SOCIALISM@@1. The word “socialism” is of comparatively recent origin, having been coined in England in 1835. In that year a society which received the grandiloquent name of the “ Association of all Classes of all Nations ” was founded under the auspices of Robert Owen ; and the words “socialist” and “socialism” were first used during the discussions which arose in connexion with it. As Owen and his school had no esteem for the political reform of the time, and laid all emphasis on the necessity of social improvement and reconstruction, it is obvious how the name came to be recognized as suitable and distinctive. The term was borrowed from England by a distinguished French writer, Reybaud, in his well-known work the *Reformateurs modernes* (1839), in which he discussed the theories of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen. Through Reybaud it soon gained wide currency on the Continent, and is now the accepted world-historic name for one of the most remarkable movements of the 19th century.

The name was thus first applied in England to Owen’s theory of social reconstruction, and in France to those also of Saint-Simon and Fourier. The best usage has always connected it with the views of these men and the cognate opinions which have since appeared. The word, however, is used with a great variety of meaning not only in popular speech and by politicians but even by economists and learned critics of socialism. The general tendency is to regard as socialistic any interference with property undertaken by society on behalf of the poor, the limitation of the principle of *laissez-faire* in favour of the suffering classes, radical social reform which disturbs the present system of private property as regulated by free competition. It is probable enough that the word will be permanently used to express the tendency indicated in these phrases, as a general name for the strong reaction that has now set in against the overstrained individualism and one-sided freedom which date from the latter half of the 18th century. The application is neither precise nor accurate ; but it is use and wont that determine the meaning of words, and this seems to be the tendency of use and wont.

Even economic writers differ greatly in the meaning they attach to the word. The great German economist Roscher defines it as including “ those tendencies which demand a greater regard for the common weal than consists with human nature.” Adolf Held says that “ we may define as socialistic every tendency which demands the subordina­tion of the individual will to the community.” Janet more precisely defines it as follows :—“ We call socialism every doctrine which teaches that the state has a right to correct the inequality of wealth which exists among men and to legally establish the balance by taking from those who have too much in order to give to those who have not enough, and that in a permanent manner, and not in such and such a particular case,—a famine, for instance, a public calamity, &c.” Laveleye explains it thus : “ In the first place every socialistic doctrine aims at introducing greater equality in social conditions, and in the second place at realizing those reforms by the law or the state.” Von Scheel simply defines it as the “ economic philosophy of the suffering classes.” Of all these definitions it can only be said that they more or less faithfully reflect current opinion as to the nature of socialism. They are either too vague

@@@1 The aim of the present article is essentially to give a history and ex­position of socialism in its leading phases and principles. The point of view is objective,—to explain what socialism has been and is. A controversial or critical article on the many vexed questions sug­gested by the subject would have been inconsistent with the plan of this work.

or they are misleading, and they quite fail to bring out the clear and strongly marked characteristics that distinguish the phenomena to which the name of socialism is properly applied. To say that socialism exacts a greater regard for the common weal than is compatible with human nature is to pass sentence on the movement, not to define it. In all ages of the world, and under all forms and tendencies of government and of social evolution, the will of the individual has been subordinated to the will of society, often unduly so. It is also most misleading to speak as if socialism must proceed from the state as we know it. The early socialism proceeded from private effort and experiment. A great deal of the most notorious socialism of the present day aims not only at subverting the existing state in every form but all the existing political and social institutions. The most powerful and most philosophic, that of Karl Marx, aimed at superseding the existing governments by a vast international combination of the workers of all nations, without distinction of creed, colour, or nationality.

Still more objectionable, however, is the tendency not unfrequently shown to identify socialism with a violent and lawless revolutionary spirit. As sometimes used, “ socialism ” means nothing more nor less than the most modern form of the revolutionary spirit with a suggestion of anarchy and dynamite. This is to confound the essence of the movement with an accidental feature more or less common to all great innovations. Every new thing of any moment, whether good or evil, has its revolutionary stage in which it disturbs and upsets the accepted beliefs and institutions. The Protestant Reformation was for more than a century and a half the occasion of national and international trouble and bloodshed. The suppression of American slavery could not be effected without a tremen­dous civil war. There was a time when the opinions com­prehended under the name of “ liberalism ” had to fight to the death for toleration; and representative government was at one time a revolutionary innovation. The fact that a movement is revolutionary generally implies only that it is new, that it is disposed to exert itself by strong methods, and is calculated to make great changes. It is an unhappy feature of most great changes that they have been attended with the exercise of force, but that is be­cause the powers in possession have generally attempted to suppress them by the exercise of force.

In point of fact socialism is one of the most elastic and protean phenomena of history, varying according to the time and circumstances in which it appears and with the character and opinions and institutions of the people who adopt it. Such a movement cannot be condemned or approved *en bloc.* Most of the current formulæ to which it has been referred for praise or censure are totally errone­ous and misleading. Yet in the midst of the various theories that go by the name of “socialism” there is a kernel of principle that is common to them all. That principle is of an economic nature, and is most clear and precise. The central aim of socialism is to terminate the divorce of the workers from the natural sources of subsistence and of culture. The socialist theory is based on the historical assertion that the course of social evolution for centuries has gradually been to exclude the producing classes from the possession of land and capital and to establish a new subjection, the subjection of workers, who have nothing to depend on but precarious wage-labour. The socialists maintain that the present system (in which land and capital are the property of private individuals freely struggling for increase of wealth) leads inevitably to social and