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The Socialist State. By E. C. K. GONNER, M.A. (London: Walter Scott. 1895.)

It is scarcely possible to say anything absolutely new with regard to Socialism. But it is possible and desirable to help the public to comprehend what Socialism means. Professor Gonner's aim, as stated in his preface, is 'to facilitate a serious and fruitful study (of Socialism) by a delimitation of the ground it should cover and by the implied suggestion that a final judgment must be arrived at, not on one aspect or on one presentment of the case, but after an even-minded review of the whole complex medley of interests, difficulties, dangers, and advantages.' He begins with explaining the characteristics of the ideal State as conceived by Socialists. He examines one by one the bases of Socialism, the arguments derived from economic theory, from history and from practical life by which Socialists endeavour to prove the case in favour of that revolution which they contemplate. He then tries to forecast the features of a Socialist commonwealth, and the influence which a Socialist polity would exert on the family, on individual character, on production, on exchange, and on economic life generally. Finally he considers what alternatives may exist for society other than its actual condition or the ideal of Socialism. It is needless to say that Professor Gonner brings an ample knowledge of economic theory to bear upon his subject-matter. His scrupulous fairness must be acknowledged by every reader. Some may complain that he has drawn no brilliant pictures of future bliss in the Socialist State, and others may grumble that he has understated what seem to them decisive objections to Socialism. But such censure is praise to an author who desires, not to add to the mass of ready-made opinion, but to teach his readers to weigh and consider.

Socialism, says Professor Gonner, is practical, not Utopian. Socialism assumes that men will continue to be much as they have been and still are—good, bad, and indifferent' (p. 25). But is not this one of the gravest questions at issue? Any opponent of Socialism will say that with men as they have been and are, Socialism is utterly impracticable. And the assumption made by Socialists generally that the average man will continue to work hard in a state of society where no efforts will avail to better his condition certainly implies an extraordinary transformation. The theoretical bases of Socialism as stated in this book are four, the theory of value, the theory of capital, the theory of wages, and the theory of crises. Upon each and all of these subjects the writer seems to think that the Socialist theory needs such extensive correction as would almost take away its Socialistic character. Want of space compels a somewhat meagre treatment of the historical basis. It would be unjust to deny that Socialists have done much to awaken the interest now felt in economic history. But a reader of the study before us would hardly realise the intense spirit of party, the resolution to prove

a system, the zeal for edification rather than for knowledge, which runs through the historical literature of Socialism. The practical basis of Socialism is less capable of literary discussion because being practical it is indefinite. The good and the evil of our present state and the probabilities that either will increase must be estimated differently by each observer. No argumentative process, however skilfully and fairly conducted, can exhaust any of the controversies which arise out of human interests. In moral and political debate everything turns at last upon an individual sensibility which admits of no standard measurement.

When examining the probable characteristics of the Socialist State Professor Gonner is careful to point out that no Socialist merely as a Socialist is committed to any peculiar doctrines about marriage or the family. This is obviously true, and yet we may think that Socialism has an unconscious bias against the institution of the family. Socialism is not Communism, yet both imply that the way to make a good citizen is to extinguish all his individual interests. Of these interests the domestic affections are perhaps the strongest. It was not without reason that Plato proposed to abolish marriage among the most favoured members of his ideal state and that the monastic system required vows of chastity. Again Socialism admits of private property and even of private accumulation to a petty degree. But Professor Gonner hardly does justice to the question whether it allows of any adequate incentive to thrift. At the present day thrift is practised chiefly by those who have or who hope to obtain some share in the instruments of production. It may be said that the Socialist State will itself accumulate sufficient capital. Then it may be asked, what will be the constitution of the Socialist State? Professor Gonner is scientifically correct in asserting that there is no necessary connection between Socialism and democracy. But the practical man will see that the experiment of Socialism is not likely to be tried in any but democratic communities, and he may be disposed to ask what degree of frugality has been hitherto shown by the governments of the most democratic states of modern times, for instance, the government of France or the government of the United States. The conclusion drawn by Professor Gonner from his survey of Socialism is rather suggested than pressed upon the reader. He thinks that we are not actually reduced to choose between the abstract principles of liberty and of regulation, and that tentative methods may conduct to an economic state which without the rigidity of Socialism will be free from the worst evils of competition.

F. C. MONTAGUE

Socialism. By LORD NORTON. Second edition. (London : Rivington, Percival. 1895. 35 pp., 8vo., 1s.)

THIS small pamphlet has little to recommend it; the arguments used against Socialism are not new, and the manner in which they are