

ECONOMICS

LESSON XVIII.

Socialism.



THE problems of modern business—of labour, of transportation and of monopolies—have been discussed in lessons XV., XVI. and XVII. Incidentally, we have learned (if we did not know it before) that the world of to-day is by no means a place where ideal justice prevails and where every man obtains that which he merits, and every man merits that which he obtains—where industry and ability are always suitably rewarded, and the faithful and energetic worker will always surely rise to the top. We have seen that a man may make a fortune by humbugging as well as by serving the public; that the wealthy monopolist can ruin a struggling rival who may have greater business ability but less capital; that promoters may make great fortunes out of the investing public without performing any adequate service in return; and that real estate speculators may make great fortunes out of the unusual appreciation of land values which they have done nothing to create.

Socialists and Communists.

It is not at all wonderful, therefore, that moralists and reformers of all the civilized or semi-civilized ages, from the time of Job and that of Horace to the present day, have lamented that the rewards of men are not in proportion to their merits, nor that, from the time of Plato, idealistic philosophers have attempted to construct ideal societies in which a juster distribution of wealth should obtain. Some of the writers have held that every man should be rewarded according to his deeds, which would apparently imply that a competent carpenter would receive more than an incompetent; others, again, have claimed that every man should be rewarded according to