

What we have to find out is, can Socialism be established, and how?

And is Socialism just and desirable; and practicable if we can succeed in getting it?

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

The place where a great city stands is not the place of stretched wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce merely.

For the place of ceaseless salute of new-comers, or the anchor-lifters of the departing,

Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings, or shops, selling goods from the rest of the earth,

Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place where money is plentiest,

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards,

Where the city stands that is beloved by these, and loves them in return and understands them,

Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and deeds,

Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,

Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,

Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,

Where the city of the healthiest father stands,

Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands.

There the great city stands.—*Walt Whitman.*

The question is, how can Socialism be accomplished? I confess that I approach this question with great reluctance. The establishment and organisation of a Socialistic State are the two branches of the work to which I have given least attention. Hitherto I have devoted my efforts to teaching the principles of Socialism, and to disproving the arguments brought against it. But I will do my best, merely observing that I can lay claim to no special knowledge, nor to any special aptitude for such a task. I have no "system" ready cut and dried. I don't think any sensible Socialist would offer such a system. Socialists are practical people in these days, and know that coats must be cut according to cloth.

But on one point I am quite certain, and that is that the first thing to do is to educate the people in Socialism. Let us once get the people to understand and desire Socialism, and I am sure we may very safely leave them to secure it.

The most useful work which Socialists can do at present is the work of education and organisation.

Socialism will not come by means of a sudden *coup*. It will grow up naturally out of our surroundings, and will develop naturally and by degrees. But its growth and its development may be materially hastened.

It always amuses me to hear the intensely practical person demand, How are you going to do it? When will you make a start? Where do you propose to leave off?

My dear Mr. Smith, it is too late to ask when we are going to begin. We *have* begun. We, or rather they, began long ago. Nearly all law is more or less Socialistic, for nearly all law implies the right of the State to control individuals for the benefit of the nation. But of late years the law has been steadily becoming more and more Socialistic. I will give you a few examples.

The abolition of toll bars and bridge tolls was Socialistic action, for it made the roads and bridges common property.

Most of the Building Acts, by virtue of which streets must be of a specified width, back-to-back houses are forbidden, &c., are Socialistic, for they take away from the property owner the power to do as he likes with his own.

The Truck Acts are Socialistic, for they deny the employer the power to swindle his workmen. The Factory Acts are Socialistic, for they deny the employer the power to work women and children to death.

The Compulsory and Free Education Acts are Socialistic. The Acts which compel the inspection of mines and factories, the inspection of boilers, the placing of a load-line on ships, and the granting of relief to paupers, are all Socialistic Acts, for they all interfere with the "freedom of contract" and the "rights of the individual." Finally, the acquirement of the postal and telegraphic arrangements by the State, and the establishment of corporate gas and water works are Socialistic measures, for they recognise the Socialistic principle of common ownership, production, and distribution.

You will see then, that Socialism has begun, so that the question of where to begin is quite superfluous.

As for the question of where we shall leave off, that is a foolish question, and only a fool would try to answer it.

There is no such thing as finality. The world will go on after we are dead and forgotten. How do I know what our grandchildren will do? Should I not be a conceited ass to attempt to lay down laws for them? My only duty towards posterity, Mr. Smith, is to smooth the road for them as much as possible, and so give them a fairer chance than we have had to make the best of life.

Socialism will come, of that I feel sure. And it will come by paths not seen by me, and will develop in ways which I do not dream of. My task is to help its arrival.

Still, I will offer you, in all modesty, a few ideas on the subject. I can at least point out to you some of the things that need to be done, and I may even suggest what seem to me reasonable ways of doing them.

What are the things to be done? We want to find work for the unemployed. We want to get pensions for the aged. We want to abolish the poor-law system. We want to produce or own food so as to be independent of foreign nations. We want to get rid of the slums and build good houses for the workers. We want to abolish the sweater and shorten hours of labour and raise wages. We want to get rid of the smoke nuisance, and the pollution of rivers; and we want to place the land and all other instruments of production under the control of the State.

Before we can accomplish any of these reforms, we must have a public in favour of them, and a Parliament that will give effect to the Popular demands. So that the first thing we need is education, and the second thing we need is a Socialist Party.

I am well aware that you may have a democratic parliament and not get Socialistic measures passed. We see that in America. But if the Democratic Parliament has a Socialistic Public behind it there need be no fear of failure.

Suppose, then, that we have a Socialistic Public and Parliament. What is to be done? It would be presumption for me to instruct such a Parliament. I am only giving you, John Smith, my poor ideas.

Perhaps we should begin with the land. Perhaps with the unemployed. Perhaps with the mines and railways.

Suppose we began with the land. The land must be

made the property of the nation. Very well, what about compensation?

Personally I am against compensation, but I suppose it would have to be given, and my only hope is that it would be kept as low as possible. So with the mines and the railways. They could be bought, and the smaller the price the better.

Then as to the unemployed. They must be registered in their various trades, and set to work.

I should divide them into three principal classes—

1. Agricultural labourers;
2. General labourers;
3. Building trades.

The first I should send to work on State farms, the second to work at public improvements, and the third to build dwelling-houses for the people.

I daresay, you may feel rather uneasy at these suggestions, and imagine that I am going to ruin the nation by saddling upon it the keep of a vast army of paupers.

But, my practical friend, the worst use you can put a man to is to make a tramp of him. All the tramps, bear in mind, and all the able-bodied paupers have to be fed and lodged now in some fashion. And although they are badly fed, and treated worse than dogs, you must not suppose that they cost little. For you must know that it costs about ninepence to give a pauper threepennyworth of food, and when you take into account the large numbers of policemen and other officials who are paid to watch and punish and attend to the tramps, it will be quite clear that a tramp is a more costly luxury than he appears to be.

But besides that it is much better that a tramp should be making something than marring himself; and you must not suppose that the State farms would be a burden to you. Decently managed, they would soon prove a great benefit.

For don't you see that all those hands which are now idle would then be producing wealth, and when I remind you that the best authorities agree that a four hours day would enable the people to produce enough for all, you will see that our unemployed could, on those State farms, very easily keep themselves.

Each of these farms would be the base for the formation of a new communal town—one of the Towns of Merrie England. To it would be sent all kinds of craftsmen: tailors, shoemakers, joiners, and the like, so that each commune would be complete in itself.

Houses upon a new model, to be arranged by a special State Board of architects, artists, sanitary engineers, and Socialists, would be built for the workers, with baths, libraries, dining-rooms, theatres, meeting-rooms, gardens, and every kind of institution needful for the education, health, and pleasure of the people.

Understand, further, that these men would not be treated as paupers. They would be treated as honourable citizens, and after rent and other charges had been paid to the State, they would receive all the produce of their labour.

Pensions would be granted to the aged poor, and all the workhouses and casual wards would be abolished.

There would be no such thing as a pauper, or a man out of work, or a beggar or a tramp in all England.

Meanwhile it would be a wise thing to form a commission of the cleverest mechanical engineers and inventors in England for the purpose of developing electricity, so as to do away with steam power, with gas lighting, and the smoke nuisance.

Then we should very probably establish a universal eight hours day, and a plan for educating and feeding all children free at the public schools.

We should nationalise the railways, ships, canals, dock-yards, mines, and farms, and put all those industries under State control.

We should have an Agricultural Minister just as we now have a Postmaster-General. He would be held responsible that the department under him produced bread and vegetables, meat and fruit for 36 millions of people, just as the Postmaster-General is now held responsible for the carriage and delivery of our letters.

So by degrees we should get all the land and instruments of production into the hands of the State, and so by degrees we should get our industry organised. These are my ideas. They are very crude, and of course very imperfect. But don't trouble on that score. When your

Public understands Socialism and desires to establish it there will be no difficulty about plans. Just get a number of your cleverest organisers and administrators into committee and let them formulate a scheme. Depend upon it they will produce a much better scheme than mine, though I think even mine is better than none at all, and as I said before I only offer it to give you an idea of the possibilities of the task before us.

This question of Socialism is the most important and imperative question of the age. It will divide, is now dividing, society into two camps. In which camp will you elect to stand? On the one side there are individualism and competition—leading to a “great trade” and great miseries. On the other side is justice, without which can come no good, from which can come no evil. On the one hand, are ranged all the sages, all the saints, all the martyrs, all the noble manhood and pure womanhood of the world; on the other hand, are the tyrant, the robber, the manslayer, the libertine, the usurer, the slave-driver, the drunkard, and the sweater. Choose your party, then, my friend, and let us get to the fighting.

CHAPTER XV.

THE INCENTIVE OF GAIN.

Supply-and-demand,—Alas! for what noble work was there ever yet any audible “demand” in that poor sense? The man of Macedonia speaking in vision to an Apostle Paul, “Come over and help us,” did not specify what rate of wages he would give! Or was the Christian Religion itself accomplished by Prize Essays, Bridgewater Bequests, and a “minimum of four thousand five hundred a year?” No demand that I heard of was made them, audible in any Labour Market, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, or other the like emporium and hiring establishment; silent were all these from any whisper of such demand; powerless were all these to “supply it” had the demand been in thunder and earthquake, with gold El Dorados and Mahometan Paradises for the reward.—*Carlyle.*

Each life's unfulfilled, you see,
It hangs still patchy and scrappy;
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired, been happy.

—*Browning.*

We will now proceed to consider some of the stock arguments used against Socialism.

Non-Socialists are in the habit of saying that Socialism