

AN AFTERWORD.

“ BUT this is again the same old sermon : on the one hand, urging the destruction of the present order of things without putting anything in its place, on the other hand, exhorting to non-action,” is what many will say on reading what I have written. “ Governmental action is bad, so is the action of the landowner, and of the man of business ; equally bad is the activity of the socialist, and of the revolutionary anarchists ; that is to say, all real, practical activities are bad, and only some sort of moral, spiritual, indefinite activity, which brings everything to utter chaos and inaction, is good.” Thus, I know, many serious and sincere people will think and speak !

What seems to people most disturbing in the idea of no violence, is that property will not be protected, and that each man will, therefore, be able to take from another what he needs or merely likes, and to go unpunished. To people accustomed to the defence of property and person by violence, it seems that without such defence there will be perpetual disorder, a constant struggle of everyone against everyone else.

I will not repeat what I have said elsewhere, to show that the defence of property by violence does not lessen, but increases, this disorder. But, allowing that in the absence of defence disorder may occur, what are people to do who have understood the cause of the calamities from which they are suffering?

If we have understood that we are ill from drunkenness, we must not (hoping to mend matters by drinking moderately) continue to drink, nor take medicines that shortsighted doctors give us and continue drinking.

And it is the same with our social sickness. If we have understood that we are ill because some people use violence to others, we cannot improve the position of society either by continuing to support the Governmental violence that exists, or by introducing a fresh kind of revolutionary, or socialist violence. That might have been done as long as the fundamental cause of people's misery was not clearly seen. But as soon as it has become indubitably clear that people suffer from the violence done by some to others, it becomes impossible to improve the position by continuing the old violence, or by introducing a new kind. As the sick man suffering from alcoholism has but one way to be cured—by refraining from intoxicants which are the cause of his illness, so there is only one way to free men from the evil arrangement of

society, and that is to refrain from violence, the cause of the suffering, from preaching violence, and from in any way justifying violence.

And not only is this the only way to deliver people from their ills, but we must also adopt it because it coincides with the moral consciousness of each individual man of our times. If a man of our day has once understood that every defence of property or person by violence is obtained only by threatening to murder or by murdering, he can no longer, with a quiet conscience, make use of that which is obtained by murder or by threats of murder, and still less can he take part in the murders, or in threatening to murder. So that what is wanted to free people from their misery is also needed for the satisfaction of the moral consciousness of every individual. And, therefore, for each individual there can be no doubt that both for the general good, and to fulfil the law of his life, he must neither take part in violence, nor justify it, nor make use of it.

THE END.

