

**THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY,  
A REFUTATION OF  
COMMUNISM &  
SOCIALISM**

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The Rights of Property, a Refutation of Communism & Socialism by Adolphe Thiers

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**ADOLPHE THIERS**

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BY ADOLPHE THIERS.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following treatise, intended to refute the dangerous doctrines entertained by a large class of Frenchmen, has recently appeared in the columns of the *Constitutionnel*; and as such doctrines are not without their advocates and supporters in our country, it is hoped that this endeavour to present M. Thiers' able work in an English dress, will not be unacceptable to those who may be desirous of gaining information relative to the new movement against Society. Much has been heard of *Communism*, *Socialism*, and *the Right to Labour*, but few, perhaps, are familiar with the meaning of the words. Happily for us their advocates are ignorant and obscure; yet, as suffering is credulous, they find listeners, whose numbers, according to the testimony of all parties, are rapidly increasing. Such will ever be the case in times of distress: the drowning man catches at a straw; the starving mechanic is ready for any scheme that promises not only to alleviate but to remove his evils for ever. Fourier, George Sand (Madame Dudévant), Louis Blanc, Cabet, Proudhon, and Considérant are the chief apostles of the new movement: their theories may differ, but their object is the same,—“to suppress the miseries of the people.” A most desirable object, and one which should be uppermost in the mind of every statesman and philanthropist; but the following pages will show to what the schemes of the new school, if carried out, would inevitably lead.

When the poor actually lack their daily bread, is it unnatural that they should listen to the recital of some golden dream, some tale of the Barmecide, if merely to divert their minds from brooding too intensely on their misfortunes? And although each of the multifarious schemes proposed for the re-organization of labour, and the removal of pauperism, contains some weighty points, claiming reflection and consideration, to each is attached such a mass of impracticable phantasies, that common sense rejects them *in toto*.

M. Thiers' treatise is full of hope; and while he opposes those who would cut up society, and throw its mangled limbs into the renovating cauldrons of our political Medeas, he deduces the most cheering conclusions from the history of the past. All social improvements must be slow and progressive:—as in the physical, so in the political world, violence and destruction go hand in hand. Much of the suffering endured by the working classes may be easily diminished, as it arises from ignorance and bad habits. They are ignorant and do wrong because they know not how to do better; or because they have neither the inclination nor the resolution to do right. In periods of distress, the ignorant labourer thinks to raise his wages by burning his master's ricks, or breaking his machines. Ignorance, during the last visitation of the cholera (and recently at St. Petersburg) raised the mob against the lives of the physicians, who were endeavouring to stay the progress of the pestilence. Ignorance is the cause of intemperance, and intemperance ruins its thousands yearly; the money spent in the gin-shop or the tap-room would provide a fund for many a "wet day." Remove the ignorance of the people, and you make them provident. Then they will begin to respect themselves, and all virtues follow in the train of self-respect. But the workman cannot do this of himself; it must be done for him by the whole nation embodied in, and represented by, the government. As a

good parent trains up his child to honesty, and virtue, and self-reliance, so should the government, which stands *in loco parentis* to the State, lead its children in the paths that conduct to happiness and honour.

The chief strength and greatest interest of the treatise we now proceed to lay before the English reader, lie in the rapid and irresistible series of deductions,—a close-linked and brilliant chain of observations and reasoning, which leave no issue for sophistry. The style of the original, which it is almost impossible to transfer to another language, is simple and nervous, lit up now and then by a vivid and touching eloquence, inspired by a profound sentiment of the dignity of human nature, and by a high intelligence of the works of the Creator.

The enemies of the existing state of society have been most active in multiplying the number of their books, and by this means have perverted many minds and deceived many souls. Accordingly it is but right that the defenders of society, in the foremost rank of whom stands M. Thiers, should imitate the zeal of the false philosophers whose doctrines have been so effectually propagated as to procure no less than 66,960 votes in the department of the Seine, for the Communist Raspail, the leader of the tumult of the 15th of May, and a prisoner in Vincennes. The main work, the true policy of the present day, is to strengthen the social principles, and to this M. Thiers has devoted his admirable talents, not only in the tribune by his speech on the Organisation of Labour, but by the present bolder and most original treatise.

In explanation of the concluding words of the author's preface, it may be necessary to observe that General Cavaignac, struck with the ruin caused by false doctrines, requested the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences "to concur in the defence of Social principles, attacked by publicists of all sorts, feeling persuaded that it was not enough to re-establish material order by means