

STATE SOCIALISM.

TOWNSEND PRIZE ORATION.

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The nineteenth century has been a century of social progress. The governmental methods of age have been revolutionized. The pendulum of politics has swung from monarchy to democracy and now threatens to rise to the other extreme of socialism. The doctrine of the divine right of kings has been repudiated, democracy is proving unsatisfactory, and the divine right of legislatures is now clamored for. The earlier schools of socialists hoped to accomplish their ends by the complete abolition of all forms of government. The new school proposes to equalize conditions by the extension of governmental functions. The former theory was supported by Karl Marx, Lasalle and Proudhon, who taught socialism, anarchy and nihilism. The promoters of the new idea are Wagner, Chamberlain and Henry George, and their doctrine takes the title of State socialism.

The underlying principle of all socialism is the dogma of equality, to which State socialism adds the proposition that the State can accomplish for the individual what he cannot accomplish for himself. With this hope of the equalization of incomes the advocates of the State interference proceed to the nationalization of industries. Under this *regime*, telegraphs, railroads, manufactures and, eventually, real property, are to be placed under the control of the General Government. The simple statement of the logical result to which such a doctrine must lead is sufficient to show its absurdity and impracticability. The greatest mistake of modern legislators is that they look to the immediate results rather than to the ultimate effect of legislation, forgetting that laws make up the artificial environments to which society in its development must conform; forgetting that a machine does not increase in efficiency as it increases in size, and that beyond a certain point efficiency decreases as size increases. The parts of the governmental machine operate with harmony and precision up to a certain point, and I

maintain that modern representative governments have reached that point. Already the federal machinery has become the most potent political factor of the age. Already it dictates the leadership and molds the policy of the nation with such brazen impunity that it has become the shame and disgrace of popular government. Increase the present army of officials fifty-fold and what will be the result? Individualism will give way to paternalism, and the integrity of the citizen will be replaced by the profligacy of the parasite. This is the experience of the European nations to-day, and in Russia, where State regulation is carried furthest, says Mr. Wallace, a man who has passed his whole life without official rank seems not to be a human being. Such is the ideal set before the young men of a nation—such is the type of society which this system necessarily tends to produce.

But more serious still, this doctrine strikes at the very foundation of and involves the elemental principles of government. When a structure is to be erected, two things are to be considered which are paramount to all others; first, the kind of structure to be built; second, the material that is to be used. And in rearing the structure of human government, whatever may be the type desired, it is evident that human beings endowed with the vices as well as the virtues of existing human nature must be the material used. And this vital fact, more than any other, has been ignored by all social reformers. Accepting as literally true the absurdity that all men are created equal, they evolve theories and systems that are neither founded on nature nor supported by reason. Plato's "Republic," Moore's "Eutopia," and Bellamy's "Looking Backward," are but the baseless visions of the dreamer, fit only for the perusal of the idle and curious. It is the height of folly to expect or even hope to rear a perfect structure of government out of imperfect human nature. "There is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts."

There can be no dispute as to the type of society desired. The militant type has given way to the industrial, and it follows that the methods used in maintaining the former should be replaced by those requisite to the development of the latter. In the early history of the race, when war and conquest were the principal occupations of men, a strong central government was an absolute necessity. This form was adopted by the Oriental nations, by the Greeks, by Sparta, and obtained throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. But that system has passed away, let us hope forever. In its place has sprung up the industrial system, whose

chief characteristic has been independence on the part of the individual in the management of his own affairs. Under this system, whose fundamental principles are coöperation, right of contract and right of property, our splendid fabric of society has been developed. But our modern so-called social reformers, unmindful of the teachings of experience, in response to the demand of the mob, would abolish these time-honored institutions with one stroke of legislation. The destruction of the institution of private property is the most iconoclastic doctrine in the entire range of socialistic philosophy. This institution, so perfectly adapted to the wants of man, has been one of the strongest civilizing influences the world has known. History acquaints us with no period when property did not exist, and it was doubtless coëval with human society. Without it, industry and thrift would give way to idleness and indulgence, and the beneficent gifts of the Creator would be forever unimproved and unacknowledged. Destroy this institution and you have already undermined the chief corner stone of society.

Opposed to this doctrine of paternalism is the doctrine of individualism—the doctrine of conservative democracy. This doctrine has for its support the dictates of reason and the sanction of history. Its teaching is this: That, taking human beings as they are, in their actual state of moral and intellectual development, taking account of the physical conditions with which they are surrounded, the promptings of self-interest will lead individuals spontaneously to follow that course which is most for their own good and the good of all. It makes the State the servant and the individual the sovereign. It insists that man can govern himself ; and that if he cannot, he should not be trusted with the government of others. It rejects alike the doctrine of the divine right of kings and of legislatures. Its only equality is the equality of opportunity, dignity and privilege before the law. It accepts inequality in capacity as a fact plain as the noonday sun, and accords to every man the just rewards of his merit. Is it reasonable to expect the best results from a man hampered by laws regulating his every action? It may be well to check refined methods of deceit or cruel utilization of advantageous position, but it can never be right to deprive energy, talent and character of the natural reward and incentive of their exertions.

History is prolific in lessons against over-legislation. "In Gaul during the decline of the Roman Empire," says Lectant, "so numerous were the receivers in comparison with the payers, and so onerous the weight of taxation that the laborer broke

down, the plains became desert, and woods grew where the plow had been." Taine and De Tocqueville attribute the French Revolution to the pernicious influence of State interference more than to any other cause, and Adam Smith, in his "Wealth of Nations," tells us that the crown lands in England were everywhere the least productive. Herbert Spencer testifies that the same is true of the crown lands in England, Austria and Germany to-day, and in our own country the history of Jamestown, Plymouth and Brook Farm bear witness to the ruinous effect of communistic ownership of property. Century after century these and similar measures have again disappointed hopes and again brought disaster.

Science, too, testifies in behalf of democracy and rejoices in the triumph of the individual. In the realm of matter, and in the lower forms of life the law of selection, the law of the survival of the fittest, sways a catholic and undisputed scepter. It is certain, also, that in the history of human progress this law has obtained with equal force in the realm of mind and spirit. But this distinction must be observed, that in the world of matter, size and physical strength are the ruling forces. The sun rules the ecliptic because he is big and dense. But in the realm of mind, moral and intellectual worth are the ruling forces. But you say this law is a stern and cruel law, which accords the strong supremacy over the weak. True, it is, we reply, but it is the law of nature. "Her voice is the harmony of the universe. Her throne is the bosom of God." As civilization advances, a certain amount of suffering must be endured. No power on earth, no cunningly devised laws of statesmen, no communistic panacea, can diminish it one jot. In the vain attempt to equalize conditions and banish suffering, the fundamental laws of nature are ignored and disaster and increased suffering follow.

Nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean; over that art
Which you say adds to nature is an art
That nature makes.

Infinitely better, then, than this doctrine of much legislation is the Anglo-Saxon doctrine of individual liberty. It is the wisest principle that obtains in the governments of modern nations. And we should continue to guard it as we guard the most precious concerns of our lives. Let us exalt the individual. Make him self-reliant and responsible. Let him lean on the State for nothing that he can accomplish for himself. "Let him stand upright and fearless, a freeman born of freemen, sturdy in his own

strength, loyal to his State, earnest in his allegiance, but building his altar in the midst of his household gods, and shrining in his own heart the uttermost temple of its liberty !”

These have been the principles that have governed the Anglo-Saxon in the past, and I believe they will control him in the future. But of one thing I am certain, that should the older nations of Europe disregard the admonitions of their wisest statesmen and surrender their birthright, the Anglo-American will not follow in their footsteps ; but, cherishing rather the traditions of his fathers, undisturbed alike by the croakings of Wagner and the sophistries of Chamberlain, by the fallacies of Henry George and the babblings of Bellamy, with feet firm-planted on the promise of God in nature, he will not despair of the government of the people ; “but with steady eye will look forward to see the white light of humanity as it streams through the widening prism of democracy spread out more and more into the glorious spectrum of a rainbow-hued civilization.”