

## THE VICTORIES OF FABIUS

*The History of the Fabian Society*, by Edward R. Pease, for twenty-five years its secretary, is an important contribution to the history of modern England. The influence of this organization in persuading the Liberal and Conservative parties to adopt increasingly radical measures of social reform and in altering the attitude of the British people as a whole in the direction of collectivism would be incredible if it were not incontestible. The Fabian Society has achieved its triumphs not by a direct entrance into the political arena, such as all other important Socialist and labor parties have made, but by the "indirect influence" of persistent, intelligent, systematic propaganda. The nature and scope of this influence can only be compared with the agitation for political and legal reforms of the Philosophical Radicals from Bentham to John Stuart Mill, and the work of the Abolitionists in the United States in the generation preceding the Civil War. In all three cases the propagandist element acted but as yeast to leaven the lump, being itself in an utterly insignificant minority; in all three cases such success as was attained was due to the personality of the men and women who took part in the work. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that at least one-half of the most original and effective social theorists who lived in England from 1883 to the present were at one time or another connected with the Fabian Society.

The internal politics of the Fabians, as related in this book, was naturally not always harmonious. The wonder is that so many brilliant and erratic intellects could work in common harness as well as they did. It will surprise many persons who think of Bernard Shaw as the very genius of caprice, to learn that he was usually a conservative force within the society and that his moderation and tact were frequently

called upon to prevent extremists and faddists from splitting the Fabians into hopelessly divided factions. The most important internal quarrel, to which an entire chapter is devoted, was the attempt of Mr. H. G. Wells to reorganize and enlarge the society and to revise its creed to include the state support of children. The Old Gang (as Mr. Pease humorously describes himself and the other members of long standing) opposed some of these changes, and in consequence Mr. Wells resigned from the society, which he has since lampooned severely in several recent books. Bernard Shaw contributes some criticisms and amplifications of the narrative of Mr. Pease which are incorporated in the appendix.

*The History of the Fabian Society*, by Edward R. Pease. Dutton. \$1.75.