

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE nineteenth century was marked by a period of industrial revolution unprecedented in the annals of history. The small manufacture of preceding ages was swept away by the gigantic factory system of modern times. The railroad, telegraph, and steamboat tore down all geographical barriers, and united the entire civilized world into one great international market, while the huge machine and the power of steam and electricity increased the productivity of labor a hundredfold, and created a fabulous mass of wealth.

But this process of transformation brought in its wake a variety of new social problems.

While a comparatively small number of men fell heir to all the benefits of the process, the greater part of the population often reaped nothing but suffering and privation from the rich harvest.

The invention of new and perfected machinery reduced many skilled mechanics to the ranks of common laborers, and deprived many more of work and wages permanently, or at least during the long and tedious process of "readjustment."

The planless mode of production and reckless competition among the captains of industry produced alternately seasons of feverish activity and intense work, and seasons of enforced idleness, which assumed alarming proportions during the oft-recurring periods of industrial depression.

The luxury, splendor, and refinement of the possessing classes found their counterpart in the destitution, misery, and ignorance of the working classes, and the social contrasts were more glaring than in any other period in history.

These evils of modern civilization engaged the attention of the most earnest social philosophers and reformers of the last century, and numerous remedial systems and theories were suggested by them. The most radical of these, the theory which discerns the root of all evils in competitive industry and wage labor, and advocates the reconstruction of our entire economic system on the basis of a cooperative mode of production, received the name Socialism.

Socialism, like most other social theories and movements, passed through many stages of development before it reached its modern aspect.

In its first phases, socialism was a humanitarian rather than a political movement. The early socialists did not analyze the new system of production and did not penetrate into its historical significance or tendencies. The evils of that system appeared to them as arbitrary deviations from the "eternal principles" of "natural law," justice, and reason, and the social system itself as a clumsy and malicious contrivance of the dominant powers in society.

True to their theory that social systems are made and unmade by the deliberate acts of men, they usually invented a more or less fantastic scheme of social organization supposed to be free from the abuses of modern civilization, and invited humanity at large to adopt it.

The scheme was, as a rule, unfolded by its author by means of description of a fictitious country with a mode of life and form of government to suit his own ideas of justice and reason, and the favorite form of the description was the novel. The happy country thus described was the Utopia (Greek for Nowhere), hence the designation of the author as "utopian."

That these theories should have frequently led in practice to the organization of communistic societies as a social experiment, was but natural and logical.

The utopian socialists knew of no reason why their plans of social organization should not work in a more limited

sphere just as satisfactorily as on a national scale, and they fondly hoped that they would gradually convert the entire world to their system by a practical demonstration of its feasibility and benefits in a miniature society.

Utopian socialism was quite in accord with the idealistic philosophy of the French Encyclopedists, and lasted as long as that philosophy retained its sway.

The middle of the last century, however, witnessed a great change in all domains of human thought; speculation gave way to research, and positivism invaded all fields of science, ruthlessly destroying old idealisms and radically revolutionizing former views and methods.

At the same time the mysteries and intricacies of the capitalist system of production were gradually unfolding themselves, and the adepts of the young social science began to feel that their theories and systems required a thorough revision.

This great task was accomplished toward the end of the forties of the last century chiefly through the efforts of Karl Marx, the founder of modern socialism. Marx did for sociology what Darwin did later for biology: he took it out from the domain of vague speculation and placed it on the more solid basis of analysis, or, to borrow an expression from Professor Sombart,* he introduced realism in sociology.

The social theories of Karl Marx and the movement based on them are styled *Modern* or *Scientific* Socialism in contradistinction to *Utopian* socialism.

Modern socialism proceeds from the theory that the social and political structure of society at any given time and place is not the result of the free and arbitrary choice of men, but the legitimate outcome of a definite process of historical development, and that the underlying foundation of such structure is at all times the economic basis upon which society is organized.

* Werner Sombart, "Socialism and the Social Movement of the Nineteenth Century," 1898.

As a logical sequence from these premises, it follows that a form of society will not be changed at any given time unless the economic development has made it ripe for the change, and that the future of human society must be looked for, not in the ingenuous schemes or inventions of any social philosopher, but in the tendencies of the economic development.

Contemporary socialism thus differs from the early utopian phase of the movement in all substantial points. It does not base its hopes on the good-will or intelligence of men, but on the modern tendency toward socialization of the industries. It does not offer a fantastic scheme of a perfect social structure, but advances a realistic theory of gradual social progress. It does not address its appeals to humanity at large, but confines itself principally to the working class, as the class primarily interested in the impending social change. It does not experiment in miniature social communities, but directs its efforts toward the industrial and political organization of the working class, so as to enable that class to assume the control of the economic and political affairs of society when the time will be ripe for the change.

Both aspects of the movement have been well represented in the history of socialism in the United States, and we will treat of them separately, devoting the first part of this work to an account of utopian socialism and communistic experiments, and the second part to the history of modern socialism