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THE SOUL OF MAN UNDER SOCIALISM

BY

OSCAR WILDE

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THE SOUL OF MAN
UNDER SOCIALISM,
THE SOCIALIST IDEAL—ART
AND
THE COMING SOLIDARITY.

BY
OSCAR WILDE,
WILLIAM MORRIS, W. C. OWEN.



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THE SOUL OF MAN.

THE SOUL OF MAN UNDER SOCIALISM.

THE chief advantage that would result from the establishment of Socialism is, undoubtedly, the fact that Socialism would relieve us from that sordid necessity of living for others which, in the present condition of things, presses so hardly upon almost everybody. In fact, scarcely anyone at all escapes.

Now and then, in the course of the century, a great man of science, like Darwin; a great poet, like Keats; a fine critical spirit, like M. Renan; a supreme artist, like Flaubert, has been able to isolate himself, to keep himself out of reach of the clamorous claims of others, to stand "under the shelter of the wall," as Plato puts it, and so to realize the perfection of what was in him, to his own incomparable gain, and to the incomparable and lasting gain of the whole world. These, however, are exceptions. The majority of people spoil their lives by an unhealthy and exaggerated altruism—are forced, indeed, so to spoil them. They find themselves surrounded by hideous poverty, by hideous ugliness, by hideous starvation. It is inevitable that they should be strongly moved by all this. The emotions of man are stirred more quickly than man's intelligence; and, as I pointed out some time ago in an article on the function of criticism, it is much more easy to have sympathy with suffering than it is to have sympathy with thought. Accordingly, with admirable though misdirected intentions, they very seriously and very sentimentally set themselves to the task of remedying the evils that they see. But their remedies do not cure the disease: they merely prolong it. Indeed, their remedies are part of the disease.

They try to solve the problem of poverty, for instance, by keeping the poor alive; or, in the case of a very advanced school, by amusing the poor.

But this is not a solution: it is an aggravation of the difficulty. *The proper aim is to try and reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty*

will be impossible. And the altruistic virtues have really prevented the carrying out of this aim. Just as the worst slave-owners were those who were kind to their slaves, and so prevented the horror of the system being realized by those who suffered from it, and understood by those who contemplated it, so, in the present state of things in England, the people who do most harm are the people who try to do most good ; and at last we have had the spectacle of men who have really studied the problem and know the life—educated men who live in the East-End—coming forward and imploring the community to restrain its altruistic impulses of charity, benevolence, and the like. They do so on the ground that such charity degrades and demoralizes. They are perfectly right. Charity creates a multitude of sins.

There is also this to be said. It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property. It is both immoral and unfair.

Under Socialism all this will, of course, be altered. There will be no people living in fetid dens and fetid rags, and bringing up unhealthy, hunger-pinched children in the midst of impossible and absolutely repulsive surroundings. The security of society will not depend, as it does now, on the state of the weather. If a frost comes we shall not have a hundred thousand men out of work, tramping about the streets in a state of disgusting misery, or whining to their neighbors for alms, or crowding round the doors of loathsome shelters to try and secure a hunch of bread and a night's unclean lodging. Each member of the society will share in the general prosperity and happiness of the society, and if a frost comes no one will practically be anything the worse.

Upon the other hand, *Socialism itself will be of value simply because it will lead to Individualism.*

Socialism, Communism, or whatever one chooses to call it, by converting private property into public wealth, and substituting co-operation for competition, will restore society to its proper condition of a thoroughly healthy organism, and insure the material well-being of each member of the community. It will, in fact, give life its proper basis and its proper environment. But for the full development of life to its highest mode of perfection, something more is needed. What is needed is Individualism. If the Socialism is authoritarian ; if there are governments armed with economic power as they are now with political power ; if, in a word, we are to have industrial tyrannies, then the last state of man will be worse than the first. At present, in consequence of the existence of private property, a great many people are enabled to develop a certain very limited amount of Individualism. They are either under no necessity to work for their living, or are enabled to choose the sphere of activity that is really congenial to them and gives them pleasure. These are

the poets, the philosophers, the men of science, the men of culture—in a word, the real men, the men who have realised themselves, and in whom all humanity gains a partial realisation. Upon the other hand, there are a great many people who, having no private property of their own, and being always on the brink of sheer starvation, are compelled to do the work of beasts of burden, to do work that is quite uncongenial to them, and to which they are forced by the peremptory, unreasonable, degrading tyranny of want. These are the poor, and amongst them there is no grace of manner, or charm of speech, or civilization, or culture, or refinement in pleasures, or joy of life. From their collective force humanity gains much in material prosperity. But it is only the material result that it gains, and the man who is poor is in himself absolutely of no importance. He is merely the infinitesimal atom of a force that, so far from regarding him, crushes him : indeed, prefers him crushed, as in that case he is far more obedient.

Of course, it might be said that the Individualism generated under conditions of private property is not always, or even as a rule, of a fine or wonderful type, and that the poor, if they have not culture and charm, have still many virtues. Both these statements would be quite true. The possession of private property is very often extremely demoralising, and that is, of course, one of the reasons why Socialism wants to get rid of the institution. In fact, property is really a nuisance. Some years ago people went about the country saying that property has duties. They said it so often and so tediously that at last the Church has begun to say it. One hears it now from every pulpit. It is perfectly true. Property not merely has duties, but has so many duties that its possession to any large extent is a bore. It involves endless claims upon one, endless attention to business, endless bother. If property had simply pleasures, we could stand it ; but its duties make it unbearable. In the interest of the rich we must get rid of it. The virtues of the poor may be readily admitted, and are much to be regretted. We are often told that the poor are grateful for charity. Some of them are, no doubt, *but the best among the poor are never grateful*. They are ungrateful, discontented, disobedient, and rebellious. They are quite right to be so. Charity they feel to be a ridiculously inadequate mode of partial restitution, or a sentimental dole, usually accompanied by some impertinent attempt on the part of the sentimentalist to tyrannize over their private lives. Why should they be grateful for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table ? They should be seated at the board, and are beginning to know it. As for being discontented, a man who would not be discontented with such surroundings and such a low mode of life would be a perfect brute. Disobedience, in the eyes of any one who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that

progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion. Sometimes the poor are praised for being thrifty. But to recommend thrift to the poor is both grotesque and insulting. It is like advising a man who is starving to eat less. For a town or country laborer to practice thrift would be absolutely immoral. Man should not be ready to show that he can live like a badly-fed animal. He should decline to live like that, and should either steal or go on the rates, which is considered by many to be a form of stealing. As for begging, it is safer to beg than to take, but it is finer to take than to beg. No ; a poor man who is ungrateful, unthrifty, discontented and rebellious is probably a real personality, and has much in him. He is at any rate a healthy protest. As for the virtuous poor, one can pity them, of course, but one cannot possibly admire them. They have made private terms with the enemy, and sold their birthright for very bad pottage. They must also be extraordinarily stupid. I can quite understand a man accepting laws that protect private property, and admit of its accumulation, as long as he himself is able under those conditions to realise some form of beautiful and intellectual life. But it is almost incredible to me how a man whose life is marred and made hideous by such laws can possibly acquiesce in their continuance.

However, the explanation is not really difficult to find. It is simply this. Misery and poverty are so absolutely degrading, and exercise such a paralyzing effect over the nature of men, that no class is ever really conscious of its own suffering. They have to be told of it by other people, and they often entirely disbelieve them. What is said by great employers of labor against agitators is unquestionably true. Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community and sow the seeds of discontent among them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary. Without them, in our incomplete state, there would be no advance toward civilization. Slavery was put down in America, not in consequence of any action on the part of the slaves, or even any express desire on their part that they should be free. It was put down entirely through the grossly illegal conduct of certain agitators in Boston and elsewhere, who were not slaves themselves, nor owners of slaves, nor had anything to do with the question really. It was, undoubtedly, the Abolitionists who set the torch alight, who began the whole thing. And it is curious to note that from the slaves themselves they received, not merely very little assistance, but hardly any sympathy even ; and when, at the close of the war, the slaves found themselves free—found themselves, indeed, so absolutely free that they were free to starve—many of them bitterly regretted the new state of things. To the thinker, the most tragic fact in the whole of the French Revolution is not that Marie

Antoinette was killed for being a queen, but that the starved peasant of the Vendee voluntarily went out to die for the hideous cause of feudalism.

It is clear, then, that no authoritarian Socialism will do. For while, under the present system, a very large number of people can lead lives of a certain amount of freedom and expression and happiness, under an industrial-barrack system, or a system of economic tyranny, nobody would be able to have any such freedom at all. It is to be regretted that a portion of our community should be practically in slavery, but to propose to solve the problem by enslaving the entire community is childish. Every man must be left quite free to choose his own work. No form of compulsion must be exercised over him. If there is, his work will not be good for him, will not be good in itself, and will not be good for others. And by work I simply mean activity of any kind.

I hardly think that any Socialist, nowadays, would seriously propose that an inspector should call every morning at each house to see that each citizen rose up and did manual labor for eight hours. Humanity has got beyond that stage, and reserves such a form of life for the people whom, in a very arbitrary manner, it chooses to call criminals. But I confess that many of the Socialistic views that I have come across, seem to me to be tainted with ideas of authority, if not of actual compulsion. Of course, authority and compulsion are out of the question. All association must be quite voluntary. *It is only in voluntary associations that man is free.*

But it may be asked how Individualism, which is now more or less dependent on the existence of private property for its development, will benefit by the abolition of such private property. The answer is very simple. It is true that, under existing conditions, a few men who have had private means of their own, such as Byron, Shelley, Browning, Victor Hugo, Baudelaire and others, have been able to realise their personality more or less completely. Not one of these men ever did a single day's work for hire. They were relieved from poverty. They had an immense advantage. The question is whether it would be for the good of Individualism that such an advantage should be taken away. Let us suppose that it is taken away. What happens then to Individualism? How will it benefit?

It will benefit in this way. Under the new conditions Individualism will be far freer, far finer, and far more intensified than it is now. I am not talking of the great imaginatively-realised Individualism of such poets as I have mentioned, but of the great actual Individualism latent and potential in mankind generally. For the recognition of private property has really harmed Individualism, and obscured it, by confusing a man with what he possesses. It has led Individualism entirely astray. It has made gain, not growth, its aim. So that man

thought that the important thing was to have, and did not know that the important thing is to be. *The true perfection of man lies, not in what man has, but in what man is.* Private property has crushed true Individualism, and set up an Individualism that is false. It has debarred one part of the community from being individual by starving them. It has debarred the other part of the community from being individual by putting them on the wrong road, and encumbering them. Indeed, so completely has man's personality been absorbed by his possessions that the English law has always treated offences against a man's property with far more severity than offences against his person, and property is still the test of complete citizenship. The industry necessary for the making money is also very demoralizing. In a community like ours, where property confers immense distinction, social position, honor, respect, titles, and other pleasant things of the kind, man, being naturally ambitious, makes it his aim to accumulate this property, and goes on wearily and tediously accumulating it long after he has got far more than he wants, or can use, or enjoy, or perhaps even know of. Man will kill himself by overwork in order to secure property, and really, considering the enormous advantages that property brings, one is hardly surprised. One's regret is that society should be constructed on such a basis that man has been forced into a groove in which he cannot freely develop what is wonderful and fascinating and delightful in him—in which, in fact, he misses the true pleasure and joy of living. He is also, under existing conditions, very insecure. An enormously wealthy merchant may be—often is—at every moment of his life at the mercy of things that are not under his control. If the wind blows an extra point or so, or the weather suddenly changes, or some trivial thing happens, his ship may go down, his speculations may go wrong, and he finds himself a poor man, with his social position quite gone. Now, nothing should be able to harm a man except himself. Nothing should be able to rob a man at all. What a man really has, is what is in him. What is outside of him should be a matter of no importance.

With the abolition of private property, then, we shall have true, beautiful, healthy Individualism. Nobody will waste his life in accumulating things and the symbols for things. One will live. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist—that is all.

It is a question whether we have ever seen the full expression of a personality, except on the imaginative plane of art. In action, we never have. Cæsar, says Mommsen, was the complete and perfect man. But how tragically insecure was Cæsar! Wherever there is a man who exercises authority, there is a man who resists authority. Cæsar was very perfect, but his perfection traveled by too dangerous a road. Marcus Aurelius was the perfect man, says Renan. Yes; the great emperor was a perfect man. But how intolerable were the

endless claims upon him! He staggered under the burden of the empire. He was conscious how inadequate one man was to bear the weight of that Titan and too vast orb. What I mean by a perfect man is one who develops under perfect conditions; one who is not wounded, or worried, or maimed, or in danger. *Most personalities have been obliged to be rebels. Half their strength has been wasted in friction.* Byron's personality, for instance, was terribly wasted in its battle with the stupidity and hypocrisy and Philistinism of the English. Such battles do not always intensify strength; they often exaggerate weakness. Byron was never able to give us what he might have given us. Shelley escaped better. Like Byron, he got out of England as soon as possible. But he was not so well known. If the English had had any idea of what a great poet he really was, they would have fallen on him with tooth and nail, and made his life as unbearable to him as they possibly could. But he was not a remarkable figure in society, and consequently he escaped, to a certain degree. Still, even in Shelley the note of rebellion is sometimes too strong. The note of the perfect personality is not rebellion, but peace.

It will be a marvelous thing—the true personality of man—when we see it. It will grow naturally and simply, flower-like, or as a tree grows. It will not be at discord. It will never argue or dispute. It will not prove things. It will know everything. And yet it will not busy itself about knowledge. It will have wisdom. Its value will not be measured by material things. It will have nothing. And yet it will have everything; and whatever one takes from it, it will still have—so rich will it be. It will not be always meddling with others, or asking them to be like itself. It will love them because they will be different. And yet, while it will not meddle with others it will help all, as a beautiful thing helps us by being what it is. The personality of man will be very wonderful. It will be as wonderful as the personality of a child.

In its development it will be assisted by Christianity, if men desire that; but if men do not desire that, it will develop none the less surely. For it will not worry itself about the past, nor care whether things happened nor did not happen. Nor will it admit any laws but its own laws; nor any authority but its own authority. Yet it will love those who sought to intensify it, and speak often of them. And of these Christ was one.

"Know thyself" was written over the portal of the antique world. Over the portal of the new world, "Be thyself" shall be written. And the message of Christ to man was simply, "Be thyself." That is the secret of Christ.

When Jesus talks about the poor he simply means personalities, just as when he talks about the rich he simply means people who have not

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developed their personalities. Jesus moved in a community that allowed the accumulation of private property just as ours does, and the gospel that he preached was not that in such a community it is an advantage for a man to live on scanty, unwholesome food; to wear ragged, unwholesome clothes; to sleep in horrid, unwholesome dwellings; and a disadvantage for a man to live under healthy, pleasant, and decent conditions. Such a view would have been wrong there and then, and would, of course, be still more wrong now and in England; for as man moves northward the material necessities of life become of more vital importance, and our society is infinitely more complex and displays far greater extremes of luxury and pauperism than any society of the antique world. What Jesus meant was this: he said to man, "You have a wonderful personality. Develop it; be yourself. Don't imagine that your perfection lies in accumulating or possessing external things. Your perfection is inside of you. If only you could realize that, you would not want to be rich. Ordinary riches can be stolen from a man. Real riches cannot. In the treasury-house of your soul there are infinitely precious things that may not be taken from you. And so, try to so shape your life that external things will not harm you. And try, also, to get rid of personal property. It involves sordid pre-occupation, endless industry, continual wrong. Personal property hinders individualism at every step." It is to be noted that Jesus never says that impoverished people are necessarily good, or wealthy people necessarily bad. That would not have been true. Wealthy people are, as a class, better than impoverished people—more moral, more intellectual, more well-behaved. *There is only one class in the community that thinks more about money than the rich, and that is the poor.* The poor can think of nothing else. That is the misery of being poor. What Jesus does say is, that man reaches his perfection, not through what he has, nor even through what he does, but entirely through what he is. And so the wealthy young man who comes to Jesus is represented as a thoroughly good citizen, who has broken none of the laws of his State, none of the commandments of his religion. He is quite respectable, in the ordinary sense of that extraordinary word. Jesus says to him: "You should give up private property. It hinders you from realizing your perfection. It is a drag upon you. It is a burden. Your personality does not need it. It is within you, and not outside of you, that you will find what you really are and what you really want." To his own friends he says the same thing. He tells them to be themselves, and not to be always worrying about other things. What do other things matter? Man is complete in himself. When they go into the world, the world will disagree with them. That is inevitable. The world hates Individualism. But this is not to trouble them. They are to be calm and self-centered. If a man takes their cloak, they are to

give him their coat, just to show that material things are of no importance. If people abuse them, they are not to answer back. What does it signify? The things people say of a man do not alter a man. He is what he is. Public opinion is of no value whatsoever. Even if people employ actual violence, they are not to be violent in turn. That would be to fall to the same low level. After all, even in prison, a man can be quite free. His soul can be free. His personality can be untroubled. He can be at peace. And, above all things, they are not to interfere with other people or judge them in any way. Personality is a very mysterious thing. A man cannot always be estimated by what he does. He may keep the law, and yet be worthless. He may break the law, and yet be fine. He may be bad, without ever doing anything bad. He may commit a sin against society, and yet realize through that sin his true perfection.

There was a woman who was taken in adultery. We are not told the history of her love, but that love must have been very great, for Jesus said that her sins were forgiven her, not because she repented, but because her love was so intense and wonderful. Later on, a short time before his death, as he sat at a feast, the woman came in and poured costly perfumes on his hair. His friends tried to interfere with her, and said that it was an extravagance, and that the money that the perfume cost should have been expended on charitable relief of people in want, or something of that kind. Jesus did not accept that view. He pointed out that the material needs of man were great and very permanent, but that the spiritual needs of man were greater still, and that in one divine moment, and by selecting its own mode of expression, a personality might make itself perfect. The world worships the woman, even now, as a saint.

Yes; there are suggestive things in Individualism. Socialism annihilates family life, for instance. With the abolition of private property, marriage in its present form must disappear. This is part of the programme. Individualism accepts this and makes it fine. It converts the abolition of legal restraint into a form of freedom that will help the full development of personality, and make the love of man and woman more wonderful, more beautiful, and more ennobling. Jesus knew this. He rejected the claims of family life, although they existed in his day and community in a very marked form. "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" he said, when he was told that they wished to speak to him. When one of his followers asked leave to go and bury his father, "Let the dead bury the dead" was his terrible answer. He would allow no claim whatsoever to be made on personality.

And so he who would lead a Christ-like life is he who is perfectly and absolutely himself. He may be a great poet or a great man of science; or a young student at a university, or one who watches

sheep upon a moor ; or a maker of dramas, like Shakespeare, or a thinker about God, like Spinoza ; or a child who plays in a garden, or a fisherman who throws his nets into the sea. It does not matter what he is, as long as he realizes the perfection of the soul that is within him. All imitation in morals and in life is wrong. Through the streets of Jerusalem at the present day crawls one who is mad and carries a wooden cross on his shoulders. He is a symbol of the lives that are marred by imitation. Father Damien was Christ-like when he went out to live with the lepers, because in such service he realized fully what was best in him. But he was not more Christ-like than Wagner, when he realized his soul in music ; or than Shelley, when he realized his soul in song. There is no one type for man. There are as many perfections as there are imperfect men. And while to the claims of charity a man may yield and yet be free, to the claims of conformity no man may yield and remain free at all.

Individualism, then, is what through Socialism we are to attain to. As a natural result the State must give up all idea of government. It must give it up because, as a wise man once said many centuries before Christ, there is such a thing as leaving mankind alone ; there is no such thing as governing mankind. *All modes of government are failures.* Despotism is unjust to everybody, including the despot, who was probably made for better things. Oligarchies are unjust to the many, and ochlocracies are unjust to the few. High hopes were once formed of democracy ; but democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people. It has been found out. I must say that it was high time, for all authority is quite degrading. It degrades those who exercise it, and degrades those over whom it is exercised. When it is violently, grossly, and cruelly used, it produces a good effect, by creating, or at any rate bringing out, the spirit of revolt and individualism that is to kill it. When it is used with a certain amount of kindness, and accompanied by prizes and rewards, it is dreadfully demoralizing. People, in that case, are less conscious of the horrible pressure that is being put on them, and so go through their lives in a sort of coarse comfort, like petted animals, without ever realizing that they are probably thinking other people's thoughts, living by other people's standards, wearing practically what one may call other people's second-hand clothes, and never being themselves for a single moment. "He who would be free," says a fine thinker, "must not conform." And authority, by bribing people to conform, produces a very gross kind of overfed barbarism among us.

With authority, punishment will pass away. This will be a great gain—a gain, in fact, of incalculable value. As one reads history—not in the expurgated editions written for schoolboys and passmen, but in the original authorities of each time—one is absolutely sickened, not by the crimes that the wicked have committed, but by the punishments

that the good have inflicted ; *and a community is infinitely more brutalized by the habitual employment of punishment, than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime.* It obviously follows that the more punishment is inflicted the more crime is produced, and most modern legislation has clearly recognized this, and has made it its task to diminish punishment as far as it thinks it can. Wherever it has really diminished it, the results have always been extremely good. The less punishment, the less crime. When there is no punishment at all, crime will either cease to exist, or, if it occurs, will be treated by physicians as a very distressing form of dementia, to be cured by care and kindness. For what are called criminals nowadays are not criminals at all. Starvation, and not sin, is the parent of modern crime. That, indeed, is the reason why our criminals are, as a class, so absolutely uninteresting from any psychological point of view. They are not marvelous *Macbeths* and terrible *Vautrins*. They are merely what ordinary, respectable, commonplace people would be if they had not got enough to eat. When private property is abolished, there will be no necessity for crime, no demand for it ; it will cease to exist. Of course, all crimes are not crimes against property, though such are the crimes that the English law, valuing what a man has more than what a man is, punishes with the harshest and most horrible severity, if we except the crime of murder, and regard death as worse than penal servitude, a point on which our criminals, I believe, disagree. But though a crime may not be against property, it may spring from the misery and rage and depression produced by our wrong system of property-holding, and so, when that system is abolished, will disappear. When each member of the community has sufficient for his wants, and is not interfered with by his neighbor, it will not be an object of any interest to him to interfere with anyone else. Jealousy, which is an extraordinary source of crime in modern life, is an emotion closely bound up with our conceptions of property, and under Socialism and Individualism will die out. It is remarkable that in communistic tribes jealousy is entirely unknown.

Now, as the State is not to govern, it may be asked what the State is to do. The State is to be a voluntary association that will organize labor, and be the manufacturer and distributor of necessary commodities. *The State is to make what is useful. The individual is to make what is beautiful.* And as I have mentioned the word labor, I cannot help saying that a great deal of nonsense is being written and talked nowadays about the dignity of manual labor. There is nothing necessarily dignified about manual labor at all, and most of it is absolutely degrading. It is mentally and morally injurious to man to do anything in which he does not find pleasure, and many forms of labor are quite pleasureless activities, and should be regarded as such. To sweep a slushy crossing for eight hours on a day when the east wind

is blowing is a disgusting occupation. To sweep it with mental, moral or physical dignity seems to me to be impossible. To sweep it with joy would be appalling. Man is made for something better than disturbing dirt. All work of that kind should be done by a machine.

And I have no doubt that it will be so. Up to the present, man has been, to a certain extent, the slave of machinery, and there is something tragic in the fact that as soon as man had invented a machine to do his work he began to starve. This, however, is, of course, the result of our property system and our system of competition. One man owns a machine which does the work of five hundred men. Five hundred men are, in consequence, thrown out of employment, and, having no work to do, become hungry and take to thieving. The one man secures the produce of the machine and keeps it, and has five hundred times as much as he should have, and probably, which is of much more importance, a great deal more than he really wants. Were that machine the property of all, every one would benefit by it. It would be an immense advantage to the community. All unintellectual labor; all monotonous, dull labor; all labor that deals with dreadful things, and involves unpleasant conditions, must be done by machinery. Machinery must work for us in coal mines, and do all sanitary services, and be the stoker of steamers, and clean the streets, and run messages on wet days, and do anything that is tedious or distressing. *At present machinery competes against man. Under proper conditions machinery will serve man.* There is no doubt at all that this is the future of machinery; and just as trees grow while the country gentleman is asleep, so while humanity will be amusing itself, or enjoying cultivated leisure—which, and not labor, is the aim of man—or making beautiful things, or reading beautiful things, or simply contemplating the world with admiration and delight, machinery will be doing all the necessary and unpleasant work. The fact is, that civilization requires slaves. The Greeks were quite right there. Unless there are slaves to do the ugly, horrible, uninteresting work, culture and contemplation become almost impossible. Human slavery is wrong, insecure, and demoralizing. On mechanical slavery, on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends. And when scientific men are no longer called upon to go down to a depressing East-End and distribute bad cocoa and worse blankets to starving people, they will have delightful leisure in which to devise wonderful and marvelous things for their own joy and the joy of everyone else. There will be great storages of force for every city, and for every house if required, and this force man will convert into heat, light, or motion, according to his needs. Is this Utopian? A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which humanity is always landing. And when

Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias.

Now, I have said that the community by means of organization of machinery will supply the useful things, and that the beautiful things will be made by the individual. This is not merely necessary, but it is the only possible way by which we can get either the one or the other. An individual who has to make things for the use of others, and with reference to their wants and their wishes, does not work with interest, and consequently cannot put into his work what is best in him. Upon the other hand, whenever a community or a powerful section of a community, or a government of any kind, attempts to dictate to the artist what he is to do, art either entirely vanishes, or becomes stereotyped, or degenerates into a low and ignoble form of craft. *A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want.* Indeed, the moment that an artist takes notice of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an amusing craftsman, an honest or a dishonest tradesman. He has no further claim to be considered as an artist. *Art is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known.* I am inclined to say that it is the only real mode of Individualism that the world has known. Crime, which, under certain conditions, may seem to have created Individualism, must take cognizance of other people and interfere with them. It belongs to the sphere of action. But alone, without any reference to his neighbors, without any interference, the artist can fashion a beautiful thing; and if he does not do it solely for his own pleasure, he is not an artist at all.

And it is to be noted that it is the fact that art is this intense form of Individualism that makes the public try to exercise over it an authority that is as immoral as it is ridiculous, and as corrupting as it is contemptible. It is not quite their fault. The public have always, and in every age, been badly brought up. They are continually asking art to be popular, to please their want of taste, to flatter their absurd vanity, to tell them what they have been told before, to show them what they ought to be tired of seeing, to amuse them when they feel heavy after eating too much, and to distract their thoughts when they are wearied of their own stupidity. *Now, art should never try to be popular. The public should try to make themselves artistic.* There is a very wide difference. If a man of science were told that the results of his experiments, and the conclusions that he arrived at, should be of such a character that they would not upset the received popular notions on the subject, or disturb popular prejudice, or hurt the sensibilities of people who knew nothing about science; if a philosopher were told that he had a perfect right to speculate in the

highest spheres of thought, provided that he arrived at the same conclusions as were held by those who had never thought in any sphere at all—well, nowadays, the man of science and the philosopher would be considerably amused. Yet it is really a very few years since both philosophy and science were subjected to brutal popular control, to authority in fact—the authority of either the general ignorance of the community, or the terror and greed for power of an ecclesiastical or governmental class. Of course, we have to a very great extent got rid of any attempt on the part of the community, or the Church, or the government, to interfere with the individualism of speculative thought, but the attempt to interfere with the individualism of imaginative art still lingers. In fact, it does more than linger ; it is aggressive, offensive, and brutalizing.

In England, the arts that have escaped best are the arts in which the public take no interest. Poetry is an instance of what I mean. We have been able to have fine poetry in England because the public do not read it, and consequently do not influence it. The public like to insult poets because they are individual, but once they have insulted them they leave them alone. In the case of the novel and the drama, arts in which the public do take an interest, the result of the exercise of popular authority has been absolutely ridiculous. No country produces such badly-written fiction, such tedious, common work in the novel-form, such silly, vulgar plays, as in England. It must necessarily be so. The popular standard is of such a character that no artist can get to it. It is at once too easy and too difficult to be a popular novelist. It is too easy, because the requirements of the public as far as plot, style, psychology, treatment of life, and treatment of literature are concerned are within the reach of the very meanest capacity and the most uncultivated mind. It is too difficult, because to meet such requirements the artist would have to do violence to his temperament, would have to write not for the artistic joy of writing, but for the amusement of half-educated people, and so would have to suppress his individualism, forget his culture, annihilate his style, and surrender everything that is valuable in him. In the case of the drama, things are a little better : the theatre-going public like the obvious, it is true, but they do not like the tedious ; and burlesque and farcical comedy, the two most popular forms, are distinct forms of art. Delightful work may be produced under burlesque and farcical conditions, and in work of this kind the artist in England is allowed very great freedom. It is when one comes to the higher forms of the drama that the result of popular control is seen. The one thing that the public dislike is novelty. Any attempt to extend the subject-matter of art is extremely distasteful to the public ; and yet the vitality and progress of art depend in a large measure on the continual extension of subject-matter. The public dislike novelty

because they are afraid of it. It represents to them a mode of Individualism, an assertion on the part of the artist that he selects his own subject, and treats it as he chooses. The public are quite right in their attitude. Art is Individualism, and Individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. Therein lies its immense value. For what it seeks to disturb is monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine. In art, the public accept what has been, because they cannot alter it, not because they appreciate it. They swallow their classics whole, and never taste them. They endure them as the inevitable, and, as they cannot mar them, they mouth about them. Strangely enough, or not strangely, according to one's own views, this acceptance of the classics does a great deal of harm. The uncritical admiration of the Bible and Shakespeare in England is an instance of what I mean. With regard to the Bible, considerations of ecclesiastical authority enter into the matter, so that I need not dwell upon the point.

But in the case of Shakespeare it is quite obvious that the public really see neither the beauties nor the defects of his plays. If they saw the beauties, they would not object to the development of the drama; and if they saw the defects, they would not object to the development of the drama either. *The fact is, the public make use of the classics of a country as a means of checking the progress of art.* They degrade the classics into authorities. They use them as bludgeons for preventing the free expression of beauty in new forms. They are always asking a writer why he does not write like somebody else, or a painter why he does not paint like somebody else, quite oblivious of the fact that if either of them did anything of the kind he would cease to be an artist. A fresh mode of beauty is absolutely distasteful to them, and whenever it appears they get so angry and bewildered that they always use two stupid expressions—one is, that the work of art is grossly unintelligible; the other, that the work of art is grossly immoral. What they mean by these words seems to me to be this. When they say a work is grossly unintelligible, they mean that the artist has said or made a beautiful thing that is new; when they describe a work as grossly immoral, they mean that the artist has said or made a beautiful thing that is true. The former expression has reference to style; the latter to subject matter. But they probably use the words very vaguely, as an ordinary mob will use ready-made paving-stones. *There is not a single real poet or prose-writer of this century, for instance, on whom the British public have not solemnly conferred diplomas of immorality,* and these diplomas practically take the place, with us, of what in France is the formal recognition of an Academy of Letters, and fortunately make the establishment of such an institution quite unnecessary in England. Of course the public are very reckless in their use of the word. That they should have called Wordsworth an

immoral poet, was only to be expected. Wordsworth was a poet. But that they should have called Charles Kingsley an immoral novelist is extraordinary. Kingsley's prose was not of a very fine quality. Still, there is the word, and they use it as best they can. An artist is, of course, not disturbed by it. The true artist is a man who believes absolutely in himself, because he is absolutely himself. But I can fancy that if an artist produced a work of art in England, that immediately on its appearance was recognized by the public, through their medium, which is the public press, as a work that was quite intelligible and highly moral, he would begin to seriously question whether in its creation he had really been himself at all, and, consequently, whether the work was not quite unworthy of him, and either of a thoroughly second-rate order or of no artistic value whatsoever.

Perhaps, however, I have wronged the public in limiting them to such words as "immoral," "unintelligible," "exotic," and "unhealthy." There is one other word that they use. That word is "morbid." They do not use it often. The meaning of the word is so simple that they are afraid of using it. Still, they use it sometimes, and, now and then, one comes across it in popular newspapers. It is, of course, a ridiculous word to apply to a work of art. For what is morbidity but a mood of emotion or a mode of thought that one cannot express? The public are all morbid, because the public can never find expression for anything. *The artist is never morbid. He expresses everything.* He stands outside his subject, and through its medium produces incomparable and artistic effects. To call an artist morbid because he deals with morbidity as his subject-matter is as silly as if one called Shakespeare mad because he wrote "King Lear."

On the whole, an artist in England gains something by being attacked. His individuality is intensified. He becomes more completely himself. Of course, the attacks are very gross, very impertinent, and very contemptible. But, then, no artist expects grace from the vulgar mind, or style from the suburban intellect. Vulgarity and stupidity are two very vivid facts in modern life. One regrets them, naturally. But there they are. They are subjects for study, like everything else. And it is only fair to state, with regard to modern journalists, that they always apologize to one in private for what they have written against one in public.

Within the last few years two other adjectives, it may be mentioned, have been added to the very limited vocabulary of art-abuse that is at the disposal of the public. One is the word "unhealthy," the other is the word "exotic." The latter merely expresses the rage of the momentary mushroom against the immortal, entrancing, and exquisitely-lovely orchid. It is a tribute, but a tribute of no import-

ance. The word "unhealthy," however, admits of analysis. It is a rather interesting word. In fact, it is so interesting that the people who use it do not know what it means.

What does it mean? What is a healthy or an unhealthy work of art? All terms that one applies to a work of art, provided that one applies them rationally, have reference to either its style or its subject, or to both together. From the point of view of style, a healthy work of art is one whose style recognizes the beauty of the material it employs, be that material one of words or of bronze, of color or of ivory, and uses that beauty as a factor in producing the æsthetic effect. From the point of view of subject, a healthy work of art is one the choice of whose subject is conditioned by the temperament of the artist, and comes directly out of it. In fine, a healthy work of art is one that has both perfection and personality. Of course, form and substance cannot be separated in a work of art; they are always one. But for purposes of analysis, and setting the wholeness of æsthetic impression aside for a moment, we can intellectually so separate them. An unhealthy work of art, on the other hand, is a work whose style is obvious, old-fashioned, and common, and whose subject is deliberately chosen, not because the artist has any pleasure in it, but because he thinks that the public will pay him for it. *In fact, the popular novel that the public call healthy is always a thoroughly unhealthy production, and what the public call an unhealthy novel is always a beautiful and healthy work of art.*

I need hardly say that I am not, for a single moment, complaining that the public and the public press misuse these words. I do not see how, with their lack of comprehension of what art is, they could possibly use them in the proper sense. I am merely pointing out the misuse; and as for the origin of the misuse and the meaning that lies behind it all, the explanation is very simple. It comes from the barbarous conception of authority. It comes from the natural inability of a community corrupted by authority to understand or appreciate Individualism. In a word, it comes from that monstrous and ignorant thing that is called public opinion, which bad and well-meaning as it is when it tries to control action, is infamous and of evil meaning when it tries to control thought or art.

Indeed, there is much more to be said in favor of the physical force of the public than there is in favor of the public's opinion. The former may be fine. The latter must be foolish. It is often said that force is no argument. That, however, entirely depends on what one wants to prove. Many of the most important problems of the last few centuries, such as the continuance of personal government in England, or of feudalism in France, have been solved entirely by means of physical force. The very violence of a revolution may make the public grand and splendid for a moment. It was a fatal

day when the public discovered that the pen is mightier than the paving-stone, and can be made as offensive as the brickbat. They at once sought for the journalist, found him, developed him, and made him their industrious and well-paid servant. It is greatly to be regretted, for both their sakes. Behind the barricade there may be much that is noble and heroic. *But what is there behind the leading article but prejudice, stupidity, cant, and twaddle?* And when these four are joined together they make a terrible force, and constitute the new authority.

In old days men had the rack. Now they have the press. That is an improvement, certainly. But still it is very bad and wrong and demoralising. Somebody—was it Burke?—called journalism the fourth estate. That was true at the time, no doubt. But at the present moment it really is the only estate. It has eaten up the other three. The Lords Temporal say nothing, the Lords Spiritual have nothing to say, and the House of Commons has nothing to say and says it. We are dominated by journalism. In America the President reigns for four years, and journalism governs for ever and ever. Fortunately, in America journalism has carried its authority to the grossest and most brutal extreme. As a natural consequence, it has begun to create a spirit of revolt. People are amused by it, or disgusted by it, according to their temperaments. But it is no longer the real force it was. It is not seriously treated. In England, journalism, not, except in a few well-known instances, having been carried to such excesses of brutality, is still a great factor, a really remarkable power. The tyranny that it proposes to exercise over people's private lives seems to me to be quite extraordinary. *The fact is, that the public have an insatiable curiosity to know everything except what is worth knowing.* Journalism, conscious of this, and having tradesman-like habits, supplies their demands. In centuries before ours the public nailed the ears of journalists to the pump. That was quite hideous. In this century journalists have nailed their own ears to the keyhole. That is much worse. And what aggravates the mischief is that the journalists who are most to blame are not the amusing journalists who write for what are called society papers. The harm is done by the serious, thoughtful, earnest journalists, who solemnly, as they are doing at present, will drag before the eyes of the public some incident in the private life of a great statesman, of a man who is a leader of political thought as he is a creator of political force, and invite the public to discuss the incident, to exercise authority in the matter, to give their views, and not merely to give their views, but to carry them into action, to dictate to the man upon all other points, to dictate to his party, to dictate to his country; in fact, to make themselves ridiculous, offensive, and harmful. The private lives of men and women should not be told to the public. The public have nothing

to do with them at all. In France they manage these things better. There they do not allow the details of the trials that take place in the divorce courts to be published for the amusement or criticism of the public. All that the public are allowed to know is that the divorce has taken place and was granted on petition of one or other or both of the married parties concerned. In France, in fact, they limit the journalist, and allow the artist almost perfect freedom. *Here we allow absolute freedom to the journalist, and entirely limit the artist.* English public opinion, that is to say, tries to constrain and impede and warp the man who makes things that are beautiful in effect, and compels the journalist to retail things that are ugly, or disgusting, or revolting in fact, so that we have the most serious journalists in the world and the most indecent newspapers. It is no exaggeration to talk of compulsion. There are possibly some journalists who take a real pleasure in publishing horrible things, or who, being poor, look to scandals as forming a sort of permanent basis for an income. But there are other journalists, I feel certain, men of education and cultivation, who really dislike publishing these things, who know that it is wrong to do so, and only do it because the unhealthy conditions under which their occupation is carried on oblige them to supply the public with what the public want, and to compete with other journalists in making that supply as full and satisfying to the gross popular appetite as possible. It is a very degrading position for any body of educated men to be placed in, and I have no doubt that most of them feel it acutely.

However, let us leave what is really a very sordid side of the subject, and return to the question of popular control in the matter of art, by which I mean public opinion dictating to the artist the form which he is to use, the mode in which he is to use it, and the materials with which he is to work. I have pointed out that the arts which have escaped best in England are the arts in which the public have not been interested. They are, however, interested in the drama; and as a certain advance has been made in the drama within the last ten or fifteen years, it is important to point out that this advance is entirely due to a few individual artists refusing to accept the popular want of taste as their standard, and refusing to regard art as a mere matter of demand and supply. With his marvelous and vivid personality, with a style that has really a true color-element in it, with his extraordinary power, not over mere mimicry, but over imaginative and intellectual creation, Mr. Irving, had his sole object been to give the public what they wanted, could have produced the commonest plays in the commonest manner, and made as much success and money as a man could possibly desire. But his object was not that. His object was to realize his own perfection as an artist, under certain conditions, and in certain forms of art. At first he appealed to the few; now he has educated the many. He has created in the public both

taste and temperament. The public appreciate his artistic success immensely. I often wonder, however, whether the public understand that that success is entirely due to the fact that he did not accept their standard, but realized his own. With their standard the Lyceum would have been a sort of second-rate booth, as some of the popular theatres in London are at present. Whether they understand it or not the fact however remains, that taste and temperament have, to a certain extent, been created in the public, and that the public is capable of developing these qualities. The problem then is, Why do not the public become more civilized? They have the capacity. What stops them?

The thing that stops them, it must be said again, is their desire to exercise authority over the artists and over works of art. To certain theatres, such as the Lyceum and the Haymarket, the public seem to come in a proper mood. In both of these theatres there have been individual artists who have succeeded in creating in their audiences—and every theatre in London has its own audience—the temperament to which art appeals. And what is that temperament? It is the temperament of receptivity. That is all.

If a man approaches a work of art with any desire to exercise authority over it and the artist, he approaches it in such a spirit that he cannot receive any artistic impression from it at all. *The work of art is to dominate the spectator ; the spectator is not to dominate the work of art.* The spectator is to be receptive. He is to be the violin on which the master is to play. And the more completely he can suppress his own silly views, his own foolish prejudices, his own absurd ideas of what art should be or should not be, the more likely he is to understand and appreciate the work of art in question. This is, of course, quite obvious in the case of the vulgar theatre-going public of English men and women. But it is equally true of what are called educated people. For an educated person's ideas of art are drawn naturally from what art has been, whereas the new work of art is beautiful by being what art has never been; and to measure it by the standard of the past is to measure it by a standard on the rejection of which its real perfection depends. A temperament capable of receiving, through an imaginative medium, and under imaginative conditions, new and beautiful impressions, is the only temperament that can appreciate a work of art. And true as this is in the case of the appreciation of sculpture and painting, it is still more true of the appreciation of such arts as the drama. For a picture and a statue are not at war with time. They take no count of its succession. In one moment their unity may be apprehended. In the case of literature it is different. Time must be traversed before the unity of effect is realised. And so, in the drama, there may occur in the first act of the play something whose real artistic value may not be evident

to the spectator till the third or fourth act is reached. Is the silly fellow to get angry and call out, and disturb the play, and annoy the artists? No! The honest man is to sit quietly, and know the delightful emotions of wonder, curiosity and suspense. He is not to go to the play to lose a vulgar temper. He is to go to the play to realise an artistic temperament. He is to go to the play to gain an artistic temperament. He is not the arbiter of the work of art. He is one who is admitted to contemplate the work of art, and, if the work be fine, to forget in its contemplation all the egotism that mars him—the egotism of his ignorance, or the egotism of his information. This point about the drama is hardly, I think, sufficiently recognized. I can quite understand that were “Macbeth” produced for the first time before a modern London audience, many of the people present would strongly and vigorously object to the introduction of the witches in the first act, with their grotesque phrases and their ridiculous words. But when the play is over, one realises that the laughter of the witches in “Macbeth” is as terrible as the laughter of madness in *Lear*, more terrible than the laughter of *Iago* in the tragedy of the Moor. No spectator of art needs a more perfect mood of receptivity than the spectator of a play. The moment he seeks to exercise authority he becomes the avowed enemy of art and of himself. Art does not mind. It is he who suffers.

With the novel it is the same thing. Popular authority and the recognition of popular authority are fatal. Thackeray’s “Esmond” is a beautiful work of art because he wrote it to please himself. In his other novels, in “Pendennis,” in “Philip,” in “Vanity Fair” even, at times, he is too conscious of the public, and spoils his work by appealing directly to the sympathies of the public, or by directly mocking at them. *A true artist takes no notice whatever of the public. The public are to him non-existent.* He has no poppied or honeyed cakes through which to give the monster sleep or sustenance. He leaves that to the popular novelist. One incomparable novelist we have now in England, Mr. George Meredith. There are better artists in France, but France has no one whose view of life is so large, so varied, so imaginatively true. There are tellers of stories in Russia who have a more vivid sense of what pain in fiction may be. But to him belongs philosophy in fiction. His people not merely live, but they live in thought. One can see them from myriad points of view. They are suggestive. There is soul in them and around them. They are interpretative and symbolic. And he who made them—those wonderful quickly-moving figures—made them for his own pleasure, and has never asked the public what they wanted, has never cared to know what they wanted, has never allowed the public to dictate to him or influence him in any way, but has gone on intensifying his own personality and producing his own individual work. At first

none came to him. That did not matter. Then the few came to him. That did not change him. The many have come now. He is still the same. He is an incomparable novelist.

With the decorative arts it is not different. The public clung with really pathetic tenacity to what I believe were the direct traditions of the great exhibition of international vulgarity, traditions that were so appalling that the houses in which people lived were only fit for blind people to live in. Beautiful things began to be made, beautiful colors came from the dyer's hand, beautiful patterns from the artist's brain, and the use of beautiful things and their value and importance were set forth. The public were really very indignant. They lost their temper. They said silly things. No one minded. No one was a whit the worse. No one accepted the authority of public opinion. And now it is almost impossible to enter any modern house without seeing some recognition of good taste, some recognition of the value of lovely surroundings, some sign of appreciation of beauty. In fact, people's houses are, as a rule, quite charming nowadays. People have been to a very great extent civilized. It is only fair to state, however, that the extraordinary success of the revolution in house decoration and furniture and the like has not really been due to the majority of the public developing a very fine taste in such matters. It has been chiefly due to the fact that the craftsmen of things so appreciated the pleasure of making what was beautiful, and woke to such a vivid consciousness of the hideousness and vulgarity of what the public had previously wanted, that they simply starved the public out. It would be quite impossible at the present moment to furnish a room as rooms were furnished a few years ago, without going for everything to an auction of second-hand furniture from some third-rate lodging-house. The things are no longer made. However they may object to it, people must nowadays have something charming in their surroundings. Fortunately for them, their assumption of authority in these art-matters came to entire grief.

It is evident, then, that all authority in such things is bad. People sometimes inquire what form of government is most suitable for an artist to live under. To this question there is only one answer. *The form of government that is most suitable to the artist is no government at all.* Authority over him and his art is ridiculous. It has been stated that under despotisms artists have produced lovely work. This is not quite so. Artists have visited despots, not as subjects to be tyrannized over, but as wandering wonder-makers, as fascinating vagrant personalities, to be entertained and charmed and suffered to be at peace, and allowed to create. There is this to be said in favor of the despot, that he, being an individual, may have culture, while the mob, being a monster, has none. One who is an emperor and king may stoop down to pick up a brush for a painter, but when the democracy stoops

down it is merely to throw mud. And yet the democracy have not so far stooped as the emperor. In fact, when they want to throw mud they have not to stoop at all. But there is no necessity to separate the monarch from the mob ; all authority is equally bad.

There are three kinds of despots. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the body. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the soul. There is the despot who tyrannizes over soul and body alike. The first is called the Prince. The second is called the Pope. The third is called the People. The Prince may be cultivated. Many Princes have been. Yet, in the Prince there is danger. One thinks of Dante at the bitter feast in Verona, of Tasso in Ferrara's madman's cell. It is better for the artist not to live with Princes. The Pope may be cultivated. Many Popes have been ; the bad Popes have been. The bad Popes loved beauty almost as passionately, nay, with as much passion, as the good Popes hated thought. To the wickedness of the Papacy humanity owes much. The goodness of the Papacy owes a terrible debt to humanity. Yet, though the Vatican has kept the rhetoric of its thunders and lost the rod of its lightning, it is better for the artist not to live with Popes. It was a Pope who said of Cellini to a conclave of cardinals that common laws and common authority were not made for such men as he ; but it was a Pope who thrust Cellini into prison, and kept him there till he sickened with rage, and created unreal visions for himself, and saw the gilded sun enter his room, and grew so enamored of it that he sought to escape, and crept out from tower to tower, and falling through dizzy air at dawn, maimed himself, and was by a vine-dresser covered with vine leaves, and carried in a cart to one who, loving beautiful things, had care of him. There is danger in Popes. And as for the People, what of them and their authority ? Perhaps of them and their authority one has spoken enough. Their authority is a thing blind, deaf, hideous, grotesque, tragic, amusing, serious and obscene. It is impossible for the artist to live with the People. All despots bribe. The People bribe and brutalize. Who told them to exercise authority ? They were made to live, to listen, and to love. Some one has done them a great wrong. They have marred themselves by imitation of their inferiors. They have taken the sceptre of the Prince. How should they use it ? They have taken the triple tiara of the Pope. How should they carry its burden ? They are as a clown whose heart is broken. They are as a priest whose soul is not yet born. Let all who love beauty pity them. Though they themselves love not beauty, yet let them pity themselves. Who taught them the trick of tyranny ?

There are many other things that one might point out. One might point out how the Renaissance was great, because it sought to solve no social problem, and busied itself not about such things, but suffered the individual to develop freely, beautifully and naturally, and so had

great and individual artists, and great and individual men. One might point out how Louis XIV., by creating the modern State, destroyed the individualism of the artist, and made things monstrous in their monotony of repetition, and contemptible in their conformity to rule, and destroyed throughout all France all those fine freedoms of expression that had made tradition new in beauty, and new modes one with antique form. But the past is of no importance. The present is of no importance. It is with the future that we have to deal. For the past is what man should not have been. The present is what man ought not to be. The future is what artists are.

It will, of course, be said that such a scheme as is set forth here is quite unpractical, and goes against human nature. This is perfectly true. It is unpractical, and it goes against human nature. This is why it is worth carrying out, and that is why one proposes it. For what is a practical scheme? *A practical scheme is either a scheme that is already in existence, or a scheme that could be carried out under existing conditions.* But it is exactly the existing conditions that one objects to; and any scheme that could accept these conditions is wrong and foolish. The conditions will be done away with, and human nature will change. The only thing that one really knows about human nature is that it changes. Change is the one quality we can predicate of it. The systems that fail are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development. The error of Louis XIV. was that he thought human nature would always be the same. The result of his error was the French Revolution. It was an admirable result. All the results of the mistakes of governments are quite admirable.

It is to be noted also that Individualism does not come to man with any sickly cant about duty, which merely means doing what other people want because they want it; or any hideous cant about self-sacrifice, which is merely a survival of savage mutilation. *In fact, it does not come to man with any claims upon him at all. It comes naturally and inevitably out of man.* It is the point to which all development tends. It is the differentiation to which all organisms grow. It is the perfection that is inherent in every mode of life, and towards which every mode of life quickens. And so Individualism exercises no compulsion over man. On the contrary it says to man that he should suffer no compulsion to be exercised over him. It does not try to force people to be good. It knows that people are good when they are let alone. Man will develop Individualism out of himself. Man is now so developing Individualism. To ask whether Individualism is practical is like asking whether Evolution is practical. *Evolution is the law of life, and there is no Evolution except toward Individualism.* Where this tendency is not expressed, it is a case of artificially-arrested growth, or of disease, or of death.

Individualism will also be unselfish and unaffected. It has been pointed out that one of the results of the extraordinary tyranny of authority is that words are absolutely distorted from their proper and simple meaning, and are used to express the obverse of their right signification. What is true about art is true about life. A man is called affected nowadays if he dresses as he likes to dress. But in doing that he is acting in a perfectly natural manner. Affectation in such matters consists in dressing according to the views of one's neighbor, whose views, as they are the views of the majority, will probably be extremely stupid. Or a man is called selfish if he lives in the manner that seems to him most suitable for the full realization of his own personality; if, in fact, the primary aim of his life is self-development. But this is the way in which everyone should live. *Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live; it is asking others to live as one wishes to live.* And unselfishness is letting other people's lives alone, not interfering with them. Selfishness always aims at creating around it an absolute uniformity of type. Unselfishness recognizes infinite variety of type as a delightful thing, accepts it, acquiesces in it, enjoys it. It is not selfish to think for one's self. A man who does not think for himself does not think at all. It is grossly selfish to require of one's neighbor that he should think in the same way and hold the same opinions. Why should he? If he can think, he will probably think differently. If he cannot think, it is monstrous to require thought of any kind from him. A red rose is not selfish because it wants to be a red rose. It would be horribly selfish if it wanted all the other flowers in the garden to be both red and roses. Under Individualism people will be quite natural and absolutely unselfish, and will know the meaning of the words, and realize them in their free, beautiful lives. Nor will men be egotistic as they are now. For the egotist is he who makes claims upon others, and the Individualist will not desire to do that. It will not give him pleasure. When man has realized Individualism, he will also realize sympathy and exercise it freely and spontaneously. Up to the present man has hardly cultivated sympathy at all. He has merely sympathy with pain, and sympathy with pain is not the highest form of sympathy. *All sympathy is fine, but sympathy with suffering is the least fine mode.* It is tainted with egotism. It is apt to become morbid. There is in it a certain element of terror for our own safety. We become afraid that we ourselves might be as the leper or as the blind, and that no man would have care of us. It is curiously limiting, too. One should sympathize with the entirety of life, not with life's sores and maladies merely, but with life's joy and beauty and energy and health and freedom. The wider sympathy is, of course, the more difficult. It requires more unselfishness. Anybody can sympathize with the sufferings of a friend, but it requires a very fine nature—it requires, in fact, the nature of a true

Individualist—to sympathize with a friend's success. In the modern stress of competition and struggle for place, such sympathy is naturally rare, and is also very much stifled by the immoral ideal of uniformity of type and conformity to rule which is so prevalent everywhere, and is, perhaps, most obnoxious in England.

Sympathy with pain there will, of course, always be. It is one of the first instincts of man. The animals which are individual, the higher animals that is to say, share it with us. But it must be remembered that while sympathy with joy intensifies the sum of joy in the world, sympathy with pain does not really diminish the amount of pain. It may make man better able to endure evil, but the evil remains. Sympathy with consumption does not cure consumption; that is what Science does. And when Socialism has solved the problem of poverty, and Science solved the problem of disease, the area of the sentimentalists will be lessened, and the sympathy of man will be large, healthy, and spontaneous. Man will have joy in the contemplation of the joyous lives of others.

For it is through joy that the Individualism of the future will develop itself. *Christ made no attempt to reconstruct society, and consequently the Individualism that he preached to man could be realized only through pain or in solitude.* The ideals that we owe to Christ are the ideals of the man who abandons society entirely, or of the man who resists society absolutely. But man is naturally social. Even the Thebaid became peopled at last. And though the cenobite realizes his personality, it is often an impoverished personality that he so realizes. Upon the other hand, the terrible truth that pain is a mode through which man may realize himself exercised a wonderful fascination over the world. Shallow speakers and shallow thinkers in pulpits and on platforms often talk about the world's worship of pleasure, and whine against it. But it is rarely in the world's history that its ideal has been one of joy and beauty. The worship of pain has far more often dominated the world. Mediævalism, with its saints and martyrs, its love of self-torture, its wild passion for wounding itself, its gashing with knives, and its whipping with rods—Mediævalism is real Christianity, and the mediæval Christ is the real Christ. When the Renaissance dawned upon the world, and brought with it the new ideals of the beauty of life and the joy of living, men could not understand Christ. Even art shows us that. The painters of the Renaissance drew Christ as a little boy playing with another boy in a palace or a garden, or lying back in his mother's arms, smiling at her, or at a flower, or at a bright bird; or as a noble, stately figure moving nobly through the world; or as a wonderful figure rising in a sort of ecstasy from death to life. Even when they drew him crucified they drew him as a beautiful God on whom evil men had inflicted suffering. But he did not preoccupy them much. What

delighted them was to paint the men and women whom they admired and to show the loveliness of this lovely earth. They painted many religious pictures—in fact, they painted far too many, and the monotony of type and motive is wearisome, and was bad for art. It was the result of the authority of the public in art-matters, and is to be deplored. But their soul was not in the subject. Raphael was a great artist when he painted his portrait of the Pope. When he painted his Madonnas and infant Christs, he was not a great artist at all. Christ had no message for the Renaissance, which was wonderful because it brought an ideal at variance with his, and to find the presentation of the real Christ we must go to mediæval art. There he is one maimed and marred; one who is not comely to look on, because beauty is a joy; one who is not in fair raiment, because that may be a joy also; he is a beggar who has a marvelous soul; he is a leper whose soul is divine; he needs neither property nor health; he is a God realizing his perfection through pain.

The evolution of man is slow. The injustice of men is great. It was necessary that pain should be put forward as a mode of self-realization. Even now, in some places in the world, the message of Christ is necessary. No one who lived in modern Russia could possibly realize his perfection except by pain. A few Russian artists have realized themselves in art, in a fiction that is mediæval in character, because its dominant note is the realization of men through suffering. But for those who are not artists, and to whom there is no mode of life but the actual life of fact, pain is the only door to perfection. A Russian who lives happily under the present system of government in Russia must either believe that man has no soul, or that, if he has, it is not worth developing. A Nihilist who rejects all authority, because he knows authority to be evil, and who welcomes all pain, because through that he realizes his personality, is a real Christian. To him the Christian ideal is a true thing.

And yet, Christ did not revolt against authority. He accepted the imperial authority of the Roman Empire and paid tribute. He endured the ecclesiastical authority of the Jewish Church, and would not repel its violence by any violence of his own. He had, as I said before, no scheme for the reconstruction of society. But the modern world has schemes. It proposes to do away with poverty and the suffering that it entails. It desires to get rid of pain and the suffering that pain entails. It trusts to Socialism and to Science as its methods. What it aims at is an Individualism expressing itself through joy. This Individualism will be larger, fuller, lovelier than any Individualism has ever been. Pain is not the ultimate mode of perfection. It is merely provisional and a protest. It has reference to wrong, unhealthy, unjust surroundings. When the wrong and the disease and the injustice are removed, it will have no further place.

It will have done its work. It was a great work, but it is almost over. Its sphere lessens every day.

Nor will man miss it. *For what man has sought for is, indeed, neither pain nor pleasure, but simply Life.* Man has sought to live intensely, fully, perfectly. When he can do so without exercising restraint on others, or suffering it ever, and his activities are all pleasurable to him, he will be saner, healthier, more civilized, more himself. Pleasure is Nature's test, her sign of approval. When man is happy, he is in harmony with himself and his environment. The new Individualism, for whose service Socialism, whether it wills it or not, is working, will be perfect harmony. It will be what the Greeks sought for, but could not, except in thought, realize completely, because they had slaves, and fed them; it will be what the Renaissance sought for, but could not realize completely except in art, because they had slaves, and starved them. It will be complete, and through it each man will attain to his perfection. The new Individualism is the new Hellenism.

THE SOCIALIST IDEAL—ART.

SOME people will perhaps not be prepared to hear that Socialism has any ideal of art, for in the first place it is so obviously founded on the necessity for dealing with the bare economy of life that many, and even some Socialists, can see nothing save that economic basis; and moreover, many who might be disposed to admit the necessity of an economic change in the direction of Socialism, believe quite sincerely that art is fostered by the inequalities of condition which it is the first business of Socialism to do away with, and indeed that it cannot exist without them. Nevertheless, in the teeth of these opinions, I assert first, that Socialism is an all-embracing theory of life, and that as it has an ethic and a religion of its own, so also it has an æsthetic; so that to every one who wishes to study Socialism duly, it is necessary to look on it from the æsthetic point of view. And, secondly, I assert that inequality of condition, whatever may have been the case in former ages of the world, has now become incompatible with the existence of a healthy art.

But before I go further I must explain that I use the word *art* in a wider sense than is commonly used among us to-day. For conven-

ience' sake, indeed, I will exclude all appeals to the intellect and emotions that are not addressed to the eyesight ; though, properly speaking, music and all literature that deals with style should be considered as portions of art ; but I can exclude from consideration as a possible vehicle of art no production of man which can be looked at. And here at once becomes obvious the sundering of the ways between the Socialist and the commercial view of art. To the Socialist a house, a knife, a cup, a steam engine, or what not—anything, I repeat, that is made by man and has form—must either be a work of art or destructive to art. The commercialist, on the other hand, divides "manufactured articles" into those which are prepensely works of art, and are offered for sale in the market as such, and those which have no pretence and could have no pretence to artistic qualities. The one side asserts indifference, the other denies it. The commercialist sees that in the great mass of civilized human labor there is no pretence to art, and thinks that this is natural, inevitable, and on the whole desirable. The Socialist, on the contrary, sees in this obvious lack of art a *disease* peculiar to modern civilization and hurtful to humanity ; and furthermore believes it to be a disease which can be remedied.

This disease and injury to humanity, also, he thinks is no trifling matter, but a grievous deduction from the happiness of man ; for he knows that the all-pervading art of which I have been speaking, and to the possibility of which the commercialist is blind, is *the expression of pleasure in the labor of production* ; and that, since all persons who are not mere burdens on the community must produce in some form or another, it follows that under our present system most *honest* men must lead unhappy lives, since their work, which is the most important part of their lives, is devoid of pleasure.

Or, to put it very bluntly and shortly, under the present state of society happiness is only possible to artists and thieves.

It will at once be seen from this statement how necessary it is for Socialists to consider the due relation of art to society ; for it is their aim to realize a reasonable, logical, and stable society ; and of the two groups above-named, it must be said that the artists (using the word in its present narrow meaning) are few, and are too busy over their special work (small blame to them) to pay much heed to public matters ; and that the thieves (of all classes) form a disturbing element in society.

Now, the Socialist not only sees this disease in the body politic, but also thinks that he knows the cause of it, and consequently can conceive of a remedy ; and that all the more because the disease is in the main peculiar, as above said, to modern civilization. Art was once the common possession of the whole people ; it was the rule in the Middle Ages that the produce of handicraft was beautiful. Doubtless,

there were eyesores in the palmy days of mediæval art, but these were caused by destruction of wares, not, as now, by the making of them ; it was the act of war and devastation that grieved the eye of the artist then—the sacked town, the burned village, the deserted fields. Ruin bore on its face the tokens of its essential hideousness ; to-day it is prosperity that is externally ugly.

The story of the Lancashire manufacturer who, coming back from Italy, that sad museum of the nations, rejoiced to see the smoke, with which he was poisoning the beauty of the earth, pouring out of his chimneys, gives us a genuine type of the active rich man of the commercial period degraded into incapacity of even wishing for decent surroundings. In those past days the wounds of war were grievous, indeed, but peace would bring back pleasure to men, and the hope of peace was at least conceivable ; but now peace can no longer help us and has no hope for us ; the prosperity of the country, by whatever “leaps and bounds” it may advance, will but make everything more and more ugly about us ; it will become more a definitely established axiom that the longing for beauty, the interest in history, the intelligence of the whole nation, shall be of no power to stop one rich man from injuring the whole nation to the full extent of his riches—that is, of his privilege of taxing other people ; it will be proved to demonstration, at least to all lovers of beauty and a decent life, that private property is public robbery.

Nor, however much we may suffer from this if we happen to be artists, should we Socialists at least complain of it. For, in fact, the “peace” of commercialism is not peace, but bitter war ; and the ghastly waste of Lancashire and the ever-spreading squalor of London are at least object-lessons to teach us that this is so, that there is war in the land which quells all our efforts to live wholesomely and happily. The *necessity* of the time, I say, is to feed the commercial war which we are all of us waging in some way or another ; if, while we are doing this, we can manage, some of us, to adorn our lives with some little pleasure of the eyes, it is well ; but it is no *necessity*, it is a luxury the lack of which we must endure.

Thus, in this matter also does the artificial famine of inequality, felt in so many other ways, impoverish us despite of our riches, and we sit starving amidst our gold the Midas of the ages.

Let me state bluntly a few facts about the present condition of the arts before I try to lay before my readers the definite Socialist ideal which I have been asked to state. It is necessary to do this, because no ideal for the future can be conceived of unless we proceed by way of contrast ; it is the desire to escape from the present failure which forces us into what are called “ideals ;” in fact, they are mostly attempts by persons of strong hope to embody their discontent with the present.

It will scarcely be denied, I suppose, that at present art is only enjoyed, or indeed thought of, by comparatively a few persons—broadly speaking, by the rich and the parasites that minister to them directly. The poor can only afford to have what art is given to them in charity, which is of the inferior quality inherent in all such gifts—not worth picking up except by starving people.

Now, having eliminated the poor (that is, almost the whole mass of those that make anything that has *form*, which, as before said, must either be helpful to life or destructive of it) as not sharing in art from any side, let us see how the rich, who do share in it to a certain extent, get on with it. But poorly, I think, although they are rich. By abstracting themselves from the general life of man that surrounds them, they can get some pleasure from a few works of art; whether they be part of the wreckage of times past, or produced by the individual labor, intelligence, and patience of a few men of genius of today fighting desperately against all the tendencies of the age. But they can do no more than surround themselves with a little circle of hot-house atmosphere of art hopelessly at odds with the common air of day. A rich man may have a house full of pictures, and beautiful books, and furniture and so-forth; but as soon as he steps out into the streets he is again in the midst of ugliness, to which he must blunt his senses or be miserable if he really cares about art. Even when he is in the country, amidst the beauty of trees and fields, he cannot prevent some neighboring landowner making the landscape hideous with utilitarian agriculture; nay, it is almost certain that his own steward or agent will force him into doing the like on his own lands; he cannot even rescue his parish church from the hands of the restoring parson. He can go where he likes and do what he likes outside the realm of art, but there he is helpless. Why is this? Simply because the great mass of effective art, that which pervades all life, *must* be the result of the harmonious co-operation of neighbors. And a rich man has no neighbors—nothing but rivals and parasites.

Now the outcome of this is that though the educated classes (as we call them) have theoretically some share in art, or might have, as a matter of fact they have very little. Outside the circle of the artists themselves there are very few even of the educated classes who care about art. Art is kept alive by a small group of artists working in a spirit quite antagonistic to the spirit of the time; and they also suffer from the lack of co-operation, which is an essential lack in the art of our epoch. They are limited, therefore, to the production of a few individualistic works, which are looked upon by almost everybody as curiosities to be examined, and not as pieces of beauty to be enjoyed. Nor have they any position or power of helping the public in general matters of taste (to use a somewhat ugly word). For example, in laying out all the parks and pleasure grounds, which have lately been

acquired for the public, as far as I know, no artist has been consulted ; whereas they ought to have been laid out by a committee of artists ; and I will venture to say that even a badly chosen committee (and it might easily be well chosen) would have saved the public from most of the disasters which have resulted from handing them over to the tender mercies of the landscape gardener.

This, then, is the position of art in this epoch. It is helpless and crippled amidst the sea of utilitarian brutality. It cannot perform the most necessary functions ; it cannot build a decent house, or ornament a book, or lay out a garden, or prevent the ladies of the time from dressing in a way that caricatures the body and degrades it. On the one hand it is cut off from the traditions of the past, on the other from the life of the present. It is the art of a clique and not of the people. The people are too poor to have any share of it.

As an artist I *know* this, because I can *see* it. As a Socialist I know that it can never be bettered as long as we are living in that special condition of inequality which is produced by the direct and intimate exploitation of the makers of wares, the workmen, at the hands of those who are not producers in any, even the widest, acceptance of the word.

1. The first point, therefore, in the Socialist ideal of art is that it should be common to the whole people ; and this can only be the case if it comes to be recognized that art should be an integral part of all manufactured wares that have definite form and are intended for any endurance. In other words, instead of looking upon art as a luxury incidental to a certain privileged position, the Socialist claims art as a necessity of human life which society has no right to withhold from any one of the citizens ; and he claims also that in order that this claim may be established people shall have every opportunity of taking to the work which each is best fitted for ; not only that there may be the least possible waste of human effort, but also that that effort may be exercised pleasurably. For I must here repeat what I have often had to say, that the pleasurable exercise of our energies is at once the source of all art and the cause of all happiness ; that is to say, it is the end of life. So that, once again, the society which does not give a due opportunity to all its members to exercise their energies pleasurably has forgotten the end of life, is not fulfilling its functions, and therefore is a mere tyranny to be resisted at all points.

2. Furthermore, in the making of wares there should be some of the spirit of the handicraftsman, whether the goods be made by hand, or by a machine that helps the hand, or by one that supersedes it. Now, the essential part of the spirit of the handicraftsman is the instinct for looking at the wares in themselves and their essential use as the object of his work. Their secondary uses, the exigencies of the market, are nothing to him ; it does not matter to him

whether the goods he makes are for the use of a slave or a king, his business is to make them as excellent as may be; if he does otherwise he is making wares for rogues to sell to fools, and he is himself a rogue by reason of his complicity. All this means that he is making the goods for himself; for his own pleasure in making them and using them. But to do this he requires reciprocity, or else he will be ill-found, except in the goods that he himself makes. His neighbors must make goods in the same spirit that he does; and each, being a good workman after his kind, will be ready to recognize excellence in the others, or to note defects; because the primary purpose of the goods, their *use* in fact, will never be lost sight of. Thus the market of neighbors, the interchange of mutual good services, will be established, and will take the place of the present gambling market and its bond-slave, the modern factory system. But the working in this fashion, with the unforced and instinctive reciprocity of service, clearly implies the existence of something more than a mere gregarious collection of workmen. It implies a consciousness of the existence of a society of neighbors, that is of equals; of men who do indeed expect to be made use of by others, but only so far as the services they give are pleasing to themselves, so far as they are services the performance of which is necessary to their own well-being and happiness.

Now, as on the one hand I *know* that no worthy popular art can grow out of any other soil than this of freedom and mutual respect, so, on the other, I feel sure both that this opportunity will be given to art and also that it will avail itself of it, and that, once again, nothing which is made by man will be ugly, but will have its due form and its due ornament, will tell the tale of its making and the tale of its use, even where it tells no other tale. And this because when people once more take pleasure in their work, when the pleasure rises to a certain point, the expression of it will become irresistible, and that expression of pleasure is art, whatever form it may take. As to that form, do not let us trouble ourselves about it, remembering that, after all, the earliest art which we have record of is still art to us; that Homer is no more out of date than Browning; that the most scientifically-minded of people (I had almost said the most utilitarian), the ancient Greeks, are still thought to have produced good artists; that the most superstitious epoch of the world, the early Middle Ages, produced the freest art—though there is reason enough for that if I had time to go into it.

For in fact, considering the relation of the modern world to art, our business is now, and for long will be, not so much attempting to produce definite art as rather clearing the ground to give art its opportunity. We have been such slaves to the modern practice of the unlimited manufacture of makeshifts for real wares, that we run a

serious risk of destroying the very material of art ; of making it necessary that men, in order to have any artistic perception, should be born blind, and should get their ideas of beauty from the hearsay of books. This degradation is surely the first thing which we should deal with ; and certainly Socialists must deal with it at the first opportunity ; *they* at least must see, however much others may shut their eyes ; for they cannot help reflecting that to condemn a vast population to live in South Lancashire while art and education are being furthered in decent places is like feasting within earshot of a patient on the rack.

Anyhow, the first step toward the fresh new-birth of art *must* interfere with the privilege of private persons to destroy the beauty of the earth for their private advantage, and thereby to rob the community. The day when some company of enemies of the community are forbidden, for example, to turn the fields of Kent into another collection of cinder heaps in order that they may extract wealth, unearned by them, from a mass of half-paid laborers ; the day when some hitherto all-powerful " pig-skin stuffed with money " is told that he shall not pull down some ancient building in order that he may force his fellow-citizens to pay him additional rack-rent for land which is not his (save as the newly-acquired watch of the highway-man is), that day will be the beginning of the fresh new-birth of art in modern times.

But that day will also be one of the memorable days of Socialism ; for this very privilege, which is but the privilege of the robber by force of arms, is just the thing which it is the aim and end of our present organization to uphold ; and all the formidable executive at the back of it—army, police, law courts, presided over by the judge as representing the executive—is directed toward this one end—to take care that the richest shall rule, and shall have full license to injure the commonwealth to the full extent of his riches.

THE COMING SOLIDARITY.

IN the long debate that mankind has held over its history it has hammered out one type as its ideal ; a type uniting the virility of self-assertion with the femininity of self-abnegation ; a type vehement in its insistence on the right of private initiative, and persistent in the subordination of its own conduct to the common weal. The womanly tenderness and the pronounced manhood of Christ bear each their equal charm, and Napoleon the egoist is tolerated for the sake of Napoleon the patriot. The judgment of the world at large is clear upon the subject, and the world has not passed its judgment in a hurry.

Every movement has, therefore, a double task before it : it must prove that the measures it proposes will elevate the type, and it must prove that it will not be careless of the single life. If it threatens to be a disintegrating force it will alarm the gregarious instinct, which is very strong ; if it threatens to suppress individuality the instinct of self-preservation will immediately take fright. In proportion as one or other of these instincts is unduly developed there is also developed the tendency to exalt the claims of society at the expense of the individual, or *vice versa*. The understanding that the claims of each are in every way identical and inseparable comes only after long debate.

Such a debate the whole Socialist movement has been passing through from the time when Marx and Bakunin quarreled over the conduct of the International. Looking backward we can see that the split was unavoidable ; looking forward we can also see that a reunion is as certain. Of the near approach of that reunion the presence in the movement of such men as William Morris and Oscar Wilde is a very obvious sign. Both have a world-wide reputation as interpreters of that art whose breath is individualism, and whose essence is harmonious combination.

The gregarious instinct will not be denied ; and to-day, when the possibilities of solidarity are such as the past had never dreamed of, it proclaims itself more imperiously than ever. For all to whom opportunities of study have been afforded the intellectual horizon has expanded, within this century, beyond the power of computation, and largeness is inevitably the prevailing note. We no longer grope our

way with timid steps ; we stride with seven-league boots to our conclusions. The toil of countless generations has put a mass of details at our disposition, and the task of this generation is to sum them up. This tendency shows itself everywhere. The closest investigator of the age, Charles Darwin, is also its boldest generalizer, and the researches of a Pasteur or a Koch rivet attention through our comprehension of the role of the infinitely little as infinitely great. Our commerce circles the globe, and the markets of both hemispheres, in spite of reactionary protective tariffs, rise and fall in unison. In politics we still play at patriotism to wheedle the mob, but the thoughtful are all internationalists at heart. We ransack the god-cupboards of every age and race, seeking materials for the construction of a religion of—Humanity, which, in the face of Philistine sneers, we practically, in our hearts, all spell with capitals. The intense individuality of a conspicuously restless epoch is everywhere alive with the instinct of solidarity, and the veriest hermits of us all—the Thoreaus, the Ruskins and the Tolstoïs—far from being mere disinterested spectators of the game, are feverishly anxious that it should be played in accordance with the only rules which, in their judgment, can lead to universal success.

All this splendid individuality, it is said, Socialism would crush ; putting humanity in irons ; squeezing us all through the self-same mould ; sending us all wriggling through life, dressed, shaped and colored alike, as so many tadpoles in a ditch.

Since we do not expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles, the best method of examining this charge is to consider what manner of men those whom we have known as Socialists have hitherto proved themselves to be. For, as it is only the most pronounced individualities who wed themselves to a movement in its first unpopularity, so it is always these early pioneers from whom the movement draws its character. In the first place, then, the Socialists have all, without exception, been rebels against authority. As such they have been persecuted, imprisoned, exiled, hanged. In the second place they have been all, without exception, evolutionists, and he who is an evolutionist is also a revolutionist, since the acceptance of the evolutionary philosophy is the profoundest mental revolution conceivable. It inverts the whole picture of life ; or rather, to speak more accurately, it opens our eyes to the fact that the whole picture has been hitherto presented topsy-turvy. The fable of a fancied fall is replaced with the proof of a continuous ascent ; for the pessimistic caricature of man as a degraded creature, conceived in sin, there is substituted a figure glowing with life and hope ; an individuality with a matchless record of triumphs over hostile environments ; a being preëminently capable of selecting from and absorbing all that is best in his environment ; a being therefore essentially fitted for

self-government. This is unquestionably the teaching of evolution ; this is the ideal it holds up as that which alone is worthy of the dignity of man. This is the ideal which, instinctively, Democracy is struggling to realize in every country, and for that struggle, which has but just begun, the Social-Democrats—the Socialists—are preparing all along the line.

This central note of self-government dominates the whole of their philosophy, and their actions are the best proof of the assertion. The world, which is wedded to custom and consequently hates the rebellion of free individualities, has accused the Socialists of revolt against every venerable respectability in existence, and the accusation is unquestionably just. They are pitiless critics of existing institutions, and the criticism is very far indeed from being confined to our existing economic system, though the Socialists are peculiar for their steady insistence that it is the economic system that gives the shape to all other institutions. To this system, under which the means of production and distribution are the property of a class, they trace directly the entire system of class rule, representative government being necessarily, in their eyes, the sorriest of farces so long as this endures.

It would be easy to show, did space permit, that the whole democratic movement, of which Socialism is the advance guard, has had its rise in an altered conception of the origin and destiny of man : a conception that has slowly dawned upon the world, that flamed conspicuously into life during the period of the Renaissance, and has received an enormous impetus of late through the scientific investigations of the evolutionists. As this proud conception is directly opposed to the humiliation doctrine that the Church still teaches, the question of the future attitude of the Church toward the democratic movement in general, and Socialism in particular, is full of interest.

In reality a far more important question is the attitude of Socialism toward the Church. The Church is on the defense ; she will shift her ground perpetually according to the fierceness of the attack, and yield position after position as she has already yielded them. Indeed, as regards a large proportion of our Protestant clergy, the charge recently made by Father Ignatius that they are clergy only in name, and freethinkers in reality, is strictly true. Hitherto, however, Socialism, having its hands full with the elucidation of the economic problem, has been content to accentuate the point on which it finds itself in harmony with all existing religions. That point is the solidarity of the race, the brotherhood of man ; an individualistic as well as a collectivist truth that all religions, dependent as they are on the masses for support, have always found it necessary to advance as the fundamental basis of their teaching. Unfortunately, all existing religions have immediately proceeded to undermine this principle of solidarity by dividing mankind into the lost and the saved, the

sinner and the saint; by the abominable calumny that we were conceived in sin; by the grossly immoral doctrine of vicarious atonement, the most flagrant inducement to the abuse of life ever imposed upon human credulity. As Socialism gathers strength and clearness, and takes its stand more firmly on the solidarity of the race—achievable only through the conception of the individual as a being of infinite capabilities—it will find it necessary to join in a general movement for the explosion of these dogmas, a movement in which it will have for allies all those who are saturated with the evolutionary philosophy of the age. It will preach to the masses the most inspiring sermon they have ever heard, and they will be greedy listeners; for it will stir to the depths the enormous body of discontent already engendered by the palpable injustices of society. It will follow a method the direct opposite of that so laboriously pursued for ages by the Church. It will say, with the historian Froude, that “the patience of the poor is the wonder of the world,” “and,” it will add, “its greatest crime.” Disobedience will necessarily be its text; for, speaking from the standpoint of the natural as opposed to the supernatural, it will be forced to condemn tolerance of unnatural conditions as the most intolerable of vices. It will say with Oscar Wilde: “The virtues of the poor may be readily admitted, and are much to be regretted.” It will tell them that class rule and liberty cannot possibly be co-existent; that in the existence of class rule is to be found the source of all their ills; that its abolition is therefore the sternly paramount duty of the hour. It will point out that all class rule depends exclusively on the power of the purse, which rests, in its turn, on the monopoly of the instruments of production and exchange; and that, to abolish class rule, there is but one thing to be done, viz., to place such instruments in the joint possession and control of the united people. It will justify this startling change not only on grounds of expediency but on grounds of abstract justice, by showing that the earth, and the inventions by which we make the earth obedient to our will, have come down to us as a joint heritage, to be administered for the common weal. It will go much further than this. Pointing to man’s achievements in the past, it will give the masses the most positive assurance of their capacity to complete the conquest, and, by firing them with hope, it will supply the one thing needed to make a revolution successful and complete. For hope and self-confidence are the parents of all great changes, and the glory of evolution is the optimistic gospel it proclaims.

In all this it is clear that the clergy must either abandon completely their view of man as a degraded being, destined forever to a leading-string existence, or they must throw in their lot with the reactionists. That such of them as choose the latter course will have no lack of company among the so-called evolutionists themselves is, unhappily,

certain, if Mr. Herbert Spencer's name is to have the weight in the future that it has carried in the past, for Mr. Spencer has been steadily educating a school to the delusion that evolution is at all times a gradual and slow-paced process that moves with even foot. Against this will be set proof overwhelming that the teachings of all history are : slow preparation followed by the quickest action ; a lengthy incubation and a sudden birth.

Throughout this century a debate has been in progress such as the world has never seen, and history invariably repeats itself. The hour inevitably arrives when men decide that they have talked enough ; the general understanding is complete, and action is in order. How soon that hour shall come, how deep the action decided on shall reach, must necessarily depend on the thoroughness of the discussion ; for solidarity of thought is only possible where the leading propositions have been boldly submitted and candidly discussed. I believe that the major premise round which the fight must rage is the evolutionary doctrine of the dignity of man ; his limitless capacity for self-government of every kind—industrial as well as religious and political. The two latter are, indeed, to-day in theory conceded, thanks to the Protestant Reformation and the French and American Revolutions. The first, which is the next and by far the most important link in the chain of evolution, has yet to be established.

While regarding the orthodox Church as a reactionary force, I am far from regarding her as a great one. In her organization, in the gifts she can bestow, in the *prestige* she can confer on those who openly attach themselves to her, and in the æsthetic attractions with which she surrounds herself, she has an apparent strength that makes a brave showing in fine weather, but it is ill fitted to stand the tempest that is coming. She will find herself, if she continues obstinately to oppose democracy, pitted against both the intellect and the interests of the age, and the combination will be irresistible. Every public upheaval we have had since the Reformation has proved the truth of this position. The French Revolution is a notable case in point, and the French Revolution took place a hundred years ago in a country where the densest ignorance prevailed, and slavish obedience to the priest had been the rule for centuries. Twenty years ago the same phenomenon presented itself, though far more conspicuously, in the Paris Commune, and the stand that Parnell is able to-day to take, single-handed, against the clergy in Ireland—the Church's modern Gibraltar—is pregnant with instruction. It will be observed that I have taken all my illustrations from the history of the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestants have too much rebel blood in their veins to be able to play the part of reactionaries with effect, and many of their sects have practically long since rejected the superstitions I have criticised.

If, however, the future opposition of the Church does not excite one's apprehensions, the attitude taken by the reactionary wing of the scientific party, under the lead of Herbert Spencer, is greatly to be deplored, for the world is only too anxious to follow the lead of those whom it believes to be earnest seekers after truth, and to follow without being at the pains of making an investigation of its own. One needs but to recall the thoughtless enthusiasm with which this century has allowed itself to accept as infallible authorities Adam Smith, and the other prophets of *laissez faire*, the magnitude of whose fallacies we are only now beginning to realise. As Mr. Spencer, who brings to the support of their tottering theory the enormous weight of his reputation as an evolutionist, has again appealed to the public in "A Plea for Liberty," the subject is just at this moment specially *apropos*.

Mr. Spencer's position is exceedingly simple. He believes in individuality, and so do we. He believes that militarism crushes individuality, and so do we. He believes that the evolution from compulsory militarism to voluntary co-operation lies along the *laissez faire* lines marked out by Adam Smith. There we unquestionably differ, since we look on *laissez faire*—the each for himself alone theory—as being in itself militarism incarnate. After premising that "social life must be carried on by either voluntary co-operation or compulsory co-operation," he boldly states that "the system of voluntary co-operation is that by which, in civilized societies, industry is now everywhere carried on. Under a simple form we have it on every farm, where the laborers, paid by the farmer himself, and taking orders directly from him, are free to stay or go as they please." To us the liberty to throw off one and hunt another master, is the sorriest of satires upon freedom. He states further that "this voluntary co-operation, from its simplest to its most complex forms, has the common trait that those concerned work together by consent." In the same essay he speaks of "the existing system under which each of us takes care of himself, while all of us see that each has fair play," and he gives us his definition of the whole competitive system in the striking phrase "the régime of willinghood." To all which I have only to reply that unfortunately the matter is beyond the sphere of argument; that it is an established *certainty* that, so far from living under a "régime of willinghood," the masses are driven to work—for abnormally long hours, at dangerous and unwholesome occupations—by the whip of hunger, a whip in the hands of those who have succeeded, as the result of our grab-all policy of industry, in getting a corner on the means of life. On this all radical reformers are agreed, and the statement of Bebel, the German Socialist leader, that "the basis of slavery is economic dependence on the oppressor," is everywhere accepted as self-evident.

Having given this extraordinary rendering of the present, Mr. Spencer passes to the yet more dangerous ground of prophecy, and he treads with no uncertain foot. The management by the people of their own industrial affairs is to him an impossibility save under the administration of a colossal directorate wielding unprecedented power, and he supports his argument with illustrations drawn from our unhappy political experience, and the admitted tyrannies of trades unions. Herein he shows an ignorance of the whole philosophy of Socialism that is inexcusable in one who is making it a special object of attack. To make my meaning clear I quote from Frederick Engels' preface to the famous manifesto written by Karl Marx and himself in 1847, a document continuously, to this day, distributed wherever Socialist agitators are at work. He says: "The manifesto being our joint production, I consider myself bound to state that the fundamental proposition which forms its nucleus belongs to Marx. That proposition is that, in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, *and the social organization necessarily following from it*, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch." To miss this—and how often is it missed!—is to misapprehend the whole position of the Socialist movement, for it is his clear comprehension of the truth that all social forms take their shape from the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, which makes the Socialist a revolutionist instead of a reformer, which makes him the uncompromising advocate of a total change of system, and the uncompromising foe of those who seek, by tinkering makeshifts, to prolong the life of the existing chaos of selfish competition, and as selfish combination. He therefore refuses to act with the Democrat or Mugwump, who professes enthusiasm for economy, because he recognises that, so long as every man has to play for his own hand, every politician will make hay while the sun shines, just as every storekeeper, when trade is brisk, uses the opportunity as though it were his last. He refuses to believe in the protestations of the free-trade *bourgeoisie*, because he knows that at heart all traders, working on a selfish basis as they must, yearn for monopoly so far as their own markets are concerned; and he points to the record of the English manufacturers, whose pseudo-enthusiasm for freedom of exchange expired the instant they secured the free importation of the materials which their particular factories required. When he looks at a Trades Union, composed of individuals each of whom has his own bread and butter fight to make, and sees that Union in desperate war with employers whose very existence it threatens, the Socialist does not expect to see in it a model of voluntary co-operation. He expects to find it a military organization, following the tactics usually observed in the industrial warfare that

everywhere prevails. In short, the Socialist sees sordid, selfish warfare everywhere the accepted method of production and exchange, and sordid, warlike tactics therefore the accepted rule in every walk of life, be it the workman's in his shop, the tradesman's in his store, the preacher's in his pulpit, or the so-called statesman's in office or on the stump. It is the soil of which its channel is composed that gives the color to every stream.

What warranty does history give for Mr. Spencer's dictum that the people cannot administer their own affairs, save under the autocratic imperialism of a bureaucratic ring? It gives us none whatever. His is the cry invariably raised by every monopolist the instant it is proposed to transfer his power to the people's hands. It was the cry of the Pope that the people were incapable of looking to their own salvation in the great beyond, and the Bible was therefore locked between covers, the priest alone being the holder of the key. It was the cry of Louis XIV.—and all the crew of rulers by the grace of God that took their cue from him—not merely that "I am the State," but that "without me the State would fall to pieces." It was the cry of the slave-owners of the South that they fed and sheltered their slaves, just as to-day pathetic letters appear in the London *Times* from Irish landlords reciting the charities extended in the past to tenants who now bite the hand that fed them. It is to-day the cry of the capitalists that the regularity with which the wants of our cities are supplied is proof positive of their fitness for administration. But the people are not asking to be fed. They are tired of their position as wards under a trusteeship that is perpetually abused. They wish for liberty to feed themselves, as they wished, four hundred years ago, for liberty to select their own spiritual food; as they fought a hundred years ago for the right to manage their own political affairs. This is the great historic evolution that Herbert Spencer, himself the victim of a class environment and an early training acquired when the principles of *laissez faire* were thought to be impregnable, finds it now convenient to ignore.

That the evolution is directly along these lines is palpable to all who have even the most superficial acquaintance with the platforms of the various reform parties of the day; and, although it is true that there is such a thing as retrogressive evolution, it has never yet occurred that retrogression has occurred during an era of invention. Far more than all its predecessors has this been a century of discoveries, and we are still unquestionably on the advance. The line of the advance is very clearly marked. Number off the various movements, one by one, and note their universal trend. Everywhere there is a struggle for home rule, for the right of the municipality, the state, or the nation, to manage, as an integral whole, its own affairs, unhampered by dictation. It is along these very lines that Nation-

alism in this country is making its most effective propaganda—a propaganda that is probably insinuating itself more extensively into general thought by the very quietness with which it works. The women have an intensely active agitation. They are tired of “taxation without representation;” they wish at least for a voice where-with to protest against being misgoverned, and all their leaders are active in the ranks of other movements, having distinctly for their aim self-government. Trades-Unionism is a movement that, as yet, has lacked the courage to declare itself, but the employers construe it correctly. “These people,” they say, “object to our running our business as we choose,” and, indeed, that is precisely the objection. They do object to being “run;” they object to being run while they are at work, to being run out of employment when they would gladly be employed. That they do not clearly comprehend that their employers, like themselves, are the victims of a vicious system that makes this industrial dictatorship a necessary evil is the gravest of misfortunes, but one that Socialist agitation is doing its best to rectify. Upon certain definite planks all sections are practically to-day agreed, as, for instance, that the great distributing arteries of the country—the railroads and the telegraphs—should be brought under the general control.

The Inter-State Commerce Act was a confession of the thought of the times upon this subject, and its notorious failure has merely added fuel to the fire. To multiply instances would be tedious. The general drift is easily discernible, and the movement toward a self-governing solidarity, that the tyrannies engendered by a misapplication of individualism has started, shows no sign of balking at the spectre of a colossal directorate that Mr. Spencer has raised. With equal show of reason might it be urged that to invest women with the suffrage would be to multiply offices, and to add further complications to our already over-tangled politics. The suffrage is claimed as a right, and so is the joint possession of our joint inheritance.

The curse of this generation is that we are afraid. Anxiety and the fear of want are necessarily the constant companions of the poor, but no class is to-day exempt. Everywhere there is uneasiness, everywhere there is a growing sense of insecurity, everywhere men dread they know not what. Granted that a storm is coming, how will it result? Will it tear society up by the roots to land us again at the point from which we started centuries ago? Are we in for a period of lawlessness to be followed by the iron rule of a dictator? Men do not know; the future is more than ever misty, and therefore they are afraid. But we have the means of knowing. We are able to-day to take stock of our resources as we never were before, and the most cursory examination shows that the resources are practically infinite. The history of the world is at last an open book, and the task of summing up is

trifling. We see that the old myths of the impotence of man are laughable monstrosities, interesting only as mementoes of his early helplessness. A thousand arts have picked him up out of the isolation of the past, and brought him into the closest contact with his fellows. Thus he has learned his strength and theirs ; he has mastered the virtue of self-reliance and discovered the power that combination gives. That character, forged in the furnace of a long and sturdy struggle, will never desert him ; that knowledge, so laboriously acquired, he will never forget. It may be that a sharp shock or two will be required to wake the sleeper ; that the chrysalis may be burst with painful effort. But that it will be burst is as certain as to-morrow's dawn. The momentum already acquired by the human race is irresistible ; *ni prêtre ni maître*, neither priest nor master, can hope to bar the way. An immense solidarity of thought, and consequently an immense solidarity of action ; a universal acceptance of the common-sense teachings of evolution, and the consequent harmony of a universal life conducted upon principles in which all the actors are agreed ; such is the forecast of a future which is probably far nearer than even the most sanguine of us suppose. That the masses are to-day completely skeptical of its attainment is nothing, for it has been the fate of all great changes to be mocked at beforehand, and to be regarded as inevitable when once accomplished. "Before 1789 we were but a handful of Republicans in the whole of France," said Camille Desmoulins.

W. C. OWEN.

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