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THE TRUTH ABOUT SOCIALISM.

I.

Nowadays an apology seems hardly necessary for any reference to the subject of Socialism. Under one form or other the principles of Socialism have been put into practice, to some extent at least, in all the more advanced communities of the world, and further and more decided advances in the same direction are now being carefully discussed. It is true that in the New World Socialistic theories have not yet acquired that deep interest, and urgent force which they have derived from the unhappy economical conditions and gross evils of Europe, but with the expansion of the race, the growth of large cities, and the fuller occupation of the land, in America, too, the same questions will inevitably command the serious attention of every true lover of his country. Young Canada in particular, may yet deem her lot comparatively peaceful and happy, but we have only to cross the line to find the conditions of labour not always remaining satisfactory, and considerable apprehension existing as regards the power wielded by millionaires and powerful corporations. As a sign of the times, I would refer interested readers to a thoughtful article by Mr. Lyman Abbot, which appeared in the *Century Magazine* for December of last year, bearing the significant title, "Danger ahead."

To attempt to give a brief and comprehensive definition of Socialism which would be satisfactory to all parties, seems a hopeless task. When Proudhon was being examined in 1848, after "the Days of June," he was asked by the magistrate to define Socialism. "It is," replied Proudhon, "every aspiration towards the improvement of society." "But in that case," remarked the magistrate, "we are all Socialists." "That is precisely what I think," rejoined Proudhon.

Now, though it is quite true that in a sense every civilized person is something of a Socialist, since the very existence of society predicates some social bond, yet M. Proudhon's broad definition scarcely embraces enough of the connotation of such an elastic term. "It may include," the *London Times* has observed, "a revolutionary anarchist like Bakunin, and a constructive statesman of the conservative type like Prince Bismarck, or it may include a reckless regicide like Robiling, and a Christian teacher like Charles Kingsley. There are Tory and Radical Socialists, State and Communal Socialists, Christian and Atheist Socialists, Socialists who are Collectivists, Communists, or Anarchists, Socialists of the Chair, and Socialists of the Pothouse." Without stamping, then, any one class, or school of thought as the true exemplar of Socialism, we should try to discover the general ideas which underlie the whole movement, and to guard against the various misconceptions which have arisen.

It is a very common mistake of the ill-informed to confound Socialism with Communism, to say nothing of including something of Nihilism and Dynamite in the general notion, whereas these systems are quite different in their principles and characteristics. It must be allowed that Communism, "the equal division of unequal earnings," when voluntarily entered upon is by far the higher state of the two, but it presupposes a high moral development, and to make it secure, a strong religious bond. We find striking evidence of this fact among the many communistic societies which sprang up in the United States some years ago. Of these numerous communities the only ones at present existing are some few which, like the Rahabite, were established on a firm religious basis. Socialism, on the contrary, does not demand this common fund with an equal division of the general property, but merely seeks to carry out more thoroughly, principles which have long been professed, and to some extent even acted upon,