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SOCIALISM AND SOCIALISTS.

It is with these words as with all others which express, at a given date, a definite situation, but which, in the long run, either because facts or the state of men's minds has changed, are transformed, and no longer convey their original meaning. Hence, to fix their meaning, at their true date, is essential. An analysis of such meaning may be reduced to this: In every human society, whether it advances or retrogrades, modifications more or less profound are always going on, modifications which are more or less perceptible, and which, with or without the knowledge of such society, act upon its economy. Apparently such a society remains the same; but in reality it is daily affected by changes of which it becomes entirely conscious only after time has fixed them in the habits and customs of the people, and marked them by its sanction. This is the course of civilizations which are being perfected or which are declining. The honor of a generation is to add something to the inheritance it has received, and to transmit it improved to the generation which comes after it. To employ what has been acquired as an instrument of new acquisition, to advance from the verified to the unknown: such is the idea of progress as it presents itself to well-ordered minds. But such is not the idea of the socialists. In their eyes the situation given is a false one, and the process too simple. Reforms in detail do not seem to them worthy of attention. They have plans of their own, the first condition of which is to make a *tabula rasa* of everything that exists, to cast aside existing laws, manners, customs, and all the guarantees of person and property. It seems to them that we have lived thus far under the empire of a misconception which it is urgent should cease; our globe, according to them, is an anticipated hell, and our civilization a coarse outline only. What is the remedy? There is only one—to try the treatment of which the socialists hold the secret. That treatment varies according to the sect. There are socialists with mild remedies, and socialists with violent remedies: the only difficulty is in the choice. But with all their differences, there is one point on which they agree—the formal condemnation of human societies as they are at present constituted, and the necessity of erecting on their ruins an order of things more conformable to the instincts of man and to his destiny here below. In exchange for our real world, the socialists offer us worlds of the fancy. This is their distinguishing trait, and one which makes of them a family apart.

—In this pursuit they have had so many precursors that to enumerate them would be to write the history of the adventures of the human mind. At one time, we have philosophers engaging in that chase in solitary speculations; and at another, sects, trying in abortive essays to realize their dreams; now, a whole population stakes in that chase its existence and repose; here, we find the idea of mysticism prevailing, and curbing instinct to the profit of a system; there, instinct gets the upper hand and breaks therein which all regular government puts on it: everywhere we witness an effort to destroy the old mould, and to obtain a new one. Revolts and factions beget one another while copying one another. First we find Plato with the most captious of models. He invented an imaginary community, which Sir Thomas More reproduced in his Utopia. In both cases, goods were to be in common, and the fruits of labor distributed by means of arbitrary combinations. Campanella went farther. With Plato he admits promiscuity; but, bolder than Plato, he regulates its exercise. Morelli, not content with recommending a community, would force it on men. He establishes for labor a species of obligatory conscription, and condemns to perpetual imprisonment the partisans of property, under pretext of their dangerous dementia. Baboeuf treats them as conspirators, and spares them as little as Morelli. For the sake of good example, he expels them from among men when he does not deliver them to the executioner.

Willingly or by force, he would have all distinctions of class and all appropriation of goods disappear. He would tolerate only one costume, one table, one ordinary. The great centres of population trouble him, and, with a stroke of his pen, he suppresses them. Luxury has its birth in cities, and of luxury he will have nothing. Homes should be as uniform as possible, in order not to excite jealousy by comparison. There should be like care for the education of all citizens. The state takes possession of them, and abandons them only at death. It makes laborers and workmen out of them. Useful services, and not acts which serve for pleasure, are demanded of them. What is not communicable to all, he says, in his imperative language, must be severely retrenched. The science of government, he says, is to suppress whatever may act as an obstacle, and the best régime is that which is so contrived as to meet with no opposers. It is not difficult to see what advance the idea of the community had now made. With Plato it was only an idyl; with Baboeuf it is a yoke of iron; from an ingenuous dream and one far from being ironical, we pass to the dreariest and most degrading servitude; Plato confines himself to advice, Baboeuf would act with living force; Plato admits categories, Baboeuf endures none of any kind; he takes the lowest level, and wishes to reduce everything to it. This contrast is intelligible: Plato remains in the imaginary, Baboeuf enters the real; with a view to the end, he thinks of the means, and fearing defeat, determines on the most energetic means.

—Examples of a common régime were no more wanting in antiquity than the speculations in which such a common régime was offered in perspective. The conventual organization, with its exploitation of mortmain and vows of renunciation, was nothing else. But those who submitted to it were out of the world, not in the world; they lived for heaven rather than for the earth. As much may be said of the Essenes, whose life was almost that of monks. The Moravians preserve more affinity with regular society; their community is neither as narrow nor as exclusive as that of the Jewish sect; they admit of marriage and of the intermingling of the sexes, while the Essenes preserved the strictest celibacy; they recognize private property side by side with collective labor, while the Essenes had nothing of their own. In the Paraguay missions, likewise, the community partook of a mixed character; each Indian had his field and his flock; only a separate domain, the Possession of God, was reserved for cultivation in common, and its produce was intended to meet the expenses for the support of the infirm, for the purposes of worship, and the payment of the tribute sent each year to the king of Spain. Moreover, in these various modes of grouping, there was neither revolt nor formal protest. They were combinations suggested at one time by a particular creed, at another by expediency of a local character. In the case of the Indians of Paraguay, their community was a beginning of civilization; in that of the Moravians and Essenes, as well as in that of the monks and anchorites, it was a means of sanctification. Under these conditions all government is easy; its point of departure is the spirit of discipline and the suppression of the instincts. From these partial communities to a general community the distance is a great one—the distance between the exception and the rule, between a special state of men's minds and the dispositions which animate the other members of the human family. Such cases must be noted, but there is no conclusion to be drawn from them.

—The community of goods has had less offensive apostles, like the Jacques in France and the Lollards in England. The former did not confine their pretensions within the walls of a monastery or the limits of a nation's territory. They had pretensions to empire, and they disguised projects of partition and spoliation under the mask of political rights. Neither did the Anabaptists admit that they entertained similar pretensions. Their religious schism was only a pretext to lead the populace to an assault on property. What a sad memory the Anabaptists have left! They filled with their crimes and their names two full centuries of the history of Germany. Münzer was their first corypheus; he invited the poor to the partition of the spoils of the rich; Mathias, in turn, ordered the sacking of the houses of the bourgeoisie; John of Leyden proclaimed polygamy a

law of the state, and was the first to conform to that law by marrying seventeen women. The execution of such bandits did not suffice to extirpate their sect, and after they had disappeared, the ruins with which the land was strewn showed what is engendered in popular interpretation, by the utopia of the community, and what vestiges it leaves after it. Socialism has no more formidable formula; and, in the end, it is the only one which is susceptible of application. All other formulæ escape the intelligence of the crowd because of their subtlety; this one is as clear as it is powerful. To take from those who have, in order to give to those who have not, is a concise and intelligible proposition, to reduce all positions and fortunes to a level, is one not less so. Both find in the heart of man a bad passion, which answers to them. When they are heard, passion leaves the vague to enter the world of realities; it knows what it wants, and whither it goes. There is no longer a mere anathema falling in a vacuum, but a campaign to be undertaken against society, with the booty in prospect—We have now cast a rapid glance at the men and the sects which, in the past, may be considered as the equivalents of socialism and socialists. With those who in our day are so named, the spirit is the same; only their procedure is different. The feeling of bitterness against established civilizations is at least as great, and if there be not as much violence in act, it is because moral force has resisted in time. We must add, that, in the case of almost all, the visions of the brain have been tempered by upright intentions. This is true of Robert Owen, who was the first to open the way. In Owen, there were two men, the man of fact and the man of an idea; the one superior, the other mediocre. A manufacturer in New York, he had the opportunity to found, aided by a benevolence without limit and by the sole power of example, one of the most flourishing industrial colonies that have ever been known. The basis of his system was the thought, borrowed from J. J. Rousseau and Bentham, that the practice of virtue has enough in it to fully indemnify those who devote themselves to it. So far the idea is a correct one, and no kind of success was wanting to the man who put the principle in practice; the error consisted in presuming, that, applied to humanity as a whole, it would succeed, as it had succeeded in a manufacturing centre. The great human family can not be governed as a small flock is governed. It was not long before Robert Owen perceived this. He himself, by exaggerating it, had changed the nature of his method for the worse. From a paternal administration he was imperceptibly led to the abandonment of all social restraint. He not only ended in the community, but he took from the community the only guarantee it possessed, the responsibility of the individual. If we believe him, man, having come accidentally into this world, and being the plaything of accidental circumstances through life, could not, without injustice, be declared responsible for his acts. Fatality alone determined good and evil; with the individual, there could be neither merit nor demerit. Why, then, punishment or reward? It was better to let man and society follow their bent, removing all the circumstances which might lead to evil, and increasing those which might lead to good. So much for this world; and, as to the other, why trouble one's self about it? It escapes our means of knowledge; it is an enigma which no one has been able to solve. Such was Owen's conclusion. Never was negation more absolute stated with greater candor. During fifty years he presented it to rebellious human societies as their only means of salvation; in colonies, in plans, in publications, in voluntary subscriptions, he spent a vast amount of money, without his personal sacrifices being able to make his desolating maxims advance a serious step. They wounded men's souls at too many points to be able to make any great ravages. The inventor of them lived long enough to assist at the obsequies of his doctrine.

—The doctrines of Saint-Simon permitted more consideration to be paid them; the basis of his system was a purely sacerdotal government. No more division between the temporal power and the spiritual; the time had come to confound them. Instead of a pope and an emperor, men were to have a *father* who would unite the functions of both, and govern in the *forum internum* and the *forum externum*, in things spiritual as well as temporal. Thus would cease, between the body and the spirit, a struggle which has lasted from the beginning of the world, and which has

maintained disorder in the world. A natural hierarchy would follow on this change. Society would be divided into three classes: savans, artists, and those engaged in industrial pursuits; and the chiefs of these three classes would be the greatest savans, the greatest artists, and the greatest workers in the industrial world. These latter would need no investiture but that of the consciousness of their force. They would not be chosen; they would install themselves in their own position. The human family would know them by their works. Moreover, the new hand of society would be, under this régime, not fear, but affection; and the most loving, placing themselves above others, would necessarily impart their tone to all others. The chain of positions being thus formed, everything would follow in the most natural manner imaginable; each one would take rank in proportion to his capacity, and each capacity would be served in proportion to its works. Thenceforth humanity was to be only one family, and the earth to constitute only one great farm, the fruits of which were to be divided in proportion to rank and services. Such was the Saint-Simonian law, and it added on the condition of woman and the relation of the sexes, certain not over-edifying precepts summed up in the expressive words, rehabilitation of the flesh. We know in what this strange morality ended, so far as the principal disciples of Saint-Simon are concerned. Its public profession cost them a suit in the courts and a sentence. Their religion did not survive this scandal, and was dispersed to the music of hisses. Everything considered, it was not worth the noise made about it. A political papacy invested with discretionary powers, with the sovereign disposal of the lot and rank of individuals in society, preaching the reign of the senses under the lying cover of the equality of the sexes, was not a system, and did not advocate a doctrine, which could long resist the revolt of men's consciences and the decrees of public opinion.

—The same fate was reserved, after a longer defense, for the doctrine of Charles Fourier. Substantially it had the same foundation; but the mode of procedure of Fourierism was different. Fourierism, like Saint-Simonism, wished to substitute a world of the fancy for the real world, and an artificial order for the course of things. Fourier started out with the idea, that from the earliest ages to our own time the passions have been the source of so many evils only because they have been unskillfully suppressed. God, according to Fourier, can not have made anything essentially bad or essentially useless. If the passions, in their actual play, are the source of many disorders, it is not with the passions themselves that we must find fault, but with the medium in which they move, a human medium, and therefore susceptible of modification. "Attractions," says Fourier, "are proportional to destinies," which means that it would be all gain for men to yield to their inclinations. Hence they must be satisfied in an association freely agreed to, and in which all the instincts of man may have room for the fullest play. These formulas of association are the ingenious part of Fourier's work. The association is in groups, which and in series, and these in phalanxes. The group is the cell of the human hive; it is composed of seven or nine persons; it has a centre and wings, and a harmony which results as much from its identifies as from its contrasts. The series comprise from twenty-four to thirty-two groups. The phalaux is Fourier's commune; consisting of 1,800 souls, it lives in a palace which he cells the phalanstery, divided in such a manner as to procure the greatest possible number of pleasures, while avoiding all the prejudices which result from the arrangement of actual households. As to property, it does not incorporate itself in individuals; it is collective. Its value circulates only under the form of coupons, and becomes susceptible of appropriation; products are divided among the three direct agents of production: capital talent and labor. Let us add, that in Fourier's system no repugnance attaches to this labor; it is attended by a love for it, taste and buoyancy; it is done in short sessions, in holiday clothes, with passion and spirit, the task is taken up or dropped at will, and varied so as to produce neither monotony nor weariness. Nor is this all; to these wonders of earth Fourier adds the joys of a heaven of his own. He has his own cosmogony and his own transmigration of souls; he walks his system through the spheres, and requires of our planets the most singular services. The whole of Fourier's system may be

summed up thus: a universal government, a perfect world adorned by a perfect society. Beyond this, imagination can not soar. In this land of vertigo, nothing is to be found but glare. Again, we have a world to be made over, a civilization to be reconstructed, man and humanity to be renewed in a confused amalgam of the marvelous and the real.

—Here stops the series of socialists at first hand; after them come the plagiarists, and, first of all, Cabet. Like Campanella and Sir Thomas More, Cabet has given us, in his "Icarie", an imaginary community, which unites all perfections in itself, and which found, in the streets of Paris, more than one partisan whom time has disabused. When it became a question to pass from ideas to acts, he perished in the attempt, and learned what becomes of dreams when brought to wrestle with realities. And so it was with Louis Blane. In the silence of his study he had imagined an administrative workshop which would cure industry of the leprosy of competition. He would have the state become entrepreneur and universal producer; he would have it carry out, at the expense of the public treasury, an experiment in relation to the economy of manual labor. In the workshops which were to be established, the workmen were to share in the profits of exploitation, and these workshops, of different kinds, were to be associated among themselves in such a way that the profits of some might serve to cover, if need were, the losses of others. Nothing could be more ingenious on paper; each of these workshops would become a type and a model; free industry would be forced, under pain of death, to draw inspiration from them, and this idea of the absorption and destruction of free industry was discoverable in the spirit of the project. Private activity was destined to disappear before official activity. We know what these specious plans became in the execution of them: by forced deviation the administrative workshop became the national workshop, with an elective head, and a minimum of wages, two features borrowed from the combination of Louis Blanc. A false idea led to applications still more false, so false that the author of the idea vehemently and justly repudiated them. Proudhon was no happier. Is it proper to rank Proudhon among socialists? No one battled them more fiercely than he; he produced the evidence of their contradictions, the emptiness of their plans, and the poverty of their doctrines; he left nothing standing, neither their arguments nor their combinations; and he warmed against them even to the point of invective. But if he was brutal toward the community, he was no less so toward property; and he remains a socialist spite of himself. From the core of what he denies we need only disengage what he affirms, to become convinced of this. Thus, he sacrifices the idea of property to I know not what species of imaginary possession floating *in vacuo*. And so, after an at-random dissertation on the determination of value, he arrives at imagining a general and uniform tariff for it, both for labor and products, by measuring the price of these latter by the number of hours employed in producing them! Lastly, as a consequence, he proposes to replace money made of gold and silver, by orders payable in kind, in such a manner as to return from gold and silver money to barter, and to deprive capital of one of its most evident powers, the power to produce interest. On all these points Proudhon remains on the staff of the socialistic legion which he so maltreated. To the same staff belongs also Pierre Leroux, as he appeared with a plan of human society in his hand. He admits the family, fatherland and property only on certain conditions. He finds that the fatherland has the drawback of recognizing a chief or head; the family, of recognizing a father and children; and the institution of property, of recognizing rich and poor. Pure despotism! It is all a question of finding a combination in which the family, the fatherland and property shall be such that man may develop in them without being oppressed by them; in other words, that the family should not produce an heir, that the fatherland should have no subjects, and property no proprietor. Such is the problem, such the solution: if to it we add a little of theurgy and metempsychosis, we shall have all the baggage of Leroux, so far as things serious are concerned.

—We have reached the end of those systems, and may judge in what they agree, and in what they differ. Under the names we have mentioned, there now remain but the men for whom socialism was a tool or a pedestal, and the political parties who took up the standard of socialism without seeking to define it. Socialism, indeed, has its day; many were attracted by it as men are attracted by novelty; then the crowd mixed with it with the obscure feeling that it would find its advantage in it, and that in the absence of conviction they should adhere to it from pure calculation. And how could the crowd defend itself against socialism? It was promised higher wages in return for less labor, a quarry to hunt in a society in dissolution, the leveling of conditions, the humiliation of the higher classes, and a general division of private fortunes among all. Is it to be wondered at that such vertigo was contagious, and that it became in some countries, for an instant, an object of alarm? Yet socialism did not deserve so much honor. As a theory, it could not stand examination; as a fact, it was not able to succeed under any circumstances or at any point. The name of Owen is connected with the failures of New Harmony and Orbistan; that of Cabet, with the Nauvoo failure in the state of Illinois; with Fourier's a series of discomfitures which followed on the heels of each other at Condésur-Vesgres, Citeaux, in the valley of the Sig, and in America. From the ideas of Louis Blanc, there proceeded only the *ateliers nationaux* (national workshops), the paternity of which he excepted to; of the boldness and rashness of Proudhon, all that remains is the memory of the *bank of exchange* or *bank of the people*, made famous by the most untoward catastrophe. The history of contemporary socialism is but one continual abortion. The principal actors on its stage have disappeared from the scene, and left their places to a few confidants who stammer out their parts. All that socialism and socialists have done is reduced to a few plans of association, to a few commonplaces which are only the weakened echo of their first timorous ideas, to a few formulas whose meaning time changes, and which have become fixed in language as problems or bugbears.

—Thus, all these chimeras gradually depart into the regions of oblivion. It may be that the same vertigo will appear again under other forms and another name; our globe is the seat of an external revolt and of an external wail. But then as now, unless the hour of an irrevocable decline has struck for humanity, the result of such errors can not be doubtful. True, these errors are covered with a mask, the love of the people, the interest of the suffering, the feeling of human perfectibility, the advance of generations to a better state and one less full of shocking inequalities. But behind this mask we find a more living physiognomy. That living physiognomy is the truth of things, whether the inventors of systems be conscious of it or not. Behind the truth of things the public conscience always retreated and always will retreat. This, to its honor, we must hope. The question is of a war to the knife against established civilizations, to the profit of imaginary civilizations; it is a question of destruction for the sole purpose of building up again; it is a question of giddily abandoning ourselves to systems which, scarcely fledged, give battle to one another, and which die out in the shock of rivalry and the weakness of isolation. It would seem, indeed, that socialists supposed that society, such as it exists, is only so much stage scenery which might be made to disappear at the wave of a wand. And what is proposed in its place? Servitude in all its forms. Take all these systems; they have one feature in common, which is to stifle, by their artificial forms, the taste for and the use of liberty. They condemn human activity to carry a yoke of iron. Here man is enticed into a world of fancy, and there he is condemned to devote himself to others without the merit of that devotion being allowed him. He can no longer dispose of the fruits of his labor, nor regulate the employment of his hands or his brain. The state takes possession of his entire person, of his goods, of the products he creates, and determines the portion of them which he shall receive back. Under the régime of socialism the individual disappears, and is absorbed by a collective being. He ceases to be a body or a soul, and becomes a piece of mechanism. Slavery does not more completely than socialism destroy the personality of man.

LOUIS REYBAUD.