

INTRODUCTION

ONE of the greatest of the difficulties which beset the path of the Socialist is the refusal on the part of his opponents to give an accurate statement of what Socialism means and what the purpose of Socialism is. The main object of this book is to explain both. The Editors have asked a Conservative to explain Conservatism and a Liberal to interpret Liberalism, and have on the same principle turned to me to write about Socialism. It is, perhaps, best that doctrines which are the objects of fierce assault should be explained by writers who believe in them, for, whether a doctrine is or is not to have a lasting influence, depends not on the success with which clever critics attack some of its outworks, nor on the amount of error which creeps into its popular advocacy, but on the amount of truth which it really contains, and that is more familiar to friend than to foe.

The Socialist movement has suffered, as all great idealist and Utopian movements have suffered, by having attached to them proposals which do not really belong to them, but which happened to be born and cradled with them. Progress has a habit of bringing