

READINGS IN SOCIAL ECONOMY

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Readings in Social Economy by Mrs. F. Fenwick Miller

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MRS. F. FENWICK MILLER

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READINGS
IN
SOCIAL ECONOMY

BY

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'PHYSIOLOGY FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS' ETC.

'Every man is to be considered as designed to pursue his own interest, and likewise to contribute to the good of others. Whoever will consider will find that in general there is no contrariety between these, but that, from the original constitution of man, and the circumstances he is placed in, they perfectly coincide and mutually carry on each other'—BISHOP BUTLER, *Sermon V.*

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PROLEGOMENA.

‘To address it to all whom it may concern would be the same thing as appealing to the total population of the empire. Is there any one living to whom it matters not whether the aggregate of human life is cheerful and virtuous, or mournful and depraved? If it concerns rulers that their measures should be wise, if it concerns the wealthy that their property should be secure, the middling classes that their industry should be rewarded, the poor that their hardships should be redressed, it concerns all that political economy should be understood. If it concerns all that the advantages of a social state should be preserved and improved, it concerns them likewise that political economy should be understood by all.’—Harriet Martineau : *Introduction to Political Economy*.

‘In former days it was almost taken for granted by the learned and cultivated—the smaller portion of mankind—that the larger portion must ever remain unlearned and uncultivated, and consequently uninformed on many subjects for the understanding of which long study and preparation were supposed to be necessary. With the progress of time, and particularly of later years, it has been found not only that the range of knowledge possessed by the learned and cultivated has been greatly extended, but that most of this knowledge may be imparted to all with rare exceptions, even to those who will still remain among the unlearned. My appeal is to the unlearned. I claim for them and myself the capacity to form a judgment upon all the matters treated of, and the wish to form an honest judgment. It appears to me that intelligence has at last been sufficiently diffused to justify our expecting that at no very distant period, all, with rare exceptions, will be able to form

rational anticipations of the future, and each will know how to direct his own conduct so as to assist in bringing about a *general state of well-being*, and to enjoy a fair share of it himself. If I am not much mistaken, the possession of this knowledge is indispensable for every human being.'—William Ellis : *The Future of the Human Race*.

'Children who leave a school in which the influence of such a course has been shed upon them, will not only have their reasoning faculties in good working order, but they will be spared the pain of falling into some of the most grievous mistakes of conduct, and of rectifying them, if ever fortunate enough to do so, through an experience of bitter suffering and mortification.'—William Ellis : *Education*.

'The mere fact of being in a crowd when their feelings were strongly moved, roused all that was strong in me ; and from the alacrity, and even comfort and joy, into which I was warmed by the thought of resistance to whatever wrong might demand it, I learned plainly enough what a formidable thing a human being might become if he took wrong for right, and what reverence was due to the training and just treatment of the myriads that compose a nation.'—Leigh Hunt : *Autobiography*.

'The prosperity of industry depends, not merely upon the improvement of manufacturing processes, not merely upon the ennobling of the individual character, but upon a third condition ; namely, a clear understanding of the conditions of social life on the part of both the capitalist and the operative, and their agreement upon common principles of social action. They must learn that social phenomena are as much the expression of natural laws as any others ; that no social arrangements can be permanent, unless they harmonise with the requirements of social statics and dynamics ; and that, in the nature of things, there is an arbiter whose decisions execute themselves. But this knowledge is only to be obtained by the application of the methods of investigation adopted in physical researches to the investigation of the phenomena of society.'—Professor Huxley : *Mason College Address*.

PREFACE.

I CANNOT BUT THINK it emphatically necessary that Social Science shall be written, as Physical Science has been already, with a special view to popular study. The extension of rudimentary learning—the development of the newspaper press—the progress of democratic institutions—all aids to social improvement if wisely guided, are so many sources of apprehension for the future if social science continues to be neglected in the education of the people. Within the last few years, a direct influence over legislation and the power to communicate and receive ideas through the printing-press have become the property of the class which feels most acutely the evils and the miseries that arise from an insufficiency and uncertainty of the supply of the necessaries and comforts of existence. Numerical superiority, and therefore political power, is now with those who incessantly see and endure the suffering arising from poverty. Insufficient food and clothing, unhealthy and over-crowded dwellings, long hours of ill-rewarded labour, inability to obtain employment, men and their children dying for sheer want of the comforts which would restore the sick to health, the ceaseless care of living from hand to mouth—these are the portion of the poor, while around

them is all the ostentatious lavishness and luxury of the owners of large fortunes. The working-classes cannot be expected to scientifically dissect social arrangements for themselves, so as to discover the true sources of poverty, and to understand how their efforts must be applied to ameliorate their own future condition, and how rash, hasty, and violent attacks upon the foundation of society must increase instead of reducing the sum of human suffering. But they cannot *be safely left* to suppose that social arrangements are the result of purposeless chance, or of the arbitrary injustice of selfish legislation. They cannot *with impunity leave themselves* in this ignorance of that over which they now have control.

As there are quacks seeking to prey on the sufferings of the human body, who in the very act of pretending to relieve increase the miseries of those who trust in them, so there are always demagogic charlatans offering remedies for the relief of social ills, which must inevitably, if they be tried, only add to the wretchedness, and intensify the destitution, and multiply the difficulties of existence. The way in which we must guard our people from quackery, physical and moral, is by increased enlightenment. A slight knowledge of physiology will save a man from faith in the quacks who profess a magic cure for all disease: an outline study of social science will preserve the mind from the credulous and mischievous belief that poverty has a single root which may be suddenly torn up in a violent cataclysmic change.

Any person who has realised, either from historical study or inductively, what are the mischievous results of a revolutionary cure for social ills, must tremble for the future