

**THE STRENGTH AND  
WEAKNESS  
OF SOCIALISM**

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BY

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## PREFACE.

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DR. RUDOLF MEYER, a conservative German author, published a work some twenty years ago entitled "The Struggle of the Fourth Estate for Emancipation." By the "Fourth Estate" he of course meant the wage-earning classes. At that time Dr. Meyer entertained the hope that the acceptance of a program of social reform would be sufficient to save Germany from social democracy. Germany, however, was not ready to go so far as Dr. Meyer recommended, and the growth of social democracy was in no wise impeded. Germany has done much to improve the conditions of the masses, but she has always moved so late that the masses have received the impression that the action was forced by fear, and did not proceed from a real, sincere desire to benefit the less fortunate portions of the community, especially the wage-earning population. Dr. Meyer has just published another book, entitled "Capitalism, *fin de siècle*." Dr. Meyer maintains that it is now too late for Germany to adopt the program of reform which he urged twenty

years ago; and he considers it essential that the public authorities should come to at least a temporary agreement with social democracy, and thus work together for the salvation of Germany from impending perils. He apprehends that Germany must make a choice between state socialism and social democracy, and he fears that social democracy may carry the day.

The United States has now the opportunity which Germany had twenty years ago. It is not by any means too late for us to escape the situation in which Germany finds herself. However it may be in Germany, the policy of social reform is still practicable among us; but we must always bear in mind the high ideals which socialism has placed before the masses of the people, and which they have absorbed. Timid, half-way measures will not stem the tide of socialism.

What are the prospects of this reform which can give us the benefits of peaceful and uninterrupted progress? It is not altogether easy — in fact, it is always difficult — to forecast the future. There is probably no country in which more violent, bitter, and even unprincipled extremes may be found. We have, on the one hand, the anarchists of the poor, who aim to arouse bitterness and hatred, and who shrink from no exercise of force, provided they think that thereby they can accomplish their



ends. With them, the torch and the dynamite bomb are questions of expediency.

We have, on the other hand, a class of men who advocate the claims of wealth in precisely the same spirit. Every proposal of reform is greeted by them with ridicule and misrepresentation; every advocate of changes, even in accordance with constitutional and legal means, is villified. These fanatics have precisely the same spirit which animates the anarchists. They would not hesitate to use force to maintain existing privileges, and they would rejoice to see anything like a socialistic reconstruction of society prevented, by torturing and putting to violent death the advocates of socialism. It is the old spirit which has ever greeted the reformer who has advocated changes in behalf of the masses with the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Most fortunately, there is, between these two extreme factions, each of them apparently quite small, a large class of fair-minded, well-meaning men and women, who are the hope of the country. America has been called the land of the "almighty dollar," and it has been supposed to be dominated exclusively by a narrow mercantilism; yet one frequently meets, among the business leaders of the country, with a certain broad-mindedness which is as delightful as it is reassuring. Men of this class are men

who will favor mutual concessions and a conciliatory policy.

This book has been written in a conservative spirit. It cannot be understood unless the reader bears in mind that its standpoint is that of conservatism. The peaceful progress of society, with the conservation of the results of past historical development, is the author's desire. He will not, however, be surprised to have the charge of radicalism brought against him. We have among us a class of mammon worshippers, whose one test of conservatism, or radicalism, is the attitude which one takes with respect to accumulated wealth. Whatever tends to the preservation of the wealth of the wealthy is called conservatism, and whatever favors anything else, no matter what, they call socialism. A writer's whole nature may be that of a conservative; he may love the old ways; he may to some extent draw his social ideals from a past which he considers, with respect to its feeling about wealth, saner than the present age, and yet, because he would, by social action, endeavor to change certain tendencies, and to conserve the treasures of the past which he feels threatened by new and startling forces, he is still a radical in the eyes of those men whose one and sole test is money.

The socialist, as well as the non-socialist reader of this

book, must clearly understand that the socialism which is described in its pages is not that of any one school. Many a socialist will take up this book and find missing in it that which he considers essential. What the author tries to do, however, is to give what seems to him the true essence of socialism as an industrial system. He has studied carefully the writings of various socialists, and has stripped off from socialism, as frequently presented, those accessories which it seems to him are no part of it. He has given that presentation of socialism which seems to him to contain the greatest strength.

The author desires to express his gratitude to many persons who have most kindly given him assistance of one kind and another. Valuable suggestions and important material have been sent him from different countries, and personal friends have read the proofs. Particular acknowledgment must be made to the following: Prof. William A. Scott, the author's colleague in the University of Wisconsin; Mr. Charles Zeublin, of the University of Chicago; Prof. John R. Commons, of the University of Indiana; Sidney Webb, Esq., and Edward R. Pease, Esq., of the Fabian Society; H. W. Lee, Esq., secretary of the Social Democratic Federation of England; Geoffrey Drage, Esq., of London, secretary of the Royal Commission on Labor; Dr. Heinrich Braun, of