FABIAN ESSAYS IN SOCIALISM.  

This book is of importance as embodying the views of a society which has been so active in lecturing on behalf of the Socialist movement. Indeed, some time ago many of us thought and said that the Fabians should publish a volume of their lectures; and, without wishing to cast at the present expression of opinions from which we of the Socialist League dissent in some measure, I cannot help wishing that such a volume had appeared about three years ago: for such a book published at that date would have dealt almost wholly with the economical and practical side of the question, and would have formed a kind of text-book for Socialists of all shades of opinion; and illuminated, as it would have been, by the brilliant and attractive style of some of the present essays, would have been a most useful weapon of attack on the capitalist position as long as a society so united, whereas a large part of the present volume is given up to the advocacy of the fantastic and unreal tactics which the Fabian Society has ex- cogitated of late, and which is at best tentative and temporary; is based, moreover, on last longer than the advent of a new Liberal government. The result is, that the clear exposition of the first principles of Socialism, and the criticism of the present false society (which latter no one knows how to make more damaging than Mr. Bernard Shaw, e.g.) is set aside for the sake of public coating of tactics, which could not be carried out in practice; and which, if it could be, would still leave us in a position from which we should have to begin our attack on capitalism over again; i.e., a position in which it may be better or worse for us than the present one, as far as the actual struggle for the new society is concerned.

Mr. Sydney Webb, to judge from this book, is the leader in this somewhat digressively moved. It seems to me to be a great op- portunity to revel in it, so to say; and, indeed, he would appear to cling some of his fellow-writers somewhat unwarily behind his charter wheels. In his hands the argumentum ad hominum becomes a rather dangerous and doubly-armed weapon. He is so anxious to prove the commonplace that our present industrial system embraces some of the machinery by means of which a Socialist system might be worked, and that some of the same machinery is used by the present municipalities, and the bourgeois central government, but that his paper tends to produce the impression of one who thinks that we are already in the first stages of socialistic life, all the while that "the poor we have always with us," and that there are worse fates than that of being "put to the wall," which might be better or worse for us than the present one.

The retort of the enemy is obvious: "If we are already all Socialists, be happy! for we are happy!"

I give Mr. Sydney Webb all credit for sincerity in desiring the destruction of the State; but we may perhaps be a little too prone to blind him to the fact that since he is sincere, the privileged will see through his attempt to hoodwink them into joining his attack on the privilege which is their life; while the discontented miserable may be more than discourages by his whole method of entering already into the fruition of the Promised Land. They may well say: "It is to be like this society, or something like it! We thought Socialism would be quite unlike our present position, or not a little so. To avoid a double alliance of the well-to-do at the expense of losing the support of the poor, it is surely necessary never to cease saying: The test of the realisation of Socialism will be the destruction of the State, on this point, that if the municipal Socialism of Mr. Sydney Webb were carried and put in practice, though it should logically (perhaps) lead to the destruction of privilege and poverty, it might possibly be carried out by the maintaining of that is not Socialism, as it would still admit of the existence of compet- ing classes. We should remember (as a Socialist said to me the other day) that under the Rouan Empire municipal administration there are a paupers, which we are very anxious to the do not exist in our day; but it had no destructive effect on the society of that epoch, which was based on chattel slavery and a papier proletarian for the de们 of the rich.

Mr. Sydney Webb takes in hand the "historic" basis of Socialism, and he is not more historical than any other of the paper-writers, indeed, less so than Mr. Shaw; his history only begins at the period just before the great industrial revolution, and the other condition of this period he treats too roughly; so roughly, indeed, as to be both inaccurate and misleading. It is true that some of the industries of the country were carried on in an individual, as you may have a perfected system, which was an epoch in a society's progress- end towards which it may be used.

The great machine industries, though they have played an important part in the movement towards Socialism are not an adequate basis for Socialism; they may be a stepping-stone, but for the mere enslavement of the workers. They will be so used as long as last, unless the workers in some form or other revolt against their slavery. On the other hand, the well-being of a society in a system of capitalist and wage-slayage, so you may have Socialism or Communism conjointly with a system of (so-called) individual production. Nay, I feel certain that when the time comes, whereas the liberty upon the basis of capitalism and wage-slayage, the world will
I have not had any space to quote passages from this book; I thought that there was no need to do so, as I assume that all Socialists would read it whether they agree with it or not.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

IN PARIS.

We shall soon have some new elections and in about Paris, as about half-a- dozen Boulangist deputies' elections have been invalidated on account of not being on the side of the bourgeois parties, it is now being recorded as being without interest for us Socialists, who don't care a damn who gets in or out of Parliament, but it furnishes a good opportunity to show the different views of Socialists. Significant in this is that it is good for us to know our men in case we want them.

Any foreigner coming to Paris is sure to meet good Socialists here so long as a Frenchman. They are in politics to the Frenchman as his programme or principles; but if he takes to politics he is nearly sure to like the other, although there are thousands of them. In my times, at the polls we have but two, or rather none at all; one school, the Parti ouvrier, is swallowed up by the Government; the other, the Blanquist is lost to the voter.

There are, of course, parties that remain independent, such as the Ligue Socialiste, which has L'Égalité as their daily paper; the party of Vaillant, which is without a paper since the Curi du Peuple stopped; the Anarchists, again, whose weekly paper is La Revolte. Staunton revolutionaries as these schools may be, they are accepted.

It is a known fact that the Parti ouvrier, 25,000 strong in Paris, with nine town councillors and one and a-half deputies—one and a-half because Joffrin is no deputy in reality, being "elected" by the government in the place of Boulangier, who got 3,000 majority over him; the whole being Dumay, who has done good work in former years. It is a known fact, I say, that this party can without secret meeting carry a measure.

In their opinion all who are not with them are with Boulangier; not being in league to stop the "genius, gun, and good luck," not being in their ranks. They do not understand a man standing aloof from their petty miseries.

They are rather strong in Paris, where the Bourse du Travail is in their hands, but are nowhere in the country. It is not so easy to make friends there, as the municipality of Paris, on which nine of them are sitting, can command the power, and can capture the town against the rest of the country.

They got into the hands of these men when I came to Paris as a delegate to the International (Possibilist) Congress, and I confess that I regret it ever since. They are Nationalists, and as much so as are Irishmen. Their programme is a rather vague one, and they are not the most intelligent and sensible workers here. They do not vote, but they make more recruits at the present time than any other school. While there are many Socialists in the country, they are not the most intelligent, and though they do not agree with the others, they say, "Let us make intelligent and sensible workers."

La Ligue Socialiste is a combination of discontented and practical Socialists. It was erected on the ruins of the Ordi du Peuple. Its members are all young and ardent men, who would not feel at home with such veterans as Jules Ferry and Jules Ferry. They have been to the Élysée; heard a speech he delivered a few weeks ago in Nantes. China is another rising man. The Ligue Socialiste is to French Socialism what Sandhurst is to the English army. The former is the French military school, the latter is the capitalist, and doubtful Socialist. The League counts about a thousand members, and has been about a year in existence. It goes in for the prize of the prize piece of legislation, and is preparing a bill for the Élysée by storm one day—a quite possible thing, if we consider the kind of men it composed of.

Vaillant, Minister of Public Instruction under the Commune, and still a Communist, has joined Jules Guesde, the Collectivist of old fame, and in spite of all these different opinions and schools of which I have been speaking, all other chiefs would be cast into the shade in the hour of action, and Vaillant would be the raiying-paint, in whose presence all differences would disappear. His presence reflects a resolution, too, that cannot be denied. He is watching the first opportunity to strike a decisive blow. Delegates of the League were present in the recent demonstrations meet every week, and he never fails to be there also. He does not care to take the chair; he sits in the crowd, and always speaks to the point. He personifies Revolution, no doubt about it. Let Government propose a law to calm the people, or to make things better, his word is the current to all. He is the one who is providing the atmosphere for the whole thing.

A big meeting assembled last week to protest against the arbitrary arrest of Bortyau, a Spanish stoker, who was only an ordinary man, who was arrested in the street, without any warning, by a monarch, who couldn't even tell him for what reason it was done. The reason is, that Bortyau is a Socialist, who has been living in the streets of Paris, lying, eating, and living, and probably from Belgium, on account of his opinions and propaganda.

Before the opening of the meeting, one heard all the different languages of the hall—Italian, German, English, and French. It was a national meeting. A Greek student was the first speaker, and he protested against the arrest with particular fervour. Subsequently, a Frenchman made a sign that governments must feel their own decay when they resorted to such means as these. Citizen Bruel said they should not protest in vain, but try to bring their point of view which sentiment was received with vigorous applause, waving of hats, and many curses against law-and-order as carried out in this grand country of yours, where conscience has no rights, and where the workingman has no right to live without producing, and where every poor man has the right to starve while working. Hurrah for free Belgium!

A. COLSAS.

Paris, 16th Jan., 1890.

1 It would be absurd, amongst people, to regard as just all that the law sanctions. Would the Athenians have been more equitable if they had ratified the decree of their thirty tyrants—Cicero.