

## COMMUNISM.

## A Parish Lecture.

IN this lecture on Communism I propose to give some brief illustration, (1) of the ideal commonwealths of philosophers, (2) of guilds and trades' unions, (3) of the voluntary Socialism of the present century, and (4) of plans now put forward for the improvement of the condition of the labouring classes. It will be seen, therefore, that I use the word Communism in the wide sense in which it is current in the journalism of the day. According to its strictest definition, it means the possession of everything in common and of nothing in private ownership. But Communism of that absolute degree is entirely a matter of the logical imagination. If there is to be any practical discussion of possible—even of conceivably possible—Communism, we must consider it as a thing of degrees. The general principle running through all degrees of Communism is this, that the property of men living in society should be regarded as belonging *in some sense* to the whole body. "Then," some one will say, "we are all Communists." So we are, of some degree or kind. It is an important fact, of which we must not lose sight, that the principle of Communism can hardly be stated in any general form which shall not demand universal acquiescence. Differences arise in considering how that principle should be carried into effect. The differences are endless. Questions of such difficulty present themselves in dealing with the subject of public claims and private rights, that I very much doubt whether any one here knows precisely where his Communism begins and where it ends.

There are those who think that there is irreverence and danger in discussing these questions at all. They would have property treated with the respect due to a divine mystery, as a thing not to be approached even in thought without delicacy and caution. They speak often of the *sacredness* of private property. Now various objects have been sacred in various religions. But it is not the Christian religion that has ever consecrated private property. To a Christian trained in the authoritative writings of our faith the notion of treating private property as something sacred ought to seem utterly strange. The *common* interest is invariably exalted over the *private* in the Bible. The principle of private property receives contumelious rather than reverent handling in the New

Testament. The common interest, on the other hand, is associated with all that we are taught to hallow most reverently and to seek most devotedly. It is enough for me to remind you of the history of the Day of Pentecost. The Christian Church, which began to exist on that day, finds in the events of it the germs and the laws of its whole subsequent existence. An impulse, we believe, then came fresh from heaven to create a brotherhood of those who had acknowledged Jesus as Lord. Three thousand souls were moved to repentance and faith. And of these it is recorded, "All that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." This was Communism, almost of the absolute degree. The first impetuous fervour of Christian feeling gave its consecrating sanction, not to the principle of private ownership, but to the principle of surrendering private ownership for the sake of the common happiness.

Private ownership has its strength, not in religion or reflection, but in the spontaneous impulses of human nature. Put religion and reflection aside, and there is no fear of the principle of private property being called in question. A man naturally likes to have his own things, and to do what he likes with his own. He may go further, and like to have his neighbour's things also; and that inclination has sometimes been erroneously described as communistic. But it is not Communism if I take anything from anybody in order that I may appropriate it to myself. The thief, even more than the honest citizen, is a votary of the private-property principle. Religion and reflection, though they may recognise individual ownership as an indestructible condition of human life, and may see many advantages resulting from it, find that their work lies, not in asserting the principle or stimulating the instinct of such ownership, but rather in proclaiming an opposite principle, that of united interest, as higher and worthier, and as having a divine right to rule over the other.

It is true that the weaker may discern that it is to their personal advantage that many things should be possessed in common; and a great deal of the actual Communism that has prevailed in social arrangements has been due to this perception. The weaker have held together, and by so doing have been

able to procure arrangements favourable to their condition. But the same fact has induced thoughtful and benevolent persons, with no view to their own interest, to advocate the same policy. If you draw back in thought to a mental position from which you can contemplate society as it is, and speculate how it might be improved, the sufferings of the poor and the follies of the unthinking and unstable will be sure to engage your attention. You may think yourself incompetent to form any theory at all about the improvement of society. It is just possible you may persuade yourself that nothing better can be devised than the competitive struggle for existence in which the helpless go to the wall. But if you have imaginative enterprise enough to construct an ideal scheme of social constitution, your scheme will almost inevitably be more communistic than the existing arrangements of society. Thoughtful speculations about society may be said to incline all but universally towards a more developed Communism.

There are some famous examples of philosophical speculations of this kind. By far the most important of them is the "Republic" of Plato, a work in which the Greek philosopher, living some time before Christ came, attempts to design a well-ordered and ideally perfect state. He finds absolute Communism to be an indispensable condition of such a state. But there is another work of the same class, immeasurably inferior, indeed, in interest and value to Plato's, but which it will suit our present purpose better to use as an illustration. I mean the "Utopia" of Sir Thomas More.

This work is at least a very singular one to be written by its author. Sir Thomas More was the son of a judge, and himself a lawyer. He was employed by Henry VIII., who made him first a Privy Councillor, and afterwards, in succession to Cardinal Wolsey, Lord High Chancellor. "Utopia" appeared in 1516, the year in which More was admitted into the Privy Council. It is the account of a happy island, described by a traveller who had lighted upon it, which enjoyed representative government, vote by ballot, and annual magistrates. But the basis of the Utopian institutions was Communism. The writer grows enthusiastic in his denunciation of the mischiefs resulting from property. I must mention that the original work was in Latin, and that the translation from which I am about to quote was made by Bishop Burnet, a distinguished political prelate. It is curious to think of the following passage as coming

from such an author and translator—not from some penniless agitator, but say from a Sir William Page Wood, and an Archbishop Tait:—

"Thus have I described to you as particularly as I could the constitution of that commonwealth which I do not only think to be the best in the world, but to be indeed the only commonwealth that truly deserves that name. In all other places it is visible that whereas people talk of a *commonwealth*, every man only seeks his own wealth; but there, where no man has any property, all men do zealously pursue the good of the public; and, indeed, it is no wonder to see men act so differently, for in other commonwealths every man knows that, unless he provides for himself, how flourishing soever the commonwealth may be, he must die of hunger; so that he sees the necessity of preferring his own concerns to the public. But in Utopia, where every man has a right to everything, they do all know that if care is taken to keep the public stores full, no private man can want anything; for among them there is no unequal distribution, so that no man is poor, nor in any necessity; and though no man has anything, yet they are all rich; for what can make a man so rich, as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties, neither apprehending want himself, nor vexed with the endless complaints of his wife? He is not afraid of the misery of his children, nor is he contriving how to raise a portion for his daughters, but is secure in this, that both he and his wife, his children and grandchildren, to as many generations as he can fancy, will all live both plentifully and happily, since among them there is no less care taken of those who were once engaged in labour, but grew afterwards unable to follow it, than there is elsewhere for these that continue still at it. I would gladly hear any man compare the justice that is among them, with that which is among all other nations; among whom may I perish if I see anything that looks either like justice or equity. For what justice is there in this, that a nobleman, a goldsmith, or a banker, or any other man that either does nothing at all, or at best is employed in things that are of no use to the public, should live in great luxury and splendour upon that which is so ill-acquired, and a mean man, a carter, a smith, or a ploughman, that works harder than even the beasts themselves, and is employed in labours that are so necessary that no commonwealth can hold out a year to an end without them, can yet be able to earn so poor a livelihood out of it, and must lead so miserable a life in it, that the beasts' condition is much better than theirs?

"Is not that government both unjust and ungrateful that is so prodigal of its favours to those that are called gentlemen, or goldsmiths, or such others that are idle, or live either by flattery, or by contriving the arts of vain pleasure; and, on the other hand, takes no care of those of a meaner sort, such as ploughmen, colliers, and smiths, without whom it could not subsist; but, after the public has been served by them, and that they come to be oppressed with age, sickness, and want, all their labours and the good that they have done are forgotten, and all the recompense given them is, that they are left to die in great misery; and the richer sort are often endeavouring to bring the hire of labourers lower, not only by their fraudulent practices, but by the laws which they procure to be made to that effect; so that, though it is a thing most unjust in itself to give such small rewards to those who deserve so well of the public, yet they have given these hardships the name and colour of justice, by procuring laws to be made for regulating it?

"Therefore I must say that as I hope for mercy, I

can have no other notion of all the other governments that I see or know, than that they are a conspiracy of the richer sort, who on pretence of managing the public, do only pursue their private ends, and devise all the ways and acts that they can find out; first, that they may, without danger, preserve all that they have so ill acquired, and then, that they may engage the poorer sort to toil and labour for them at as low rates as is possible, and oppress them as much as they please; and if they can but prevail to get these contrivances established by the show of public authority, which is considered as the representative of the whole people, then they are accounted laws; and yet these wicked men, after they have by a most insatiable covetousness divided that amongst themselves with which all the rest might have been well supplied, are far from that happiness that is enjoyed among the Utopians; for the use, as well as the desire, of money being extinguished, there is much anxiety and great occasion of mischief cut off with it. . . . I cannot think but the sense of every man's interest, and the authority of Christ's commands, who, as He was infinitely wise, and so knew what was best, so was no less good in discovering it to us, would have drawn all the world over to the laws of the Utopians, if pride, that plague of human nature, that is the source of so much misery, did not hinder it; which does not measure happiness so much by its own conveniences as by the miseries of others; and would not be satisfied with being thought a goddess, if none were left that were miserable, over whom she might insult; and thinks its own happiness shines the brighter by comparing it with the misfortunes of other persons; that so, by displaying its own wealth, they may feel their poverty the more sensibly."

On two points of modern interest, Sir T. More is very advanced. With reference to the customary hours of labour, he speaks as follows: "They do not wear themselves out with perpetual toil from morning to night, as if they were beasts of burden, which as it is indeed a heavy slavery, so it is the common course of life of all tradesmen everywhere, except among the Utopians; but they, dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, appoint *six* of these for work." He anticipates the objection, that this allotment of time would not be sufficient for the work necessary to be done, and meets it by replying that the Utopians allowed no class of men to be idle, nor any time to be wasted on frivolous work. These rules being enforced, "a small proportion of time," he says, "would serve for doing all that is either necessary, profitable, or pleasant to mankind." As to the studies and employments of women, he reports that in Utopia all the women learn some trade; that men and women of all ranks go in large numbers to hear lectures of one sort or another, according to the variety of their inclinations; and even that "the women are sometimes made priests, though that falls out but seldom, nor are any but ancient widows chosen into that order."

I cannot explain, for I confess I do not understand, how such speculations as those

of the Utopia could have been given to the public without offence by Sir T. More in the reign of Henry VIII., or by Bishop Burnet in the reign of Queen Anne. What I have quoted will at least show you that Communism of the most extreme degree has had charms for others besides the poor and the ignorant. And there is this further significance in such speculations: what was thus worked into shape and written out and published by one man, a benevolent and thoughtful Christian, may be assumed to represent a very general undeveloped feeling in others who meditate on the same facts and occupy themselves with the same problems. Misery and degradation in the lowest class, luxury and insolence in the highest, cannot be thought about without generating a persuasion that society as a whole ought to have some remedy or other for such violations of its idea.

From the speculations of philosophers I pass to actual forms of social life which grew up amongst men who did not reason about what was desirable, but felt what they wanted. The Guilds of the Middle Ages were organisations in which common people united themselves together from the simple motives which at all times have prompted men to voluntary association. They are divided into three classes: the first consists of religious guilds; the second of town or merchant guilds; the third of craft or trade guilds. Confining our attention to this country, we may regard these three classes as standing chronologically in the same order. The religious or social guilds were the earliest; then, as towns grew by degrees into organised existence, the town guilds, otherwise called merchant guilds, came into being as the original form of municipal corporations; and, later than these, grew up the craft guilds, in which men of the same trades associated themselves together.

The religious guilds were formed of men and women who came into voluntary association in order to carry out purposes of piety and mutual aid. They were benefit societies, burial clubs, and religious associations, all in one. These were very numerous in England from the Saxon times onward. They commonly bear the name of some saint or festival, and a portion of their income is spent on the appropriate devotions, the rest being applied to the relief of members and of the poor. They were formed, as I said, of men and *women*. For both wives and single women were admitted as members. The ordinances or rules of a large number of

guilds have been printed in a recently published volume from returns made in the reign of Richard II., and now preserved in the Public Record Office. From this volume I select some illustrative ordinances.

A guild of the commonest type was that of St. Katherine, Aldersgate. I quote from its rules:—

"The first point is this, that when a brother or sister shall be received, they shall be sworn upon a book to the brotherhood, for to hold up and maintain the points and articles following; . . . and that every brother and sister, in token of love, charity, and peace, at receiving shall kiss every other of those that be there. Also, if it so befall that any of the brotherhood fall in poverty, or be anientised \* through eld, that he may not help himself, or through any other chance, through fire or water, thieves or sickness, or any other haps, so it be not on himself along, through his own wretchedness (misdoing), that he shall have in the week 14d."

Then follow rules as to entrance money, subscriptions, attendance at St. Botolph's Church, burials, election of new members, &c.

The following extract is from the ordinances of the guild of St. Michael-on-the-Hill, Lincoln, founded in the year 1350. The original of this is in Latin.

"Whereas this guild was founded by folks of common and middling rank, it is ordained that no one of the rank of mayor or bailiff shall become a brother of the guild, unless he is found to be of humble, good, and honest conversation, and is admitted by the choice and common consent of the bretheren and sisteren of the guild. And none such shall meddle in any matter, unless specially summoned; nor shall such a one take on himself any office in the guild. He shall, on his admission, be sworn before the bretheren and sisteren, to maintain and to keep the ordinances of the guild. And no one shall have any claim to office in this guild on account of the honour and dignity of his personal rank. If any brother or sister of the guild has fallen into such an ill state that he is unable to earn his living, and has not the means of supporting himself, he shall have, day by day, a penny from the bretheren and sisteren of the guild, in the order in which their names stand on the register of their admission to the guild; each brother or sister giving the penny in turn out of his own means."

Another guild, with a special interest attaching to it, is that of the Lord's Prayer at York. It is thus described in the Latin return:—

"Once on a time a play, setting forth the goodness of the Lord's Prayer, was played in the city of York, in which play all manner of vices and sins were held up to scorn, and the virtues were held up to praise. This play met with so much favour, that many said, 'Would that this play could be kept up in this city, for the health of souls and for the comfort of the citizens and neighbours.' Hence the keeping up of that play became the whole cause of the beginning of this brotherhood. And so the main charge of the guild is, to keep up this play, to the glory of God the maker of the said Prayer, and for the holding up of

sins and vices to scorn. And because those who remain in their sins are unable to call God their Father, therefore the bretheren of the guild are, first of all, bound to shun company and businesses that are unworthy, and to keep themselves to good and worthy businesses. And they are bound to pray for the bretheren and sisteren of the guild, both alive and dead, that the living shall be able so to keep the guild that they may deserve to win God's fatherhood, and that the dead may have their torments lightened."

The account goes on to give the rules of the guild. They are to keep a table showing the meaning and use of the Lord's Prayer hanging against a pillar in York Cathedral, and a candle-bearer with seven lights near this pillar. And whenever the play of the Lord's Prayer is played in York, the brethren of the guild are to ride, clad in one suit, with the players through the streets, to do honour to it, and to insure that order shall be kept. As in every guild, the brothers or sisters are to be helped in time of need, and to be honoured at their burial.

The guild-merchant of a town was, in its strictest form, the union of all persons having land or any share in land within the town boundaries. It was called guild-merchant, or trading-guild, because these burghers or citizens were thus associated with a view to the regulating of their common or various trades. It is this union of citizens as such that is called on the Continent the *Commune*. The guildhall in any town is the place where the citizens meet in their guild-merchant.

The guilds-merchant seem to have grown, historically speaking, out of the ordinary or voluntary guilds. Three stages may be remarked in the following examples. The guild of the Blessed Mary, at Chesterfield, begun A.D. 1218, has all the usual provisions as to devotions and as to help to be given to the brethren, but it is said to have been founded to hold certain services, and the better to assure the liberties of the town. All shall swear, say the rules, to guard all their liberties, within town and without town, and to give trusty help thereto whenever it may be needed. This is not called a *gilda mercatoria* or guild-merchant, but it comes near one. The next case is that of a guild at Coventry. The merchants of Coventry, being far from the sea, found themselves much troubled about their merchandise, and applied to Edward III. for a charter for the foundation of a guild-merchant. The charter (A.D. 1340) states that King Edward, "so far as in us lies," enables the men of Coventry to establish their guild-merchant, and to make ordinances. The ordinances given in the return make no mention of any matters except those which are common to

\* From the French *anientir*.



guilds in general; and, unless there were supplementary ordinances, it does not appear that this guild-merchant differed from other guilds. It was a rich corporation, however, and it maintained a lodging-house with thirteen beds to lodge poor travellers, with a governor of the house and a woman to wash their feet. But there is a very elaborate set of ordinances of the city of Worcester, dating 1467, of which the title is as follows:—"Ordinances, constitutions, and articles, made by the king's commandment, and by whole assent of the citizens inhabitants in the city of Worcester, at their *yeld marchaunt* (guild-merchant), holden the Sunday in the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the year of the reign of King Edward IV. after the Conquest, the sixth." These regulations settle a multitude of details as to the municipal government and trade of the city. I select a few points of interest. It is required that the commons may have knowledge from year to year how the common ground is occupied, and by whom, and if that it be not rented, the commons to seize it into their hands, to the end that they may be remembered of their right, and to have profit and avail thereby. There is a provision that if any man's wife become a debtor in buying or selling, or hire any house for her life, she may be proceeded against as a woman sole merchant; and that an action for debt be maintained against her, to be conceived after the custom of the said city, without naming her husband in the said action. Here is an early prohibition of the truck system of wage-paying. A custom had grown up that the masters and makers of cloth should pay their labourers in mercery, victual, and by other means, and not in silver, to the great hurt of the said artificers, labourers, and of the poor commonalty. Therefore "it is ordained from henceforth, by this present guild, that none artificers, labourer, or any other person of the said city, against his assent, will, or agreement, be not compelled or charged to receive nothing in chaffer, but in gold or silver, of any makers, chapmen, or sellers of cloth." Any one presuming to do the contrary was to be fined each time, half the fine to go to the commons of the city, to be put in their common coffer, there to be kept to the profit of the said commonalty. And this was not to be evaded by the employment of work-people outside the town to the hurt of the poor commonalty of the city. Another article refers to the election of Members of Parliament. "They shall be chosen openly

in the guildhall, by such as dwell within the franchise, and by the most voice, and not privily. And the said persons so chosen for the parliament, that they be at it to the end of the parliament, and that they *be served of their wages accustomed*, after their coming home, within a quarter of a year next following."

As industrial life grew and expanded, guilds of the third class were naturally evolved. These were the associations of persons engaged in particular trades. Trades being commonly called crafts, these are designated *craft-guilds*. It appears that there was considerable jealousy and antagonism between the town guilds, or communes, and these trades' unions. The jealousy was on the side of the older, or municipal, organism, which sought to keep down and control the new developments of industrial power. The conflict between them, which ended in the conquest of freedom and independence by the trades' unions, may be illustrated by a struggle between the municipality of Exeter and a craft-guild of tailors in the fifteenth century.

Edward IV., by letters patent, in 1466, empowered the tailors of Exeter to form themselves into a guild, and to assume control over all persons of that trade in Exeter. This incorporation was thought to infringe upon the liberties of the town or the privileges of the municipality. Accordingly, about ten years later, we find records of great troubles at Exeter. The tailors'-guild sought to enforce payment of fees to the guild by tailors of the town; and being resisted, they went, arrayed in warlike fashion (*modo guerrino arraiati*), with force and arms, that is to say, with jacks and doublets of defence, with swords, bucklers, glaives, and staves, into the houses of offenders, and beat and threatened them. The mayor and commonalty, with great trouble and expense, got up a case against the tailors, and brought it before the king in council; who thereupon made a formal award, defining in disputed points the respective jurisdictions of the corporation and the guild. But the discussion did not end here. In the twenty-second year of Edward IV. (1481) the corporation presented a petition to Parliament in which they enumerate their grievances, and pray that the tailors' letters patent and the said guild and fraternity, and all things pertaining to the same guild and fraternity, be irrite, cassed, adnulled, void, and of no force nor effect; and by the advice of the lords spiritual and temporal, and with the assent of the com-

mons of the realm, the prayer is granted. Notwithstanding which act of Parliament, we find the guild going on and prospering. The living social force prevailed. Probably the tailors became strong in the municipal council, or they were backed up by other crafts having the same interests. At all events, the guild is not dissolved, but flourishes; it makes new ordinances in 1500, exhibits an inventory of goods in 1504, and adds new ordinances again under Henry VIII., in 1516 and 1531.

These craft-guilds were in the strictest sense of the term *trades' unions*, and their ordinances are far more comprehensive and interfere far more with individual liberty than the laws of any modern *trades' union* have attempted to do. But there is, nevertheless, a fundamental difference between the craft-guild of the fifteenth century, and the trade union of the nineteenth, which I will endeavour briefly to explain.

The craft-guild was an incorporation of masters, the trade union is a combination of workmen.

But this distinction will be misleading unless we take into account a mighty change in the form of industry, to which manifold new conditions are owing. The change is from *small industry* to *great industry*. Originally, every master in a trade was a working man. This is the natural commencement of manufacturing industry. It begins in a small way. And in a primitive condition of society, when little capital has been accumulated, and populations are scanty, and means of locomotion excessively restricted, industry will remain small. But as towns flourish and trade increases, the craftsmen save money and become comparatively rich, and are able to employ assistants, and so are developed into small capitalists. Capital, once securely realised, tends to grow with rapidity, and manufacturers become to a considerable extent employers of labour. This was the history of the craft-guilds of the Middle Ages. They became companies, such as those which still retain names and possessions and give splendid dinners in the City of London. These guilds were very close and exclusive, and became such hinderers of the general prosperity that Lord Bacon called them in his day "fraternities in evil." But still the most important manufacturing industries remained "small," or comparatively small; they were carried on to a great extent in cottages; until they were revolutionised by the application of steam to manufactures and the accompanying development of capital.

The modern form of industry has without

doubt added immensely to the wages of the working classes, and in most points improved their condition. But it disorganised them. It made the "hands" into mobile parts of a vast machine, liable to be left idle or thrown aside, whenever it became the interest of capital to change its point of application. The employers became relatively powerful to an almost unparalleled degree. There was hardly ever any section of society, perhaps, more unorganised, more destitute of the mutual attachments by which men hold together, than the working classes of this country would be without *trades' unions*.

It appears that for some two centuries the interests of the working people were chiefly protected by the Statute of Apprentices, of the 5th Elizabeth, and by customs which had grown into authority under that statute. According to this act, no one could lawfully exercise, either as master or as journeyman, any art, mystery, or manual occupation, except he had been brought up therein seven years, at least, as an apprentice. Rules were laid down as to the taking and keeping of apprentices, and it was enacted that journeymen must be kept in a certain proportion to apprentices. As to journeymen, it was enacted that in most trades, no person should retain a servant under one whole year, and no servant was to depart or be put away but upon a quarter's warning. The hours of work were fixed to about twelve hours in summer, and from the day dawn till night in winter. Wages were to be assessed yearly by the justices of the peace or the town-magistrates, at every general sessions first to be holden after Easter. The same authorities were to settle all disputes between masters and apprentices, and to protect the latter. They were to assess the wages so as to "yield unto the hired person, both in the time of scarcity and in the time of plenty, a convenient proportion of wages." Now this act, when steam and machinery had been introduced together, became unsuited to modern conditions of industry. It was finally repealed in A.D. 1809. But when you bear in mind that such a statute had been removed, and that it was not replaced by any analogous legislation, and that the new conditions of industry tended of themselves to put the work-people in crowds into the hands of capitalists, you will not wonder that the working classes felt their way to some combinations by which they might protect themselves against injury and secure some regularity and stability of life.

Trades' unions composed of working men

are accordingly a characteristic growth of the present century. I observe an extremely interesting illustration of their history in a recent report of our consul in Saxony. You will see all that I have described occurring in a narrower compass, and with more marked features. I abridge from Mr. Crowe's report in a Blue Book of this year.

"The Saxons, frugal, hard-working, and abstemious, were more generally engaged as artisans and mechanics in proportion to the population than any people in Germany. It was calculated that every thirteenth man was master, journeyman, or apprentice to some corporate trade. In Saxony the domestic, as distinguished from the factory system, was longest preserved; and improvements in steam and machinery were slowest in making way. In no country was the corporate spirit of the earlier times more instinct with life, and nowhere was it found more difficult to compass the abolition of guilds. Till ten years ago, with the exception of country masons, carpenters, sweeps, and bakers of rye bread, there was not a man of any craft who did not necessarily belong to a guild. The number of masters—frequently the number of journeymen—was strictly limited. Wages were regulated by custom, being the same for the good, the middling, or the still less skilful hand. Mastery was dependent on a long course of travel, years of apprenticeship, and examination. . . . The measures which really undermined the guilds were passed to facilitate the establishment of factories; the causes which precipitated their fall were the construction of railways, the consequent extension of markets, and the demand for cheaper and better wares. As the factory system expanded the guilds shrank, and the population outgrew the old and stationary corporations. From 1840 to 1850 the factory system arose. From 1850 to 1860 the guilds languished. In 1861 they were abolished by law."

Mr. Crowe goes on to describe various results of this change, which, he says, are still only in their beginnings. But the only observation I shall quote is the following:—

"Nothing is more remarkable in the meanwhile than that, parallel with the efforts made to free labour from all artificial interference, we have to notice the agitation of a class of men who, under the guise of reformers, seek to re-establish in a new shape the old constraint of the guilds. That the State has to protect the working classes against the despotism of capital, that it is the duty of trades' unions to establish tariffs of prices which shall exclude piece-work, ignore skill, and place the bad and the middling hand on the same level as the good, is the creed of a party which now wields a certain power in Saxony."

It is remarkable, I admit, but it is also most natural and reasonable. Men who had matured such a character as the Saxons had by the aid of trade-organisation were not likely to acquiesce in being transformed into drifting aggregations of unorganised units.

Trades' unions must seem extremely moderate and practical forms of association when we compare them with other developments of the same principle which also belong to the present century, and of which I now go on to speak. The theories and experiments to

which I refer are commonly classed under the general title of Socialism. This term is used with nearly the same looseness or comprehensiveness as Communism. Those who discriminate between them would in most cases understand by Socialism some variety of association which does not involve the abolition of private property, and by Communism the system of having all things in common.

The many changes which came together in the latter part of the last century and the earlier part of the present, amongst other results, had the effect of setting speculative minds at work on schemes of social reconstruction. And the schemes of recent social theorists, unlike those of Plato and Sir Thomas More, were intended by their originators to be carried out into immediate practical effect, and have actually been put to the test of experiment by enthusiastic disciples. The names of leading importance in the tentative socialism of the nineteenth century are those of Owen, St. Simon, and Fourier; the chief scene of the experiments has been the United States of America. The necessary element for these schemes is enthusiasm, disengaged from old beliefs. Without the enthusiasm no one could go heartily into the reconstruction of society; and where the old beliefs remain, enthusiasm would devote itself to other tasks than a revolutionary reorganisation of the world.

It is difficult for us English people to do justice to the motives and characters of these rebuilders of society. They for the most part differ much from us in creed; they are excessively fanciful and sanguine; and their failures are ludicrous. What more can be wanted to alienate an Englishman? Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that a man would hardly be a socialist or communist without being moved by an interest in the welfare of his fellow-men, and that it is almost always pity for the suffering and the degraded that feeds the socialist fire. The more genuine socialists are men of honourable enthusiasm for the elevation of the lower classes, willing to make sacrifices in their cause. Socialism has been promoted, not by the poor, but for the poor; and it is altogether a mistake to connect it with personal greediness. It is a remarkable fact, which would hardly have been expected beforehand, that voluntary or experimental socialism should have attracted more adherents in the United States than anywhere else. This is surprising, because the most powerful argument for social reconstruction in the Old World is found in the miseries which are so much less prevalent in

the New. It is difficult to see what commonplace advantages Americans can look for in socialist life, which they have not at command already. But the truth is that Socialism is a product of hope and enterprise, much more than of decay and despair.

The three men whom I have named were all contemporaries. In 1825, when St. Simon died at the age of sixty-five, Owen was fifty-four and Fourier fifty-three. St. Simon and Fourier were authors. Owen was a successful man of business. They were equally fanatical believers in their own doctrines.

St. Simon was as ambitiously comprehensive in his system as other Frenchmen are apt to be. I can only mention here his leading social maxims, which are these:—

All social institutions ought to aim at the amelioration, moral, intellectual, and physical, of the greatest and poorest class.

All the privileges of birth, without exception, are to be abolished.

To every man according to his capacity; to every capacity according to its works.

In order to carry out the first principle, society was to be organised under the heads of religion, science, and industry. The leaders in each department were to constitute the government. Science and industry were alike holy; all property was church property; every vocation was a religious function.

The second principle involved the abolition of inheritance. The state was to be the ultimate owner of all land and realised property, and was to assign or distribute it to individuals according to capacity and merits.

There was, therefore, to be no community of goods. The St. Simonians believed in the natural inequality of men, and regarded it as the very basis of association, and the indispensable condition of social order.

Marriage was not to be abolished. Christianity, they said, has lifted women out of servitude, but it has condemned them to subordination. The St. Simonians announce their definitive enfranchisement, but without pretending to abolish the holy law of marriage proclaimed by Christianity.

After the death of St. Simon, a number of his disciples formed a kind of sect or church in his name at Paris, and also carried on for a while some industrial speculations in accordance with his principles. St. Simon exercised a very important influence on some able and distinguished men, but the St. Simonian organisation in a very few years came to an end.

Robert Owen first became known as the

head of a great manufacturing business at New Lanark, in Scotland. In that capacity he produced admirable and much-admired results, by deliberately making the moral and physical well-being of his work-people his primary consideration. Being seduced into speculative philosophy, he adopted as his main principle the conclusion, which is certainly not a bad rule for educators and managers to be guided by, that every man is what his circumstances make him, and that in order to improve men you must improve their circumstances. It was natural that a preacher of this principle should desire to create model circumstances; and turning his thoughts to America, as furnishing the most favourable conditions for a new community, he went over in 1824, and bought an estate upon which a small religious community, founded by a German named Rapp, had already been planted. The estate, having been named Harmony by the Rappites, was called New Harmony by Owen. Here a society of nine hundred members came together, and endeavoured to form perfect circumstances, that the circumstances in turn might form perfect men. Owen not only established this community himself, but he preached his doctrine very earnestly by lectures and appeals to kings and congresses, and the result of it was that about 1826 some eleven Owenite associations were founded in America. They were mostly small, and none of them lasted more than three years.

Fourier's doctrine is difficult to describe in a few words, but it took a strong hold of a number of able and good men, especially in the United States. His great idea was to make labour attractive. He thought that by grouping people together, and planning their hours and ways of work, he could contrive such arrangements that all the natural instincts and passions should fall into harmony and be utilised, and all mankind should be made perfectly happy. He occupied himself especially with organising the labours of cultivation, and undertook to secure that they should be equally productive and delightful. His system also, like St. Simon's, was based on inequalities. He held that in an order prudently arranged, the natural and social inequalities that follow will be the surest pledges of concord and harmony. By skilful arrangement and grouping all faculties would be exercised, all instincts satisfied, all organisations would mutually support and complete each other.

It was a difficulty in the way of trying Fourierist experiments, that to do justice to



the system it was necessary to try them on a very large and costly scale. The only attempt made in France broke down before it came into action through lack of funds. But Fourier's system, having fascinated one or two ardent American minds, was preached and expounded by them in the year 1842 with considerable effect. Thoughtful and religious men believed that Fourier had at least pointed out the direction in which attempts should be made to realise a perfect social life. It has been said that "a yearning towards social reconstruction has become a part of the continuous, permanent, inner experience of the American people." As many as thirty-four communities are named as having owed their origin to the Fourierist movement of 1842. The most considerable of them, called the North American Phalanx, founded by Albert Brisbane and Horace Greeley, continued to exist for twelve years, from 1843 to 1855. But most of the communities, being in general very small, fell to pieces very rapidly. The promoters lay the blame in general on the faults of the members. Greeley, the well-known journalist, and one of the early disciples of Fourier, speaks thus of those who joined the communities:—

"A serious obstacle to the success of any socialistic experiment must always be confronted. I allude to the kind of persons who are naturally attracted to it. Along with many noble and lofty souls, whose impulses are purely philanthropic, and who are willing to labour and suffer reproach for any cause that promises to benefit mankind, there throng scores of whom the world is quite worthy—the conceited, the crotchety, the selfish, the headstrong, the pugnacious, the unappreciated, the played-out, the idle, and the good-for-nothing generally; who, finding themselves utterly out of place and at a discount in the world as it is, rashly conclude that they are exactly fitted for the world as it ought to be."

So we can easily imagine. But then this question presents itself. What particular advantage would there be, either to the world or to themselves, in drawing out the noble and lofty souls and setting them to live together in an agricultural phalanx? Life, we know, even to those of us who have means, and who are fit to be members of Fourierist communities, has its troubles and discouragements; but they are mostly of the sort that could not be cured, and would not have any promise of being cured, by a system of farming in groups. The only real attraction of Socialistic schemes is their promise to strengthen the feeble and to make the poor comfortable. If they are to succeed by excluding the poor and the weak, what is the good of them?

There is, however, another hindrance to

the success of such communities besides this which made Mr. Greeley so bitter. Family life and community life do not agree well together. We should have thought so beforehand, and so it has proved. There is a sort of parody on Socialism in the success and long continuance of two grotesque associations in the United States, that of the Shakers and that of Oneida, which get rid of the domestic difficulty in two opposite ways. The Shakers maintain absolute celibacy, the Oneida people have wives and children in common. Both these bodies sustain themselves, like the Mormons, by very peculiar religious pretensions which must be accepted by all who join them.

The common English mind, we may safely assume, is not likely to be fascinated, either by the constructive schemes of philosophers, or by the experiences of those who have tried to carry such schemes into effect. We are not, however—how could we be?—content with our present social condition, nor without aspirations after the improvement of it. It is scarcely possible to be religious or thoughtful at all without revolving plans of some kind by which social miseries may be cured or social happiness increased. A portion of such plans may be described as communistic, whilst others belong rather to the individualistic class. It remains for me to complete my rapid sketch of Communism by speaking very briefly of projects now entertained which have for their purpose to make realised wealth more serviceable to the poorest class.

And at this point it will be most convenient for me to describe an attitude of mind towards such proposals, in which I think I could almost compel you—even if it were against your will—to go with me. I speak to humane and Christian persons. I recall to your minds the teaching of the New Testament and the instincts of humanity. Now if certain plans were proposed to you by which it could be shown to your satisfaction that, at the cost of some of the wealth of the rich, the condition of the poor could be made permanently more easy and more secure against degradation, would you not joyfully accept them? You cannot say no. Well then, when attempts are made to devise such plans, what have you to say to them? If you refuse to listen to them, you may say that you know beforehand that all such plans must be delusive—that they will fail to attain their end, or that the end is not worth the disturbance and apparent injustice by which it would have to be sought. But overwhelming proof can be given that *all* such

plans are *not* delusive. Who objects, for example, to the providing of parks open to the common people at the public cost or by the gift of the rich? Who disapproves of the support of national education out of the taxes? or of the compelling of landowners to sell their land for railways, and of railway companies to carry passengers at one penny a mile? Some of the plans in question are, however, manifestly delusive. If they are, no one ought to favour them. Therefore, I conclude, we all sympathise with the object of such plans; but we think it necessary to consider carefully whether they are calculated to attain their end or not.

It is possible, also, to disapprove of *the temper* in which schemes are advocated. And in this light, the International Working Men's Association, which is now the object of many ardent hopes and grave fears, may justly incur censure. Its original design was that of uniting together the artisan and labouring classes in the different countries of the world, so that mutual aid might be given in the common effort to raise the working class. But the society has apparently fallen into the hands of eloquent foreign leaders, trained to revolutionary movements, who delight in invectives against capital, and who substitute vague but exciting phrases for practical measures. The aim of the society, we are told, is nothing less than the expropriation of the expropriators. It is a fine phrase, but who is to say what it means? Such language is as little congenial to the English atmosphere as the proposal that Citizen Dilke should be the first president of the English republic. As regards, however, the violent and minatory language of continental democrats, I venture to say that we are hardly in a position to judge it reasonably. It is the habit of foreigners to speak excitedly. And then there is the language and policy of their opponents to be considered. If we see two persons fighting and abusing one another, we do not disapprove of one party only. Thus we can hardly judge the people of Paris and what they did fairly, without comparing them with the provincials and what they did. At the same time it has an unreal effect, and is in every way to be regretted, that English workmen should speak to the public through the mouths of un-English revolutionists.

One of the most ambitious schemes which has been put forward by the International Society is that of the acquisition of the land by the State. On the great scale, it seems impossible to imagine how this could be done. But there is no *a priori* reason why more of

the land should not belong to the public than is at present the case amongst ourselves. In Switzerland, the Communes hold a great deal of land, which they either keep for common use, or let to tenants at a rent. It seems to be simply a question of good policy whether it would be well for us to adopt the same custom, or rather to spread it more widely, amongst ourselves.

Another project, admitted by the International Society into its programme, but too moderate to satisfy its more ardent spirits, is the promotion of co-operative industry. We shall probably all agree in holding that every hindrance ought to be removed out of the way of co-operation. But if it is proposed that the State should advance capital for this purpose, all sorts of objections arise, which the working people themselves are perfectly able to appreciate.

I pass on to the recent proposals of a new social movement, introduced with a moderation of tone which conciliated even Conservative peers. These proposals were seven in number.

The first two, I must say, appear to me to be chimerical upon the face of them. It was proposed that working men and their families should be housed in cottages with gardens at a moderate rent; and that food should be sold retail at wholesale prices. As to the latter, it would be simpler to enact that any one who would call at a certain office at a certain hour of the week should receive a shilling or so out of the public funds. The provision and regulation of public markets is another matter; what I understand to have been proposed is the selling of food at a reduced rate. This, I think, will not bear consideration. In seeking the other object, pleasing homes for all, we find ourselves grappling with the difficulties of space and time. We cannot live both in London and out of it. We could all get houses at a lower rent, and with gardens, in the country; but then we should lose the advantages of living near our work in London. The working people know very well that their housing is simply a matter of wages. Increase a man's wages, and he will be able to get into a better house. The distressing cases are those of people with the lowest wages and the largest families. For such persons everything is a difficulty,—food and clothing at least as much as house-room. If you are to give to them out of the public funds, you may as well give them one necessary as another.

Whenever the State undertakes to provide for the maintenance of any class, it will have

to do it at some sacrifice of their liberty. This is a consideration which disposes of all the invidious comparisons between poor people's houses and the fine stables and kennels of the rich. The rich might keep the poor in the luxury of the lower animals, if at the same time they controlled their liberties as they do those of the lower animals. In a paper advocating the first proposal, Mr. George Potter quotes from another writer a ludicrously imaginative account of the way in which a Swiss municipality would place its working people in agreeable homes. There would be other criticisms to make on this account; but I restrict myself to observing that the author quietly slips in the remark that the municipality would *flog the idle, the drunken, and the dissolute*. This condition surely deserves attention. Would the poorest people in this parish desire to be housed at somewhat lower rents by the Marylebone Vestry with the understanding that the Vestry would flog the idle, the drunken, and the dissolute? As a member of the Vestry, I should wish to decline this unpleasant responsibility.

The third proposal is that the hours of labour be shortened. On this point it might be enough to say that the working men in many employments throughout the country have just gained, through the determined combination of a portion of them, a definite reduction. But I will add an interesting quotation:—

"When Cromwell had abolished the feasts at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, and other festivals commonly called holidays, as tending towards superstition, and had introduced the strict observation of Sunday, the apprentices who by this 'were deprived not only of the benefit of visiting their friends and kindred, but also of all set times of pleasure and lawful recreations,' petitioned Parliament for the appointment by law of one day in every month for these purposes, and Parliament thereupon set apart for them the second Tuesday in every month. The masters, it appears, were in no way pleased at this, and curtailed their apprentices in the enjoyment of their 'play days;' whereupon Parliament, on a further petition from the apprentices, ordered that on these fixed play days all shops should remain closed." (English Guilds, p. clix.)

The remaining four points are as follows: (1) A further organisation of local government; (2) Technical instruction for skilled workmen; (3) Public parks, buildings, and institutions for innocent and improving recreation; and (4) The adequate organisation of the public service for the common good. There is nothing revolutionary in any of these demands. They are matters for administrative zeal and ability, and not for any struggle between classes, or conflict of parties. I should have supposed that there were subjects of greater importance, and of more

interest to the working classes now engaging public attention, such as the regulation of the sale of liquors, the abolition of the truck system, or the management of mines. But any judicious practical suggestions for promoting the above-mentioned objects of the Social Movement would, I think, be generally acceptable.

There is one inference to be drawn from this list of proposals, put forth by Mr. Scott Russell, on behalf of some active representatives of the working people; I mean, that it was not found possible to unite working-class opinion in favour of certain projects which do not appear in the list; such, *e.g.*, as that of aiding emigration largely with State funds, or that of multiplying in some way or other very small holdings of land. Both these projects are tempting; the former especially has excited a great deal of desire and hope. But it has been shown that one of the chief advantages looked for from emigration on a large scale, the thinning of the labour market at home, would be neutralised immediately by the immigration of cheap Irish and foreign labour. There is no country in Europe, I believe, not the most prosperous, in which the wages are not considerably lower than they are in England, and in which the working people do not live, in respect of food and clothing at least, somewhat more hardly. As regards the cultivation of land in small holdings, not only is there the primary difficulty of obtaining possession of the land and settling the cultivators on it, but the same causes which have changed the small industry to the great in manufactures seem to make it certain that the large cultivation must supersede the small in agriculture also.

Similarly, most projects which have in view the direct promotion of the economical interests of the working classes prove to be on examination either delusive or impracticable. For the raising of wages, the direct specifics are freedom of trade and of locomotion, and the accumulation of capital. Whatever tends to make men rich, tends also to increase employment and to raise the rate of wages for the poor. But whatever can be done to improve the social condition of the common people—to make their life more comfortable, more healthy, and more civilised—is of high value to the working classes in general; and if more can be done to this effect at the cost of those who are better off, that is a kind of Communism with which I have tried to persuade you that we all ought to sympathise.

The improvement of education, the creation of parks and gardens and fountains, the opening out of streets, the best sanitary arrangements, the provision of medical aid, the building of markets, and the like, may partially be promoted, as they have been, by the voluntary gifts of the rich. If they are to be made independent of the casual goodwill of the benevolent rich, the cost of them must be provided out of the rates. All such benefits involve a proportionate raising of our rates. And that places an obstacle in their way, which is apt in this country to be a difficult one to get over. If you read accounts of America or of Switzerland, which are the two model countries as regards the working people, and see with admiration and envy how much is done for education and in the general interest of the most numerous class of the citizens, you cannot help wishing that we should in some such respects imitate them. But if you also inquire what rates are paid in those countries, you will be amazed. The rates are not only what we should call high, but they are several times as heavy as ours are. We cannot hope to have great public improvements without paying for them. But then we are met by the appeal in behalf of "the poor rate-payer." It is common to speak as if the rate-payer were already burdened as heavily as he could possibly bear. That is only a way of talking; but could we not do something to meet the case of the poor rate-payer, without giving up the hope of more ambitious public improvements? I wish we could have the question of *graduated rating* taken into serious consideration. I have sometimes thought that a special rate for improvements above the necessary class might be laid, like the income-tax, on the more affluent. But it would be a simpler and more thorough plan to rate according to an ascending scale; and I do not see what better use the rich could make of their money than to pay liberally, under compulsion, towards all improvements which would tend to civilise the general life of the population. Only travellers know how much we, in wealthy England, are in such respects behind many poorer countries.

Now—to bring this rapid survey to a conclusion—let me ask what duty or policy it seems to suggest to the rich and to the poor respectively. It urges the rich to remember the old truth, that they are not owners but trustees of what they possess, and that it is the law of God the Creator that the capital held by any member of the community should be made serviceable to the community as a

whole. The rich are bound to be on their guard against doing harm by their riches—against demoralising the poorer classes, as they do so largely, by profligate expenditure, by careless almsgiving, by the temptations of their domestic service, and in other ways. Where riches abound, there will be employment and high wages, diffusing much general prosperity; but it is almost certain that there will be at the same time a pauperised residuum, the dregs of a wealthy nation, ruined by the fluctuations of employment and by the corruption of their self-respect. Whilst they should very earnestly consider how not to do harm, the rich are bound also to consider how they may do good. We want amongst our rich people, hardly more good-nature or kindness, but much more of the *communis sensus*, more patriotic ambition, more enterprise in promoting public benefits. Why should they not be more emulous of the Athenians of old, of the Americans of to-day, in public liberality?

To the working people our review suggests that they should strive to make themselves independent by combination. Let them combine—not in benefit clubs that are sure to break, nor in strikes that are sure to fail, but judiciously; let them try to *insure* themselves against the fluctuations of employment, against sickness, against old age, against the over-eagerness of capitalists, by wholesome combinations in as many forms as they find expedient. In policy, let them press for, not State grants that might bring windfalls to some, but such public improvements as might benefit all equally, and such as might reasonably be provided by a wealthy State for the mass of its citizens. Let them cherish the practical spirit of Englishmen, with its suspicion of wild schemes and extravagant promises.

Many of us are neither rich nor poor; we have no power to make imposing gifts, and no inducement to join co-operative societies or trades' unions or benefit clubs. But we have great influence on opinion and policy, peculiar opportunities of binding classes together. Let us use our opportunities for humane and Christian ends. We are subject to a double magnetism, and are drawn on the one hand towards the rich, on the other hand towards the poor. We may yield ourselves to either attraction; but let us remember that it is the spirit of the world that tempts us to make up to the rich, whilst the spirit of Christ bids us sympathise with the humble and the poor.

J. LLEWELYN DAVIES.