

**ENGLISH SOCIALISM OF
TO-DAY: ITS TEACHING
AND ITS AIMS EXAMINED**

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English Socialism of To-Day: Its Teaching and Its Aims Examined by H. O. Arnold-Forster

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H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER

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AND ITS AIMS EXAMINED**

ENGLISH SOCIALISM OF TO-DAY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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OUR GREAT CITY

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CASSELL & CO., LTD.,

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THE ARMY IN 1906

London: JOHN MURRAY, 50a Albemarle Street

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ENGLISH SOCIALISM OF TO-DAY

ITS TEACHING AND ITS AIMS EXAMINED

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER, M.P.

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PREFACE

THE contents of this book originally appeared in the form of articles contributed to the 'Standard.' They have been reproduced practically without alteration, as no criticism has appeared during the course of publication which has necessitated any correction as to matters of fact, or any modification of the conclusions arrived at.

There have, however, been some criticisms which are deserving of attention, not because of their weight or cogency, but because they supply a useful confirmation of the statements made by the author, and because they furnish convincing proof of the strength of the case he has sought to establish.

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The criticisms may be conveniently divided into two classes, the elusive and the abusive. The elusive criticism is that which seeks to discredit the case against Socialism by pretending that it is based upon incorrect or unauthorised documents. It is indeed a favourite device of Socialist controversialists to repudiate any utterance or any

written document which does not happen to suit the audience which for the time being they desire to conciliate. This practice is rendered easy because within the limits of Socialist literature diametrically opposite views on almost every subject discussed are to be found.

Under these circumstances the only safe course for one who desires to express an opinion upon the Socialist policy, and at the same time to be free from the danger of being met with a denial of his authority, is to go straight to the fountain-head, to ask the responsible leaders of the Socialist party what it is they do mean, and to accept their printed official reply as conclusive. This is the course which the author has adopted. The principal official of one of the Socialist organisations has thought fit to upbraid the author for his failure to observe the proper precautions in obtaining information with regard to Socialism, its teaching and its aims. 'If Mr. Arnold-Forster,' says the Secretary of the I.L.P., 'desired to have such Independent Labour Party publications as would place him in possession of the general teachings of the I.L.P. why did he not make application to me as Secretary of the Association?' These words would possibly not have been written had the writer been aware that the course which he recommends is precisely that which was followed.

An application was made, not, it is true, to the I.L.P., but to the Secretary of the 'Social Democratic

Federation,' asking him to be good enough to send any literature which, in his opinion, explained the Socialist position and described the Socialist programme. In reply the Secretary forwarded a long catalogue of books and pamphlets issued or circulated by his association. The list contained works published by the Independent Labour Party and by the Fabian Society, as well as those published by the Social Democratic Federation itself. From the list thus acquired some fifty books and pamphlets were ordered, and it is on the documents so supplied that the author has relied. In every case the authority cited is given in full. It will be seen that in the great majority of cases the quotations are taken from the latest authorised official programmes of the two principal Socialist associations. In all other cases they are taken from publications issued or circulated by those associations.

It might have been thought that under these circumstances the author would have been safe from what has been called the 'elusive' form of criticism, and that his authorities, at any rate, would not have been called in question. Such, however, has not proved to be the case. The most important, and indeed the only serious, criticism has come from Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P., a courteous and competent opponent, whose position as Chairman of the Independent Labour Party gives special weight to his words. Speaking at Dundee on December 6,

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1907, Mr. Macdonald declared the present work to be valueless because the author, so far from doing justice to Socialism, had chosen to quote from 'obscure and obscurantist documents which expressed the Socialist need in the very baldest and the very worst form.'

As has already been made evident, this remark falls as a criticism. The documents from which quotations have been made may have the qualities attributed to them; they may be both 'obscure and obscurantist'; but that is not the fault of the present author. If they are not all that could be desired, they are, at any rate, the best to be got; for they are the official programmes and the official publications of the principal Socialist bodies in this country.

Mr. Macdonald's criticism has been referred to here, not for the purpose of continuing a controversy for which there is really no material, but because it serves as a warning to those who are confronted by Socialist denials. The Socialists are appealing by means of books and pamphlets, scattered broadcast throughout the land, to uneducated and unguided men. It is by what these books and pamphlets contain that they ought to be judged; and the fact that moderate and conciliatory language which has no relation whatever to the printed official statements is sometimes used in addressing audiences composed of educated men and women ought not to weigh for one moment in the balance.