

CHAPTER X.

The Coming of Socialism Affirmed.

And now, looking out upon society, in the light of the materialistic conception—that is, equipped with the knowledge that now makes us capable

Of tracing to their origins and accounting for the existence of social classes, institutions, laws and practices;

Of tracing changes in thought to social changes, and accounting for these by showing the connection between them and previous economic changes, that came with the adoption of new tools, or an extended subdivision of labour;

Of noting how men, by their action, affected their environment and their fellow men, and then in turn became affected by these, amidst the growth of population, the springing up of organised society, and rise of class cleavage in it, the appearance of the State, nations, and cities, and the problems connected with them;

Of thus proceeding from one to another of—inner life, suggestion from without, human action, objective change, subjective consequence, consequent human action, and so on, men thinking, doing, performing, and thinking again—knowing or not knowing the best way to proceed or best thing to do, but always acting according to their lights, that is, limited and conditioned as

the while incidents and events follow one another in their order. We note their succession and account for the order of their succession, as we come to understand how history is made.

Thus we arrive at this view, that action and reaction succeed one another in a process that occasions the formation and transformation of society, that occasions historic events. This is the materialist conception; this is Marx's "guiding thread." It is only a method, but no contemporary of his can be credited with a greater discovery—a greater conquest of thought. As Engels shared in the work, he shares in the glory. Reverently of both: Sanft ruhet Ihre Asche.

Now it can be truly said, that in a knowledge of the past is to be found an explanation of the present, and in so far as this is an explanation of a process that must continue, what of the future? The answer must be discovered by studying this process objectively.

Tracing the process: With economic development the social class that gets its living by working for wages came into existence and as manufacture, and later the machine industry, supplanted the older forms of production, this class grew in numbers greatly, but has never flourished exceedingly. It has had no golden era to which it could wish to return. To be a wage labourer is to be a servant and have a master; and to be a master over the labour of free men is to be the possessor of instruments of industry, stocks of materials and some money in hand or at call—is, in a word, to be a capitalist. But to remain master over the

labour of these free men, they must be cut off from the means of making as good a livelihood on their own account; and in that men working singly on bits of raw material with hand tools are at first undersold on the market by the capitalists, and as then a generation grows up unskilled in the use of these hand tools—these free men become so cut off. In this manner capital seizes on industry after industry and in them lowers the status of those engaged to that of wage workers, without property in the means of production—proletarians. After those connected with industry and trade have become divided into capitalists and wage-workers—technical development continuing—numbers are continually being passed out of the capitalist class into that of wage labour by "the automatic action of competition," and so as a result of friction and erosion the capitalist section of society diminishes while that of wage labour grows, economic dominion extending more and more over society as the capitalists become fewer, individually wealthier, and more powerful.

Thus have capital and labour come and brought their problems with them.

But in the struggle between these two social forces, the materialist conception leans to neither side. It merely investigates, collects the facts, and so arrays them as to make them disclose to us the message that they contain in themselves as to what is to be the outcome of this class struggle, what social transformation is to result.

And now, assuming the presence in society of the capitalist and wage classes as we know them—their origins traced out and existence accounted for—studying them ob-

jectively, allowing no subjective preference, hopes or fears to sway our judgments, but merely arraying the facts with a view to finding the answer to this question, How will the struggle between capital and labour end? Will labour overthrow capital as history shows the rising middle class overthrew the dominion over them of the landed aristocracy?

As each class and section of society comes through being similarly affected to have a class life in a world of its own, out upon which it looks from its own point of view, so through the head of labour run currents of thought corresponding to the conditions of life and circumstances surrounding it.

However it started, whatever according to time and place its degree of enlightenment, standard of education or level of class wisdom, it is a part of this mankind whose history we have been reviewing,—a section of society—and, therefore, has brains. Historically he lived in some comfort or in stint, according as employment was regular or intermittent or as wages allowed. He saw machines set up in place of himself, and his heart sank as he went forth to walk the roads in search of a master, and not for a time finding one, suffered and saw those dependent on him suffer. Left native village, town, and even country in search of work and wages: Lived through commercial crises and financial panics, but did not understand them; only knew he had passed through periods of distress, and that thereafter he met many newcomers in his class who had been bred higher up, but somehow lost their footing in the class above.

Out of work he goes anxiously begging for employment, perhaps envies those in it, and wishes the master would give him the opportunity to show that he would serve him better than some other one that he employs. In work he looks on the anxious applicant for a billet as his enemy, fears he might be given his job; workers from other places he dislikes, but immigrants from other countries he hates, and would almost see the hand of a divine providence behind a calamity that destroyed these people before they could come and take jobs he and his should have. Earning a wage that enables him to do so, he will provide for his wife and have his children educated, and try to set them out on a better career than his own. Stinted, he will overwork his wife and have her supplement the family income with her earnings outside the home in addition to doing all the work in it; and rob his children of their childhood to turn it into something to eat and drink or to pay the landlord with.

He looks out upon a civilisation that he does not share in, but when shops, works, and the units of business capital were small and new countries were opening up for colonisation, he had hopes of starting for himself, or trying his fortune in new lands as he saw others do. As these conditions change, openings through which to rise become fewer and fewer; even those above are tumbling below, and such hopes fade.

But Labour has struck a new line. It lives in the midst of organisations, civil, political, military—the organisation of itself by the employers where it works. Accepting the wages system because it knows

no other, it organises into trades unions, fights its employers for concessions. Hopes rise and fall with success and failure, and as results become disproportionate to cost, the prospect becomes less alluring. There is always the reserve army of unemployed.

Labour longs for emancipation from what it feels to be a thralldom. Experience succeeds experience, impression succeeds impression. It dawns on some that it is useless attempting to conquer a position that will satisfy within the framework of capitalist society. The cry is raised that this framework must be shattered, that the economic relations must be changed. The position taken and occupied by capital and by labour are studied and thought out. Labour begins to think that as idleness produces nothing, labour produces all. Capital is pressed to justify its position, and its existence is threatened in the proclamation of the principles of Socialism. Labour becomes convinced that while it permits capital to exist, it will be outraged, oppressed, and exploited.

As the workers circumscribed by this framework of present capitalist society fail to achieve their aims, and as failure causes them to think, ponder, meditate, become conscious of this framework, and as a study of their position within capitalist society gives the worker's mind those impressions which are summed up in the principles of Socialism, so is the road that labour will travel mapped out for it, so is Socialism accounted for, and the certainty of its coming affirmed.

Thus has capitalist society raised up a class trained, skilled, educated—capable

of performing all the functions in connection with the making and maintenance of the instruments of labour, the production and transportation of wealth in all its forms from the simplest article to objects of decoration and ornament—of performing all the services from those involving only the rudest toil to the filling of offices in which the highest trained intelligence is required. This class coming to occupy this position could not do so without becoming conscious of its work, its capability and its life, and of the difference between the amount it produces and the amount it receives, that it must work several days for the wages that will only purchase what it makes in one day. In this experience alone is the suggestion that the capitalist should be abolished.

Thus in the light of the materialist conception, that stage of economic development which is the capitalist process, as it turns the means of production into capitalist property and concentrates this into the hands of the few who become, though overlords of industry, mere investors; at the same time, because it cannot do otherwise, raises up, adds to and increases the intelligence of the propertyless wage-workers (including salaried), and in doing this, capital is raising up a rival power in society that increasingly objects to remain in subjection to it—is calling into existence the industrial army, which, though at first commanded and furnished with officers by capital, is through being instructed, organised, trained, allotted functions, and at the same time so treated as to provoke discontent in its ranks—while becoming conscious of a feeling that it

could, with the means of production, produce for its own use without apparently useless drawers of dividends, who do not even see how work is done—this army, for one reason and for another, is having its mind swung round to the acceptance of proposals to appoint its own officers and leaders, and renouncing the authority of capital, enter in and take charge of the means and instruments of production on its own behalf, and thenceforth use them as partners in an association the membership of which produces for its own use. This is Socialism. A something in itself concerning which different heads may have in them different notions, different ideas as to what it will be like, and how it will come, or whether that or something else would be preferred. But these subjective preferences may arise and change or differ accordingly as the mind sums up and theorises from this or that point of view, while looking out upon a more or less explained or unexplained world of capital and labour.

Capital looks out upon this world; labour looks out upon it; their situations, points of view and preferences differ. The materialist conception accounts for and explains all these varying phenomena, and shows how the frictions and antagonisms arise; that the form of production in grouping men into the representatives of capital and of labour it groups them into opposing forces that will fight on the industrial or the political field wherever their interests clash or an advantage can be gained. Labour cannot leave capital alone, because capital cannot leave it alone. Labour cannot leave the State alone, because the State

cannot leave it alone. As every line of study brings us back to economic conditions, so the principles of Socialism are often discovered anew; often are men who have started to think found to be on the way to their discovery. And, again, it may be said, if in the statement of these principles is summed up the inevitable effect upon the mind of capitalist conditions, then, because no other line, way, or method of emancipation can, from the nature of the economic process, be discovered for labour, **SOCIALISM IS IN THE NATURE AND PROCESS OF THINGS.**

Thus the materialist conception of history affirms the coming of Socialism. And it is to come, not because by few or many of our neighbours it is more or less strongly desired, hoped for, or aspired to. These are only mental feelings, preferences and affinities, only subjective states that may change as their position in society changes. A change in the economic process—foreseen, a consequent change in these would be foreseen. Socialism is not a mental feeling, so not a hope, nor an aspiration, neither is it a conjecture—which same is only a thought.

Nor is it the realisation of a great scheme, plan, or design, thought out by one or another of the would-be architects of new social orders. Such products of ingenious minds—utopias—society cannot rearrange itself in accordance with, fit itself into, or put on, as one would a new suit of clothes.

Nor because of the existence in society of the different grades of rich and poor, for many a one living on rent, interest, divi-

dends, or benefactions is poor. This does not give the line of cleavage.

But because as a result of economic development, because of that procession of changes in the conditions of industry and trade, the people have become divided into these two classes—these two opposing social forces of capital and labour, the Capitalist Class and the Working Class.

