THE SCIENTIFIC BASES OF ANARCHY.

ANARCHY (*ἀν-ἀρχή*), the No-Government system of Socialism, has a double origin. It is an outgrowth of the two great movements of thought in the economical and the political fields which characterise our century, and especially its second part. In common with all Socialists, the anarchists hold that the private ownership of land, capital, and machinery has had its time; that it is condemned to disappear; and that all requisites for production must, and will, become the common property of society, and be managed in common by the producers of wealth. And, in common with the most advanced representatives of political Radicalism, they maintain that the ideal of the political organisation of society is a condition of things where the functions of government are reduced to a minimum, and the individual recovers his full liberty of initiative and action for satisfying, by means of free groups and federations—freely constituted—all the infinitely varied needs of the human being. As regards Socialism, most of the anarchists arrive at its ultimate conclusion, that is, at a complete negation of the wage-system and at communism. And with reference to political organisation, by giving a further development to the above-mentioned part of the Radical programme, they arrive at the conclusion that the ultimate aim of society is the reduction of the functions of government to *nil*—that is, to a society without government, to An-archy. The anarchists maintain, moreover, that such being the ideal of social and political organisation, they must not remit it to future centuries, but that only those changes in our social organisation which are in accordance with the above double ideal, and constitute an approach to it, will have a chance of life and be beneficial for the commonwealth.

As to the method followed by the anarchist thinker, it differs to a great extent from that followed by the Utopists. The anarchist thinker does not resort to metaphysical conceptions (like the 'natural rights,' the 'duties of the State,' and so on) for establishing what are, in his opinion, the best conditions for realising the greatest happiness of humanity. He follows, on the contrary, the course traced by the modern philosophy of evolution—without entering, however, the slippery route of mere analogies so often resorted to by Herbert Spencer. He studies human society as it is now and was in

the past; and, without either endowing men altogether, or separate individuals, with superior qualities which they do not possess, he merely considers society as an aggregation of organisms trying to find out the best ways of combining the wants of the individual with those of co-operation for the welfare of the species. He studies society and tries to discover its *tendencies*, past and present, its growing needs, intellectual and economical; and in his ideal he merely points out in which direction evolution goes. He distinguishes between the real wants and tendencies of human aggregations and the accidents (want of knowledge, migrations, wars, conquests) which prevented these tendencies from being satisfied, or temporarily paralysed them. And he concludes that the two most prominent, although often unconscious, tendencies throughout our history were: a tendency towards integrating our labour for the production of all riches in common, so as finally to render it impossible to discriminate the part of the common production due to the separate individual; and a tendency towards the fullest freedom of the individual for the prosecution of all aims, beneficial both for himself and for society at large. The ideal of the anarchist is thus a mere summing-up of what he considers to be the next phase of evolution. It is no longer a matter of faith; it is a matter for scientific discussion.

In fact, one of the leading features of our century is the growth of Socialism and the rapid spreading of Socialist views among the working classes. How could it be otherwise? We have witnessed during the last seventy years an unparalleled sudden increase of our powers of production, resulting in an accumulation of wealth which has outstripped the most sanguine expectations. But, owing to our wage system, this increase of wealth—due to the combined efforts of men of science, of managers, and workmen as well—has resulted only in an unprevented accumulation of wealth in the hands of the owners of capital; while an increase of misery for the great numbers, and an insecurity of life for all, have been the lot of the workmen. The unskilled labourers, in continuous search for labour, are falling into an unheard-of destitution; and even the best paid artisans and skilled workmen, who undoubtedly are living now a more comfortable life than before, labour under the permanent menace of being thrown, in their turn, into the same conditions as the unskilled paupers, in consequence of some of the continuous and unavoidable fluctuations of industry and caprices of capital. The chasm between the modern millionaire who squanders the produce of human labour in a gorgeous and vain luxury, and the pauper reduced to a miserable and insecure existence, is thus growing more and more, so as to break the very unity of society—the harmony of its life—and to endanger the progress of its further development. At the same time, the working classes are the less inclined patiently to endure this division of society into two classes,

as they themselves become more and more conscious of the wealth-producing power of modern industry, of the part played by labour in the production of wealth, and of their own capacities of organisation. In proportion as all classes of the community take a more lively part in public affairs, and knowledge spreads among the masses, their longing for equality becomes stronger, and their demands of social reorganisation become louder and louder: they can be ignored no more. The worker claims his share in the riches he produces; he claims his share in the management of production; and he claims not only some additional well-being, but also his full rights in the higher enjoyments of science and art. These claims, which formerly were uttered only by the social reformer, begin now to be made by a daily growing minority of those who work in the factory or till the acre; and they so conform with our feelings of justice, that they find support in a daily growing minority amidst the privileged classes themselves. Socialism becomes thus *the* idea of the nineteenth century; and neither coercion nor pseudo-reforms can stop its further growth.

Much hope of improvement was laid, of course, in the extension of political rights to the working classes. But these concessions, unsupported as they were by corresponding changes in the economical relations, proved delusory. They did not materially improve the conditions of the great bulk of the workmen. Therefore, the watchword of Socialism is: 'Economical freedom, as the only secure basis for political freedom.' And as long as the present wage system, with all its bad consequences, remains unaltered, the Socialist watchword will continue to inspire the workmen. Socialism will continue to grow until it has realised its programme.

Side by side with this great movement of thought in economical matters, a like movement was going on with regard to political rights, political organisation, and the functions of government. Government was submitted to the same criticism as Capital. While most of the Radicals saw in universal suffrage and republican institutions the last word of political wisdom, a further step was made by the few. The very functions of government and the State, as also their relations to the individual, were submitted to a sharper and deeper criticism. Representative government having been experimented on a wider field than before, its defects became more and more prominent. It became obvious that these defects are not merely accidental, but inherent to the system itself. Parliament and its executive proved to be unable to attend to all the numberless affairs of the community and to conciliate the varied and often opposite interests of the separate parts of a State. Election proved unable to find out the men who might represent a nation, and manage, otherwise than in a party spirit, the affairs they are compelled to legislate upon. These defects became so striking that the very

principles of the representative system were criticised and their justness doubted. Again, the dangers of a centralised government became still more conspicuous when the Socialists came to the front and asked for a further increase of the powers of government by entrusting it with the management of the immense field covered now by the economical relations between individuals. The question was asked, whether a government, entrusted with the management of industry and trade, would not become a permanent danger for liberty and peace, and whether it even would be able to be a good manager?

The Socialists of the earlier part of this century did not fully realise the immense difficulties of the problem. Convinced as they were of the necessity of economical reforms, most of them took no notice of the need of freedom for the individual; and we have had social reformers ready to submit society to any kind of theocracy, dictatorship, or even Cæsarism, in order to obtain reforms in a Socialist sense. Therefore we saw, in this country and also on the Continent, the division of men of advanced opinions into political Radicals and Socialists—the former looking with distrust on the latter, as they saw in them a danger for the political liberties which have been won by the civilised nations after a long series of struggles. And even now, when the Socialists all over Europe are becoming political parties, and profess the democratic faith, there remains among most impartial men a well-founded fear of the *Volksstaat* or 'popular State' being as great a danger for liberty as any form of autocracy, if its government be entrusted with the management of all the social organisation, including the production and distribution of wealth.

The evolution of the last forty years prepared, however, the way for showing the necessity and possibility of a higher form of social organisation which might guarantee economical freedom without reducing the individual to the *rôle* of a slave to the State. The origins of government were carefully studied, and all metaphysical conceptions as to its divine or 'social contract' derivation having been laid aside, it appeared that it is among us of a relatively modern origin, and that its powers grew precisely in proportion as the division of society into the privileged and unprivileged classes was growing in the course of ages. Representative government was also reduced to its real value—that of an instrument which has rendered services in the struggle against autocracy, but not an ideal of free political organisation. As to the system of philosophy which saw in the State (the *Kultur-Staat*) a leader to progress, it was more and more shaken as it became evident that progress is the more effective when it is not checked by State interference. It thus became obvious that a further advance in social life does not lie in the direction of a further concentration of power and regulative functions in the hands of a

governing body, but in the direction of decentralisation, both territorial and functional—in a subdivision of public functions with respect both to their sphere of action and to the character of the functions; it is in the abandonment to the initiative of freely constituted groups of all those functions which are now considered as the functions of government.

This current of thought found its expression not merely in literature, but also, to a limited extent, in life. The uprise of the Paris Commune, followed by that of the Commune of Cartagena—a movement of which the historical bearing seems to have been quite overlooked in this country—opened a new page of history. If we analyse not only this movement in itself, but also the impression it left in the minds and the tendencies which were manifested during the communal revolution, we must recognise in it an indication showing that in the future human agglomerations which are more advanced in their social development will try to start an independent life; and that they will endeavour to convert the more backward parts of a nation by example, instead of imposing their opinions by law and force, or submitting themselves to the majority-rule, which always is a mediocrity-rule. At the same time the failure of representative government within the Commune itself proved that self-government and self-administration must be carried on further than in a mere territorial sense; to be effective they must be carried on also with regard to the various functions of life within the free community; a merely territorial limitation of the sphere of action of government will not do—representative government being as deficient in a city as it is in a nation. Life gave thus a further point in favour of the no-government theory, and a new impulse to anarchist thought.

Anarchists recognise the justice of both the just-mentioned tendencies towards economical and political freedom, and see in them two different manifestations of the very same need of equality which constitutes the very essence of all struggles mentioned by history. Therefore, in common with all Socialists, the anarchist says to the political reformer: 'No substantial reform in the sense of political equality, and no limitation of the powers of government, can be made as long as society is divided into two hostile camps, and the labourer remains, economically speaking, a serf to his employer.' But to the Popular State Socialist we say also: 'You cannot modify the existing conditions of property without deeply modifying at the same time the political organisation. You must limit the powers of government and renounce Parliamentary rule. To each new economical phasis of life corresponds a new political phasis. Absolute monarchy—that is, Court-rule—corresponded to the system of serfdom. Representative government corresponds to Capital-rule. Both, however, are class-rule. But in a society where the distinction between capitalist and labourer has disappeared, there is no need of

such a government; it would be an anachronism, a nuisance. Free workers would require a free organisation, and this cannot have another basis than free agreement and free co-operation, without sacrificing the autonomy of the individual to the all-pervading interference of the State. The no-capitalist system implies the no-government system.'

Meaning thus the emancipation of man from the oppressive powers of capitalist and government as well, the system of anarchy becomes a synthesis of the two powerful currents of thought which characterise our century.

In arriving at these conclusions anarchy proves to be in accordance with the conclusions arrived at by the philosophy of evolution. By bringing to light the plasticity of organisation, the philosophy of evolution has shown the admirable adaptivity of organisms to their conditions of life, and the ensuing development of such faculties as render more complete both the adaptations of the aggregates to their surroundings and those of each of the constituent parts of the aggregate to the needs of free co-operation. It familiarised us with the circumstance that throughout organic nature the capacities for life in common are growing in proportion as the integration of organisms into compound aggregates becomes more and more complete; and it enforced thus the opinion already expressed by social moralists as to the perfectibility of human nature. It has shown us that, in the long run of the struggle for existence, 'the fittest' will prove to be those who combine intellectual knowledge with the knowledge necessary for the production of wealth, and not those who are now the richest because they, or their ancestors, have been momentarily the strongest. By showing that the 'struggle for existence' must be conceived, not merely in its restricted sense of a struggle between individuals for the means of subsistence, but in its wider sense of adaptation of all individuals of the species to the best conditions for the survival of the species, as well as for the greatest possible sum of life and happiness for each and all, it permitted us to deduce the laws of moral science from the social needs and habits of mankind. It showed us the infinitesimal part played by positive law in moral evolution, and the immense part played by the natural growth of altruistic feelings, which develop as soon as the conditions of life favour their growth. It thus enforced the opinion of social reformers as to the necessity of modifying the conditions of life for improving man, instead of trying to improve human nature by moral teachings while life works in an opposite direction. Finally, by studying human society from the biological point of view, it came to the conclusions arrived at by anarchists from the study of history and present tendencies, as to further progress being in the line of socialisation of wealth and integrated labour, combined with the fullest possible freedom of the individual.

It is not a mere coincidence that Herbert Spencer, whom we may consider as a pretty fair expounder of the philosophy of evolution, has been brought to conclude, with regard to political organisation, that 'that form of society towards which we are progressing' is 'one in which *government* will be reduced to the smallest amount possible, and *freedom* increased to the greatest amount possible.'[1] When he opposes in these words the conclusions of his synthetic philosophy to those of Auguste Comte, he arrives at very nearly the same conclusion as Proudhon[2] and Bakunin.[3] More than that, the very methods of argumentation and the illustrations resorted to by Herbert Spencer (daily supply of food, post-office, and so on) are the same which we find in the writings of the anarchists. The channels of thought were the same, although both were unaware of each other's endeavours.

Again, when Mr. Spencer so powerfully, and even not without a touch of passion, argues (in his Appendix to the third edition of the *Data of Ethics*) that human societies are marching towards a state when a further identification of altruism with egoism will be made 'in the sense that personal gratification will come from the gratification of others;' when he says that 'we are shown, undeniably, that it is a perfectly possible thing for organisms to become so adjusted to the requirements of their lives, that energy expended for the general welfare may not only be adequate to check energy expended for the individual welfare, but may come to subordinate it so far as to leave individual welfare no greater part than is necessary for maintenance of individual life'—provided the conditions for such relations between the individual and the community be maintained[4]—he derives from the study of nature the very same conclusions which the forerunners of anarchy, Fourier and Robert Owen, derived from a study of human character.

When we see further Mr. Bain so forcibly elaborating the theory of moral habits, and the French philosopher, M. Guyau, publishing his remarkable work on *Morality without Obligation or Sanction*;

[1] *Essays*, vol. iii. I am fully aware that in the very same *Essays*, a few pages further, Herbert Spencer destroys the force of the foregoing statement by the following words: 'Not only do I contend,' he says, 'that the restraining power of the State over individuals and bodies, or classes of individuals, is requisite, but I have contended that it should be exercised much more effectually and carried much farther than at present' (p. 145). And although he tries to establish a distinction between the (desirable) negatively regulative and the (undesirable) positively regulative functions of government, we know that no such distinction can be established in political life, and that the former necessarily lead to, and even imply, the latter. But we must distinguish between the system of philosophy and its interpreter. All we can say is that Herbert Spencer does not fully endorse all the conclusions which ought to be drawn from his system of philosophy.

[2] *Idée générale sur la Révolution au XIX^e siècle*; and *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*.

[3] *Lettres à un Français sur la crise actuelle*; *L'Empire knouto-germanique*; *The State's Idea and Anarchy* (Russian).

[4] Pages 300 to 302. In fact, the whole of this chapter ought to be quoted.

when J. S. Mill so sharply criticises representative government, and when he discusses the problem of liberty, although failing to establish its necessary conditions; when Sir John Lubbock prosecutes his admirable studies on animal societies, and Mr. Morgan applies scientific methods of investigation to the philosophy of history—when, in short, every year, by bringing some new arguments to the philosophy of evolution, adds at the same time some new arguments to the theory of anarchy—we must recognise that this last, although differing as to its starting-points, follows the same sound methods of scientific investigation. Our confidence in its conclusions is still more increased. The difference between anarchists and the just-named philosophers may be immense as to the presumed speed of evolution, and as to the conduct which one ought to assume as soon as he has had an insight into the aims towards which society is marching. No attempt, however, has been made scientifically to determine the ratio of evolution, nor have the chief elements of the problem (the state of mind of the masses) been taken into account by the evolutionist philosophers. As to bringing one's action into accordance with his philosophical conceptions, we know that, unhappily, intellect and will are too often separated by a chasm not to be filled by mere philosophical speculations, however deep and elaborate.

There is, however, between the just-named philosophers and the anarchists a wide difference on one point of primordial importance. This difference is the stranger as it arises on a point which might be discussed figures in hand, and which constitutes the very basis of all further deductions, as it belongs to what biological sociology would describe as the physiology of nutrition.

There is, in fact, a widely spread fallacy, maintained by Mr. Spencer and many others, as to the causes of the misery which we see round about us. It was affirmed forty years ago, and it is affirmed now by Mr. Spencer and his followers, that misery in civilised society is due to our insufficient production, or rather to the circumstance that 'population presses upon the means of subsistence.' It would be of no use to inquire into the origin of such a misrepresentation of facts, which might be easily verified. It may have its origin in inherited misconceptions which have nothing to do with the philosophy of evolution. But to be maintained and advocated by philosophers, there must be, in the conceptions of these philosophers, some confusion as to the different aspects of the struggle for existence. Sufficient importance is not given to the difference between the struggle which goes on among organisms which do *not* co-operate for providing the means of subsistence, and those which *do* so. In this last case again there must be some confusion between those aggregates whose members find their means of subsistence in the ready produce of the vegetable and animal kingdom, and those

whose members artificially grow their means of subsistence and are enabled to increase (to a yet unknown amount) the productivity of each spot of the surface of the globe. Hunters who hunt, each of them for his own sake, and hunters who unite into societies for hunting, stand quite differently with regard to the means of subsistence. But the difference is still greater between the hunters who take their means of subsistence as they are in nature, and civilised men who grow their food and produce all requisites for a comfortable life by machinery. In this last case—the stock of potential energy in nature being little short of infinite in comparison with the present population of the globe—the means of availing ourselves of the stock of energy are increased and perfected precisely in proportion to the density of population and to the previously accumulated stock of technical knowledge; so that for human beings who are in possession of scientific knowledge, and co-operate for the artificial production of the means of subsistence and comfort, the law is quite the reverse to that of Malthus. The accumulation of means of subsistence and comfort is going on at a much speedier rate than the increase of population. The only conclusion which we can deduce from the laws of evolution and of multiplication of effects is that the available amount of means of subsistence increases at a rate which increases itself in proportion as population becomes denser—unless it be artificially (and temporarily) checked by some defects of social organisation. As to our *powers* of production (our potential production), they increase at a still speedier rate; in proportion as scientific knowledge grows, the means for spreading it are rendered easier, and inventive genius is stimulated by all previous inventions.

If the fallacy as to the pressure of population on the means of subsistence could be maintained a hundred years ago, it can be maintained no more, since we have witnessed the effects of science on industry, and the enormous increase of our productive powers during the last hundred years. We know, in fact, that while the growth of population of England has been from 16½ millions in 1844 to 26¾ millions in 1883, showing thus an increase of 62 per cent., the growth of national wealth (as testified by schedule A of the Income Tax Act) has increased at a twice speedier rate; it has grown from 221 to 507½ millions—that is, by 130 per cent.[5] And we know that the same increase of wealth has taken place in France, where population remains almost stationary, and that it has gone on at a still speedier rate in the United States, where population is increasing every year by immigration.

But the figures just mentioned, while showing the real increase of production, give only a faint idea of what our production might be under a more reasonable economical organisation. We know well

[5] A. R. Wallace's *Bad Times*.

that the owners of capital, while trying to produce more wares with fewer 'hands,' are also continually endeavouring to limit the production, in order to sell at higher prices. When the benefits of a concern are going down, the owner of the capital limits the production, or totally suspends it, and prefers to engage his capital in foreign loans or shares of Patagonian gold-mines. Just now there are plenty of pitmen in England who ask for nothing better than to be permitted to extract coal and supply with cheap fuel the households where children are shivering before empty chimneys. There are thousands of weavers who ask for nothing better than to weave stuffs in order to replace the Whitechapel rugs with linen. And so in all branches of industry. How can we talk about a want of means of subsistence when 246 blasting furnaces and thousands of factories lie idle in Great Britain alone; and when there are, just now, thousands and thousands of unemployed in London alone; thousands of men who would consider themselves happy if they were permitted to transform (under the guidance of experienced men) the heavy clay of Middlesex into a rich soil, and to cover with rich cornfields and orchards the acres of meadow-land which now yield only a few pounds' worth of hay? But they are prevented from doing so by the owners of the land, of the weaving factory, and of the coal-mine, because capital finds it more advantageous to supply the Khedive with harems and the Russian Government with 'strategic railways' and Krupp guns. Of course the maintenance of harems *pays*: it gives ten or fifteen per cent. on the capital, while the extraction of coal does not pay—that is, it brings three or five per cent.,—and that is a sufficient reason for limiting the production and permitting would-be economists to indulge in reproaches to the working classes as to their too rapid multiplication!

Here we have instances of a direct and conscious limitation of production, due to the circumstance that the requisites for production belong to the few, and that these few have the right of disposing of them at their will, without caring about the interests of the community. But there is also the indirect and unconscious limitation of production—that which results from squandering the produce of human labour in luxury, instead of applying it to a further increase of production.

This last even cannot be estimated in figures, but a walk through the rich shops of any city and a glance at the manner in which money is squandered now, can give an approximate idea of this indirect limitation. When a rich man spends a thousand pounds for his stables, he squanders five to six thousand days of human labour, which might be used, under a better social organisation, for supplying with comfortable homes those who are compelled to live now in dens. And when a lady spends a hundred pounds for her dress, we cannot but say that she squanders, at least, two years of

human labour, which, again under a better organisation, might have supplied a hundred women with decent dresses, and much more if applied to a further improvement of the instruments of production. Preachers thunder against luxury, because it is shameful to squander money for feeding and sheltering hounds and horses, when thousands live in the East End on sixpence a day, and other thousands have not even their miserable sixpence every day. But the economist sees more than that in our modern luxury: when millions of days of labour are spent every year for the satisfaction of the stupid vanity of the rich, he says that so many millions of workers have been diverted from the manufacture of those useful instruments which would permit us to decuple and centuple our present production of means of subsistence and of requisites for comfort.

In short, if we take into account both the real and the potential increase of our wealth, and consider both the direct and indirect limitation of production, which are unavoidable under our present economical system, we must recognise that the supposed 'pressure of population on the means of subsistence' is a mere fallacy, repeated, like many other fallacies, without even taking the trouble of submitting it to a moment's criticism. The causes of the present social disease must be sought elsewhere.

Let us take a civilised country. The forests have been cleared, the swamps drained. Thousands of roads and railways intersect it in all directions; the rivers have been rendered navigable, and the seaports are of easy access. Canals connect the seas. The rocks have been pierced by deep shafts; thousands of manufactures cover the land. Science has taught men how to use the energy of nature for the satisfaction of his needs. Cities have slowly grown in the long run of ages, and treasures of science and art are accumulated in these centres of civilisation. But—who has made all these marvels?

The combined efforts of scores of generations have contributed towards the achievement of these results. The forests have been cleared centuries ago; millions of men have spent years and years of labour in draining the swamps, in tracing the roads, in building the railways. Other millions have built the cities and created the civilisation we boast of. Thousands of inventors, mostly unknown, mostly dying in poverty and neglect, have elaborated the machinery in which Man admires his genius. Thousands of writers, philosophers and men of science, supported by many thousands of compositors, printers, and other labourers whose name is legion, have contributed in elaborating and spreading knowledge, in dissipating errors, in creating the atmosphere of scientific thought, without which the marvels of our century never would have been brought to life. The genius of a Mayer and a Grove, the patient work of a Joule, surely have done more for giving a new start to modern industry than all the capitalists of the world; but these men of

genius themselves are, in their turn, the children of industry: thousands of engines had to transform heat into mechanical force, and mechanical force into sound, light, and electricity—and they had to do so years long, every day, under the eyes of humanity—before some of our contemporaries proclaimed the mechanical origin of heat and the correlation of physical forces, and before we ourselves became prepared to listen to them and understand their teachings. Who knows for how many decades we should continue to be ignorant of this theory which now revolutionises industry, were it not for the inventive powers and skill of those unknown workers who have improved the steam-engine, who brought all its parts to perfection, so as to make steam more manageable than a horse, and to render the use of the engine nearly universal? But the same is true with regard to each smallest part of our machinery. In each machine, however simple, we may read a whole history—a long history of sleepless nights, of delusions and joys, of partial inventions and partial improvements which brought it to its present state. Nay, nearly each new machine is a synthesis, a result of thousands of partial inventions made, not only in one special department of machinery, but in all departments of the wide field of mechanics.

Our cities, connected by roads and brought into easy communication with all peopled parts of the globe, are the growth of centuries; and each house in these cities, each factory, each shop, derives its value, its very *raison d'être*, from the fact that it is situated on a spot of the globe where thousands or millions have gathered together. Every smallest part of the immense whole which we call the wealth of civilised nations derives its value precisely from being a part of this whole. What would be the value of an immense London shop or storehouse were it not situated precisely in London, which has become the gathering spot for five millions of human beings? And what the value of our coal-pits, our manufactures, our shipbuilding yards, were it not for the immense traffic which goes on across the seas, for the railways which transport mountains of merchandise, for the cities which number their inhabitants by millions? Who is, then, the individual who has the right to step forward and, laying his hands on the smallest part of this immense whole, to say, '*I* have produced this; it belongs to *me*'? And how can we discriminate, in this immense interwoven whole, the part which the isolated individual may appropriate to himself with the slightest approach to justice? Houses and streets, canals and railways, machines and works of art, all these have been created by the combined efforts of generations past and present, of men living on these islands and men living thousands of miles away.

But it has happened in the long run of ages that everything which permits men further to increase their production, or even to continue it, has been appropriated by the few. The land, which derives its

value precisely from its being necessary for an ever-increasing population, belongs to the few, who may prevent the community from cultivating it. The coal-pits, which represent the labour of generations, and which also derive their value from the wants of the manufactures and railroads, from the immense trade carried on and the density of population (what is the value of coal-layers in Transbaikalia?), belong again to the few, who have even the right of stopping the extraction of coal if they choose to give another use to their capital. The lace-weaving machine, which represents, in its present state of perfection, the work of three generations of Lancashire weavers, belongs again to the few; and if the grandsons of the very same weaver who invented the first lace-weaving machine claim their rights of bringing one of these machines into motion, they will be told 'Hands off! this machine does not belong to you!' The railroads, which mostly would be useless heaps of iron if Great Britain had not its present dense population, its industry, trade, and traffic, belong again to the few—to a few shareholders, who may even not know where the railway is situated which brings them a yearly income larger than that of a mediæval king; and if the children of those people who died by thousands in digging the tunnels would gather and go—a ragged and starving crowd—to ask bread or work from the shareholders, they would be met with bayonets and bullets.

Who is the sophist who will dare to say that such an organisation is just? But what is unjust cannot be beneficial for mankind; and *it is not*. In consequence of this monstrous organisation, the son of a workman, when he is able to work, finds no acre to till, no machine to set in motion, unless he agrees to sell his labour for a sum inferior to its real value. His father and grandfather have contributed in draining the field, or erecting the factory, to the full extent of their capacities—and nobody can do more than that—but he comes into the world more destitute than a savage. If he resorts to agriculture, he will be permitted to cultivate a plot of land, but on the condition that he gives up one quarter of his crop to the landlord. If he resorts to industry, he will be permitted to work, but on the condition that out of the thirty shillings he has produced, ten shillings or more will be pocketed by the owner of the machine. We cry against the feudal baron who did not permit anyone to settle on his land otherwise than on payment of one quarter of the crops to the lord of the manor; but we continue to do as they did—we extend their system. The forms have changed, but the essence has remained the same. And the workman is compelled to accept the feudal conditions which we call 'free contract,' because nowhere will he find better conditions. Everything has been appropriated by somebody; he *must* accept the bargain, or starve.

Owing to this circumstance our production takes a wrong turn. It takes no care of the needs of the community; its only aim is to

increase the benefits of the capitalist. Therefore—the continuous fluctuations of industry, the crises periodically coming nearly every ten years, and throwing out of employment several hundred thousand men who are brought to complete misery, whose children grow up in the gutter, ready to become inmates of the prison and workhouse. The workmen being unable to purchase with their wages the riches they are producing, industry must search for markets elsewhere, amidst the middle classes of other nations. It must find markets, in the East, in Africa, anywhere; it must increase, by trade, the number of its serfs in Egypt, in India, in the Congo. But everywhere it finds competitors in other nations which rapidly enter into the same line of industrial development. And wars, continuous wars, must be fought for the supremacy on the world-market—wars for the possession of the East, wars for getting possession of the seas, wars for having the right of imposing heavy duties on foreign merchandise. The thunder of guns never ceases in Europe; whole generations are slaughtered; and we spend in armaments the third of the revenue of our States—a revenue raised, the poor know with what difficulties.

Education is the privilege of the few. Not because we can find no teachers, not because the workman's son and daughter are less able to receive instruction, but because one can receive no reasonable instruction when at the age of fifteen he descends into the mine, or goes selling newspapers in the streets. Society becomes divided into two hostile camps; and no freedom is possible under such conditions. While the Radical asks for a further extension of liberty, the statesman answers him that a further increase of liberty would bring about an uprising of the paupers; and those political liberties which have cost so dear are replaced by coercion, by exceptional laws, by military rule.

And finally, the injustice of our repartition of wealth exercises the most deplorable effect on our morality. Our principles of morality say: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'; but let a child follow this principle and take off his coat to give it to the shivering pauper, and his mother will tell him that he must never understand the moral principles in their right sense. If he lives according to them, he will go barefoot, without alleviating the misery round about him! Morality is good on the lips, not in deeds. Our preachers say, 'Who works, prays,' and everybody endeavours to make others work for himself. They say, 'Never lie!' and politics is a big lie. And we accustom ourselves and our children to live under this double-faced morality, which is hypocrisy, and to conciliate our double-facedness by sophistry. Hypocrisy and sophistry become the very basis of our life. But society cannot live under such a morality. It cannot last so: it must, it will, be changed.

The question is thus no more a mere question of bread. It covers

the whole field of human activity. But it has at its bottom a question of social economy, and we conclude: The means of production and of satisfaction of all needs of society, having been created by the common efforts of all, must be at the disposal of all. The private appropriation of requisites for production is neither just nor beneficial. All must be placed on the same footing as producers and consumers of wealth. That would be the only way for society to step out of the bad conditions which have been created by centuries of wars and oppression. That would be the only guarantee for further progress in a direction of equality and freedom, which always were the real, although unspoken goal of humanity.

P. KROPOTKIN.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS.

THERE are unmistakable symptoms abroad that the old and vexed question of County Boards is again to the front, and that, unless recent changes in the Government (which is not unlikely) cause a year's delay, there will be submitted to Parliament in the coming session a measure dealing comprehensively with this subject.

We may safely predict for it a troubled and stormy career, lingering, probably, and protracted till the time arrives for the annual massacre of Government Bills, when it will be again relegated to the departmental pigeon-holes, to the relief of perplexed politicians and to the secret satisfaction of the community at large.

This is essentially a question which is forced into public notice from time to time by the rivalry of parties rather than by the complaints of the people.

Nothing is more easy or more plausible than to avow adhesion to the principle of representative bodies in substitution for the monopoly of power exercised under the *régime* of nominated magistrates. Moreover, on the one hand, the Conservative is tickled with the idea of resuscitating the county as an administrative area, while the Radical rejoices in the prospect of dealing a deadly blow at the political power of the landed gentry in the rural districts. Both parties thus lend a ready ear to the complaints and contentions of the philosophic, the scientific, and the sentimental classes of politicians, who elaborate grievances from the perusal of blue-books and from the examination of statistical returns, rather than watch for or deal with them in detail as they arise in a practical spirit.

We have been, indeed, officially informed by the political chiefs of the Local Government Board that an admirable plan has been prepared, which will be acceptable to all parties; but ominous rumours have since supervened, confirming the suspicions of old Parliamentary hands that no simple or easy method of dealing with the problem, or, rather, with the mass of knotty and tangled problems involved, has been discovered, or is indeed practicable.

It is easy to criticise and find fault with the existing state of