

## ART. V.—SOCIALISM.

SOCIALISM may fairly claim to have won its place amongst the burning and pressing questions of the day. There was a time when such a subject was scarcely mentioned in civilized society, and the discussion of it was relegated to obscure gatherings of extremists who courted secrecy rather than publicity. But now all this is changed; Socialism no longer hides its head in darkness, as though it were ashamed of itself, or doubtful of the reception it would meet, but it invites and welcomes the attention of the public, it is debated on the platform and in the pulpit, and by the press. It is important enough to secure a place upon the programme of the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, and at the Church Congress which has just closed, although it had no formal position assigned to it, yet the Archbishop of York referred to it in his opening sermon, and the Bishop of Manchester, in his presidential address, faced the question with his usual clearness and boldness. "I thank God," he said, "that men cannot leave this question alone, that it is being stirred to-day not only by men of questionable character and motives, but also by some of the wisest of our economists, and of the noblest of our politicians."

The *Record* newspaper, in commenting upon the Bishop of Manchester's address, speaks most plainly: "It seems to us that the present tendency amongst the clergy is not one of undue prejudice against Socialism. On the other hand, there is in many quarters a disposition to coquet with any notions, no matter how revolutionary or absurd, which the poor are supposed to favour. There is danger in this disposition. We would be no grumblers, but we are much mistaken if the action in this respect of some of the clergy is not impairing the influence of the Church amongst educated lay people. There is an avidity to what are called advanced views, and to apply crude remedies which may do credit to the hearts, but certainly not to the heads, of those who display it."

This opinion expressed by the *Record* is certainly not in harmony with the views of the most advanced Socialists themselves. The virulence with which the clergy are assailed is hardly exceeded even by the abuse launched at landlords and owners of property. In view of the coming School Board elections, a Socialist and Secular Committee has been formed, a member of which declares "that they would have to fight the clerical party with all their might."

It is worth while to consider how it happens that this question, "so large and so difficult, involving issues so vast

and awful," is concentrating upon itself so large a share of public attention.

Of course the stir which has been made and the effect which has been produced upon the public mind are in a great measure due to the energy and zeal and perseverance and self-devotion with which a few ardent enthusiasts have pushed the subject into prominence; but there must be something more than this to account for the widespread interest, the mingled sympathy and alarm, with which this question is everywhere debated and discussed.

It is perfectly natural, when any man professes to have discovered a remedy for all the evils which affect society, that multitudes of willing listeners should be found amongst those who are suffering from the evils which he claims to be able to cure. All those who are discontented with their present circumstances, and who hope to find an easy way out of them, are sure to give a sympathetic consideration to proposals for their relief, however extravagant or absurd those proposals may be.

The quack who professes to possess a sovereign remedy for an incurable disease is likely to have a far larger number of patients than the man of science who proclaims that the disease is hopelessly beyond all remedy.

But as the Bishop of Manchester wisely said: "This is by no means exclusively a poor man's question. Not only does the spread of destitution create and intensify a discontent which threatens the very existence of civilized society, but its effects darken for every sensitive man the whole heaven of social life. The more truly Christian a man is, the more he regards his fellow-men with the eternal love of Christ, the more will he suffer at the sight of this intolerable misery, and the more earnestly will he strive to find a remedy for it." And happily it is quite certain that an attentive hearing will be accorded by all classes of society to any schemes and plans which may be proposed for the relief of the suffering, and for the mitigation of the distress in which large numbers of our fellow-citizens are always involved.

And thus it arises that the interest given to what Socialists have to propose spreads wider and grows stronger every day amongst all classes of society.

No one, whether he is working man or peer, Socialist or Individualist, Radical or Tory, philanthropist or statesman, professes to be fully satisfied with the conditions under which the poorer classes have to live. And almost everyone in the country, whatever may be his position, is interested in discovering some remedy for the gigantic evils which are present amongst us, and which have grown up under the constant

pressure of an ever-increasing competition which is the almost invariable result of an advancing civilization.

It is quite impossible that things should remain much longer as they are. With the improved education and the increased political power amongst the working classes, it cannot be expected that they will be contented to continue in circumstances which are growing more difficult every year.

It is notorious that the spirit of discontent is being awakened—a discontent which is legitimate and wholesome in so far as it leads to constantly increasing desires and efforts towards an improvement of their social condition, but a discontent which may easily become dangerous if no steps whatever are taken to remedy the evils from which it springs.

Now, Socialism, whether or not it be wholesome or reasonable in itself, is the natural expression of a wholesome and reasonable discontent. It proclaims aloud the existence of the evils for which it professes to provide the remedy. Every Socialist leader invariably and most properly makes this the foundation and starting-point of his demands. He appeals alike to the necessities of the poor and to the sympathies of the rich when he points to the conditions under which the poor live, and which all alike regard as intolerable. He secures a consideration for his remedies because of the earnestness and persistence with which he asserts the existence of the disease.

Obviously, if there were no ills to be redressed, if poverty and misery were merely visions of a disordered imagination and had no real existence, the charms of Socialistic remedies would fall upon dull ears, and would make no way. Upon the man who has never known what indigestion means, the potency of Eno's fruit salt or Holloway's pills is urged in vain.

But no one doubts the existence of social evils; the evidence is too clear to be mistaken. However much men may differ as to the proper remedies to be applied, there is scarcely room for any difference of opinion as to the nature and extent of the evils which cry out for a remedy.

Take for an example the condition of the unemployed. During last winter we were told that some of the strongest trade societies had as many as  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of their members out of work; and, of course, the organization of trades unions is such that their members are likely to obtain employment in preference to others. Think what it means to have one-eighth part of the manhood of the country in enforced idleness!

Not only is this an index of the crippled condition of the nation's trade, but it has also a terrible meaning to the wives and families of the men who are unemployed. And if this was the condition of the highest class of artisan, what was the

position of the unskilled labourer? For him, wages are lower while he is at work, and the prospect of regularity in his employment is less certain. Who can wonder that in our great towns, and in London most of all, the cry of the unemployed has been heard, and has attracted so much of public attention?

Winter is again close at hand, and although, perhaps, there may be no demonstration of the unemployed, yet assuredly once more the cry will be heard which rises with unvarying pertinacity and regularity so soon as the winter has begun.

But even if it were not so, and one could dare to hope that every worker would be able to secure some kind of employment, even then it would be impossible to say that the cry of discontent was unreasonable. Sometimes we get a little light let in upon this awful subject, and are able to get some idea of how the poor live.

The report of Mr. Burnett to the Board of Trade, and the revelations before the Committee of the House of Lords upon the sweating system, disclose a state of things which is a disgrace to any civilized community. The eager rivalry between the would-be workers on the one hand, and the fierce competition to get things at the cheapest possible rate upon the other, combine to force down the rate of wages until they reach such a point that life is worn out in the vain effort to get the means of living, and it becomes hopeless to procure even the commonest necessities of life by the most arduous and unceasing labour. Hundreds and thousands of our fellow men and women are ground down under a bondage far more terrible than that of the Israelites in Egypt—a bondage in which there is no relief, and from which there is no release but death.

But one can hardly understand the case by considering only the condition of the unemployed and of the underpaid, without also looking to the very important and vital question of the "Homes of the Poor."

A few years ago the pamphlet called "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London" made such startling revelations upon this subject that the attention of the whole country was aroused, and a Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor was appointed to investigate the question. These inquiries clearly showed that the poorest classes had to live in such miserable habitations, and so closely herded together, that their very existence was a source of danger to the community. There was at the time much excitement and talk and stir; the very ablest men in the whole country were members of the Royal Commission; evidence was taken in London and in many other large centres of population; everybody felt that something must be done. But year after year has passed by, and, so far

as we are aware, no single step has been taken, and no good of any kind has been effected, as the result of the public attention drawn to the subject.

Perhaps the question was insoluble; for the problem seemed to be, how to provide two rooms for a family which could barely afford to pay for one, and how to provide proper shelter for those who had no means with which to pay any rent at all.

No one who has not actually lived amongst the London poor can at all appreciate the importance of this question of rent in the life of a working man. Whether he is in work or out of work, inexorable as fate the rent-collector calls every Monday, and under any circumstances the money must be forthcoming. If all else fail, the pawnshop must be resorted to to supply the necessary funds. In any time of temporary pressure it is the necessity of having to meet the weekly rent which is the real terror in the house. Few people realize that a labouring man in London must make up his mind that he will have to spend from one-fifth to one-third of his whole income in rent. There is surely no other grade of society which is housed at so exorbitant a rate. Who amongst the professional or mercantile classes would dream of spending so large a proportion of his whole income in the rent of his house? But even if he did—if the man with an income of £1,000 a year should choose to pay a rental of £200 or £300—he would still have enough remaining to purchase the necessaries of life, and his extravagance in rent would only come into competition with other luxuries which he would be obliged to give up. But if the income is only 20s. a week, and the rental is 5s. or 6s. of that sum, it is easy to see that even the common necessaries of life must be difficult to provide, and that the inadequate house accommodation has been furnished at the expense of clothing or food, or both. Quite recently a man who had been in regular employment at 22s. a week, and who, having four children, had indulged himself in the luxury of two small rooms, for which he paid 7s. 6d. a week, fell out of work. While he was in regular work he had found it necessary to spend one-third of his whole income in rent; when employment failed, of course this luxury must be abandoned, and so six persons are crammed together in a tiny room, for which 5s. 6d. is paid. But how, and how long, can it be paid, and what is to be the end, if work cannot be had when there are no more goods to pawn?

Who can wonder if under these circumstances the cry of discontent is heard, and sometimes waxes loud and strong; and if the language of so-called Socialists seems often too bitter and emphatic, at least let it be remembered that they

are denouncing no imaginary evils, but fighting for very life against the enemies whom they denounce. And when we are inclined, as many religious people are, to magnify the virtues of content, let us ask ourselves, in all sober seriousness, does Christianity demand, or does philanthropy require, or does humanity teach, that a man ought to be content when his family and himself are being dragged down to the very verge of starvation without any fault of his or theirs? No! Christianity says, "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content;" but it nowhere demands anything so unreasonable, so impossible, as that men should be content without being able to procure the means of living.

And after all, to those who know most of the condition and the feelings of the poor, the wonder is, not that there is so much of the open expression of discontent, as that there is so much of quiet and patient endurance of evils which appeared to be inevitable, and for which there could be found no remedy.

The natural discontent of which Socialism is an outward expression, however, arises not merely from the condition of the poorest classes, but derives its emphasis and force from the striking contrasts which this wealthiest city in the world presents. Here luxury and lavish expenditure abound on every side; here whatever ministers to mere frivolity and pleasure thrives and flourishes; here Lazarus lies at the rich man's gate, and is a witness to all the extravagant expenditure which he dares not hope to share; and here, as the newspapers will let him know, there are amongst the wealthy and the noblest and the great some, at least, whose names are not conspicuous amongst those who go to strengthen by their virtues the nation to which they belong.

And when we are inclined to smile at the extravagance of Socialistic language, and the positive absurdity of many of their claims, it would be well for us to remember that this is often due to the natural irritation arising from the presence of urgent needs, for which there seems to be no remedy, and by the consciousness that amongst the wealthy classes there is so strong a disposition to accept the present condition of things as inevitable, that no effectual effort is made to improve it.

But some persons will be ready to say that there is yet another obvious and sufficient reason why the proposals of the Socialists find such ready acceptance amongst the poorer classes. Obviously, if I could be persuaded that my tooth-ache could be cured only by a sound tooth being extracted from my neighbour's head, or if my gout could be subdued only by the confiscation of my neighbour's port, or my head-

ache soothed by giving the nauseous draught to him, it is very easy to see that such a system of medicine would soon attain a marvellous popularity amongst the sick and suffering, although possibly it would not find so many adherents amongst the strong and the healthy.

And no doubt many of the Socialistic proposals do seem to possess this character, and appear to proclaim that the poverty and the misery of the poor is to be remedied by the forcible curtailment of the property and luxury of the rich—that the emptiness of my pocket is to be met by an enforced contribution from the pockets of the well-to-do.

Obviously, such proposals are likely to prove popular; but, obviously also, the popularity of them will be more marked amongst those who are suffering from the disease of poverty than it is at all likely to become amongst those who are wealthy and have everything to lose.

There are, then, abundant reasons why Socialism should grow, quite apart from the intrinsic merits of those plans which the system has to propose for our adoption. To these plans, and to the relationship between Christianity and Socialism, we shall hope to draw attention in the next number of THE CHURCHMAN.

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#### ART. VI.—DID THE APOSTLES POSSESS THE POWER OF SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT WILL?

A GENERATION or two ago most sober-minded persons would have been startled, and even shocked, at such a question as this being so much as raised. Possibly many may be startled even now.<sup>1</sup> The almost universal belief among members of our Church was that the promise of speaking with new (that is, as they understood it, with foreign) tongues was given by our Lord to His Apostles (St. Mark xvi. 17), and that the promise was made good on the day of Pentecost, when the power was for the first time exercised. They would probably quote, if questioned on the subject, the proper preface for Whitsunday in the Communion Service, where it is said that the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles, giving them the gift of divers (*i.e.*, as they suppose) foreign languages. But this is quite an assumption. By "divers languages" our compilers probably meant no more than to refer to 1 Cor.

<sup>1</sup> I doubt whether Olshausen is justified in saying (iv. 376) that the "old orthodox opinion" (as he calls it) "that the gift of speaking all the languages of the world was bestowed on the Apostles as a permanent endowment," is a view now abandoned.