

## "CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM."

The 'Methodist' the official organ of the English Wesleyans contains a report of a public meeting held at Exeter Hall on the 3rd. of April last, Lord Shaftesbury being in the chair, to discuss the proper attitude of religious bodies towards the condition of the London outcast poor. At this meeting the Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Baptists, and Independents (or Congregationalists), were represented by some of their leading ministers and laymen, and several very striking speeches were delivered. As an illustration of the extent to which liberalism in political opinions, based upon orthodox Christian principles, has spread amongst ministers of religion, we give a portion of an address delivered by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M. A., (Oxford), a leading Wesleyan. Mr. Hughes, after saying that although sins such as drink, lust, and laziness were the parents of a great deal of misery, asked:—"Was all poverty due to these causes? Was not society largely to blame for much of it? And if society, then the church, which had been for 1000 years supreme in this country? Many of them detested the *doctrines* promulgated by Henry George, but his *facts* were incontestable. The poor had been growing poorer as the rich had grown richer. Let him quote an authority whose word would be accepted throughout the world—the great Prime Minister of England. Mr. Gladstone said in the House of Commons fifty years ago, 'One of the saddest features of the social condition of the country is the fact that the constant increase in the wealth of the upper classes is accompanied by a decrease in the power of consumption on the part of the people, and by greater privation and suffering on the part of the poor.' And in 1863 he said, 'From 1842 to 1853 the income subject to taxation of this country increased by 6 per cent, and this prodigious increase of wealth has taken place entirely to the advantage of the propertied classes.' And in 1872 Professor Fawcett said that 'the struggles of the working man against want were exciting a profound hostility to the fundamental principles upon which society was based. Production increased beyond all hopes, yet the day seemed as remote as ever when the workman should have his fair share of the profits.' For twenty years, he (the speaker) had been oppressed by this fact. In vain did Malthus come to him and assert that for the poor man there was no place at the banquet of life. In vain did Darwin tell him that in the pitiless struggle for existence the weak must go to the wall, and the Devil take the hindmost. The Christian principle—the Gospel principle—knew nothing of privileged classes, of sacrificing the masses of the people to secure culture, power, and fame for the few. The Bible laid down a very revolutionary law for the idle—'He that will not work, neither let him eat,' and, in any truly Christian community, the man who neither toiled with his hands, nor span with his brain, would have a very hard time of it. (Here the Earl of Shaftesbury interposed with, 'We cannot have these questions discussed here,' but was met with shouts of 'Go on' from all parts of the Hall, and Mr. Hughes, on resuming, was greeted with tremendous cheers.) He said that he considered himself in order in discussing what he deemed to be the causes of existing poverty. Dives was declared in the Gospel to be condemned because nothing better could be said of him than that 'he was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.' James Nasmyth, the engineer, was once examined by a Committee of the House of Commons on the question of pauperism, and stated that by reason of competition he had been compelled to replace many of the men in his works by apprentices. When asked what became of these men, he said—and the speaker did not blame him, for he was quite in accordance with the old political economy—'I do not know; I leave that to the operation of natural laws.' Would the Carpenter of Nazareth have said that? He doubted it. (Hear, hear.) That was the political economy of the time, which taught that demand and supply and the competition of starving men kept wages at the right level. History had shown that demand and supply were controlled in the middle ages

by guilds and beneficent custom. The workman was then the capitalist. Now machinery had destroyed the capitalist labourer, and made the vast masses of the people mere wage-earners. And law had done nothing to modify this. In the same way the feudal rights of the peasant—such as free pasturage, wood from the nearest forest for house building and fuel, and garden ground—had been destroyed without replacement. The new political economists contended that just and beneficent laws must take the place of the old guilds and customs. Political economy must become an ethical science. Ricardo and Mill were now discredited in the great seats of learning on the Continent, and even at Oxford and Cambridge a new school was arising which brought the old dogmas to the impartial test of history. Christian effort had been too exclusively individual in its modes of action. It was time to save society! The great need of our time was Christian socialism! The awful word had been uttered; and every man's hair should now stand on end, and every young lady should faint. (Laughter and cheers.) In France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Russia it absorbed attention and overshadowed everything else. Especially in Germany had it developed itself. There were five distinct socialistic movements in that country—Atheistical and Anarchial Socialism, a Conservative socialism represented by Prince Bismarck—(laughter)—a Roman Catholic Socialism which in Bavaria had 300,000 priests and 100,000 working men, an Evangelical Socialism, and an Academical Socialism. Only one of these movements called itself atheistic. (Cheers.) The noble chairman was himself one of the most revolutionary Socialists that ever lived. ('Hear hear,' and laughter.) The abolition of the Factory Act, with which his name would ever be associated, was pure socialism. Poor-law legislation was not only socialistic, but communistic. So the Irish Land Acts, the Education Acts, the Liability of Employer's Acts, and the Sunday Closing of Public-houses were simply socialism. (Hear, hear.) Such socialism was the result of Christianity. A Permissive Billist was a Socialist of the deepest dye. (Laughter.) Why were the masses alienated from the Church? Because Christians had neglected their social interests. Count Cavour, that far-sighted Italian statesman, predicted many years ago that Rome, despairing of the alliance of monarchies and despotism would ally itself with Socialism, and the day had come. It was significant to him in that connection that when Joseph Arch took up the cause of the peasants, Cardinal Manning was the only well-known minister of religion who stood beside him on that platform. The Church which devoted itself bravely to bettering the social, as well as spiritual, life of the working classes would become the Church of the working classes. But it would be infinitely better if they all took it up together. (Applause.) Why should they allow Roman Catholics and atheists to anticipate them? Let their ministers study the question in all its phases. They had fought the battle of the middle classes for free-trade; let them now fight the battle of the working men for a fair wage. He solemnly called upon all the Churches of Christ to do their long-neglected duty in acting for the social welfare of mankind, and so to bring back the alienated masses to the brotherhood of Christ. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

Toil, feel, think, hope. A man is sure to dream enough before he dies without making any arrangements for the purpose.—Sterling.

All men have the same rights, and one right that every man should have is to associate with congenial people. There are thousands of good men whose desires I do not covet. They may be stupid, or they may be stupid only in the direction in which I am interested, and may be exceedingly intelligent as to matters about which I care nothing. In either case they are not congenial. They have the right to select congenial company; so have I. And while distinctions are thus made, they are not cruel; they are not heartless. They are for the good of all concerned, spring naturally from the circumstances, and are consistent with the highest philanthropy.—Col. Ingersoll.