Bourgeois versus Socialist.

Without wishing to carry on the debate any further which has been going on in the Commonweal between Mr. Bax and Mr. Bradlaugh, it is natural that we should print a few words on it, as it is clear that there must have been a good many words avoid on the subject.

In the last paper, Mr. Bradlaugh complains that there has been a real misunderstanding of the nature of the Socialists, and of the bourgeois. Perhaps after all this is likely to be the case in all so-called debates where the disputants differ as to principle: clearly they must take some things for granted or they would stick fast from the first. This debate is now the third I have noticed carefully, and in all the three the disputants on either side, though in all cases very able persons, seemed, so to say, to find it hard to get at each other and strike the blow. If so, one thing they can do and should do, if they are to claim any success; each may at least state what his position is; and though this is specially incumbent on the one who takes the affirmative or positive side, yet even the one who takes the negative side must not be so wholly negative as not to show the basis of his objections: he must not be a mere objector, but must object on principle.

Now it seems to me that in this debate our friend Bax has stated his position quite clearly, and to every one not prepared from the first to pick holes in his statement, quite unmistakably. Mr. Bradlaugh, on the other hand, has done nothing but make objections, some of them merely verbal and frivolous, others rather what I should call disputers' objections—the sort of thing which clogs up an oral debate; and some, no doubt, the objections of the kind which naturally occur to a person prejudiced against a change in the basis of society. Bax has been under the disadvantage of having in his second paper to follow Mr. Bradlaugh through the objections which are left on a basis of propositions which he thought proper to put, so that his restatement of his position had to be deferred to his last paper, which was somewhat languidly replied to by Mr. Bradlaugh; of whom in truth I fear it must be said that he does not take his case out of whole cloth, as he seems throughout not really being attacking Socialism, but rather has been desperately defending a statement which he stumbled on in his anxiety to be considered "practical," that there may be or is an essential difference in

the economic life of both the various countries which make up the modern world; but he has also shown that modern production compels the aggregation of capital. It is hardly worth while arguing seriously against either of these queer pieces of perversity; but it is really strange to find a man of ability who has not been struck back from the ideal international character of the worker's movement, who cannot grasp the argument that if capitalism is international, the foe that threatens it, the system which is put forward to take its place, must be international also. As to the other point, which, though not an original one for Mr. Bradlaugh, is the general argument, Mr. Bradlaugh does stoutly and returns to more than once, the denial of the tendency toward the aggregation of capital under our present system, that capital is an object, but no such object, and to this argument, that petition forces people to produce cheaply, and that you can only produce cheaply by producing on a large scale! Anybody who doubts this and has money to throw away had better try it in practice—as I have in a number of cases, and I believe will be able to bring more instances of this generally admitted fact; I may perhaps be allowed to give another, as coming under my own notice. Textile printing used to be done wholly by means of blocks on long poles, and there used to be a great many small businesses of this kind, employing down to as few as ten or a dozen men; but when the cylinder machine was perfected, and a man and two boys at one stroke could do the work of 200 blockers and their attendants "teasers," these businesses had to shut up, as they could not find work for even one machine. Again, in my small business I am obliged to refrain from doing certain kinds of weaving I should like to do because my local demand is a compass a powerfully. But I am more than a reader able to multiply examples to prove what is patent: one only can stand aghast at Mr. Bradlaugh's hardihood in denial.

In short, Mr. Bradlaugh thinks Socialism an unpractical matter, and this cannot condemn him in his ability to prove it is a matter of consequence to prove it. He has not even tried to understand what Socialists mean by monopoly, and says, though rather guardedly, that he sees no class in the country which has the monopoly of power.

Again, one can only say that if he were a manual workman he would soon find out whether he could work for his livelihood without paying the tribute demanded by the monopolist; nor would he be long in denying that his power was parallel to the power of the state when he sets to work to try how much more reward he could get for his labour from Peter than he could from Paul. It is a pity that Mr. Bradlaugh will not try to understand his Social opponent's meaning, but in his way and under his terminological bourgeois does, and shows the usual persistency in reading incidents characteristic of the present condition of things into the future. At the bottom of all this lies, not, it may be, a want of historical formation as to the mere facts of history, but an entire incapacity of understanding their significance and their continuity; in short, a practical denial of the doctrine of evolution. To persons of this turn of mind the clash is struggle in the one, and peace, and so on, is at war, and the economic life of both the various countries which make up the modern world; but he has also shown that modern production compels the aggregation of capital. It is hardly worth while arguing seriously against either of these queer pieces of perversity; but it is really strange to find a man of ability who has not been struck back from the ideal international character of the worker's movement, who cannot grasp the argument that if capitalism is international, the foe that threatens it, the system which is put forward to take its place, must be international also. As to the other point, which, though not an original one for Mr. Bradlaugh, is the general argument, Mr. Bradlaugh does stoutly and returns to more than once, the denial of the tendency toward the aggregation of capital under our present system, that capital is an object, but no such object, and to this argument, that petition forces people to produce cheaply, and that you can only produce cheaply by producing on a large scale! Anybody who doubts this and has money to throw away had better try it in practice—as I have in a number of cases, and I believe will be able to bring more instances of this generally admitted fact; I may perhaps be allowed to give another, as coming under my own notice. Textile printing used to be done wholly by means of blocks on long poles, and there used to be a great many small businesses of this kind, employing down to as few as ten or a dozen men; but when the cylinder machine was perfected, and a man and two boys at one stroke could do the work of 200 blockers and their attendants "teasers," these businesses had to shut up, as they could not find work for even one machine. Again, in my small business I am obliged to refrain from doing certain kinds of weaving I should like to do because my local demand is a compass a powerfully. But I am more than a reader able to multiply examples to prove what is patent: one only can stand aghast at Mr. Bradlaugh's hardihood in denial.

In short, Mr. Bradlaugh thinks Socialism an unpractical matter, and this cannot condemn him in his ability to prove it is a matter of consequence to prove it. He has not even tried to understand what Socialists mean by monopoly, and says, though rather guardedly, that he sees no class in the country which has the monopoly of power.

Again, one can only say that if he were a manual workman he would soon find out whether he could work for his livelihood without paying the tribute demanded by the monopolist; nor would he be long in denying that his power was parallel to the power of the state when he sets to work to try how much more reward he could get for his labour from Peter than he could from Paul. It is a pity that Mr. Bradlaugh will not try to understand his Social opponent's meaning, but in his way and under his terminological bourgeois does, and shows the usual persistency in reading incidents characteristic of the present condition of things into the future. At the bottom of all this lies, not, it may be, a want of historical formation as to the mere facts of history, but an entire incapacity of understanding their significance and their continuity; in short, a practical denial of the doctrine of evolution. To persons of this turn of mind the clash is struggle in the one, and peace, and so on, is at war, and the