

Society on the Morrow of Revolution [Oct, 1890]

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VIII.—HARMONY, SOLIDARITY.

IN the preceding chapter we have seen that individuals will be able to group themselves and understand each other in the organization which will result from their daily relations without the necessity for any authority existing among them, by the mere fact that those who group themselves will have the same affinities, the same tendencies, the same end in view. It remains for us to see if the groups can continue their existence side by side without hindering, troubling, or lighting each other. We firmly believe it, and we will explain the reasons which, in our opinion, make this belief a certainty.

If we study the causes of division which in the present society makes every individual an enemy of his kind, we shall see that primarily it is the fear of to-morrow which makes every individual an egotist. Nevertheless man as a whole is rather inclined to sociability, and is pleased to help his fellows when he feels that he can do so without injuring himself or his chances of success. The desire to be successful, the love of money, are only the products of the competitive organization of society, which makes it a law for every individual to use all means in this continual war in which they are engaged; to reach the goal before their competitors they must crush them, if they would escape being crushed themselves, serving as a stepping-stone to the others. Such is the organization of society. We must conquer or be conquered; we must stop our ears, so as not to hear the cries of those who are drowning. Instead of stopping to help them, one is compelled, on the contrary, to aid them to sink still deeper, for the crowd of competitors is ever behind you, always pressing onward, and it will march over you without pity if you show any signs of stopping. When we consider this, it is not astonishing that concord and agreement between individuals is so difficult in the present society, based as it is on individual competition, on mutual extermination.

But, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the present society being destroyed, private property being abolished, individuals no longer having any necessity to hoard up money in order to have the certainty of being able to supply their wants to-morrow—that, moreover, being made an impossibility for them by the suppression of all money or representative of value—having the satisfaction of all their needs assured in the new society, the incentive to individuals being then only that ideal which finds its expression in striving towards the best, the relations between

individuals and groups of individuals will no longer be based upon those exchanges of products in which everyone tries to beggar his neighbor, the object of these relations will then simply be to render mutual services. Where the individual interest is no longer paramount a common understanding will be easy, and the causes of discord will have disappeared.

Certainly this concord will not be established in a perfect manner all at once. These happy relations will not come into existence immediately, as at the touch of a wand of a fairy at the theater. Before we reach this point we shall have to put up with much trickery, we shall have had to feel our way; but it would also be a mistake to believe that the Social Revolution, such as we understand it, such as it must be in order to endure, can be the work only of a few days. The task will be long and painful, and will give rise to much strife, but with all its attempts, all the repetition of effort, all the deception met with, the final success will be much more complete than it could possibly be made by acts of authority. The mistakes, the trickery, will only have one result: it will make individuals more careful, it will cause them to reflect before taking action; and when they see that they are going wrong, it will be easy for them to change their direction. But an authority would prescribe a wrong road for them to take, and would force them to proceed along it; they would only be able to alter their wrong course and get rid of their blind leaders by recommencing the revolution. Experience has shown us that this is not always such an easy task.

Individuals being grouped as we have seen in the preceding chapter, either for producing some article required for consumption or to consume some article provided by production, it will be necessary for these groups to enter into relation with each other. They will have to keep themselves informed as to each other's condition and manner of action in order to provide what is required, or to know where they will have to apply to procure what they want. In a word, it will be necessary for the groups to carry on the same work of aggregation as the individuals will have effected between themselves in order to form groups. Each group requiring a product of any kind will seek out the group who produces it, and will enter into relations with it in order to get the required supplies.

At this point arises the objection, "What will a group do in case the other groups are not disposed to supply it with what it requires?" As we have said, individuals being no longer forced by want to hoard up riches in a society where the individual interest is merged in the general interest, the relations of individuals and groups will be based upon the general well-being, or what is considered such. Every sort of work which is really useful will certainly find its supporters in some of the various groups. It will have to be very bad indeed if it attracts no one. It will even have this advantage over the present society, that new ideas will be put into practice immediately, whereas now a new idea is put into practice only when a capitalist realizes that he has found a new means of exploitation; and as capitalists, outside of their business, are not very strong intellectually, it results that many ideas are indefinitely adjourned when they are not definitely buried, and those which are carried out, instead of benefiting everybody, only become a means by which a few secure a fortune.

"But," we shall be told, "your ideal of society would be a Spartan republic where all would be turned to the advantage of society. You would sacrifice the individual; and everything in the way of causing pleasure, everything which only served to amuse or to distract and was not employed for pressing wants, would by this very fact be excluded from the social production."

This is indeed a mistake. We consider that everything the individual can desire is for him a want, and therefore it is necessary for him to have it, and it must inevitably form part of the

social production. There, again, the affinities, the similarities of taste will lead individuals to group themselves so as to establish relations with one another and to ensure the satisfaction of their desires.

For our part we believe that, allowing for the diversities of temperament and the varieties of aptitude, groups will be established for the production of everything which human activity can dream of, and that in a society of equals we shall continue to find everything which can give pleasure to individuals. This is a conclusion which we reach through the ideal of which we dream, in which all men, by the fact of their possessing a superior education and through the facility by which they will be able to satisfy their wants, will have the most simple, and at the same time the most refined and aesthetic, tastes, and consequently will lose the love of tinsel and decorative metal which distinguishes the uncultivated man. We take man as he is and as he will be in all probability on the morrow of the Revolution, and we say that the variety of aptitudes that differentiates men will permit the production of precisely that which is necessary to satisfy all individuals, however great may be the diversity of tastes which separates them.

We willingly admit that certain things may not be produced because the need of them is only experienced by a very few individuals. But, then, will not men be masters of the greater part of their time; of all their time even, if it pleases them? Will not materials and tools be at the disposal of everybody? Those who feel the want of a thing which is not ready made to their hands will only have to seek out those who have the same wants and form a group in order to produce that special thing which they lack. So we shall see a new branch of social industry created.

Another objection, which is not serious, but may appear so to anyone who has not yet succeeded in disembarassing himself of the prejudices of the existing society, is this: "It may happen," we are told, "that the efforts of production will be expended rather on one branch of industry than another, and consequently that certain commodities will be in excess of the demand for them, whilst others will be absolutely lacking. In order to prevent this inconvenience, we must have some statistical committees, who will not be a government at all, but who will tell the individuals what they ought to do. If you do not have these committees, you will not be able to deal with this inconvenience."

What we have just said about the production of articles of luxury or pleasure is a complete reply to the question. Those who feel the want of an article will always be able to produce it themselves; but we should have to consider people very stupid if we believed that they would be glad to work merely for the pleasure of working, or if we imagined them capable of being so infatuated with their task as to desire to produce goods which they would know would only be blocking up the warehouses.

Besides, statisticians would not be wanting. The taste for figures, for reckoning and measuring, is possessed by very many men. Let theirs be the task to keep us informed on the details of production and the balancing of commodities with consumption.

The producing groups would only be started in accordance with needs, and an inconvenient excess of commodities could never arise, for the Post Office, the telegraph, and all other means of communication being at the free disposition of groups and individuals, every group could keep itself informed as to the necessities of consumption and regulate its action accordingly. Commodities could be sent from the places where they had accumulated to the places where they were needed. Consequently individuals would find no useful end served by establishing in authority over them a statistical commission, which would order them what to do, when they could very well arrange the matters themselves.

It will be seen from the few points we have dealt with that it will be perfectly easy to organize a society without authority.

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