

Anti-Socialist Tracts.—No. 5.

SOCIALISM
AND
SENTIMENT.

BY
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SIDNEY DARK.

IT is conceivable—in a world where the impossible does not exist—that there may be men and women converted to Socialism from the study of text-books on political economy. Certainly I have met Socialists who have arrived at their faith from the possession of an inhuman desire for “order.” Their souls are disturbed by the jolly disorder of life. Their ideal is a Prussian regiment. They yearn to see us all standing in line, living lives with precision and regularity. Such a man evidently is Mr. Sidney Webb, the brains of the Fabian Society. He is the apostle of a tyrannical efficiency, the preacher of a dreadful and unholy system of regularity. However, it is without question that the majority of men and women who join the Socialist ranks do so solely because they are sentimentalists. The mass of men, says Gronlund, are never moved except by passions, feelings, interests. Self-interest may account for some recruits to the army of the red flag—it certainly accounts for the activity of many of its leaders—but it accounts for a minority. Most Socialists are moved to their first enthusiasm by pity, by sympathy, and by anger. They are, that is to say, sentimentalists.

The Sentimental Socialist.

I am making no attack on either sentiment or sentimentalists. Sentiment rules the world, and, generally speaking, the man and the woman who are not sentimentalists are exceedingly hateful persons. Indeed, to be able to walk along the streets of a modern city and not to be moved by pity, not to have one's sympathy stirred, not often to find oneself in a white heat of anger, is proof that one has lost one's soul, and that one has become a Scrooge among one's brethren. The sentimental Socialist sees poverty and suffering on the right hand and on the left. He rightly regards these things as evils, and he has convinced himself that the only method for their destruction is the confiscation of private property and the nationalisation of land and interest. It is a hasty conclusion that will not bear investigation. Writing

entirely and wholly from the sentimental point of view, I submit that even if Social Democracy, perfectly achieved, would destroy poverty the evils of poverty must inevitably be aggravated by the progress towards Socialism. I submit, secondly, that poverty, evil as it is, is not the only evil—is not, indeed, the greatest evil—that threatens a man on his journey through life. I submit, thirdly, that the really great things, the possessions which give the individual man the opportunity for the fullest development of his life, must be made difficult, and even impossible, to attain, if Socialism ever comes into being.

The Road to Socialism.

It is, perhaps, improbable that a complete condition of Social Democracy will be realised in this country or any other in this generation or the next. The idea of revolution has been, for the moment, abandoned, and evolution is a slow process, almost necessarily complicated by many reactions. The Socialist is, therefore, concerned to bring into existence a series of laws definitely aimed at artificially increasing the wealth of the labouring class by practically robbing the capitalist. He predicates that while the two classes exist their interests must be entirely opposed, and that, therefore, to benefit the one you must hurt the other. This assumption is entirely false. The prosperity of the community depends on the co-operation of three factors—capital, enterprise, and labour. Capital is largely the result of thrift and ingenuity. Consequently, immediately the capitalist class in any country is harassed by disproportionate taxation and mulcted of its share in the wealth which it helps to create, that community is penalising thrift, penalising energy, penalising originality and ingenuity. The very smallest study of social life must make it apparent that **THE PROSPERITY OF THE ORDINARY MAN DEPENDS ON THE EFFORTS OF THE EXTRA-ORDINARY MAN.** Every new invention, every new scientific development, is the work of one or two men, but it reflects upon the lives of hundreds of thousands. If, therefore, you discourage the efforts of the extraordinary man, you are obviously taking away from the measure of prosperity that can be obtained by the ordinary man. Moreover, it must never be forgotten, in considering Socialistic legislation, that it does not progress in equal degree in every country, and that if in Great Britain the capitalist, the

inventor, and the captain of industry are treated harshly, there are other countries only too ready to receive them and to afford them the opportunity for development and reward. For Great Britain, therefore, to pursue steadily a course of Socialistic legislation must be to drive away the men on whom the national prosperity naturally depends, and, in consequence, to make employment even harder to obtain than it is to-day, and thus to add immensely to the sorrows of unlucky women and children. As a sentimentalist whose sympathies are as much with the poor and the struggling as any Socialist, I regard with apprehension the law-making advocated by Socialistic politicians.

I have said that I do not for a moment attempt to minimise the horrors of extreme poverty. I know of no figure in the world so tragic as that of the man tramping the streets from morning to evening searching for work and finding no man to hire him. The problem of unemployment is by far the gravest problem by which modern civilization is faced. I believe that there are remedies for unemployment, and equitable devices for dealing with the evils of overwork and starvation wages. Poverty—when poverty means unemployment and semi-starvation—is an unutterable evil. That is admitted; but it is false to suggest that because a man's income is small he is therefore necessarily miserable.

The Evils of Poverty.

Everybody knows, as a matter of fact, that such a suggestion is ridiculously untrue. It has happened to many men to be exceedingly poor: it has certainly happened to me, and I can recall the fact that happiness in a very full degree was possible on a shaky income of a little more than £1 a week. It is the game of the Socialist to pretend that the man who works for wages is always a wretched, timorous, whining serf. Here, for example, is a choice verse from a Social Democratic song:—

“ See the toiler how he slaves,
For a trifle of his toil,
How disease and death he braves,
Yet the masters take the spoil;
And how often, cap in hand,
Trembling, pleading, piteously,
He is forced to take his stand
In the mart of slavery.”

I have had a considerable acquaintance with the British workman in many trades and in many parts of the country, and I confess that I at least have never seen him standing "Cap in hand, trembling, pleading, piteously." Imagine a bricklayer's labourer, or a mill hand, or a compositor in this interesting melodramatic position. A far more characteristic attitude, and in its way far more typically British, was that adopted recently by a number of unemployed men given casual labour who refused to work because they were deprived of the usual Saturday afternoon off.

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

As a matter of fact, the poor man is generally happy and comparatively contented, in the majority of cases a good citizen and nearly always a good fellow. The aim of the Social reformer should be to minimise as far as possible the uncertainty of his labour and to gain for him as high a standard of comfort as is compatible with the general welfare. It is not, as a matter of fact, conceivable that Socialism, if it were ever reached, could do much more than this for a large proportion of the population.

But while we are moving towards Socialism a man must surrender most of the great human possessions that have made life wonderful and fine. "Liberty, equality, and fraternity," that was the expression of the great sentiment behind the French Revolution, and the greatest of these is liberty. Every man yearns to be free—free to say what he likes, to think what he likes, to do what he likes. He recognises that his actions and his words must be to some extent limited, because if they are not he will be interfering with the liberty of other people and becoming a small tyrant on his own. But his freedom must be as unqualified as possible. Socialism, however, kills freedom outright. Mrs. Snowden has declared that there is no real freedom which is not economic freedom. "He is a slave," she continues, "who depends for his bread upon the will or the whim of a man like himself, or of a number of such masters." To this, one can only quote the immortal rejoinder of Mr. Boffin, "'Miew,' says the cat, 'Quack-quack,' says the duck, and 'Bow-wow-wow,' says the dog."

I am, for example, one of those persons who depend for their bread upon the will or the whim of a man like myself. I go out into a market and sell a certain form of labour for the best price I can get. To say that I am, therefore, a

slave is a ridiculous misuse of terms. It would be just as sensible to say that because I have to sell my labour for my board and lodging I am an isosceles triangle or a fruit salad. I am, as a matter of fact, perfectly free to think what I like about everything and everybody (including my employer). I can invent a religion for myself, I can believe the oddest things in heaven and earth, and no man dare say me nay. I am practically free to say what I like. I can abuse the King, or Mr. Keir Hardie, I can talk disrespectfully of any dignitary, I can play the fool, and I can be a considerable nuisance to my neighbours without being forcibly hindered. I can go where I like, I am not obliged to live in one place for more than a week at a time or for more than a night at a time. The freedom of my actions is for all practical purposes absolutely unlimited. Now, what is this "economic freedom" that Mrs. Snowden talks about, and which I apparently do not possess? Certainly I may quarrel with the man who buys my work. I cannot work for him if he refuses to employ me, and I may be forced to find another market, but under Socialism there would be no other market to find.

When the Red Flag flies at Westminster I shall be economically "free" in the sense that I shall be made to work whether I want to or not, and be forced to accept just exactly the amount of return settled by the law. But if this is economic freedom, then economic freedom is a euphemism for downright slavery. As it is I can barter my labour, can haggle with my employer, can change my master, can work or starve just as it suits me.

Mere Slavery.

Under Socialism I shall be bound hand and foot, the creature of a bureaucracy, the slave of innumerable laws. Mr. Snowden, who cares for liberty as little as his wife, tells us that those who fear that Socialism will destroy individual liberty fail to distinguish between liberty and licence, and he goes on: "Socialism is liberty, for it will restrict the freedom of the individual to inflict injury upon others or to do what is injurious to himself." Here you have the full, magnificent confession. We are not to be allowed to do things which some kind person or other considers will be injurious to ourselves.

Let us imagine what this will come to in practice. Remember that Socialism, if it come in England, will certainly

be affected by the Puritanist of Mr. Henderson, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, and Mr. Snowden. There are a large number of persons (many Socialists among them) who regard drinking alcohol as being injurious. From the exaggerated scientific point of view it is perfectly easy to prove that it is injurious. I am therefore perfectly certain that under the system of Socialism that would prevail here the consumption of alcohol would be a penal offence, to be followed by a long period of imprisonment interspersed by frequent sermons by Dr. Clifford. Tobacco-smoking would also be rigorously punished. We should not be allowed to read anything but Socialist tracts and improving novels. Doubtless the "New Age" press would receive a government subsidy, though I fear Mr. Blatchford would be suppressed as being dangerously cheerful.

No person will be allowed to sit up after nine o'clock, to play bridge or to eat meat. There would be no more "sumptuous dinners." Everything would be settled for us and there would be no appeal against the judgment of the experts. As Mr. Snowden says, with fine prophetic ecstasy, "The British people will become a nation of scientists and philosophers, who, throwing natural enjoyment aside, will lead a life of pure intellectual opinions. Mortal men will become demigods." What a horrible prospect! The *life* of the future! Dull demigods in Dulwich turning aside from natural enjoyments and rollicking in intellectual happiness provided by a Socialist Ministry. If the jolly, good, hearty working man, smoking his pipe while he cheers the frenzied orator at a street corner, really understood that he was to be made into a "demigod" in a world robbed of its cakes and particularly of its ale, I have no hesitation whatever in saying that he would prefer to remain "cap in hand, trembling, pleading, piteously," if at the same time he could have, on an occasional Saturday or Bank Holiday, a small share of natural enjoyments.

Impossible Equality.

But, it is urged that liberty by itself is useless, that the whole revolutionary dream must be realised, and that it is worth while accepting a modified liberty if one can also attain universal equality and unbounded fraternity. I do not believe in the possibility of equality. Men are born with different capacities and different powers. One man

is destined to lead and another to follow, and, moreover, there could be no equality under Socialism. Read this! "The Fabian Society resolutely opposes all pretensions to hamper the socialisation of industry with equal wages, equal hours of labour, equal official status, or equal authority for everyone." Mr. Webb is not going to be equal with the gentleman at the street corner, Mr. Macdonald is not going to surrender his place of power. There will be no equality under the Red Flag. We shall have surrendered our liberty for nothing.

The Elected Person.

Socialism in its progress and its attainment must mean a considerable addition of power to the elected person. We have already had some rather striking revelations as to the possibilities of elected persons on certain boards of guardians in the East End. Give men of small capacity and small character power and they will abuse it. Of this there is no doubt whatever. As you proceed towards Socialism more and more power must be given to the members of municipalities and the members of local boards. They will become great employers of labour, they will hold in their hands greater and greater capacity for interfering with the life and comfort of the people who live in the areas which they administrate, and, as sure as the sun rises in the heavens, they will abuse that power and become tyrannical and corrupt. Call Mr. Shaw as witness! "Capable men understand too well how difficult and responsible public work is to be particularly anxious to undertake it." And again: "It is possible for a councillor to be stupendously ignorant and shamelessly lazy and yet to be not only popular with his fellow councillors, but, provided he is a tolerably entertaining speaker, with the ratepayers also." The consequence will be that the permanent official will become the actual power and that we shall set up a bureaucracy which, as industry becomes more and more municipalised, will have infinitely wider power than the political bureaucracy that stifles the life of Russia.

After the sentiment of personal liberty, and perhaps part of it, comes the desire of most men to possess something. It may be a book, it may be a dog, it may be a home, it may be a fortune. The desire for possession overtakes practically every person sooner or later in his life. I know of nothing in my own life that has given me such extra-

ordinary pleasure as the possession of a garden which belongs to me and where I can dig, and sow, and footle about at my own sweet will. But Socialism strikes at once at this desire for private possession. Mr. Blatchford says, "No man has a right to call anything his own but that which he himself has made." Alas! I did not make my garden. Mr. Williams tells us that "it is difficult if not impossible to determine the moral title to private property in anything. Private property exists entirely on sufferance." It will only, therefore, be necessary in the Socialist state for the commune to prove that the fact that I possess my garden interferes with the common social life for it to be promptly taken away from me. In practice this will mean, of course, that the secretary of the commune, if he wants my garden for himself, will, if he is a person of any ability, very soon discover a subterfuge.

Love of Home.

But the garden and the dog and the book are small things. Love of home is perhaps the greatest and the strongest of all sentiments, not only in this country, but all over the civilised world, and despite the fact that the allegation is hotly denied by such domestic Socialists as Mrs. Bruce Glasier, the theory of Socialism is entirely incompatible with the existence of the individual home and the individual family. "I do not believe," says Mr. George Lansbury, "it is desirable to cultivate the family idea as at present understood, which in the main is designed to teach the children to think more of their own family than any other." "We set up one great kitchen, one general dining hall, and one pleasant tea garden," says Mr. Blatchford. Mrs. Snowden tells us that for every child born the state will make provision. "Either the mother will be paid so much per child so long as it lives and thrives, as her wages for important work done for society in bearing and rearing it, or her absolute independence of her husband will be secured in some other way."

This means that the breeding of children is to become a business, as Mr. Ellis Barker has said, just as the breeding of cats and dogs is a business now. All the wondrous sentiments of life, the love of a man for a woman, the love of family, the love of home, are to be swept ruthlessly away. We may own nothing, not even ourselves, we are to be the slaves of a system. Mr. Keir Hardie

frankly wants to go back to pure savagery. Of all the peoples in the ancient world, the Spartans were the most barbarous, the most immoral, and the most savage: and Sparta is Mr. Keir Hardie's ideal. In Sparta, he says, there was not only common land but also a common table, whilst dogs and horses were practically common property also. How splendid!

Every sentiment that actuates man nowadays is to be swept away. There are some men who love work, who find the best hours of life in trying to do something as well as it possibly can be done. "To the Socialist labour is an evil, to be minimised to the utmost. The man who works at his trade or avocation more than necessity compels him, or who accumulates more than he can enjoy is not a hero but a fool from the Socialist standpoint." So says Mr. Belfort Bax. Love of country has moved man perhaps more than any other passion. It is even admitted by the German Socialists that nationalism must be the beginning of progress, but the Independent Labour Party report says, "Patriotism was one of the weapons used by the enemies of the people to blind them to facts." And Mr. Sidney Webb in a magnificent generalisation affirms that "the abstract right to unfettered freedom in self-government which we all see we must deny to the individual cannot be accorded to the family, the tribe, the race, the parish, the city, the county, the province, or the state."

Hopeless Future.

Long live Slavery! Long live the political boss! Without individuality, without home, without personal possessions, with a wife supplied to him by the state, with no children to call him father since they will be born only to be incarcerated in the state *crèche*, the unfortunate citizen of the Socialist Democracy will not even be allowed to believe in a heaven from which he can escape from the dull demigodism provided for him on earth. For Socialism as expounded by all its philosophers is atheistic. I know that kind-hearted curates in poor parishes and "slim" labour leaders deny this, but every Socialist teacher of real eminence in every country in the world advocates the tearing down of altars and the tearing up of creeds as essential to the millenium on earth. Dull, and bored, and tyrannised over, the toilers in this new world will have no God to

pray to and no Heaven to anticipate. The goal of the Socialist is horrible to contemplate. In the endeavour to cast out one devil it will bring in seven devils worse than the first.

It must not be thought that the Anti-Socialist is content with things as they are. Because God is in heaven all should be well on the earth. But it is not. No political party can exist unless it dreams dreams.

Anti-Socialist Ideals.

We have our dreams of a new society in which all men shall be free, and in which every man shall consider that his advantages and his privileges bring with them duties to those whose advantages and privileges are fewer. Mutual consideration will exist between masters and men, and the prosperity and the comfort of the lowest shall be the one paramount consideration of statesmen and lawmakers.

The worker will be protected from unfair competition. Public opinion, and if necessary legislation, will abolish sweating and undue hours of labour. The rights of property will be respected, and the rights of labour regarded. The tavern will be reformed and humanised. The child will be protected and educated, not in absurd imitation of a literary education, but naturally to live the life to which circumstances and ability have called him. Our dream is not of a new heaven and a new earth, but of a new England, a merrie England recreated.

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[L. 9.]