

SOCIALISM

III. IMPRACTICABILITY; INJURIOUS TO FAMILY LIFE; HOSTILITY TO SMALL HOLDINGS; ANTI-CHRISTIAN AND ANTI-CATHOLIC; NOT SOCIALISTS BUT ATHEISTS.

(Concluded from last week.)

The impracticable character of Socialism having long ago been pointed out, I looked with interest to see whether in either of the two volumes of the Socialist library published in 1905, namely, 'Socialism and Positive Science,' a translation from Prof. Ferri, and 'Socialism and Society,' by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, any serious attempt was made to meet this charge of impracticability. There is no serious attempt made in Prof. Ferri's work. In Mr. MacDonald's there is an attempt, whether serious you must yourselves judge. I have already shown how this writer—now the Member for Leicester—confuses the issue by making all social reform a step in the direction of Socialism instead of away from it. Now to the many practical objections against the collective ownership of all the lands, and mines, and railways, and dockyards, and ships, and mills, and workshops, he answers: 'Make the change by degrees. Solvitur ambulando, not sic volo, laboratory experiment, not revolution, is the method of Socialism.' (1) But how can this be taken, in spite of the Latin quotation, as a serious answer to the objections to Collectivism. If the end is wrong, it is not made right by being reached slowly and piecemeal. If I were to uphold that the best social arrangement was an oligarchy of great trusts, with all the rest of the people their industrial and political subjects, and you raised objections to the working of such a society, would it be a serious answer to say that this arrangement was to be reached cautiously, slowly, and in a Fabian manner? And supposing Mr. MacDonald's phrase 'laboratory experiment' is a correct paraphrase of solvitur ambulando, are you and I to be stretched on the laboratory table as a corpus vile for social vivisection? Is Scotland with all her great historic memories, is the mighty empire, of which Scotland forms one of the most brilliant jewels, are the homes and hearths of the Scottish people, as were they some worthless material, to be exposed to the chances of a dubious experiment?

SOCIALISM IMMORAL AS BEING INJURIOUS TO FAMILY LIFE.

I said dubious; but the experiment is worse than dubious, for real Socialism is not merely, as I have shown you, insidious and impracticable, but is exposed to a third and graver charge of being immoral, in the sense of being opposed to that solid family life which is the very pivot of morality and of happiness. No doubt such a charge will be indignantly repudiated; but remember before you join in the repudiation how precisely I have limited genuine Socialism, how carefully I have explained that a vast percentage of those who call themselves, or are called by others, Socialists, deserve not the name, and are striving after something completely different from genuine Socialism. To make a charge against these men, these merely nominal Socialists, of being opposed to family life would be almost as preposterous as to make such a charge against the Pope or the Premier. But Socialism itself, that sets up the State as the universal producer and provider, this is an immoral doctrine, destructive of family life. I know indeed full well that there is much highly injurious to family life in the present condition of things, especially in the work of married women away from their homes, and in the miserable dwellings of so many of our people, for example, the overcrowded tenements of the jute-workers in Dundee, that make the name of 'home' a mockery. That indeed is a reason why every one of us should be eager for the social reform that will mend or mitigate those evils, but not to mend them by doing away with the very home we are seeking to preserve or restore. And yet this is precisely what Socialism does. The sacred union of man and woman for mutual help, for educating and supporting their children, for providing for their future welfare, the sense of mutual responsibility and care, the true and healthy communism, that of the home, the countless co-operative associations which each family forms, the thousand ties of dependence that are an occasion for the display of the best qualities of human nature—this realm of self-devotion and self-sacrifice—all this becomes unmeaning

and impossible where the Socialist State provides for the nourishment and education and technical training and material and moral outfit of each child. The moral office of parents is gone, the sacred enclosure of home is violated, the sacred words, father, mother, brother, sister, have been degraded to a lower meaning, and the next step is to reduce the rearing of man under approved physicians and physiologists and the latest professor of eugenics, to the level of a prize cattle farm. The Christian family and Collectivism are incompatible; their antagonism is so rooted that reconciliation is impossible.

BENEFIT OF SMALL HOLDINGS, AND SOCIALIST HOSTILITY TO THEM.

This antagonism is seen in various ways, and first in regard to small properties. Where the mass of mankind live, each family in a separate house with a garden around it, or small holding, or farm that will not occupy habitually much more labor than that of the members of the household—this is the best field for the Christian family; this the historical condition for the soundest family life, Christian and non-Christian, in the past, this the ideal of social reform, this what the new movement in Great Britain towards garden cities is proclaiming, this what Leo XIII., the great exponent of Christian family life and of the Christian renovation of society, urged so strongly, this the prevalence of which in great parts of Germany and the United States, gives to those two great countries the best security for their greatness.

But against such small properties, against the countryside being dotted with innumerable homesteads, such as still can be seen in parts of Aberdeenshire and among Highland crofters, real Socialism has set itself in persistent hostility, from the days when Karl Marx mistook the future and prophesied the disappearance of peasant proprietors, (1) to the publications of 'The Socialist Library,' last year, wherein Mr. MacDonald ignores this prime remedy for social disease. (2) and where Prof. Ferri condemns small farms in his biological fashion as rudimentary organs with no function in the higher organization of society. (3) And here you can find a good practical test of the difference on which throughout this paper I have laid such emphasis, the difference between mere nominal or harmless Socialism on the one side, and real and mischievous Socialism on the other. If a party or writer desires the spread of peasant proprietors, of small farmers, crofters—desires to see a multitude of families, each family working its own ground for its own sustenance, or for a wholesome supplement to its income; then any alleged Socialism of the party or the writer is only nominal and innocuous, like the alleged Socialist legislation of Australasia that has endeavored by the taxation of unimproved ground values and by other measures, such as the exemption of improvements and of small landowners from taxation, to create as many farmers as possible on the vacant lands, and transform desolate sheep runs into the homes of a thriving peasantry. (4)

But true Socialism is hostile to peasant owners as well as to all owners; the small farm or croft is an instrument of production no less than the mine or factory, and must be absorbed by the community, not left as family property for family benefit. Extremes meet; and Individualism agrees with Socialism in making the individual the unit instead of the family—the individual working for himself, the individual face to face with the all-embracing State, and every power or function of intermediate organs weakened, numbed, often totally paralyzed. And thus the very criticism that has been directed against Individualism is equally applicable to Socialism, that it regards man, to use a famous French saying, as *ne enfant trouve*, *mort célibataire*—that is, it regards every one as if reared in a foundling house and dying unwedded.

THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN AND ANTI-CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN OF SOCIALISTS.

And yet a clearer sign of the incompatibility of genuine Socialism with the Christian family is seen in the hostility of Socialism to Christianity. True, there have been so-called 'Christian Socialists' like Maurice or Kingsley; true there are in England now a large body of men, e.g., many of the Fabian Society and many members of the Anglican 'Christian Social Union,' who call themselves both Socialists and Christians. But this is quite a misnomer, considering

1 See the facts and figures in Cathrein-Gottelmann, pp. 160 ff. Also on the growth of the peasantry, relatively and absolutely, in Germany, see W. J. Ashley, *Progress of the German Working Classes*, 1904, pp. 60-63.

2 *Socialism and Society*, p. 170.

3 *Socialism and Positive Science*, pp. 71, 72.

4 See *The Economic Journal*, 1904, pp. 491 ff., on "Taxation of Land Values in Australasia."