

THE FABIAN SOCIETY.

A COURSE OF LECTURES

ON

The History and Implications of Equality

WILL BE GIVEN IN

THE MEMORIAL HALL LIBRARY,

FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.,

On FRIDAYS (with one exception) at 8 p.m.

These lectures are open to the public.

SOCIALISM aims at social and economic equality; but the form and extent of such equality is still indeterminate. When Socialists discuss the question, diversity of opinion at once becomes apparent as to exactly the sort of equality to be desired. As we advance towards a more socialized state of society, and take practical steps to bring it about, the need to clarify our ideas on the subject of equality grows. The further we proceed, the greater is the danger of making false moves, unless we are sure of our direction.

The object of this course of lectures is to set our minds to work on broad lines upon the question of social and economic equality. First of all, we want to be reminded of what human experience has to tell. In the various phases of social life which our race has traversed or is traversing, what tendencies toward economic equality can we trace? What do they consist in? What do they amount to? Where do they lead? How far are they a mere counterpoise in some sort of permanent equilibrium, and how far can they be regarded as indicating a goal towards which (and away from its opposite) society definitely progresses? Evidently, no society could exist were no tendency towards peaceful co-operation found in it. How far has this co-operation pre-supposed or encouraged, or made necessary, ideas of equality as its basis or its objective? We must be helped towards an answer by students of anthropology and history: not necessarily Socialists, but experts in those branches of knowledge.

Passing to phases of thought more specifically Socialist, it is important to trace the rôle played by the idea of equality in their evolution. We can learn much from the agreements and differences of the pioneers of modern Socialism upon this subject. Modern Socialism being in its inception utopian, and its utopias being closely related to those of earlier thinkers, it has been considered best to treat this aspect also somewhat broadly. This is attempted in lectures four and five of our course.

The sixth and seventh lectures are intended to gather up and group certain theoretic conclusions. The sixth lecture will discuss and develop the conception, increasingly influential to-day, whereby the individual human being, male or female, is regarded more and more as the unit, less as a member of a group, and each such unit, being taken as a distinct person* thinking and acting for him or herself, is held personally and individually responsible to, and a claimant upon, the community as a whole. The close relation of this developed sense of individuality to social and economic equality is apparent, especially in the problem of economic relations between the sexes.

The last lecture will include some discussion of equality as a philosophic idea, with an attempt to assign its position in relation to inequality, and to indicate some practical limits to its unqualified application in the social and economic sphere.

SCHEME OF LECTURES.

OCT. 27. I. THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY. (*a*) Traces in Primitive Society. By Prof. EDWARD JENKS, M.A., B.C.L.

TUESDAY

NOV. 21. II. THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY (*continued*). (*b*) Traces in Mediæval England. By KENNETH H. VICKERS, M.A.

SYLLABUS.—The theory of equality as it appeared in the middle ages. How far it worked out in practice. Political equality: signs of such a conception. Social and economic equality. How far does it appear in the manor and the guild? The attempt to secure equality within certain divisions is clearly seen, but it has to be fitted into the scheme of a declining feudalism.

DEC. 8. III. SPECIALIZATION AND INEQUALITY IN MODERN HISTORY.
By A. F. POLLARD, M.A., Professor of English History in the University of London.

SYLLABUS.—The breakdown of primitive equality owing to (i) the specialization of economic functions; (ii) the expansion of the village market into the national market, and of the national market into the world market; (iii) the substitution of competition for custom: and (iv) the growth of capitalism. Sixteenth century ideas of inequality of classes, but of equality among members of each class. Legislative efforts to prevent individual inequality. Their comparative failure and success. Modern excesses of inequality due to the Industrial Revolution.

JAN. 26. IV. THE IDEA OF EQUALITY. (*a*) In the Earlier Utopias.
By the Hon. W. PEMBER REEVES, Director of the London School of Economics.

FEB. 23. V. THE IDEA OF EQUALITY (*continued*). (*b*) In the Doctrines of Modern Socialists. By Miss MILLCENT MURBY.

MAR. 22. VI. EQUALITY IN RELATION TO INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM.
By C. MOSTYN LLOYD, B.A.

APRIL. VII. EQUALITY AND INEQUALITY: LIMITS TO THE APPLICATION OF EQUALITY IN THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERE. By R. C. K. ENSOR, B.A., L.C.C.

A Syllabus of each of the last four lectures will be issued later.