

CHAPTER IV

The Icarian Communities

I.—THE ORIGIN OF ICARIA

AMONG the most interesting pages in the history of American Communism are those relating to the Icarian experiments. The records of patient sufferings, heroic devotion, and acrimonious feuds of these colonies cover almost half a century; they are full of pathos and instruction, and have been the subject of numerous monographs, pamphlets, and magazine articles.

Étienne Cabet, the founder and spiritual father of the Icarian communities, was born in Dijon, France, in 1788. He received an excellent education, studied medicine and law, and met with considerable success in the practise of the latter profession in his native town. At an early age he settled in Paris, where he affiliated himself with the secret revolutionary societies, in which the capital of France abounded at that time.

In the revolution of 1830 he took a leading part as a member of the "Insurrection Committee," and upon the elevation of Louis Philippe to the throne of France, he was appointed Attorney-General for Corsica. This appointment was a shrewd move on the part of the Government to banish the dangerous Democrat from the revolutionary atmosphere of Paris under the guise of a reward for his services during the revolution. But the advisers of the "citizen-king" did not reckon with the upright instincts of Cabet, and no sooner had the new Attorney-General assumed the duties of his office in Corsica, than we find him aggressively active in the ranks of the radical anti-administration party. As was to be expected, he was removed from office with due despatch, and in 1834 his townsmen of Dijon elected him as their deputy

in the lower chamber. His steadfast opposition to the administration, and revolutionary attitude in the chamber, again drew on him the wrath of the Government, and having been tried on a charge of "*lèse-majesté*," he was given the choice between two years of imprisonment and five years of exile.

Cabet chose the latter alternative, and emigrated to England. Here the busy politician for the first time found leisure for study and meditation, and as a result of both, he evolved a system of communism very similar to that of Robert Owen.

Returning to France in 1839, Cabet published his views in a work entitled "*Voyage en Icarie*" ("*Voyage in Icaria*"), and the publication of that book marked a turning-point in his entire career. "*Voyage en Icarie*" is in the form of a novel, and its very simple plot, briefly summed up, is this: Lord Carisdall, a young English nobleman, has by chance learned of the existence of a remote and isolated country known as Icaria. The unusual mode of life, habits, and form of government of the Icarians excite his lordship's curiosity, and he decides to visit their country. "*Voyage en Icarie*" purports to be a journal in which our traveler records his remarkable experiences and discoveries in the strange country.

The first part of the book contains a glowing account of the blessings of the cooperative system of industry of the Icarians, their varied occupations and accomplishments, comfortable mode of life, admirable system of education, high morality, political freedom, equality of sexes, and general happiness. The second part contains a history of Icaria. It appears that the social order of the country had been similar to that prevailing in the rest of the world, until 1782, when the great national hero, Icar, after a successful revolution, established the system of communism.

This recital gives Cabet the opportunity for a scathing criticism of the faults of the present social structure, and also to outline his favorite measures for the transition from that system to the new *régime*.

Prominent among those measures are the progressive income tax, abolition of the right of inheritance, state regulation of wages, national workshops, agricultural colonies, and, above all, a thorough and liberal system of education. The last part of the book is devoted to the history of development of the idea of communism, and contains a summary of the views of almost all known writers on the subject, from Plato down to the famous utopians of the early part of the nineteenth century. The plan of the novel does not differ materially from that of More's "Utopia" or Morelly's "Basiliade," both of which were published before Cabet's work, or from that of Bellamy's, Howell's, or Hertzka's utopian novels, published after it, but the success of the book was extraordinary.

Between the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 the masses of France were in a constant state of vague discontent seeking some definite expression, and Cabet's work, with its popular style, its strong arraignment of the existing social order, and glowing pictures of a happy brotherhood of man, was acclaimed by them as a new gospel. Edition after edition of the book was published, and there were not many working men in France who had not read it.

Encouraged by the brilliant reception of "Voyage en Icarie," Cabet devoted himself entirely to the propaganda of his communistic ideas, and for that purpose published, between 1840 and 1847, the *Populaire* and the *Icarian Almanac*.

By means of these periodicals, the "Voyage," and other works, he gained a powerful influence among the French working men, and in 1847 was said to have no less than 400,000 adherents among them.

When Cabet wrote his "Voyage en Icarie" he most likely intended merely to express his general views on social problems, applicable to any country in civilization, and with no expectation of making those views the subject of an immediate social experiment. But, as the agitation for "Icarianism" grew stronger, and gave rise to much heated contro-

versy with opponents of the movement, his enthusiastic adherents urged the necessity of founding an "Icarian" colony, in order to vindicate the truth of his theories by a practical demonstration. Accordingly, Cabet published in May, 1847, a proclamation to the French working men under the heading, "Allons en Icarie!" ("Let us go to Icaria!")

The language of the proclamation is in the style of exultant enthusiasm characteristic of Cabet.

Recounting the hardships and persecutions to which the Icarians were subjected in France, and declaring that a revolution in their fatherland, even if successful, would not avail the working class, it unfolds a magnificent vista of the future of the Icarian settlement. Cabet believed that not less than 10,000 to 20,000 working men would immediately respond to the appeal, and that within a short time a million of skilled laborers and mechanics would follow them. With such an army he expected to build immense cities and villages on the communistic plan, with large industries, schools, theaters, etc.; in short, a veritable paradise on earth, with a happy population of equals. The document wound up with an eloquent description of the beautiful climate and fertile soil of "America."

The proclamation had a magic effect on the Icarians. Cabet received from his enthusiastic disciples thousands of letters containing offers of gifts for the prospective community. The offers embraced articles of household furniture, tools, clothing, pictures, guns, seeds, libraries, jewelry, money, and everything imaginable, including, of course, a number of highly valuable inventions of all kinds to be tested in the new colony. A few weeks after the proclamation was issued, Cabet announced in the *Populaire* that he expected to unite more than a million cooperators for his enterprise.

It now became necessary to fix upon a more definite location of the proposed settlement than the very vague "America," and in September, 1847, Cabet went to London to seek the counsel of Robert Owen on that point. Owen recom-

mended Texas. Texas at that time had just been admitted to the Union, and eagerly sought to populate its vast unoccupied territory. Large grants of land were made by the new State to private concerns on condition of securing settlers, and the representative of one of such concerns—the Peters Company—just happened to be in London in January, 1848. Cabet, upon learning of that fact, immediately went to London again, and on January 3, 1848, made a contract with the Peters Company by which the latter agreed to deed to him a million acres of land in Texas on condition that the colony take possession of it before July 1, 1848.

Cabet was happy, and immediately announced in the columns of his *Populaire* that "after a careful examination of all available countries," he had chosen a beautiful and fertile tract of land in Texas for the proposed colony.

The first "advance-guard," consisting of sixty-nine persons, sailed from Havre in February, 1848. Their departure was preceded by a very impressive ceremony on the pier. The pioneers solemnly signed a "social contract" pledging themselves to the principles of communism; Cabet delivered a touching address on the aims and the future of the movement, and, returning home, he wrote in the *Populaire*: "In view of men like the advance-guard, I can not doubt the regeneration of the human race. . . . The 3d of February, 1848, will be an epoch-making date, for on that day one of the grandest acts in the history of the human race was accomplished—the advance-guard departing on the ship 'Rome' has left for Icaria. . . . May the winds and waves be propitious to you, soldiers of humanity! And we, Icarians, who remain, let us prepare, without loss of time, to rejoin our friends and brothers!"

II.—TEXAS

THE "advance-guard" of the Icarians arrived at New Orleans on the 27th of March, 1848, and their disappointments

commenced immediately. It appeared that Cabet was not up to the smart business methods of our American land agents, and that he had taken the statements of the representative of the Peters Company too literally. The Icarians had been led to believe that the lands of the Peters Company were washed by the Red River and were accessible by boat, but, on consulting the map, it appeared that "Icaria" was separated from the river by a trackless wilderness of over 250 miles.

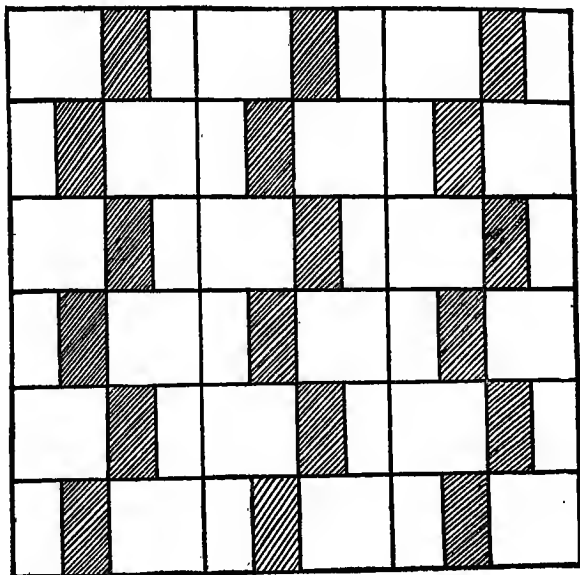
Another disappointment, not less grave, the pioneers found in the peculiar apportionment of the land. The State of Texas had divided its unoccupied territory into square sections of 640 acres (one square mile) each, and had granted to the Peters Company the alternate sections of a certain tract of land. The Peters Company, in turn, divided its sections into half-sections of 320 acres, and ceded to the Icarians the alternate half-sections. To give our readers a clear idea of the location of the lands of our Icarian settlers, we reproduce on the next page the diagram, published by Dr. Albert Shaw in his "Icaria."

In this diagram the blank sections represent the land reserved by the State of Texas, the blank half-sections represent the land retained by the Peters Company, and the shaded half-sections represent the land acquired by Cabet.

The absurdity of attempting to establish a communistic colony with a central administration and a cooperative system of industry and agriculture on many scattered and disjointed parcels of land is so obvious that it needs no comment.

Nor was this all. The *Populaire* had assured the Icarians that 1,000,000 acres of land had been acquired by Cabet, but upon a closer inspection it appeared that the contract of the Peters Company provided expressly that 3,125 persons, or families, should each receive 320 acres of land, provided they take actual possession, *i.e.*, build at least a log cabin on their respective parcels before July 1, 1848. And as the

small advance-guard could not very well build more than about thirty log cabins before July 1, 1848, they could secure no more than about 10,000 acres, or one-hundredth part of the promised million.



Distribution of Icarian Lands in Texas.

These disappointments, however, did not deter the resolute band from their course. Arrived at Shreveport, they secured a few ox-teams and one wagon, and started on the march to Icaria. The hardships of this tedious trudge can hardly be described. Their only wagon broke down, their supplies gave out, and sickness set in. At last they arrived in the promised land, a sick and weary lot.

But with the energy and good cheer characteristic of the pioneer, they set to work without loss of time. A small log house and several sheds were built, and they commenced plowing the prairie. In the mean while July had arrived,

and with it the malarial fever. The weakened and overworked Icarians fell an easy prey to the disease, four of their number died, their only physician became hopelessly insane, and every man in the settlement was sick.

Such was the condition of the affairs in September, when part of the second advance-guard of Icarians, about ten in number (the second advance-guard consisted of nineteen men, instead of the promised 1,500, and part of these did not reach Icaria, having fallen sick on the way), joined them. Under these circumstances the pioneers decided to abandon Texas. To facilitate the retreat, they divided themselves into groups of two to four men, supplying each man with about \$6, all that was left them, and after much suffering the weary party arrived at New Orleans in the winter of 1848. There they were joined by several new detachments of Icarian emigrants from France, including Cabet himself.

By this time the Icarian movement had lost much of its strength in France. The February revolution of 1848 overthrew the kingdom of Louis Philippe, and established the Second Republic, the "right to labor" was proclaimed, and the "national workshops" were launched. The working men of France were full of hope for the social regeneration of their country, and the movement to establish a great communistic state abroad appealed but little to them.

The million of Icarians expected by Cabet toward the close of 1847 dwindled down to less than 500, who gathered around him in New Orleans in December, 1848, and January, 1849.

The funds of the Icarians amounted at that time to about \$17,000.

To undertake a new emigration to Texas with such meager means, and after the discouraging experience of the first advance-guard, was out of the question, and the Icarians resigned themselves to remaining in New Orleans until a proper location could be secured.

In the mean while dissensions arose among the Icarians,

resulting in the withdrawal of about 200 of their number. The remainder, about 280 in number, finally fixed upon Nauvoo, Ill., as a place of settlement, and arrived at that town in the middle of March, 1849, having lost twenty men in transit as victims of cholera.

III.—NAUVOO

THE town of Nauvoo, in Hancock County, Illinois, was built up by Mormons under the leadership of Joseph Smith. In 1845, when the population of Chicago numbered about 8,000, Nauvoo had 15,000 inhabitants, and was the most prosperous and flourishing town in the State.

But the persecution of the Mormons became very intense. Joseph Smith was killed, and his successor, Brigham Young, organized a general migration of his followers to Utah.

In 1849, Nauvoo, with its large stretches of cultivated land and its numerous buildings, was practically abandoned save for the solitary Mormon agent who remained in charge of the property, wistfully looking for purchasers or tenants.

The opportunity seemed to our Icarians almost providential, and they were not slow in taking advantage of it.

They rented about 800 acres of land, purchased a mill, distillery, and several houses, and for the first time fortune seemed to smile on them.

The next six or seven years marked a general era of prosperity in the history of Icaria. Their main building was a structure about 150 feet wide, and was used as a common dining-hall, assembly-room, etc. Besides, they had a school-house, workshops, a forty-room dwelling-house, and a number of smaller houses.

They kept about 1,000 acres of rented land under cultivation, operated a flouring-mill, sawmill, and whisky distillery, conducted some tailoring, shoemaking, and carpentering shops, and their property was estimated at about \$75,000. Nor were the intellectual and ethical sides of their life

neglected. In their schools the children were taught a variety of subjects and carefully trained in the principles of the Icarian philosophy. They published newspapers, pamphlets, and books in English, French, and German for the propaganda of their ideas, maintained a library of over 5,000 volumes, and frequently indulged in the pleasures of theatricals, music, and dances.

Their membership had almost doubled during that time, and the future of Icaria seemed bright with brilliant promises.

But beneath the serene surface trouble was already brewing. In February, 1850, the Icarians adopted a constitution which provided for the administration of their affairs by a board of six directors. Of these directors, the first was the president of the community, and the other five were at the head of its following departments respectively:

1. Finance and Provisions.
2. Clothing and Lodging.
3. Education, Health, and Amusement.
4. Industry and Agriculture.
5. Printing-Office.

The acts of the board of directors were, however, subject to the approval of the General Assembly, consisting of all male members over twenty years old.

Under this constitution Cabet was elected president from year to year, and at first exercised his power very discreetly. But as the years rolled on, the founder of Icaria grew older, narrower, and more arbitrary, and his actions gave frequent cause for unpleasant friction.

In these disputes, which gradually grew quite acrimonious, the members of the administration grouped themselves around Cabet, while the opposition dominated the General Assembly.

The hostilities of the two parties, now open and now concealed, continued with more or less vigor until August 3, 1856, when the final breach occurred. The immediate oc-

casion for the rupture was the semiannual election of directors. The three new directors chosen were opponents of Cabet, and the latter and his followers refused to recognize them.

Chaos and pandemonium now reigned in Icaria. The belligerent factions were loud in their denunciations of each other; manifestos, proclamations, appeals, and libels were busily published; acts of physical violence became an everyday occurrence, until the civil authorities of Nauvoo intervened, and installed the newly elected directors by force. Cabet and his party were not inclined to submit to defeat gracefully. They ceased to work, rented a separate building for their faction, and did their utmost to bring about the dissolution of the community, going to the extent of petitioning the State Legislature to revoke the charter of Icaria.

In October, 1856, Cabet was formally expelled from membership in the community, and at the beginning of November he, with his faithful minority of about 180 persons, left Nauvoo for St. Louis.

A week later Étienne Cabet was no more.

The father of Icaria and originator of one of the strongest popular movements in France of the middle of the last century succumbed to a sudden stroke of apoplexy in St. Louis on the eighth day of November, 1856. He died far away from the fatherland he loved so dearly, and an exile from the community on which all his thoughts and interests had been centered during the last years of his life.

IV.—CHELTENHAM

THE faithful band of 180 who had followed Cabet to St. Louis now found themselves in a pitiable plight. Bereft of their leader, with no means to speak of, and the inclement winter before them, they could not think of establishing a new colony just then.

The men, almost all of whom were skilled in one trade or another, accordingly secured work and remained in St. Louis until May, 1858, when the greater part of them, about 150 in number, migrated to Cheltenham, to resume their interrupted community life.

Cheltenham was an estate of twenty-eight acres, lying about six miles west of St. Louis. It contained a large stone building and six small log houses, and was very near the city. But unfortunately these advantages were more than balanced by the unfavorable features of the estate: the place was a veritable hotbed of fever; the purchase price, \$25,000, was excessive, and as the cash payment was but small, the mortgage was correspondingly heavy.

But our Icarians were not discouraged. With a zeal born of enthusiasm, they went to work building up the social and industrial organization of their new colony. They set up numerous workshops, which did pretty remunerative work for customers in the near-by St. Louis, established a printing-office, schools, the indispensable music band and theater, and provided for periodical lecture courses and discussions.

Cabet's name lent them great prestige with the Icarians in France; they were recognized as the only genuine Icarian community by the Paris Bureau, and received much financial and moral encouragement from the old fatherland. One subscription opened in Paris for their benefit netted them as much as \$10,000.

Their material prosperity seemed to be insured in 1859, when the old and fatal issue of all Icarian communities, the form of administration, reappeared in their discussions. This issue divided the Cheltenham settlers into two opposite camps. The majority, consisting mainly of the older members, believed in a single leader with dictatorial powers, while the younger elements advocated a democratic form of government. The contest terminated in a complete victory of the conservative elements, and the defeated minority, forty-two in number, withdrew from the community in a body. The

loss of so many able-bodied men was a blow to the young community from which it never recovered.

The industry of Cheltenham was crippled, its social life became cheerless, and members steadily withdrew, until, in 1864, the community consisted of fifteen adults of both sexes and some children.

It was a sorrowful day when the last president of the Cheltenham Community, the heroic and devoted A. Sauva, called a meeting of these last Mohicans, and, amid the loud sobs of the last "Popular Assembly," declared Cheltenham formally dissolved.

V.—IOWA

THE first split in the ranks of the Icarians affected the Nauvoo settlers hardly less injuriously than the Cheltenham seceders.

The withdrawal of Cabet and his large following deranged their entire industrial system; their property shrank together, while their debts increased very rapidly, and to escape certain decomposition, they decided upon a new change of locality. Nauvoo had always been regarded by the Icarians as a temporary settlement. The place was too small and too near the heart of civilization for their grand social schemes. They contemplated the establishment of an independent and highly complex communistic society on a large scale, and for that purpose they needed an immense stretch of land far away from the populated centers of the country.

With that object in view they had acquired over 3,000 acres of land in southwestern Iowa as early as 1852, and thither they now removed. They could not very well have made a worse choice.

Iowa was, at that time, a vast desert, and the land selected by the Icarians was in the most secluded part of the State. The settlement lies at a distance of sixty miles from the Missouri River. In 1860 the railroad now passing through the tract had not yet been built; for miles in all directions

the land consisted of trackless virgin prairie, with no trace of a hamlet or any human habitation. The enormous cost of transportation made the sale of their farm products to outsiders almost a matter of impossibility. In addition to that, the land was heavily mortgaged; the mortgage drew ten per cent. interest, and, as the Icarians could not pay the latter, the debt compounded at a fearful rate.

The hardships of the early pioneer days in Iowa proved too much even for a great many of the brave and enduring Icarians; members withdrew by the wholesale, until in 1863 the number of the faithful was reduced to thirty-five, including men, women, and children, and the amount of their debt exceeded \$15,000.

The community seemed to face certain destruction, when the War of the Rebellion broke out. That war brought temporary relief to the little settlement. It enabled them to dispose of their surplus farm products at good prices, and to save up sufficient money to make a settlement with their mortgagees by which the latter accepted \$5,500 in cash and 2,000 acres of land in payment of the mortgage.

The next years of the history of the Iowa Community are marked by the monotonous and perseverant efforts of the settlers to insure their material welfare.

They lived in miserable huts, often lacked the most necessary articles of food and clothing, and worked themselves into a state of stupor, but the bright vision of a great and beautiful Icaria was always before their eyes, lending new vigor to their enfeebled bodies and new enthusiasm to their wearied minds.

And gradually they worked themselves up. To the score of little log houses a common dining-hall and assembly-room was soon added; they purchased more land, built a grist- and sawmill, and raised considerable live stock.

With increasing prosperity the number of their members augmented, and in 1868 it had almost doubled.

The completion of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad gave a new impetus to their industries, and they now entered on an era of moderate prosperity.

The primitive log houses were discarded for more comfortable habitations, and a new central hall, sixty feet wide and two stories high, was erected.

With the return of material comfort, the attention of the community was again turned to the social and esthetic side of life. As in Nauvoo and Cheltenham in the periods of prosperity, theatricals, music, public readings, and, above all, public discussions in the common assembly-room, became a regular feature in the life of our Iowan settlers.

And, as in Nauvoo and Cheltenham, the public discussions eventually led to the formation of factions within the community. The hardships of pioneer life in the wilds of Iowa had naturally made the old generation conservative. Their comparative prosperity had been wrung by them from a hostile surrounding in fierce and obstinate battle; it was the result of untold sacrifices and privation, and they clung to it with the love and tenderness of a fond mother. The lofty ideals which had animated their work in the early stages of their struggles gradually shifted to the background; material welfare, first regarded by them as a mere means for the realization of their sublime social theories, soon became the end, and the utopian dreamers and enthusiasts developed into every-day farmers, with remnants of radical traditions reduced to a bare formula.

In marked contrast to this mental attitude stood the younger members of Icaria. Of these, part had grown up in the community, but the early struggles of their fathers were to them but a pale recollection of their childhood, and others had joined of recent date, and brought with them new ideas and a new atmosphere.

The socialist movement had seen great changes since the "Voyage en Icarie." The utopian dreams of the first half of the last century had given way to the modern socialism of

Karl Marx; the International had established a firm bond of solidarity among the socialists of all great countries of Europe, the recent experiences of the Commune of Paris had given ample proof of the outbreak of active class war in Europe, while in America a socialist labor movement was rapidly developing.

Several of the "young party" had been members of the International, and others had fought in 1871 on the barricades of Paris.

It was under the leadership of these men principally that the young "progressive party" was formed in opposition to the "conservative party" of the old Icarians.

The contest between the two parties was at first quite amicable, but gradually it assumed a more serious and threatening character.

The young men demanded a number of reforms in their industrial and agricultural methods, suffrage for women, propaganda among outsiders, wholesale admission of new members, and other radical measures; while the old pioneers were suspicious of all innovations and change in their mode of life.

In September, 1877, the friction had gone so far that the "young party," which was in the minority, demanded a formal separation. The demand was flatly refused by the majority, and the disaffected minority thereupon declared upon their opponents war to the knife.

The conflict grew personal and hot, and neither party was very choice in selecting means to subdue its opponents. The party of the young finally went so far as to apply to the civil courts for a dissolution of the community, and in order to secure proper legal grounds for the application, they, the "progressives," charged the Icarian community, which was incorporated as an agricultural joint-stock association, with having exceeded its powers and having violated the provisions of its charter by its communistic practises.

In August, 1878, the charter of Icaria was declared for-

feited by the Circuit Court, and three trustees were elected to wind up its affairs.

The Icarians never recovered from the effects of that split, altho each of the two parties made vigorous efforts to reestablish the community after its formal dissolution.

The "young party," by arrangement with the trustees and their former adversaries in the community, remained in possession of the old village, and reincorporated under the title, "The Icarian Community." But the community somehow did not prosper, and in 1884 the young Icarians removed to Bluxome Ranch, near Cloverdale, Cal., a horticultural farm which had then recently been purchased by some of their friends. The new settlement received the name *Icaria Speranza*. It never prospered, and was finally dissolved by decree of the court in 1887.

In the mean while the old party had reorganized under the name, "The New Icarian Community," with Mr. Marchand, a veteran Icarian, as president. They received as their share of the property of the former community the eastern portion of the old domain, \$1,500 in cash, and eight frame cottages, which they removed bodily from the old homestead. They built a new assembly hall and resumed their agricultural work.

With no accessions from the outside and a gradual depletion of their own ranks, caused by the occasional death or withdrawal of a member, they struggled on until 1895, when the community was finally dissolved.

Thus ended the great Icarian movement which half a century before had made its appearance with so much flourish of trumpets, and with the bold promise of regenerating the social and economic system of the world by the mere passive proof of the blessings of brotherly community life.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

THE history of communistic experiments in the United States covers a long period of time and furnishes such an abundance of material for analysis and induction, that it would hardly be proper to close this account without a few general observations.

What strikes us most in these experiments is the varying degree of success attained by the different groups.

The sectarian or religious communities have, beyond doubt, been the most successful in point of the average length of their duration and the degree of their material prosperity. Most of the societies classed as sectarian have existed over half a century, and a few are still in existence with the record of a full century behind them. Some of them, as the Shakers, the Economy, Oneida, and the Amana communities, have amassed fortunes, and all the others live or have lived in comparative comfort and affluence after the brief period of their pioneer days.

The careers of the "non-religious" communities, on the other hand, have as a rule been short-lived and fraught with hardships. The average duration of the communities of the Owenite group was barely more than two years, that of the Fourierist Phalanxes, with the three notable exceptions of the North American Phalanx, the Brook Farm, and the Wisconsin Phalanx, was no longer, and the Icarian Communities were in a constant process of destruction and reorganization. These communities, furthermore, never achieved any degree of material prosperity, and their existence was, with a few exceptions, one of abject poverty.

This glaring disparity in fortune and success of apparently similar enterprises could not fail to evoke numerous com-

ments from the students of community life. Nordhoff and others sought to explain the phenomenon by the fact that the religious societies had strong leaders, and they came to the conclusion that no community could thrive without the guidance of an energetic and intelligent individual who knew how to gain the confidence of all members. Noyes and Greeley, on the other hand, advanced the theory that religion as such was the sustaining power of communities, and indispensable for the success of all communistic experiments.

On a closer examination, however, both theories appear rather superficial and not in harmony with the facts: The Shakers hardly ever had a single leader of recognized universal authority since the days of Ann Lee, and still their prosperity continued unabated for almost a century after the death of the prophetess, while New Harmony was a crying failure notwithstanding the leadership of a man of the intelligence and executive abilities of Robert Owen. Similarly, the Fourierist Phalanxes were very short-lived, altho they were, in a majority of cases, deeply religious; while the avowedly agnostic Icarians managed to maintain their existence during almost two generations.

The real reason for the comparative success of the religious communities is, however, quite obvious.

In the first place, these communities were chiefly composed of German peasants, men skilled in the tillage of the soil and whose wants were more than modest; while the membership of the "non-religious" communities mostly consisted of a heterogeneous crowd of idealists of all possible vocations, accustomed to a higher standard of life, and as a rule devoid of any knowledge of farming. What, then, is more natural than that the former should have made a better success of their "domains," or farms, than the latter?

Furthermore, the religious communities were organized for religious purposes, and not for the propaganda of communism; their communism was but a secondary incident to their existence, and whenever their material interests required,

they sacrificed it, without compunction of conscience. The Shakers, Harmonists, Amanites, Perfectionists, and other religious communities employed hired labor in their fields and shops, and toward the end of their existence they practically ceased to be communities, and became agricultural and manufacturing corporations. Their material success was thus to a large degree due not to their communism, but to their departure from communism. In other words, the sectarian, or religious, communities in the long run discarded communism, and in many instances became profitable business enterprises; while the "non-religious" communities adhered to a communistic *régime* to the last, and almost uniformly had short-lived and unsuccessful careers.

As experiments in practical communism, the American communities must consequently be admitted to have been a total failure. And it would be idle to seek for the particular cause of the failure of each separate community as McDonald and other historians of his type have attempted to do; the cause of failure of all communistic experiments is one—
✓ the utopian character of the fundamental idea underlying their existence.

The founders of all communities proceeded on the theory that they could build up a little society of their own, eliminate from it all features of modern civilization which seemed objectionable to them, fashion it wholly after their own views of proper social relations, and isolate themselves from the surrounding world and its corrupting influences.

But the times of the Robinson Crusoes, individual or social, have passed. The industrial development of the last centuries has created a great economic interdependence between man and man, and nation and nation, and has made humanity practically one organic body. In fact, all the marvelous achievements of our present civilization are due to the conscious or unconscious cooperation of the workers in the field and mines, on the railroads and steamships, in the fac-

tories and laboratories the world over; the individual member of society derives his power solely from participation in this great cooperative labor or its results, and no man or group of men can separate himself or themselves from it without relapsing into barbarism.

This indivisibility of the social organism was the rock upon which all communistic experiments foundered. They could not possibly create a society all-sufficient in itself; they were forced into constant dealings with the outside world, and were subjected to the laws of the competitive system both as producers and consumers. Those of them who learned to swim with the stream, like the religious communities, adopted by degrees all features of competitive industry, and prospered, while those who remained true to their utopian ideal perished.

Modern socialists have long given up the idea of mending the present capitalist social and industrial system by isolated patches of communism. They recognize that society is not made up of a number of independent and incoherent groups, but that it is one organic body, and it is in the progress of the whole social organism that they center their hopes and efforts.

Another and perhaps more interesting question to the student of social problems is the influence of community life upon the formation of human character.

The communities of the Owen period were too short-lived to modify the character and habits of their members to any appreciable extent, and so were the Fourierist experiments, with the exception, perhaps, of the North American and Wisconsin Phalanxes and Brook Farm. But the Icarian communities, and, above all, the sectarian or religious communities, have lasted for several generations. And, altho the life and career of the Icarians were much disturbed by internal strife and material adversities, and the sectarian communism was not always pure and unalloyed, the two groups could not fail to produce a type of men and women with

characteristics somewhat different from those of the rest of humanity.

In view of the oft-repeated assertion that competition furnishes the only incentive to inventiveness and industry, it is interesting to note that the communists have, as a rule, been possessed of these qualities in a high degree. Nordhoff, who was by no means a partial observer, remarks in this connection: "No one who visits a communistic society which has been for some time in existence can fail to be struck with the amount of ingenuity, inventive skill, and business talent developed among men from whom, in the outer world, one would not expect such qualities." And again: "Nothing surprised me more than to discover the amount and variety of business and mechanical skill which is found in every commune, no matter what is the character and intelligence of its members."

It is also the unanimous testimony of all observers that the communists were, as a rule, very industrious, altho no compulsion was exercised by the communities. "The pleasure of cooperative labor is a noticeable feature of community life when seen at its best," observes Ely; Hinds, commenting on his personal observations of many communities, concludes that individual holding of property is not essential to industry and the vigorous prosecution of complicated business; and Nordhoff corroborates their testimony in the following passage:

"How do you manage with your lazy people?" I asked in many places; but there are no idlers in a commune. I conclude that men are not naturally idle. Even the "winter Shakers"—the shiftless fellows who, as cold weather approaches, seek refuge in Shaker and other communes, professing a desire to become members; who come at the beginning of winter, as a Shaker elder said to me, "with empty stomachs and empty trunks, and go off with both full as soon as the roses begin to bloom"—even these poor creatures succumb to the systematic and orderly rules of the place,

and do their share of work without shirking, until the mild spring sun tempts them to a freer life."

But while the members of communistic societies are not idle, and do their work steadily and well, they show no signs of the enervating hustling and hurrying which mars the pleasure of work in modern civilization. They take life easy.

"Many hands make light work," say the Shakers, and they add that for their support it is not necessary to make work painful.

The Oneida communists had short hours of work and devoted much time to rest and recreation, and the Amana communists admitted that one hired hand did as much work in one day as a member of the commune would do in two.

The communists, as a rule, also paid strict attention to the rational rules of hygiene, were models of cleanliness, and, almost without exception, temperate in their habits, although the German communists did not disdain the use of good beer and wine, especially in harvest-time.

Contrary to the general impression, life in communistic societies was, on the whole, not monotonous. The communists strove to introduce as much variety in their habits and occupations as possible. The Harmonists, Perfectionists, Icarians, and Shakers each changed their location several times. Of the Oneida Community, Nordhoff says: "They seem to have an almost fanatical horror of forms. Thus they change their avocations frequently; they change the order of their evening meetings and amusements with much care, and have changed even their meal hours." With the Fourierist Phalanxes, variation of employment was one of the main principles, and the same is true of almost all other communities.

They were cheerful and merry in their own quiet way; disease was a rare occurrence among them, and they are not known to have had a single case of insanity or suicide among them.

Under those circumstances it will not be surprising to

learn that the communists were the most long-lived people in the United States.

Among the members of Amana Community there were recently two above ninety years old, and about twenty-five between eighty and ninety. Most of the Harmonists lived to be seventy and over; among Shakers ninety is not an uncommon age; the Zoarites had among them in 1877 one member ninety-five years old, and a woman of ninety-three, both of whom voluntarily continued working, and many members past the age of seventy-five years; and in Oneida many members lived to be over eighty years. Of the founders and leaders of the communities, Rapp reached the age of ninety years; Bäumeler and Noyes, seventy-five years; and Marchant, one of the leading Icarians, is still alive and active at the age of eighty-seven.

The influence of community life seems to have been as beneficial on the moral and mental development of the communists as it was on their physical development. The Amana Community, consisting of seven different villages with a population at times exceeding 2,000, had never a lawyer in its midst; and this community, as well as Bethel, Aurora, Wisconsin Phalanx, Brook Farm, and numerous other communities, declared with pride that they had never had a lawsuit against their communities or among their members.

Their bookkeeping was, as a rule, of a very primitive nature. They did not exact any security from their managing officers, still there were no cases of defalcations or maladministration in office.

"The communists are honest," says Nordhoff; "they like thorough and good work, and value their reputation for honesty and fair dealing. Their neighbors always speak highly of them in this respect."

They were also noted for their hospitality, kind-heartedness, and readiness to help those who applied to them for aid.

And, finally, it must be noted that the communists invari-

ably bestowed much attention upon the education of their children and their own culture. Their schools, as a rule, were superior to those of the towns and villages in the neighborhood; they mostly maintained libraries and reading-rooms, held regular public discussions, and they were more cultured and refined than other men and women of the same station in life.

On the whole, the communistic mode of life thus proved to be more conducive to the physical, moral, and intellectual development of man than the individualistic *régime*.