously occupied with trifles, and so busy in barren fields. Infidelity is not rampant, but subtle and all-pervasive about us; a larger and more thorough science is questioning the premises and postulates of our accepted theologies; education and government are increasingly indifferent or hostile to religious interests and issues; while an alarmed ecclesiasticism hurls its impotent anathemas into the silent air, and the devoutly obedient betake themselves to the reading of "old wives' fables," or a fervid, but foolish, fanaticism

proposes to take the world by storm! If we are "men, having understanding of the times"—addressing myself again especially to men of Christian convictions and aims—we have worthier and more urgent work than this to do. Let us, at least, have done with trivialities and animosities and the wranglings of embittered schools. And what if we try to bring back the divine humanities and moralities into our preaching and work, helping men to believe in God and the Ten Commandments, and trying to convince the little circles of goodly people among whom we live, that religion is not a personal luxury, but a new life, which is to show itself in generous affections and beneficent activities, in the cultivation of the sympathy and enthusiasm of a divine brotherhood, and in the achievement of great enterprises of goodness and mercy to men? Then, would your Christianity go forth to her task with a renewed courage, and with a resistless might. Needing no apology from its friends, fearing no malice in its foes, its character would be its best defence, and its work would proclaim

the divinity of its mission. In creed, or in commandment, in lessons of human virtue, or in claiming obedience to faith, its voice would ring out upon the startled attention of the world as the very voice of God. Some mocking Mephistophelean spirit will tell me, I know, that in all this I do but play with a fair ideal. Well, be it so; but I will cling to it with resolute heart, as the best hold I can find for a somewhat despairing hope.

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