IS SOCIALISM SOUND?

VERBATIM REPORT

OF

A FOUR NIGHTS' DEBATE

BETWEEN

ANNIE BESANT and G. W. FOOTE,

AT THE

HALL OF SCIENCE, OLD ST., LONDON, E.C.

On February 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd, 1887.

REVISED BY BOTH DISPUTANTS.

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FIRST NIGHT.

WILLIAM MORRIS IN THE CHAIR.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, we are met here to-night to open an extremely interesting discussion on what, I think, you will probably all agree with me is in point of fact *the* question of the day—(cheers)—the question which practically includes all questions, whether you call them politics or whether you do not. And it is, further, made more interesting by the fact that both the debaters are skilled and practised debaters with very great talent; and I think I may be perfectly certain that the subject will be treated in a thoroughly serious and satisfactory manner. As chairman, before such a debate it is clearly my business to say as little as I possibly can; and I will only add that the subject is so very interesting that it may perhaps make some rather excited at what goes on. I hope therefore that we shall all remember that we came here to hear the two debaters; and if we have to give voice to our feelings on any occasion we shall do so at the end of sentences, so as to interfere as little as possible with the debaters' arguments. (Hear, hear.) I have only now to tell you the conditions under which the debate is to take place. Annie Besant will open the debate and speak for half an hour. Mr. Foote will then speak for half an hour. And after that Annie Besant will speak for a quarter of an hour and Mr. Foote for a quarter of an hour, and so each debater will have two quarters of an hour, and that will conclude the debate of this evening. I will now call upon Annie Besant to open the debate on "Is Socialism Sound?". (Cheers.)

ANNIE BESANT: Friends; in taking the affirmative of the question, "Is Socialism Sound?", I propose to divide into two parts that portion of the debate which falls under my conduct. I propose to-night to deal with the economic basis of Socialism, and to try to show that that is sound. I propose on this night fortnight to deal with the historical evolution of Socialism, and to try to show that it is a necessary result of the evolution of the past. In the other two nights of the debate it will be my duty to follow Mr. Foote—the duty of leading it falling upon him. And I must at the very outset ask you to bear with me during my first speech, in that it will be necessary to put with extreme terseness the arguments which I must lay before you. Any argument stating the economic case for Socialism compressed into half an hour must necessarily be very inadequate, and I can only give you a rough outline, leaving you to elaborate the details for yourselves. (Hear, hear.) And I will commence by asking you to distinguish in thought between that form of Socialism which has been described as Utopian, which is thought out by the student in seclusion, and which gives a complete scheme full of elaborate details on every possible point—a scheme which it is proposed to impose from without upon society. That is not the form of Socialism that I defend here to-night. Over against that is the more modern form of Socialism which has been described as scientific Socialism, and that form of Socialism, in common with every system that can fairly be called scientific, is an attempt to go to the root of the matter; to try to understand thoroughly the causes of the effects that we see around us; to trace back—just as a geographer may trace a river to its source—to their real source certain facts that we find in the society around us. The chief fact it deals with is the fact of poverty. It strives to trace back poverty to its source, and having, as it believes, done that—having found out the cause of poverty in modern society—scientific Socialism lays down a fresh economic basis for society; and then, asserting that new principle as basis, it believes that from it there will gradually be developed a healthy social organism, not produced from without, but growing from within, by the action of the natural social and economic forces which are at work in society itself. (Cheers.) And this distinction is not invented by myself for the purposes of this debate. I will

take Emile de Laveleye, a writer who is not a Socialist, although I might refer to a Socialist like Engels, who was, I believe, the first to state this distinction clearly. Writing on Socialism in the *Contemporary Review*, April, 1883, Emile de Laveleye pointed out the extreme difference between modern Socialism and the earlier forms in which Socialism presented itself. He said: "Ricardo, Mill, in fact all the representatives of orthodox science, show that with free competition, in a country where both the population and the wealth are on the increase, the revenues of proprietors will also steadily increase, while wages will fall to what is strictly necessary. . . . . Political economy has thus furnished Socialism with a scientific basis, and has been the means of its quitting the region of Communistic aspirations and Utopian schemes." And M. de Laveleye warns these who are against Socialism that they must beware of "mixing up this system with Communistic Utopias". I submit that Socialism is no longer a dream. It is a reasoned scheme based on political economy. It proposes to change our economic basis. It proposes to do this by rational and thoughtful argument, convincing the brain of man. And those who do not appreciate this change of position—those who merely go round the outside of the question, who take the old schemes and deal only with matters of detail on every point—such have not grasped the real centre of the question; they are simply beating the air, and never touch the chief point with which we are concerned. (Cheers.) Now, many definitions of Socialism have been given, and they cover a large amount of ground. You may start from the wide definition of Proudhon, "Every aspiration for the amelioration of society is Socialism", but that is somewhat too general to serve as a practical definition. It is very possible that various definitions may be advanced by Mr. Foote, and it will then be my duty to deal with them as he puts them forward; but so far as I am concerned to-night, I lay down one principle as the differentia of Socialism, as that on which every Socialist is agreed—that which I maintain is the economic basis of Socialism; and I allege that Socialism is the theory which declares that there shall be no private property in the materials which are necessary for the production of wealth. Whatever your Socialistic school—let

it be Anarchist or Communist, let it be Collectivist, Evolutionary or Revolutionary, or both, you will nowhere find a Socialism which will disagree with that fundamental statement, or which will not proclaim, as the basis of all proposed changes, the destruction of private property in the materials which are necessary for the production of wealth. (Cheers.) The next question arises as to what we mean by these "materials". And I propose to divide them under two heads, practically following the usual divisions of political economy, although using phrases to describe them which are not those of the ordinary economic books. I describe as raw material everything which the political economist describes as land—that which Mill said "no man made", including, of course, in that raw material, all ore and minerals, and other natural material for the production of wealth, so long as it has been untouched by man. The whole of that will come under my definition of raw material. And I put over against that the material upon which human labor has been employed, and I class the whole of that together as wrought material. That will include of course what is generally known as "capital"; as "means of production"; or as "instruments of production". And I take every case in which raw material has been transformed by human labor into wrought material as the second division of the materials for the production of wealth with which we have to deal to-night. Now every Socialist claims all this as common property. He declares of raw material *plus* wrought material—that the claim to make that common property differentiates the Socialist from every non-Socialist school. He alleges that the essential difference—which is what we want to get at here to-night—the essential difference between Socialism and Individualism is that the Socialist says that these materials ought to be public property, whereas Individualism declares that they ought to be private property; and between these two logical and opposite schools you will find a number of schools under different names which tend more or less in one direction or in the other. Some only claim raw material as common property, and would leave the wrought as individual property. But I assert to you that everyone who claims these, or part of these, as common property has begun with Socialism, and is bound by logic to go on step by step until the whole becomes public property. I allege

that land nationalisation is essentially a Socialistic plan; and here again, instead of putting it on my own authority, I fall back once more on M. de Laveleye, quoting from his article on "The European Terror" in the *Fortnightly Review* of April, 1883, I find him, without apparently the smallest notion that anyone would challenge him, stating: "Collectivism may be conceived as more or less completely applied, according as the State hold only the soil, and this is the system which is being now so much discussed in England, under the name of *nationalisation of land*, or as the State hold all fixed capital, and in this latter case, all that is reserved to individuals is the enjoyment of what they can purchase with the immediate produce of their labor". I take it then that this is the absolute differentia between the Socialist and the non-Socialist, and it is with respect to this raw and this wrought material that every Socialist is a Communist. And I use that word deliberately, because of the misconception with which it is often regarded in a country like this. If we take the "Manifesto of the Communists" put forward by Karl Marx and his friend Friedrich Engels in 1847, in which he proclaims himself to be a Communist, and where according to the common view he would destroy all property and take away all individual claims, what are Karl Marx's own words? They are: "It has been said of Communists that we wish to destroy property which is the product of a man's labor—earned by his own work; that property which forms the basis of all personal liberty, activity, and independence—personally earned, personally acquired property". But, he goes on to point out that as capital is a collective product, "Capital is therefore not a personal factor; it is a social factor. Therefore when capital is converted into common property belonging to all members of society, personal property is not thereby changed into social property." And he adds: "Communism deprives no one of the power to appropriate social products for his own use; it only deprives him of the power to subject others' labor by such appropriation" (pp. 13, 14, 15, ed. 1886). (Cheers.) Whether or not you agree with that definition of Marx's, whether or not you may carry Communism, as some writers do, very much farther than Marx has carried it, and may use the word as negating private property completely, still I submit that if you are going to argue against Socialism, instead of cari-

caturing it, you must take the words you attack with the limitations put upon them by the writers who used the words, and must distinguish Marx's Communism from that of some others. And if you fail to do this, and merely use it to rouse prejudices in the minds of the ordinary citizen against the system, and thus mislead the understanding, you may gain a temporary triumph on the platform, but you do nothing towards bringing the argument to a satisfactory conclusion. (Cheers.) I pass from that, and the next point I put for your consideration is this. It is impossible to separate in practice raw material from wrought material, so that you can nationalise the one and leave the other as private property. I have sometimes thought that the opposition between land and capital which has been so much dwelt upon by a certain school is really nothing more than a survival from the mercantile system, in which capital was regarded merely as money, and the distinction between land and money being apparently very clear these two things were taken as fundamentally distinct. I believe that the view taken of land and capital to-day is very much colored in the minds of many by that old and discredited mercantile theory. (Hear, hear.) If raw material is to be land which "no man made"—which is, as we say, given by Nature—where are you going to get that in an old country? How are you going to find out the so-called prairie value which persons talk about so readily but understand so little? How, in a country like ours, are you going to find out the economic rent, if you are going to use the old Ricardian definition and call rent that portion of the produce which is paid for the use of the original and indestructible powers of the soil? Take a marsh. That is raw material which is useless for agricultural purposes, having, of course, no economic rent. But if you drain the marsh, it is no longer raw material, for human labor has changed the raw material into wrought material for the use of man. And I am going to try to show you presently that you cannot draw any distinction economically between your marsh made into fertile land by human labor, and your iron which was as much raw material as the marsh, until by human labor it was moulded into the machine for the sake of the greater productive power it would not otherwise have possessed. (Hear, hear.) What is it that the State is to have if you

are going to nationalise the land? Is it to have the rent of the undrained marsh? That is nothing. Is it to have some economic rent? Then you must extend your Ricardian definition to include not only the original and indestructible powers of the soil, but also the acquired powers which the soil has gained by the labor of man. If you only claim for the State the rent of your raw material, then your whole scheme of land nationalisation becomes absurd and hopelessly impracticable. (Hear, hear.) But if you are going to claim for the State rents which are based upon the present differences of the value of the land—of land which has been made fertile by generations of laborers—land on which human power has been expended and which in its present condition is the result of the employment of human energy—then I submit to you that you are nationalising the rent of wrought material and not only the rent of raw. And when you have once done that you have started from the Socialist basis and you will find yourself unable to distinguish between the wrought material of the land and the wrought material of the machine. And now instead of taking this improved—this wrought—material in the shape of land, I will take it in the shape of a machine. A man invests money in a machine and he demands that payment shall be made to him for the use of that machine. Payment made for the use of capital is generally termed interest, but I prefer to term it rent. Using different words for the same thing tends to confusion of thought, and I want to try to make our views here to-night clear and not confused. What is rent? Payment made for differences of productive power. What is interest paid for capital but payment made for differences of productive power? It is essentially a form of rent. There is no difference in principle between the extended doctrine of the Ricardian rent which makes it the part of the produce paid to the landlord for the original *plus* the acquired powers of the soil—that is for advantages of productivity—and the interest which is paid to the capitalist also for advantages of productivity, only the advantages are in the form of a machine which produces more, instead of in the form of the more fertile land which produces more than the less fertile. I submit then that such payment—payment of rent for advantages of fertility, payment of rent for advantages of productive

power, that these payments are just and rational payments, equalising to the laborer the results of his labor, because by paying rent for an advantage you stand on the same ground as your brother who does not share that particular advantage, and the rent is merely the payment you make for the advantage you have that he does not share, so that both of you are practically on the same level, receiving for equal amounts of labor equal results of your toil. (Hear, hear.) Now, under the Individualistic system these rents go to the individual, and they keep up an idle class which need never work at all, because other persons work for it. Under Socialism these rents would go to the community, and the only persons they would support would be the servants of the community who were told off to perform different non-productive functions for the benefit of those whom they serve. (Cheers.) And that is our essential difference—that is the point on which Mr. Foote must meet me to-night. (Hear, hear.) I pass to my next point—that all rent for the material of production should be paid to the State. Private property in these being destroyed, common property, or—if you prefer the word—Communism takes its place. Thus we reach Collectivist Socialism, the Socialism I am defending to-night. At this point the question—a perfectly fair one—is asked very often by our opponents: "How far will private property in anything survive the destruction of private property in the materials for wealth production?". Now on that point the Collectivist is completely within his right if he says boldly and plainly that no other private property need be destroyed at all save private property in these materials for wealth production. Emile de Laveleye puts this very strongly, and shows how Collectivism could be worked leaving untouched private property in everything, saving in that which I have called raw and wrought materials. There would be nothing against the Socialist theory in such private property. But it is perhaps as well to speak perfectly frankly and with absolute straightforwardness on this point. And I, for one, confess that realising the enormous change which the acceptance of the principle of common property in the materials for wealth production will inevitably work—a change not merely in society as a whole, but a change which will touch men's minds and morals quite as much as it will touch

their views on economics—I admit freely and frankly that it is perfectly possible that men who are educated in the Collectivist system will after a while grudge the enormous waste of labor which is implied in constantly dividing off to each man his exact share; and that private property will survive just as far as convenience, as desire, as experience keep it alive, and no farther. (Hear, hear.) That is to say, that it is perfectly possible that—after being trained in the Collectivist system—that, after realising some better ideal than the mere scramble which is the condition of society at the present time, you will very largely weaken the desire for what is called private property. That exaggerated love of private property which has grown into a disease, a morbid extreme, in many civilised countries—what does it grow from? It grows out of the struggle for existence. It grows out of the fear that you will not have enough, unless you are always grabbing as much as you possibly can, to keep you in the time when you are unable to work. Once let men feel that there is enough for all; once let men feel that there is no necessity laid upon them to seize by strength from their brother lest they, or those nearest to them, should suffer in the strife; once let the idea spread that co-operation in brotherly fashion is a nobler ideal than that of cut-throat competition, and I believe that you will enormously weaken the sense of private property. (Cheers.) And, after all, would it be so much the worse for society if such a weakening took place? Is our highest ideal to be that of a number of pigs at a trough, struggling with each other, pushing each other aside, for fear the trough should be too small for every pig's dinner, and that unless the strong can push aside the weaker he himself may go hungry? I cannot help thinking that it is not a very impossible ideal of society that, instead of that struggling round the pig-trough, you may rather have human beings sitting around a board where there is enough for all; where every man knows that he will have his share; where he is willing to await his turn, ready to pass what is wanted by his neighbor; and where the appetite of the diner, rather than the weighing-machine, shall measure the ration that is given to him. (Great cheering.)

The CHAIRMAN: I will now call upon Mr. Foote to answer.

Mr. G. W. Foote: One thing to-night gives me exceeding pleasure, and that is, for the first time in my life, to meet a lady in debate. It shows that whether we are driving towards Socialism or not, even our individualistic state of society, rotten as it is said to be, is somehow consistent with a growing recognition of the natural rights of a sex which has through history been down-trodden. (Cheers.) Therefore I think that, on the whole, the system, in that very fact, shows that it is not incompatible with progress. Mrs. Besant is here to-night to advocate another system, that of Socialism, which she undertakes to show to us is sound. And to-night she has given us what she calls the economical basis of Socialism. But I frankly confess, without in the least intending to be ironical, that I have heard of nothing in this economical basis which is not a part of the economical basis of every other system. I have listened and I have heard nothing—I use the words without meaning anything invidious—but commonplaces of political economy, most of which I am prepared to admit, although I do not admit with Mrs. Besant the policy of calling things which, according to present usage, pass under one name, by some other name in order to suit an argument or a purpose. It may be convenient to Mrs. Besant, but it seems to me inconvenient to other people. Now, has Mrs. Besant told us what the system of Socialism she thinks to be sound really is? ("Yes".) Well, everyone is entitled to his opinion. I think not. Mrs. Besant has given us one definition of Socialism, which I admit is perfectly intelligible, and which I am glad to receive; but it appears to me that a system like Socialism which claims to supplant the present system altogether, root and branch —which proposes to deal with millions of people and thousands of millions of capital and land upon an entirely new foundation—ought to give something more in the way of explanation than a bald definition covering not more than two lines of print. Mrs. Besant says that her system of Socialism is not a Utopian scheme. I have not the slightest doubt that she thinks so; but I certainly differ from her. Whenever mankind is fitted for any particular social system, it will inevitably live in the midst of that social system. Outward institutions are merely the expressions of inward thoughts and feelings. It is quite true that the environment in which a man

lives largely moulds his character; but it is also true that man's internal nature acting with and against his environment — in accordance with the well-known laws of biology and civilisation, with which Mrs. Besant is acquainted—produces that progress which is recorded on the pages of universal history. And Individualism has been the very essence of that progress. Competition also has been the essence of that progress. It is not such an alarming thing as Mrs. Besant dreams. She has quoted from Emile de Laveleye—who is not a Socialist, but who, in my opinion, dreads it too much, because I believe it is a great deal farther off than he imagines. She quotes from him to the effect that Socialism will put an end—or at least proposes to put an end—to this system of competition by means of which some are pressed down and others are elevated. Gronlund—whose book on Socialism is justly one of the favorites of Socialists, and in some sense may be called their New Testament, as Karl Marx's book may be called their Old Testament — Gronlund, seeing that competition is essentially indestructible, seeks to restore it under the new name of emulation. We are not to compete with each other, but we are to emulate each other. (Cheers.) In what is the radical distinction? It is simply the difference between the concrete object of desire and the abstract object of desire. If I compete with my fellows it is for success in business, say; but if I emulate, for what is it? For success in procuring public opinion on my side; an opinion which we all value more or less, which some persons value above all things, and which the foremost in the race of emulation must get, and all the others to some extent greater or less, exactly as in the competition for material objects, must lose. (Hear, hear.) Mrs. Besant was candid enough—and I think it is greatly to her honor—to admit towards the conclusion of her speech that it was highly probable that a Collective state of society would somehow or other result in Communism. I was glad to hear that, because it saves me a great deal of trouble. I should otherwise have had to show from the works of Mr. Bax, Mr. Morris, and others distinguished in present-day Socialism, what the system would ultimately lead to. Now, if you admit that it will ultimately lead to something, you are bound to consider whether what it leads to will be agreeable, and for the advance-

ment of man's moral or intellectual character. Mrs. Besant thinks Communism would ultimately be a good thing. But I fancy I have seen somewhere in her writings—and, if not, she will correct me—that a system of Communism would mean that the unfit would live at the expense of the fit. I admit, with Mrs. Besant, that there are many hard things in Nature. But I did not make Nature. No Individualist made it, any more than any Socialist. If I were at the top of a fifty-foot ladder, it would be extremely absurd for me to declaim against the laws of gravitation and then descend in a somersault. (Laughter.) I should admit that the law of gravitation was a very hard fact, and come down rung by rung. And so I see in human nature that the Darwinian law of the struggle for life in some form or another cannot be abolished. It is the wisdom of men and women to recognise the fact as unalterable, as a thing which cannot be changed "by all the blended powers of earth and heaven".

Mrs. Besant says Socialism is intended as a redress for poverty. What does she mean? Does she mean that poverty can, by the adoption of a certain system, be immediately changed or removed? Certainly, if you passed a law to-morrow that everybody should be entitled to go to a national workshop and there get what is called productive work, you would, for a time, be able to feed everybody; but unless you took into account, unless you carefully considered, unless you carefully provided for, something which Mrs. Besant has not mentioned to-night, but something she has been very eloquent about on other occasions, viz., the law of population, which I think she will admit with me is inevitable and is a natural fact which cannot be blinked, then in the course of time you would not be able to find employment, and this system would bring on in an exaggerated form the very same poverty which you wish to remove. ("Oh!", and cries of dissent.) Mrs. Besant speaks of people being like pigs round a big trough, some of whom cannot even get their feet in. (Laughter.) Well, that is the attitude in which pigs always eat. Now, supposing there be only enough food for ninety-nine pigs out of a hundred—I merely suppose it hypothetically—which is preferable in the long run, that the weak, unfit pig should perish and leave no offspring, or that a strong one should suffer that fate? I put the

case as one of hard fact, whether we like it or not. If people to-day were content to come under some sensible adjustment with regard to the population question, neither Socialism nor Communism would in this economical respect —although it might in other respects which I shall speak of next Wednesday night—be fraught with much evil. But if a man who is unfit—Mrs. Besant used the word—and a man who is fit were put on exactly the same level, and if society insured them the same amount of subsistence, what would be the result? The problem affects posterity as well as yourselves. We are stewards for posterity. (Cheers.) We know that the law of heredity is a scientific truth which cannot be gainsaid. We know that the unfit will transmit their characteristic qualities of unfitness to their offspring. It is better for the race that the unfit should not so transmit these qualities, and if Mrs. Besant removes the law of natural selection, which provides for the gradual improvement of the race, she is bound to provide in her new scheme something which is adequate to replace it. Why, as a matter of fact, under the present law—which in some respects is too Socialistic—boys of fourteen and girls of twelve years of age can go and get married. Mrs. Besant thinks perhaps they do not. Mr. Arnold White, who knows as much about London poverty as any man, gives an analysis of a hundred and seventy-six cases which were investigated in Clerkenwell. In eleven cases the wife was fourteen years old. In two cases the husband, and in twelve the wife, were fifteen. In twelve cases the husband, in forty-six the wife, and in three cases both, were sixteen. Twenty-seven husbands and forty-eight wives were seventeen when they began housekeeping, and in thirteen cases both of the happy pair boasted of that age. Let me give another statistical fact. In 1884—not so very long ago—14,818 men married under age in England, and 74,004 married at the age of twenty-one. And the practice of marriage by men under age has increased since 1841 from 4·38 per 100 to 7·25 in 1884. Now, is it any wonder if this causes a frightful deterioration? If boys and girls rush into marriage at a time when they are utterly unfit economically to support their offspring; and if those who marry at a later age are—as Mrs. Besant knows full well—grossly imprudent in the number of their offspring, is it any wonder

that the trough should be over-swarmed? And is it any wonder that some should be turned away through the operation of a natural law which can no more be defeated than the Alps can be removed. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Besant says that she would not only nationalise land, but also wrought material. And then she subsequently told us there was no distinction in a country like ours between land and wrought material. Is it a fact that the nationalisation of the land is Socialistic? Does it in any way involve that wide regulation of human affairs which the confiscation and seizure of all capital would entail? It does not. Suppose the land were nationalised to-morrow, rent would necessarily be paid still. Rent cannot be abolished. It is the difference between rich and poor land and good and bad convenience of site. No man could claim a plot of rich land for the same value as another man paid for a similar plot of poor land. That rent would have to be paid; but instead of going into the pocket of a few private individuals who did not assist or co-operate in making the land, this rent would go into the national exchequer, and every man would as a citizen become a part owner of the land which is the gift of Nature to all. (Cheers.) It is a curious fact that before the present phase of English Socialism was heard of, and long before its chief advocates appeared in the field, the nationalisation of the land was advocated by Mr. Herbert Spencer, the protagonist of Individualism. In his "Social Statics", published so far back, I think, as 1850, he argued that the equal right of all to access to nature, and to the exercise of their faculties in the gratification of their wants, logically led to the State-ownership of the soil. "Equity," he wrote, "does not permit property in land. For if *one* portion of the earth's surface may justly become the possession of an individual, and may be held by him for his sole use and benefit as a thing to which he has an exclusive right, then *other* portions of the earth's surface may be so held, and eventually the *whole* of the earth's surface may be so held; and our planet may thus lapse altogether into private hands". He further argued that the doctrine of collective ownership of land may be carried out "without involving a community of goods", or causing "any serious revolution in existing arrangements", and he concludes the chapter by saying, "that

the theory of the co-heirship of all men to the soil is consistent with the highest civilisation; and that, however difficult it may be to embody the theory in fact, equity sternly commands it to be done". Surely, then, if the greatest living opponent of State Socialism writes in this way, it is idle to assert that the nationalisation of the land is a Socialistic measure. (Cheers.) Sir Henry Maine tells us that the idea of land being a chattel in the market is very recent. It is probably not more than two centuries old. People will probably recur to the collective ownership of the soil, which will stand in a different position to capital. Mrs. Besant says that capital is a social product. The watch in my pocket is a social product. Mrs. Besant's dress is a social product. Everything conceivable is a social product under a system like ours where the division of labor obtains. Well, if no social product could come under private ownership, Mrs. Besant is landed in sheer Communism—not in the far future—but to-night, according to the principles which she lays down. What is a social product? I want to eliminate the personal element from the illustration as far as possible. One man with capital might engage fifty men without capital to work upon certain raw material, which his capital has provided. What do they work for? They produce a manufactured article, but the essence of the contract on the workman's part was not any specific amount of produce, but a certain proportion of his time given for a certain monetary consideration. At the end of it the workman gets his stipulated sum, and the capitalist holds the product. But suppose the product turns out to be a drug in the market—suppose the product has to be sold without a profit. The workman will not lose. It was not part of his contract that he should bear any risk or responsibility. In other words, his fate was not bound up with the product. He contracted to do certain work at a certain price, and was paid for it. The product rightly remained with the person who undertook the responsibility and risk. Now, if the workman is prepared to undertake the responsibility and risk, he also can become, in the fullest sense of the word, a capitalist as well as his employer. (Cheers and "No".) I believe in co-operation as much as Mrs. Besant. Civilisation *is* co-operation. We could not have been in this hall to-night unless we had co-

operated to produce common results. Division of labor means co-operation. But Mrs. Besant's co-operation is co-operation by law. My co-operation is voluntary co-operation. I distrust law. Mrs. Besant seems to place implicit reliance on it. She thinks probably in the future, if the law is made by the many, it will be absolutely just and wise. I do not think so. The many can be mistaken as well as the few. The many can go wild for a time as well as the few. I say that no man ought to be handed over bound hand and foot to that majority which calls itself society, but which can never be more than a majority, large or small. The majority has no right to do everything and anything. It has no just power to rule the minority arbitrarily, leaving them with no power to settle their fate for themselves. (Cheers.) Mr. John Stuart Mill thought—and everybody who agrees with Mrs. Besant must honor him—that the individualistic system would survive and gradually develop into voluntary co-operation.

Now, supposing Mrs. Besant's system were established, one of two things must happen. Either she would have to seize the whole of the present capital, or she would have to pay for it. (A voice: "Seize it!".) I should like to know how this is to be done. Suppose the property of the country were obtained by either of these means, what would the Collectivists gain in either case? They would, possibly, have the capital. But capital is a very tender plant, reared with difficulty, and easily killed. It is not, like the land, indestructible. It has to be continually renewed. What is at present the value of capital? Mrs. Besant speaks as if all the profits of manufacturing and commercial enterprises were really a return on capital. That is a fallacy. Capital is worth what it will fetch in the open market in good security—no more and no less. The railway companies in England are getting on the average four per cent. First-rate security will give you, I think, about three per cent., and that security is considered practically firm. Now if, in addition to the capital, a capitalist has to provide himself the trained capacity, the result consists of three things. First, the interest on the capital which would be paid by any other man who used it; secondly, insurance against risk; and, thirdly, the cost of direction which, if he did not direct the concern himself, he would necessarily incur in the

payment of other persons who did. Under your Socialist system, this cost of direction would still remain. If you elect directors, how would you pay them? If you paid them at the same rate as a day laborer, the probability is they would do just about as much labor, and just as valuable labor, as that of day laborers. (Cries of dissent.) I say that, of course, without any disrespect to day laborers. But a man who cannot draw a distinction between laying bricks and writing "Hamlet", for instance, has something yet to learn. (Hear, hear, and applause.) Now, this direction would have to be paid for; men with directing capacity would make you pay their price. You could not help it. Generalship is indispensable. Cæsar's legions locked up in Gaul were worth nothing until Cæsar came. And so it is with any great commercial enterprise. Unless you have the directing capacity, the ordinary run of workers could not possibly work with a profit. You may see two mills standing side by side in a town like Oldham. The one will be bankrupt in two years; and the other, in the same period, will be paying ten per cent. What is the cause of the difference? One is in the hands of a skilled management, carefully watching the markets and generally exhibiting sagacity in the conduct of the business; the other is deficient in this controlling wisdom. If you were a capitalist, and did not head the enterprise yourself, choosing the managers and watching personally over everything, all you would be entitled to, and all you would obtain, would be three or four per cent. at the outside which is the market interest on capital. Then, is this big revolution worth working for three per cent.? (Cries of "No, no", and "Yes".) I think not.

As a redress for poverty, Socialism would, in my opinion, wholly fail. All the Socialists, I believe, with one or two trifling exceptions, consider that the Malthusian theory of population is a delusion and a snare, a middle-class or upper-class invention. (Hear.) Well, Charles Darwin—the greatest naturalist of our age—did not think so. One of his greatest successors, Professor Huxley, does not think so. And, what is more to the purpose to-night, Mrs. Besant does not think so. You could not, as human nature is, provide restraints. If so, I should like it proved. I deny the possibility of it. But Individualism is gradually lessening the pressure of poverty. ("Oh! oh!") Nothing is so easy as to

confine attention to what has occurred within a few months, rather than to extend observation over a number of years. Speak to an old man in any great manufacturing centre and ask him the difference between fifty years ago and now. Nay, do not go to any old man; go to absolute statistics which cannot be refuted. I shall show you if Mrs. Besant questions it, because I have the figures under my hand, that during the last fifty years the wages of skilled artisans have nearly doubled; I shall show you that the wages of unskilled laborers have increased nearly forty or fifty per cent. I shall show you that the prices of nearly all commodities have diminished instead of rising. (Cheers, and "No, no".) I shall show you that the only two things that have risen are the prices of meat and rent. Now, if the profits of the capitalist have increased, they have increased in the mass, and not in proportion. (A laugh.) It is very easy to laugh at statistics and Blue Books. But, if you look at the last Blue Book, with respect to the Royal Commission on Trade—(laughter)—I suppose, then, that we are to take not only Socialist arguments but Socialist facts—you will find that during the last fifty years, in the various changes that have taken place, the condition of the worker has improved, and pauperism has diminished. When you hear of men being out of work, it is only a small proportion of them who are out of work. And as I understand the state of things, I contend that it is the Individualistic system which is working such improvements. The fate of the workers lies in their own hands. (Cheers.) Why wait until you convince everybody that the millennium is at hand? Why not begin with co-operative experiments to-morrow, and gradually bring society to the truth by experiments which will convince, and cease indulging in extravagant schemes and excited declamation which will do no good whatever? (Loud applause.)

ANNIE BESANT: Friends, I must ask Socialists who are present to be good enough for my sake even more than for their own not to interrupt in the way some are inclined to do. Your flag to-night is in my hands, and I cannot keep it unsoiled if you interrupt my opponent. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote has said, and said truly, that Individualism has not been incompatible with progress. That is true; it is a historical fact; and it would be idle to deny

that in evolving from the more savage and brutal forms of society the Individualism through which we have passed is a necessary stage. But I hope to be able to show you later on that real Individualism that makes for progress can only be secured by the Socialist. That I am prepared to defend this day fortnight. (Cheers.) Then Mr. Foote said that I was dealing only with the commonplaces of political economy, and that he had but little trouble in admitting most of them. But surely he was acute enough to see that my claim for the whole of the raw and wrought material included the claim for the whole of the capital of this country? So that while at the beginning of his speech he said that my claim was a mere commonplace, at the end of his speech he urged you not to take the step I am striving to induce you to take. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote complains that my definition was not full enough. It included the whole of the land and all the capital; and that ought to be full enough. (Laughter, and hear, hear.) In dealing with the economic basis, and seeing that I carefully confined myself to the economic aspect of Socialism, I fail to see what further definition Mr. Foote can require. He made another statement, however, with which I agree, when he said that when mankind was fitted for a system then it is that they will live in that system. That is exactly why I believe that Socialism is now approaching. I learn from Emile de Laveleye that the majority of French workmen in every town are Socialists; that the professors of nearly every university in Germany and Italy are upholding Socialism. Even in this country the conception as to property hitherto held will have to be completely given up, according to Professor Graham: and I believe Socialism to be absolutely inevitable, although I try to hasten its coming by pointing out the advantages that will accrue from the acceptance of it. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote says, is competition so evil a thing? And I do not propose to waste time over the difference between competition and emulation. Competition is an evil thing under present conditions. (Hear, hear.) Competition under Socialism might possibly not have many evil results. And I will tell you why. So long as you have your raw and wrought materials in the hands of a class, then that class can practically fix the remuneration of labor. (Hear, hear.) Upon that, too, I will not be content with my own opinion, but

will take the authority of Emile de Laveleye, who points out that "in every contract he who advances the wherewithal to labor, *i.e.*, land and capital, will fix the terms he chooses; and will, of course, so fix them that the profits will be at a maximum and the wages at a minimum". (Cheers.) Take, too, the declaration of Cairnes—that there is no possibility of the laboring class, as a whole, rising out of the position of suffering and distress in which it is to-day, so long as it continues to be composed of wage-laborers. When you have your competition hampered by absolute proprietorship in the whole of the materials of wealth production on the one side, and on the other a proletariat without property—a proletariat who must get at the land and capital or starve—then your pretence of free competition is a fraud and a hypocrisy, for one of the competitors has a clog around his neck which makes it impossible for him to swim against the other. (Cheers.) And that is not all. So long as you have these proprietors and the proletariat, the proletarians will have to work for the proprietors as well as for themselves. And the difficulty is that the proprietors can wait, and the proletarians cannot. The proprietor has got his land. He can cultivate it himself if the worst comes to the worst. He has got his capital. He can utilise that if the worst comes to the worst. And land and capital give him credit, and that will keep him well-clothed and well-fed for years and years. But the proletarian cannot wait, for he wants food and can only get it by taking the wages offered to him. He starves if he waits. And to say that these parties are equal, and are able to make a fair contract, is to fly in the face of every fact of our present society. (Cheers.) That brings me—following Mr. Foote step by step—to the statement that he remembers a passage of mine in which I stated that Communism would mean the living of the idle on the industrious. I presume he was quoting from my pamphlet on "Modern Socialism," in which I stated what I stated to you to-night—that it was likely that society would evolve into Communism. But I added—and this Mr. Foote omitted to mention—"that stage of development man has not yet attained; and for man as he is, Communism would mean the living of the idle on the toil of the laborious". (Hear, hear.) I hold that immediate complete Communism is

utterly impracticable, but that through Collectivism you may come to Communism. Mr. Foote says the struggle for existence is necessary; the fact of the struggle for existence must be recognised. That both Darwin and Huxley realise it is true; but it was because Darwin realised it that he was against those checks to undue increase of the population which I propose. He says, if you limit the number of competitors and soften the struggle for existence, progress will be arrested. He would leave the old brute struggle to go on among men, trusting that thus, despite the suffering, improvement will result. Is Mr. Foote prepared to take up that position, and to deny everything we have striven to do to lessen and regulate this strife by substituting rational for natural selection? (Hear, hear.) But Mr. Foote also says—and here I agree with him—that if the law of population is not recognised poverty will once more result. Mr. Foote is right. Many of my fellow Socialists—not thinking as carefully and thoughtfnlly as they should—ignore or deny that indisputable truth. But I allege that when you have Socialism, the fact that unless you regulate the relative numbers of producers and consumers you will overburden your producers, will be a fact so patent and obvious that the blindest will be compelled to see it. (Hear, hear.) Well, but says Mr. Foote, suppose there is enough for every ninety-nine out of a hundred, is it not better for the unfit to perish and not transmit their unfitness to their offspring? But do you kill out the unfit in the present condition of society? Is it the unfit who go to the wall in the social struggle for existence? Why, it is your idlers who live; your idle aristocrats who cannot earn their own living; the lazy women who cannot sweep a room or clean a saucepan. (Hear, hear.) These are the men and women who live under your present social system, and it is the fit who are crushed out—those who could work and who long to work; those who are industrious and pray for work; those you kill off by your competition, and your idle vagabonds it is who live. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote says the poor marry very young. I know that. And why? Because they are crowded together in small rooms where no separation of the sexes is possible, and where in consequence the sexual instinct is awakened at an age when it should still be sleeping; because in their

miserable life their poverty makes them old when they ought to be young, and the longings of manhood and of womanhood are roused in them when they should be still almost in their childhood. (Hear, hear.) There is no blame to them. Forced in this impure hothouse of poverty; with no pleasure save that of the sexual relation; with no relief for their feelings save in sexual intercourse; shut out from art, from beauty, from education, and from everything that might make life fair to them as to others, they cling to this one joy of their manhood and their womanhood as all of happiness that is open to them. (Cheers.) But Mr. Foote says—Why not go in for land nationalisation? it is more simple. Mr. Foote did not think it worth while to deal with the difficulty of nationalising the rent of land. He ignored the fact that in nationalising the rent of land—which is capital as well as land, a point he had apparently forgotten—he has the whole of the Socialist difficulty to face. (Hear, hear.) I will take Sidgwick on this head. He points out that capital and land cannot be separated; that land is capital, and is largely the result of accumulated labor. Take, for instance, a railway. Is the railway running through a county land or capital? Does not the land over which it runs represent part of the capital of the railway company? And Mr. Foote, in an eloquent passage, said that those—the idle class—who took the rent of the land did not make the land; that they did not even co-operate in making the land. I can find no better words than his to describe the class that lives on the capital made by the labor of others; "They did not make the capital; they did not even co-operate in making it". They have taken it unfairly, by force and fraud, that is, by theft, and we want to take it back from them. (Cheers.) But Mr. Foote says that all who work to make the capital work with their eyes open, and that they have no right to quarrel with the result. Is that true? Surely not. Even with their eyes open men prefer a poor wage to absolute starvation. But it is not a case of freedom of contract. They are forced into the contract by the absolute pressure of their bodily necessities. (Hear, hear.) It is not a case of willingly accepting a contract which you have power to refuse. You are driven into it with the whip of starvation, and you must take it or starve. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE: To-night Mrs. Besant naturally circumscribes the limits of the debate: I follow her and must do so. Next Wednesday night I trust to alter to some extent the character of the debate. I shall then go a little further into the Socialistic scheme, and see how it would work in practice—or rather how it would be likely to work in practice. (Hear, hear.) For the present I confine myself to the duty of following Mrs. Besant. She admits that Individualism is not incompatible with progress. I cannot say that the admission was wrung from her, because it is one that no student of history could possibly refuse to make. But the fact that the progress the world has made during the last three centuries—the great era of progress—has been achieved under the system of Individualism ought to make innovators pause before they propose to substitute something for it, unless they can clearly show—not in mere words but almost in the visualisation of imagination—that what they propose to put in its place will be far better than what they wish to remove. (Cheers.) Under the present system we do somehow hold on; we do not go from bad to worse; we keep making some little improvement year by year and generation by generation. (Hear, hear.) If you cannot cultivate, under purely arbitrary conditions of your own making, a special variety of a plant in a short time, how are you going to cultivate, under what cannot be purely arbitrary conditions, a special new variety of human nature in a short time? Mrs. Besant says present human nature is not fit for her whole scheme. Her whole argument is founded on prophecy. Some day or other human nature will be fit for it! I think that some day the forces which have elevated man in the past will bring him to higher things. I know Individualism is not incompatible with social elevation. It is an essential requisite for a man to assist anyone else that he shall be strong and self-helpful himself. You cannot have a really strong society when everybody is a leaning-post to everybody else. (Hear, hear.) In some parts of the world where they live under a system which is very much nearer Socialism than ours, they look upon the suffering and peril of their fellow creatures almost with amusement. But in a country like ours where Individualism so predominates, our instincts are such that brave fellows will leap into the water, and brave firemen

will run up the fire-ladder, and men will go out in the lifeboats to sinking crews, and women will send their dearest to save the lives of others. (Hear, hear.) These things are done under Individualism—it is not incompatible with the highest development of human nature.

Mrs. Besant says I cannot separate land from wrought material. Now land is not wrought material in the ordinary sense of the word—that it can be carried about. Whatever improvements you make in the soil you cultivate, by digging, manuring, and planting, you cannot carry them away with you. They remain on and in the land. And that is one of the reasons why the law interferes, and gives the tenant compensation for whatever improvements he has made when his lease is terminated by the landlord's action. Now, if the land were nationalised, is it true that we could not possibly separate the value of the land, for the purposes of statemanship, from the value of other things? A railway runs over a certain amount of land. Supposing we wanted that bit of railway. The company is not in the true sense of the word "a bloated capitalist". (Laughter.) Thousands on thousands of persons have small sums of money invested in it as shareholders. Heaps of money are invested in railway security by life assurance societies. If you were to take it you would make these bankrupt, and ruin the expectations of almost everybody who assured their lives for the benefit of their wives and children. These things are talked about without the consequences of what is proposed being seen. A laugh is cheap and a sneer is easy. But when you find yourselves face to face with the consequences you never foresee, you might feel a little less jubilant. (Cheers.) If the land were bought under Act of Parliament, and a price given for it, any State that took possession of it would be bound to compensate for it, otherwise it would injure thousands who have invested their money in it. Socialists may claim their right to take it without compensation. I for one deny their right to do it. (Hear, hear.) Mrs. Besant may differ from me. Well, in that case we must both appeal to such feelings of fair play as men may possess. (Cheers.) It would not be very difficult to take over a railway. My opinion is that it is confusion to suppose that because the State can do one thing well it can do everything well. You might as well say that because a

man can build a house well he could paint a picture well. (Hear, hear.) There is no natural reason for believing it. A municipality can supply us very well with water and also with gas. But what municipality could supply us with anything except what had been simplified for it through long experience and experiment under individualistic enterprise? If any one tried to get municipalities to take up the electric light he would be laughed at. Individualism has to work it up, and risk the money, and by and by when it has succeeded society will step in and reap the advantage of it. (Hear, hear.) There are certain things that must be monopolies. Mrs. Besant may say that capital is a monopoly too. But what I want to point out is, that although for the moment the amount of capital existing is determined, the amount of capital that may exist is indeterminate. The amount of land that exists in England is determined; but land is also determinate—it cannot be more to-morrow than it is to-day. But capital can. (Hear, hear). While the land is now practically the same as in the time of William the Conqueror, capital is probably a thousand times as much as it was then. I hold that what is a natural monopoly the State should undertake, and the State has never relinquished that right. There is no such thing in English law as private ownership of land; there is no such thing in English law as an absolute private right to work a public monopoly. A railway has only a right given to it by Act of Parliament. A water company has only the right given to it by Act of Parliament. It is simply a question of prudence whether it is better to give a public company a right of working a monopoly under Parliament, within legal conditions, or for a municipality or State to take the direct management of it itself. But the principle of it is the same whether the company work under statutory limitations, or whether the State provide the directors. (Hear, hear.) The State is the ultimate sovereign of all monopolies. I hold, as an Individualist, that they should be regulated by the State, and that they should be actively conducted by the State.

Now let us try to separate our land from the wrought material. What would be the actual problem? Here is some land the State proposes to take. All the State has to do is to lay down what it considers just principles of compensation,

which, of course, it is impossible to argue out in detail at present. Besides, Mrs. Besant is a land nationaliser as well as I. The State would have to lay down broad principles of fair compensation. And commissioners would have to apply them in particular cases, just as commissioners did when they fixed the judicial rents in Ireland, or as the Land Court does when it adjudicates on the question of a tenant's unexhausted improvements. There would be no difficulty in it at all. I cannot understand how Mrs. Besant can so dwell upon a difficulty which is, after all, mainly of her own creation. (Hear, hear.)

Why is the land different from capital? Mrs. Besant says capital is a social product. Admitted. She says that land and capital are both used for production. Yes. But there is this difference. Land is naturally a monopoly. Land was not created at all. Nobody co-operated in the making of it. But people did co-operate in the making of capital. The difference between capital and land is, that in the one you have a vast mass of value created by the voluntary cooperation of employers and workmen under all varieties of association, while in the other you have an uncreated and indestructible gift of Nature to all her children. You have the right to take for all the prime gift of Nature. But I cannot see your right to take for all what has been created by separate bodies of men after giving such consideration for the raw material as the law of the land declared at the time to be just. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Besant says that under the present system capital fixes the terms upon which labor shall work! Did she never hear of trades' unions? Mr. Thornton's fine book, "On Labor", showed how it was that trades' unions were able, in spite of the mistaken notions on the subject of most political economists, to affect the price of labor. Mrs. Besant says the capitalist fixes wages! Is there no such thing as supply and demand? Mrs. Besant must know that it is one of the commonplaces of political economy, as you will find in Mill, that under a highly-developed economical system like ours, with immense accumulation of capital and increasing skill in labor, wages tend to rise and profits to fall to a minimum. That is a commonplace of political economy. And the proof of lies in the fact that the profits *are* falling. Statistics

show it. And wages have risen a hundred per cent.—in some cases more and in others less—during the last fifty years. Further, the return on capital, which, as I said, is simply interest—the market rate for the use of capital—gradually gets less and less. You cannot now get for invested capital, unless you conduct the enterprise yourself, what was obtained ten years ago. Interest now is so low that bankers have been declining to give interest at all, and depositors have often been glad for the bankers to take charge of the money for them without any percentage. (Laughter.)

Mrs. Besant says that the proletariat cannot rise—that it is the unfit, the idle, who live. Not all of them, I hope. It is rather too sweeping a condemnation. I am in favor, as a Radical, as much as Mrs. Besant can be, of abolishing all privileges created by law. (Cheers.) And what is more I have always been in favor, in all public reforms, of adopting the wise German proverb of sweeping the stairs from the top downwards. But it is not true that it is simply the unfit who survive and the fit who are killed out. What is the fact? According to the income tax table, schedule D, incomes from £200 to £1,000 have increased in number, from 1874 to 1885, from 162,435 to 215,790; incomes from £1,000 to £2,000 from 11,944 to 13,403; and so on right up the scale. But you find a decrease when you come to incomes from £5,000 to £10,000. These have diminished from 2,035 to 1,928. (Hear, hear.) And the incomes above £10,000 a year have diminished from 1,283 to 1,220. So that there is a great increase of incomes from £100 upwards to £5,000, and a decrease at the wealthier end of the scale. The wages of the workman have also increased. ("No, no.") I say yes. If Mrs. Besant denies it I will prove it, but not otherwise. I say then that under the circumstances it is not the fit who are killed out and the unfit who survive. The fact is the mass of the people are better off. The workers are in an improved condition. The income tax returns show an increase of small incomes and a decrease of big ones. That is inconsistent with Mrs. Besant's position. It is corroborative of mine. (Cheers.)

ANNIE BESANT: Mr. Foote alleged—I am going back to the speech made before the last, when he was dealing with the conditions under which men accepted labor for which

they took wage—that if the product was a failure the loss fell on the capitalist, and not on the worker. If Mr. Foote will think that question out he will find that if a product is a failure—that is, if the capitalist cannot sell that which has been produced and a glut is caused—that while the capitalist may lose his profit the workman loses his livelihood, which is a much more important thing. And it is looking excessively superficially at the subject to say, that because a man receives a certain amount of wage he runs no risk from the failure of the market. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote went on to urge that capital is easily killed, and that it is a very tender plant. That is a favorite phrase of the capitalist. But capital is not a tender plant. Look at the way France was treated at the Franco-German War, and see how soon she replaced the wealth of which she was then robbed. The making of capital lies in the productive power of the nation, and you cannot frighten away capital in the fashion some persons imagine. You have it left behind you after your big capitalists are frightened, and the sooner they are frightened off the spoil the more chance there is for the worker who really creates the capital. Then we are told that the capitalist's profits must cover insurance against risk, interest on capital, and the cost of production; and Mr. Foote might have added the rent. It is true that they cover these things, but when Mr. Foote goes on to urge the enormous value of generalship and of business ability, and to declare that the man, who cannot distinguish between the value of the labor of laying bricks and that of writing Hamlet, is apparently not worthy of having an opinion on a scientific problem, one cannot help asking two questions. Are not the wages of superintendence enormously higher than they ought to be, judged by comparison with the value added to the product by the business manager? And is it not possible that, valuable as Hamlet is, the laying of bricks is even more necessary to the community; and if society wants to be served both by the bricklayer and the poet, it must be content to take from each that which his natural capabilities enable him to give; and not to give enormous extra advantages to the man who, being an artist, has joy in his work as part of his payment, but whose work is not more necessary to the community than is that of the humbler members who do the actual manual

labor on which our lives depend. (Cheers.) Mr. Foote argues that the wages of skilled workmen have doubled, and those of unskilled workmen have risen; and we all know these figures come from Mr. Giffen. When he says so scornfully, "Is it worth while to make a revolution for 3 per cent?", I turn to Mr. Giffen, and I see he puts rent and interest, without a penny of wages of superintendence, at £407,000,000; and I am inclined to say that as the total produce per year is only £1,250,000,000, then to rescue from the idle class even one-third of that total is worth trying hard for by law, and might even, if it could be effected thereby, excuse a revolution. (Cheers.) Then we are told that under the present system we at least go on—we do not go from bad to worse. Why, that phrase is used by every tyranny, as well as by every Tory as an excuse for opposing the wicked Radicals whenever they propose a change. They use it by the necessity of their position; but it is, indeed, strange, for a Radical to use against Socialism the very argument he would scoff at if it came from a Tory against himself. (Hear, hear.) Then we are told that Mrs. Besant admits that human nature is not fit for *it*—what is "it"? Mrs. Besant admitted that human nature was not yet fitted for Communism, but not that it is not fit for collectivist Socialism. Mrs. Besant thinks it is fit for collectivist Socialism. (Hear, hear.) Then I am told that in the savage state—which for some mystic reason is like Socialism—men look on unmoved at drowning men, whereas under Individualism they plunge in to the rescue. I think I have read not so very long ago of men walking away from a pond whilst children were drowning. But that is not argument—it is only an attempt to raise prejudice against the system at which it is aimed. (Hear, hear.) Under your Individualism also the wealthy people look on unmoved in the great cities at the poor, as they slowly die of that which is a worse death than drowning. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote urges that if you take the railways you will rob people of the insurance they are hoping to leave to their widows. But this difficulty is not special to Socialism. The insurance offices have a large number of mortgages on freehold land. When you nationalise the land, are you going to steal from these offices? or is it not true that just the same difficulties will occur in the

nationalisation of land as in the nationalisation of capital? and that while these difficulties are a good reason for proceeding with caution, they are not the slightest reason for not moving at all? (Cheers.) In any such change you will have to be careful as to the method; but the difficulties placed against the nationalisation of capital are of equal force in dealing with the nationalisation of the land. Then Mr. Foote says that municipalities can only take up things when experience has shown them to have been successful. I was told only the other day by the secretary of a company for the raising of water by hydraulic power that their machines were only taken by municipalities which had the water supply in their own hands, and that these were ready to take the cost in this instance which private companies refused to incur. (Hear, hear.) Next, Mr. Foote argues that the land differs from capital in that it is a fixed quantity, while capital is not. The soil of England, he says, has not increased since the time of William the Conqueror. Does Mr. Foote mean to say that the soil is not more productive now than it was in the time of William the Conqueror? If his argnment as to the land is good for anything, that is the meaning of it. You measure your soil by its power of production; and if you increase the productive power and get more food from it than before, then the increased productivity is the measure of the increased land; and it is only throwing out words to those who look at words rather than things to say that, because the outline of the country is very much the same, therefore the land has not increased. (Cheers.) The land has increased in everything that makes it valuable. Thousands of aeres have been brought under cultivation, and those cultivated have been made more productive. Land is increasing in productive power. Capital, says Mr. Foote, cannot be limited. I was under the delusion that capital could only be obtained by applying labor to raw material, and Mr. Foote expects me to believe that the material is limited, and that that which is made out of it is unlimited. I find myself unable to accept that view. (Hear, hear.) Then, against the argument I put at the end that the wages of the laborers as a class could not rise very high—Mr. Foote asks me if I have not heard of trades unions and whether I do not think they can affect the rate of wages? To a very small extent. Mr. Foote

quotes Mr. Mill, but he knows that Mr. Mill's political economy has been discredited in point after point, and is in much given up to-day by every economist of repute. You cannot now quote Mill as a final authority. You must take the arguments of Cairnes and Sidgwick and Jevons, who have taken up the science where Mill dropped it, and you must meet and refute their arguments. And what is it that Cairnes has said on this subject? Cairnes distinctly tells us that "nothing is more certain than that taking the whole field of labor, real wages in Great Britain will never rise to the standard of remuneration now prevailing in new countries"; that the "possibilities of the laborer's lot are confined" within "very narrow limits", "so long as he depends for his well-being on the produce of his day's work. Against these barriers trades unions must dash themselves in vain." (Hear, hear.) And then he says, if you deal with the relative position of the industrial classes you find that inequality is continually increasing; that "unequal as is the distribution of wealth already in this country, the tendency of industrial progress is towards an inequality greater still. The rich will be growing richer, and the poor, at least relatively, poorer" ("Some Leading Principles of Political Economy", pp. 337, 338, 340, ed. 1874). And he winds up his argument on this point by declaring that "if workmen do not rise from dependence on capital by the path of co-operation, then they must remain in dependence upon capital; the margin for the possible improvement of their lot is confined within narrow barriers which cannot be passed, and the problem of their elevation is hopeless" (*Ibid.*, p. 348). (Hear, hear.) These are Professor Cairnes' words. I ask Mr. Foote to meet Professor Cairnes on his own ground, and give us the authority which will show us that Cairnes' judgment is wrong. It is true that profits tend to fall because of the competition between employers. But when Mr. Foote says that wages still tend to rise, then he speaks against the deductions of political economy, and against the knowledge of facts of every practical man who hears him. Wages do not now tend to rise in the fashion which has been put. By combination something can be done. But as Sidgwick points out—a man worthy of careful thought—Sidgwick points out that if you are going to deal with the condition of

wage-laborers, then you must recognise that the tendency of our system is to press their wages down to a minimum, and to a minimum which is below what is necessary for healthy life. (Cheers.) Mr. Sidgwick points out that wherever laborers belong to the capitalist—as the horse and the ox belong to him—then they have a fair subsistence to keep them in working order; but he says that the pressure of competition has forced the wage-laborer below a fair subsistence; and that is the point to which the wage continually tends. (Hear, hear.) And I submit that on that point you find that the views deduced from the principles of political economy as to the results of the present competitive system have been really borne out by all the facts of the society you have around you, and that what Professor Sidgwick says is true. And whilst you have more absolute money going into the laborer's hands in some trades to-day than before, it is also true that the share of the produce obtained by the worker is not growing greater but smaller. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote says that he is in favor of abolishing privileges established by law. I ask him to come over then to the Socialist ranks, and join us in abolishing the privileges conferred on the landlords and the capitalists by giving them these unfair monopolies. And when he says that the salvation of the workman lies in his own hands, I endorse that with all my power. I say your salvation does lie in your own hands. Till you are educated, till you understand your own condition, till you are loyal to each other, till you unite to win your own liberty, you will remain oppressed; and only as you band yourselves together, and realise the changes you should seek to bring about, will you raise yourselves from your position of dependence. The workers must save themselves. We can only talk; but you must act. (Cheers.)

Mr. Foote: I notice in this debate that up to the present Mrs. Besant is fonder of relying upon other person's opinions than on statistics and facts that cannot be questioned. I submit that the question before us to-night is not what Mill or Cairnes thought. We are here to think for ourselves, and it is the business of the debaters to lay before you grounds upon which you can form your own judgment. And the best of all grounds, and in the long run the only ground, is fact. Now Mrs. Besant has not denied the truth of my statement, that during the last

fifty years mechanics' wages have risen in the majority of cases nearly a hundred per cent., and that during the same period the wages of unskilled labor have increased nearly fifty per cent. (Hear, hear.) Cairnes' opinion cannot avail against those facts. It is useless for Cairnes to say that the workman's elevation is impossible if, during those fifty years, the workman *has* been elevated.

Again, you have heard I daresay a good deal about the distress in the shipbuilding trade, and I know many of the hard-working men of the Tyneside have suffered seriously owing to the glut of ships in the market. There are ships lying idle there because there is no carrying trade for them. And the shipbuilding trade has consequently suffered very much. But still, with all that, what is the fact as to the wages? Before the Royal Commission, Mr. Knight (the secretary of the Amalgamated Boilers and Engineers Society, with whom I had the honor of speaking once at the Crystal Palace) was interrogated as to the recent strike, and he said that the reason of it was that the men complained that upon the piece work they had accepted they could not manage to earn as much as they thought they should according to the rate of day wages. Now the question was put to Mr Joseph Knight "What do you call a fair day's rate for rivetters for piece work?" "I should say", he replied, "a fair day's rate, working at piece work, is 8s. per day". Now if you take five and a half days a week, which leaves at least one day and a half leisure a week for a man, to say nothing of his evenings, you get a wage of £2 4s. per week. Because they could not get that sum they had gone out on strike. Now, does that look as if the working classes in the main were in such a truly deplorable case as Mrs. Besant endeavors to depict? I admit that there are evils and suffering in society, and everyone of us thinks that something should be done to remedy them. (Hear, hear.) But I see no use in exaggerated pictures of blackness and despair. Mrs. Besant said I used forms of words to appeal to your prejudices. I say she has painted a black picture so as to appeal to your finer feelings of sympathy to foist upon you an economical system which is to be judged according to pure scientific canons of criticism and not according to sentiments excited by one side or the other.

Mrs. Besant said that capital was not a tender plant, and she

said, "see how quickly France recouped herself after the war with Germany". Why, that "exploded" political economist John Stuart Mill explained it himself. If a war in civilised times leaves the land, the plant employed in manufactures, the canals, the railways, the docks, and all the permanent instruments of production, all the people have to do is to set to work again. But how soon would France have recovered herself if Germany had spoiled all her canals and railways and docks, ruined her machinery, destroyed her buildings, broken down her hedges, and devastated her vineyards? France would not be in the position she is in to-day. It would be found that capital was hard to accumulate. It would take generations of hard effort to remedy the result of one single devastating campaign fought on the old barbarous methods that were practised three or four centuries ago. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs. Besant says that generalship is necessary, but that it should not be rated too highly. Do I rate it too highly? I do not rate anything except at its market value. I know of no other method. If a man asks me how much a bricklayer's work is worth, or an artist's, I say I do not know. What does he get in the market? That is the only means I have of judging of its value. All the economists who have learnedly explained or befogged the question have got no further than old Butler, who wrote "Hudibras", and who said: "The value of a thing is just as much as it will bring". (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Generalship can be rated too high! Now supposing you have industrial armies, as Socialists are fond of advocating, these armies would have to be commanded. ("No, no.") But you cannot have armies without commanders. Why use the word army, if you do not mean a similar mode of direction from headquarters? Why not find some other term? Mrs. Besant said she preferred to find new terms. Why not find a new term for that? Is it a fact that an army is of much use without its general? No. A general in military matters and a general at the headquarters of an industrial army would be of similar value. Such a general in military matters is often of more worth in a struggle than another army as large as the one he commands. The difference between the genius of command on the one hand and on the other will often make a small army more valu-

able than a big one. What was it made the difference between Oliver Cromwell, with a small sick army shut up on the peninsula of Dunbar, and David Leslie, with nearly three times the number ranged on the heights? The English soldiers were brave, but the Scotch were also brave; and they fought after at Worcester as bravely as men ever fought on this earth. But the difference lay in this, that at the head of the smaller army there was the sleepless vigilance, the military genius, the unfaltering and invincible mind of one of the greatest generals that the earth ever produced. (Cheers.) Although he was down below and David Leslie had a better position on the heights, the result was that Cromwell's army, by a splendid stroke of generalship, defeated the other army, losing itself only a few men, and taking ten thousand of the others as prisoners. (Cheers.) I say that the captain or general of a great industrial enterprise may be of as much importance to its success as the whole army put together, and under any system you must pay him somehow. Mrs. Besant said society must fix the wage. But supposing the man objects and walks off, and goes elsewhere. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) It is very well to speak of altruism, but even under the selected communisms of America, as Noyes tells us in his history of those institutions, what he called general depravity—in other words, personal interest—even among the elect divided them again and again. One concern—a big one—broke up because the artisans themselves complained that the value of their product was twice that of those who worked in the fields, and they should therefore only work half as long as agriculturists did. Mrs. Besant says that human nature is fit for Collective Socialism. In my opinion Collective Socialism is not fit for human nature. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

Mrs. Besant proposes to wrest capital and land from the idle classes. It is well to understand not only what they propose to do, but how they propose to do it. Wresting means taking away, and taking away without compensation. (Cheers.) Now the wealth is to be taken from the idle classes. What idle classes? (A voice: "Those who do not labor"). Do you mean the English aristocracy? (Cheers.) I am as ready to deal with them by law as you are. Why, Mr. Bradlaugh, who is opposed to Socialism, is quite ready to deal with the

English aristocracy, if he gets the chance. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Surely we do not need Socialism as a revelation to inform us that the English aristocracy should be removed. Radicals have known that long. But some whom Mrs. Besant includes in this idle class are not idle. Was Josiah Mason idle, who worked as he did, and, having made a fortune, founded the best institution in Birmingham, erecting out of his fortune a splendid monument of his wise generosity? Was Whitworth idle? Was Bessemer idle? But why go through a long list of these? Mrs. Besant knows and you know, as I know, that many of these men included in the idle classes work in their way, and contribute in their way to the production which is the result of labor and capital and superintendence. Without their guidance, and without the capital which their ability helped to get together and increase, the workman would really be worse off than he is to-day. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs. Besant says that I should not scoff like the Tories, who say that we should do nothing fresh because we still go on. I never said we should do nothing because we still go on. What I said was that if we do go on under the present system, you must show us some very clear reason for believing that the new system will supplant it with immense benefit before we give up all we now possess. That is very different. I am surprised that Mrs. Besant could not see the difference. Mrs. Besant also thought that it was not right for me to insinuate that certain barbarous or savage people were somehow in a state of Socialism. But if Socialism means an omnipotent State, that the State regulates all industry, that the State owns all the land and all the capital employed in production, then nearly every primitive form of society is more or less in a condition of Socialism or Communism. (Hear, hear.) The Individualism of the last three centuries has revolutionised the modern world and done more in that time than the Socialism of the lower states has done in as many thousands of years. (Cheers.) Again, Mrs. Besant holds me wrong for saying that the soil of England is of the same extent now as it was in the time of William the Conqueror. I said "soil"; I did not say its productiveness, nor did I say cultivated soil or uncultivated soil. I I said simply soil. And the soil of the earth means all its

surface and what is under it that can be got out. Now, is the soil of England in that respect any greater than it was in the reign of William the Conqueror? On the contrary, some miles of coast on the east have been washed away by the sea. (Laughter.) But it *is* true that the capital has increased a thousandfold. Mrs. Besant says she cannot understand that, but if the fact is true, not understanding it will not alter it. The explanation is not so difficult. There is so much raw material got somehow from the land, either from plants, or from animals that consume the vegetation, or from the surface of the ground, or from the bowels of the earth. Now that raw material so worked might be consumed the very same year, or a portion of it might be kept over for further production. That amount so kept over goes on accumulating—the abstinence of each generation from consumption causes an accumulation of capital. And that process goes on to an extent which is practically illimitable; although at any one moment it is determined. If that explanation does not make it clear, my power to do so fails me.

Mrs. Besant says it is not true that the workman can emancipate himself. I say it is. That is the grand distinction between us to-night. She wants to call in an omnipotent State to provide the brains which we have not got, to provide the moral cohesion which we have not got. But where is it to come from? When we have the moral cohesion, when we have the intellectual capacity, we can join together. We do not want to wait for the millennium. Any Trades Union could, if it had the necessary mental and moral qualities, begin co-operative production to-morrow. When we are sufficiently advanced we shall go in the right direction, and the workers will find in voluntary co-operation the way to elevate themselves from the dependence of the wage system. But until we are sufficiently advanced we must not expect the reward, and no social mechanism will ever supply us with the qualities we lack. (Cheers.)

A vote of thanks, proposed by Mr. Foote and seconded by Mrs. Besant, having been accorded the chairman, the debate was adjourned.

SECOND NIGHT.

MR. ARTHUR B. MOSS IN THE CHAIR.

The CHAIRMAN: Friends, to-night we are to listen to the second instalment of this interesting and instructive discussion on Socialism. Mr. Foote will open the proceedings with a speech of half-an-hour's duration. Mrs. Besant will follow with a speech of the same length. There will then be two subsequent speeches of a quarter of an hour for each disputant, and that will terminate the proceedings. As I know from personal experience that audiences who assemble in this hall are for the most part trained listeners, I have only to ask you to give to the consideration of the subject all the attention which the importance of it undoubtedly demands. I have great pleasure in calling upon Mr. Foote to open the discussion. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE: Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, in opening this discussion to-night I have the opportunity of settling the lines upon which it is to go. I am glad of the opportunity, because it is highly necessary not only that I should be able to reply to what Mrs. Besant advances on behalf of Socialism, but that I should also be able to urge objections against it in my own fashion, which she will have to reply to in return. First of all, let me say—not for the instruction of all, but for the instruction of some—that Socialism is by no means a new thing. Almost all the Socialistic pills that are prescribed in our age have been tried by the human race again and again in various stages of its career. The peculiar American sect of Free Lovers, for instance, is only teaching something which was taught long, long ago, which is always tried more or less as society is in a low condition, and is always left behind as society advances into what is called civilisation. So it is with Socialism. What is, after all, the essence of Socialism? It is the omnipotence of the State: the declaration that the State is rightly lord of all, that no

citizen has any rights excepting those which the State allows him, and that even the family itself only exists by the toleration of the State. If that is the essence of Socialism, it is to be found amongst savages, amongst barbarian nations, and is still to be found amongst peoples in Oriental lands. An extreme instance of it was found in ancient Peru, where everything was managed by State officials, and where every department of the life of the citizen was absolutely under the control of those who were in authority. (Hear, hear.) There is, then, nothing new in Socialism. Further, ever since Christianity had any power Socialism has been a commonplace of its teaching. I am not here for the purpose of dealing with theology, but simply to deal with the relation of the system to social matters. Mrs. Besant kindly drew my attention, in furnishing me with a list of books she would use, to two articles by Emile de Laveleye, one in the *Fortnightly Review* and one in the *Contemporary Review*, both for the same month of April, 1883. I was exceedingly glad of the references, because they had very naturally escaped my attention, having been published at a time when, owing to the law of the majority, which of course is supreme, I was secluded for my country's good. (Laughter.) Now Laveleye, in the second of those articles, cannot understand why Socialists reject Christianity, which admits a great deal of their claims, and accept Darwinianism, which denies the very equality they urge. He says, "Christianity condemns riches and inequality with a vehemence nowhere surpassed"; and (on page 565), after citing a long and eloquent passage from Bossuet, a great French divine, he gives the following brief quotations from the early Christian Fathers. "The rich," says St. Basil, "are thieves". St. Chrysostom says, "the rich are brigands. Some sort of equality must be established by their distributing to the poor of their abundance; but it would be preferable if everything were in common". St. Jerome says, "opulence is always the result of a theft; if not committed by the actual possessor, it has been the work of his ancestors". (Cheers.) I am glad to see so many Socialists in accord with these early Christian Fathers. (Laughter.) St. Clement says, "If justice were enforced there would be a general division of property". Mrs. Besant must, of course, be also aware that the

founder of Christianity taught the precept, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor". She must be further aware that the early Christian Church practised Communism; but as soon as it grew large—as soon as the fanatical bond of the small community was broken—this teaching had to be relinquished in the interest of the very order itself. (Hear, hear.)

Again, we have had no dearth of paper Utopias—from Plato, whose *Republic* is a classic, down to Gronlund, the American writer, whose "Social Commonwealth" I referred to as a sort of New Testament for Socialists. If you invest ninepence in one of Routledge's shilling series, you will get a little collection of more modern Utopias than Plato's, beginning with Sir Thomas More, going on to Lord Bacon, and ending with Thomas Campanella, whose "City of the Sun" has some affinities with More's work, and also some differences, which I have not time to dilate upon now. In more recent times still we have had the Utopian schemes of Owen, Fourier, and St. Simon; and essentially Utopian schemes even by men like Comte. Then there have been attempts to reduce their teachings to practice in France, in England, and in America. Curiously enough, in every case, unless the community was held together by some bond of religious bigotry, or fanaticism, or as I should sometimes prefer to say, of sheer imbecility, they have always broken up and had to resolve themselves into the general competitive system of mankind. (Cheers.)

While it is perfectly true that many noble natures have been attracted by Socialistic Utopias, it is also a fact that a very different class of persons are attracted by them. Horace Greeley, who at one time belonged to a Socialist community in America, and who after he ceased to be a practical Socialist assisted some Socialist communities with his money, wrote from bitter experience as follows: "A serious obstacle to the success of every Socialistic experiment must always be confronted. I allude to the kind of persons who are naturally attracted to it. Along with many noble and lofty souls, whose impulses are purely philanthropic, and who are willing to labor and suffer reproach for any cause that promises to benefit mankind, there throng scores of whom the world is quite worthy—the conceited, the crotchety, the selfish, the headstrong, the pugnacious, the unappreciated, the played-out, the idle,

and the good-for-nothing generally; who, finding themselves utterly out of place and at a discount in the world as it is, rashly conclude that they are exactly fitted for the world as it ought to be." (Laughter.) There cannot be any doubt in the minds of those who know Mrs. Besant that she belongs to the first and better class of those whom Greeley mentions. (Cheers.) But I am decidedly of opinion that even in England there is a large contingent of the second class. Watching the antics of some of the more forward class of Socialists, who do not follow the example of the Fabians, but go out into the streets and advertise themselves lustily, I am inclined to think that Horace Greeley wrote from a very accurate and very painful observation of Socialists and of mankind. (A voice: "Apply it to yourself".) Socialism I urge, is really a case of recrudescence. In my opinion it might be described as economical atavism. In our country, curiously enough, every time there is acute distress, Socialism comes to the front, and every time the distress disappears it recedes until it becomes invisible. (Hear, hear.) If the trade of England improves—and it has shown signs lately of improving—the probability is that Socialism will have to wait until distress is again acute. ("No, no.") I know that some Socialists think differently, but that is my opinion and as I am in possession of the platform I shall say just what I think—(cheers)—and it will be well to leave Mrs. Besant the opportunity as well as the right of replying to me. (Cheers.)

In defining Socialism last Wednesday, Mrs. Besant said that you might take the definition of Proudhon. Now Proudhon was certainly a writer of great power, and nobody can read his writings without feeling that he lived habitually in a lofty moral atmosphere; but it would be as well, if we are to judge of his economics, to take his own definition of property. *La propriété c'est le vol*, he says:—"Property is theft". I do not know whether Mrs. Besant accepts that definition of property; if not, I do not know why Proudhon was referred to at all. But really Mrs. Besant's definition comes to much the same thing. She says that "Socialism teaches that there should be no private property in the materials used in the production of wealth". That is, not only the land, but also the capital of the country is to be appropriated by the State.

(Hear, hear.) I deny that such a definition leaves any right of private property at all. (Hear, hear.) I deny the possibility of any separation of wealth into two classes —one capital and the other simply wealth. Every particle of wealth is capable of being used as capital for the production of fresh wealth. The line is arbitrary. Only a certain amount of wealth is used as capital at a certain time, but the whole is capable of being so used. Mrs. Besant's definition would result in the complete abolition of private property, a result which, I think, Socialism must eventually come to if we accept it. I agree with Mr. Bradlaugh in saying that no definition of Socialism is accurate except that which includes the abolition of private property. Any other definition is divided from this by a thin sheet of tissue paper, which probably is set up in order that we may not see all that Socialism means, and thus be led to accept its best side without seeing its worst side, which is inseparably connected with it. (Cheers.)

Now, how is capital to be appropriated by the State? I said last Wednesday that we not only want to know what Socialists propose to do, but how they propose to do it. If a man wants me to go to Manchester, it is a matter of importance to me to know whether he wants me to go on a bicycle, by train, by stage-coach, or to fly. Unless he goes my way, I shall not go his way. Now, how is this appropriation to be made? Mrs. Besant says it will be taken somehow, but she does not tell us how. I should like to know how it is to be done. Our friends of the Social Democratic Federation say, for instance, of railways, that they are to be appropriated by the State "with or without compensation". (Cheers.) Now that implies that "with or without" are equally right, and if it be right to appropriate without compensation what utter fools they must be to include the possibility of compensation. (Cheers.) I submit that we have no right to deal with interests that have been allowed by law without compensation. (Cheers.) Of course, if Socialists say, as Gronlund does, that the State has a right to do *everything;* if they urge that there are no rights antecedent to the State, and that there are no rights which are inviolable by the State; there is nothing more to be said. That, however, is not my philosophy, nor, if I read mankind aright, is

that the philosophy of mankind. All of us recognise that there are personal rights over which the State has no just control or authority. Mrs. Besant recognises it every day of her life. Mrs. Besant stands every day of her life in opposition to the declared law of the land. Mrs. Besant writes and prints and publishes what, according to the law, is illegal. She justifies by her conduct—and I, of course, quite approve of the position she takes up—the principle that there are imprescriptible rights of mankind, which altogether transcend the power of the State, whether the power be exercised by a single despot or by a multitude that transforms itself into a despotism. (Cheers.) One of the French Socialists, called Clement Duval, an Anarchist, who is now unfortunately paying the penalty of his mistakes in a prison—(cheers)—he has evidently two or three friends here who, I hope, will never share his fate—committed a burglary at the house of a widow lady, abstracted money that did not belong to him, and stood by while his comrade set fire to the house. That looks like an ordinary case of ruffianism. When a man profits by his theories in this way, it certainly looks as though self-interest had a great influence among some Socialists. But on his trial Duval said: "I declare from my point of view I am not a thief. Nature, in creating man, gives him a right to existence, and he is justified in availing himself of it. If society does not supply him with the means of living he is entitled to take what he requires." (Cheers). He did not, however, quite approve of the house being set on fire, whereupon his comrade reproached him by saying: "Then you are not a true Anarchist", to which he answered: "I am. Why burn down houses which, after the great revolution, will afford shelter to the workers?" (Cheers.) I am pained to think that robbery by individuals like this can find any justification. (Hear, hear.) Do our Socialist friends propose to carry this right through? Do they propose to do by a majority what many of them would censure when done by an individual? If an individual had no right to help himself, what right has the majority to help itself? I do not believe that majorities have a right to do anything they like—(hear, hear)—although I admit that their *power* to do so is unquestioned. I say that the majority have only the right to act within the lines of those purposes for

which all society is formed. All society is, in my opinion, formed for the protection of life, of liberty, and of property. (Cheers.) Gronlund says: "We shall not trouble ourselves overmuch about compensation". Mrs. Besant does not, so far as I know, give her views on that point at all. I beg her to-night to give us some idea of how she would have the State appropriate the possessions of private individuals. (Cheers.)

The motive of this appropriation is the redress of poverty. Assuredly poverty should be redressed if possible. (Hear, hear.) And assuredly poverty *is* being redressed. (Cries of "Oh, oh," and Hear, hear.) Now I am quite prepared for the "oh's," and I will give the "oh's" a few facts which they can digest at leisure. First of all the removal of ignorance is one means for the redress of poverty. (Cheers.) In my opinion ignorance is simply the mother of all the preventible ills that human flesh is heir to. (Hear, hear.) In 1851 in England (excluding Scotland and Ireland) there were 239,000 children at school; in 1881 there were 2,863,000 at school. (Cheers.) Look for a moment at the statistics of crime. In 1839 there were 24,000 prisoners committed for trial in England, and in 1881 there were only 15,000, although the population had largely increased. Now look at the statistics of pauperism. In 1849—from which date our statistics become accurate—there were 934,000 paupers in England; in 1881 there were 803,000—that is, a decrease of 131,000, although in the interval there had been a large increase in the population. (Hear, hear.) In the whole of the United Kingdom in 1849 there were 1,676,000 paupers, but in 1881 there were only 1,014,000. Now look at another class of figures. In 1831 there were 429,000 depositors in our savings banks, and the amount of their deposits was £13,719,000. In 1881 the number of the depositors had increased to 4,140,000, and the amount of the deposits had increased to £80,334,000. (Cheers.) In 1862 there were 90,000 members of co-operative societies with a paid-up capital of £428,000, and annual sales of £2,333,000. In 1881 there were 525,000 members, with a paid-up capital of £5,881,000, and total sales of £20,901,000. (Cheers.) In the various building societies in the country there were as many as 500,000 members. (Hear, hear.) Now these statistics are facts. They are not fancies. They are not Individualistic

dreams to set against Socialistic dreams. They are things that have already happened. If this accumulation of wealth —this saving practically by the working classes—has been effected during the last twenty or thirty years, what reason is there for supposing that the improvement may not go on with accumulating power, gathering momentum as it goes, until by self-help, and personal thrift, and the sense of individual responsibility, the social problem is solved on the lines of Individualism—without transforming the State into an almighty and omnipresent tyrant, ruling every person and everything with a rod of iron? (Cheers.)

If Socialism were inaugurated, you would not settle the question. It is only the few in every generation who do the forward work. The mass simply mark time. It is the few who go ahead and point the way. When they have convinced the rest by experience, when their ideas are proved to be true, the rest take advantage of the demonstration and join them. (Hear, hear.) Mrs. Besant complained that the great instrument of Individualism is cut-throat competition. There is an old adage that if you give a dog a bad name, that is sufficient to secure his destruction. Now why cut-throat? Of course it makes competition look ugly. It suggests a razor and blood. But why not say simply "competition". Competition may be a very bad thing for those who cannot keep up. It does not follow that it is for those who can. Competition may be a bad thing for a man who runs in a race and loses; but it is not so bad a thing for the man in front. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) And unless you are going to abolish all competition, which Mrs. Besant proposes to do; unless you are going to remove it as she proposes from *every* department of human life; I do not see how you can object to the principle at all. (Hear, hear.) John Stuart Mill who, although, according to Mrs. Besant, he is a discredited economist, is not by any means a discredited thinker—for his writings will probably live when both Mrs. Besant and myself are forgotten—John Stuart Mill says:—"Instead of looking upon competition as the baneful and anti-social principle which it is held to be by the generality of Socialists, I conceive that, even in the present state of society and industry, every restriction of it is an evil, and every extension

of it, even if for the time injuriously affecting some class of laborers, is always an ultimate good". (Hear, hear.) I agree with Mill in this. If competition is to be removed, what do you propose to substitute for it as a method? Are you going to base society on pure disinterestedness? Gronlund himself, the writer of the New Testament of Socialism, says: "Morals are *not* the foundation, still less religion. They are the top of our system. *Interest—self-interest—is the foundation, the prime motor, the mainspring of our actions*, so it is, has always been, and will always be." Self-interest, then, is to be the mainspring of our actions even under Socialism. It *must* be, and I will tell you why. You may do disinterested actions and practise generosity—the more the better. But daily life can only be organised on permanent motives. And the only permanent motive which will keep the average man at work, prevent him from idling, and make him thrifty, is the desire of his own personal advantage—the desire of the advantage of his own family—without infringing on the equal right of all others to work for the same ends for themselves. (Cheers.)

I have a number of other points for Mrs. Besant, but if she goes over these I shall be satisfied. Meanwhile let me ask her, above all things, to tell us how she proposes to carry out the appropriation of all the wealth of the country by the State. (Hear, hear.) How is it to be done? On what principles is it to be conducted? For until you tell us that, you are working with one hand behind your back. Show us the hidden hand. (Cheers.)

ANNIE BESANT, who was received with cheers, said: In Mr. Foote's last speech, on Wednesday night, he threw out a challenge which I was then unable to answer, as I had no further right of speech; and, with your permission, I will accept that challenge very briefly before passing on to the points which were raised in the speech to which we have listened to-night. Mr. Foote then asked me to explain how we were going to deal under Socialism with what, he said, were the necessary "generals" of industry, and he compared Oliver Cromwell in his generalship of the army to the best of those men who organised industry, and who because of their special ability were highly paid. I would submit to Mr. Foote first that in that comparison he confused two things, which are very different—the

wages paid for exceptional ability and the interest paid for the use of capital held by idlers. It is not wise to mix up different things in that fashion if you desire to seek clearness of thought. Wages for exceptional ability might exist under Socialism, where the interest for capital was abolished as a payment to idle individuals. Not only so, but it must be also remembered as to generalship that history tells us that the greatest generals were not those who were attracted merely by high pay; and I read Oliver Cromwell's character very badly if he was moved to his devotion to his country by the hope of the cash payment that he might receive, and not by his enthusiasm for the cause which he thought was the nobler cause at that time in England. Then Mr. Foote, arguing on the question of the "tenderness" of capital, asked me what would have happened in France had Germany destroyed the canals, and generally the fixed capital of the country. There would have been a far slower revival of prosperity. But I desire to reassure Mr. Foote on this head, and to tell him that when the Socialists take over the land and capital here they do not propose to destroy, before taking over, the canals and fixed plant, but to keep them for the benefit of the people to work with, so that they shall start with the advantage of the past accumulation, and use it for the facilitation of present and future labour. (Cheers.) Then Mr. Foote challenged me on the question of the rate of wages. Here I am obliged to go over the point very quickly, and I would suggest to Mr. Foote that in dealing with Mr. Giffen's figures there are certain points he overlooked. Mr. Foote stated that the wages of skilled labor had risen 100 per cent., and that that of the other forms of labor had risen 50 per cent., and he asked me to explain the cause of that. But Mr. Foote did not state that which Mr. Giffen put with great frankness—that his figures were, to a considerable extent, guess-work rather than absolute certainty. His statement was that unfortunately there was no account drawn up that would give full statistics on the question save from the date of about fifteen or sixteen years ago, and he explained that in dealing with this matter, he was dealing with figures drawn from local trades and then he takes from these an average which he admits himself might not be really accurate. (Hear, hear.) He then goes on to say that the wages have risen variously

from 20 per cent. up to 50 and 100 per cent. And after he has admitted that variation of percentages, for the rest of his pamphlet he speaks of the rate of wage as having doubled. Instead of taking into account the small increase of 20 per cent. he takes the highest percentage for the purpose of his argument, and uses that as if valid for the whole of his argument. But I am willing to admit a very considerable rise of wages. That has, however, been largely balanced by the enormous rise of rent. It has also to some extent been balanced by the very great rise in the price of meat which is used to a considerable extent in this country. The rise of rent is simply enormous. If you take the rent in 1843 it amounted only to £95,000,000; if you take it now it has run up to at least £200,000,000; and if you are going to put the gain of the workers on the one side, you must take into account the gain of those who live on the workers on the other side. (Hear, hear.) Nor is that all. Mr. Giffen himself admits that while wages have risen in this fashion, the returns from capital have risen from £188,500,000 to £407,000,000. He admits that the wages which are paid to the workers among the upper and middle classes, the wages of the highly paid, have risen from £154,000,000 to £320,000,000; so that you have your returns from capital more than doubled; your returns of these higher wages more than doubled, and I ask you with what pretence, after admitting figures of that sort, can Mr. Giffen say that the whole of the material advantage of the last fifty years has gone into the pockets of the manual workers? (Cheers.) But even this is not all; in order thoroughly to understand how the rise has come about, you must investigate the surrounding conditions, and you will find that you are dealing with a time when an enormous impetus was given to trade. You are covering the whole of the time when trade was expanded by the first rush consequent on the free trade movement. You are dealing with a period in which England practically stood alone as the workshop of the world; when her coal and her iron went everywhere; when she was the maker of nearly all the improved machinery, and had nearly all the other nations of the world as her customers to give her laborers work. All these things must be taken into consideration when you are dealing with the rise of wages that, as I admitted, has been con-

siderable. But that is now no longer the case. You have come to the end of the tether of your prosperity, for other countries now raise their own coal and produce their own iron. Your coal and your iron are getting lower down, and therefore harder to work, while other countries are not coming to you now as formerly for your machinery. You used to be the world's workshop, but you are now competitors with other nations; and the result of that is that as you are competing with men whose wages are lower, your wages will have to sink to the level of those which are paid to the worst paid workers in foreign countries. (Hear, hear.) That is my position. The past was a time of unexampled prosperity, but that time is over, and now the share to be divided among the workers is less than it has been; the workers feel the pinch of poverty, and that is the problem with which you have to deal at the present time. Nor still is that all. During the time over which Mr. Giffen has taken his figures you have had a growing Socialism with all its advantages. There has been the great benefit of trades unions, which fifty years ago were illegal. They were combinations of workmen struggling together to obtain the legal right of combining, the right to work with each other for a rise of wages. Trades unions are essentially Socialistic. (Hear, hear.) They do away among the members with that competition of which Mr. Foote is so strong a supporter; they tell the stronger men not to use their strength for the injury of their weaker brethren, but to hold together so that the advantage of the strength may spread over all, and not be taken by the stronger to the detriment of the weaker. The same sort of attack as that of the Tories on trades unionism is now being made on Socialism, and the same reasons are given for the attack, namely, that trades unionism was tyrannical, that it held back the stronger, and tended to equalise the earnings of the more and the less skilled workers.

There is one other point as to the growing Socialism that I wish to refer to, and that is the passing of various Factory Acts, which have practically, to a certain extent, limited the power of plunder of the propertied classes. These Acts, which came between the capitalist and the worker limiting the hours to a considerable extent, have, by their influence on public opinion, even limited the hours

of labor in places outside the statutory scope. You have the whole of these matters operating on this question of the rise of wages, and simply to say that the wages have risen and to leave out of consideration everything that has been a factor in that rise, is really not to go to the root of the question, but to deal with it with absolute superficiality. And I contend that these figures are used against the workers in a fashion that even Mr. Giffen—holding a brief for the capitalist as he said he was accused of doing—would have been ashamed to use them. (Hear, hear.) I will conclude this brief answer to Mr. Foote's challenge by reminding him of that which of course he must know, the relative position of workers and of capitalists in the matter of increased incomes. He submitted to you figures as to the rise of incomes amongst the poor folk. Why not have laid some stress on the enormous rise of incomes amongst the wealthier persons as well? Why not have told us of the fortunes of £50,000 and upwards, that whereas there were only eight of these in 1843, there were sixty-eight in 1880? Why not have told us that the fortunes ranging from £1,000 to £5,000 have enormously increased during that time, having risen from 6,328 in 1843 to 15,671 in 1879–80? Why did he only lay stress upon the increase of small incomes and not on the increase in the large incomes? and why not have pointed out that, according to Mr. Giffen, you will find that out of sixteen and a half millions of different incomes, there are only one and a half millions over £150 a year? Why not also have pointed to the shocking extravagance that has been one of the signs of that fifty years' growth, and the shameful luxury and waste which have characterised the aristocracy of wealth? And why not have cast one thought towards a point of serious importance in dealing with the possibility of change—to that wise remark of De Tocqueville, that the French made their Revolution when their condition was improving? He suggested that people do not rise in revolt when crushed down by hopeless misery, but that it is as they improve, as their position gets somewhat higher, as they have hope in their life, that then it is the hope that sometimes pushes them into the revolution which they would never have dreamt of making in their days of utter degradation. (Cheers.)

I pass from that to deal with the speech of to-night.

Mr. Foote says Socialism is old. So is man. But it does not necessarily follow that because a thing has been long in the world it is bad. (Hear, hear.) How ought history to be used? History is the record of the experiences of our race. Are we to read it only to abuse our ancestors and to say what fools they were? Or are we to read it to learn wisdom from their experience; to utilise only what was proved to be right and true, and to avoid falling into their errors by marking the places where they stumbled? (Cheers.) Mr. Foote passed on to what he called the peculiar American sect of "Free Love". I fail to understand why any mention of that sect was introduced into this debate. (Hear, hear.) It has nothing to do with our discussion. The phrase "free love" raises in England a very bitter feeling, largely because the views implied by it are not sufficiently understood. And I quite fail to understand—and Mr. Foote did not give us any explanation—why he dragged that particular sect into a discussion on the question "Is Socialism Sound?" (Cheers.) Mr. Foote says that Socialism is the characteristic of a low state of civilisation; and to some extent it is true that you will find in the low stages of civilisation a very crude form of Socialism as well as of Individualism. (Hear, hear.) But if it is true that you are to condemn Socialism because among some tribes of low civilisation you will find a community of goods, are you then to condemn Individualism because in some tribes in low stages of civilisation you find it in the crudest form, and see the strongest man preying upon the weaker and using his imprescriptible right of eating his neighbor for his dinner? Because, if you are going to argue in that way then Socialism and Individualism are alike to be rejected; where is the path along which humanity is to walk? (Cheers.) But Mr. Foote says that according to Socialism the State is everything; everything is to be done by the State. I cannot help regretting that Mr. Foote did not define what he meant by the State. If by the State he means a bureaucracy ruling over the people, or a despotism like that of Peru—a despotism in which the workers had no political or social power whatever, but were merely a class tyrannised over by an absolute sovereign and a hierarchy of priests and aristocrats—then I deny that such a State has anything to do with Socialism. (Hear, hear.) But

if by the State he means the whole of the community organised for self-government; if he means a society organised for the good of the whole of society; then I agree with him that it is of the essence of Socialism that that organised community shall be supreme over itself. And I fail to see any difference there can be between the Socialist and the Radical on this head, when the Socialist says that the community should be the controller of itself, and the Radical desires the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. (Cheers.) We ought not in this discussion to merely play with words. (Hear, hear.) We want to get to facts, and it is necessary for Mr. Foote to define what he means by the State before I can deal with his statement as to the tyranny implied.

Then Mr. Foote went off to touch on Christianity, and stated that ever since Christianity had begun Socialism was a part of it. But this need not be any accusation against Socialism, since he also says that it existed long before Christianity was in existence, and it was very likely to be partly taken into Christianity when Christianity became one of the religions of the world. It is possible that if I had lived in those times I might have approved of some of the doctrines which were put forward by those fathers of the Church which Mr. Foote quoted. (Hear, hear.) And if Christianity walked on the same lines as Socialism then Socialists would be willing to welcome it on these points of agreement, as they are willing to-day to welcome Christians as workers for this common purpose. (Hear, hear.) But if we are to bring theology into this discussion, it is as well to remember that Jesus Christ not only said, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor", but also, "Blessed be ye poor", and that Socialism considers as an absolute curse that poverty which the founder of Christianity is said to have blessed. But will it not be wiser to try and deal with the thing itself rather than say whether or not it enters into a religion to which both Mr. Foote and myself are known to be antagonistic, and which can hardly be introduced here without unfairly prejudicing the view I am advocating? (Hear, hear.) I pass from this about Christianity to the statement that many Utopian schemes of Socialism have been suggested in the past. That is so. Is it wonderful that men, grieving sorely at the sorrow of their present, should strive to picture some nobler life on

earth, where the sorrow and the misery should have passed away? (Cheers.) Remember it was the noblest men who did this. Utopian dreamers or not, they were the nobler outcome of humanity. All who long for a nobler life on earth must at times dream of some Utopia. (Hear, hear.) And it was better to have noble dreams even, than to rest satisfied with the brutal gratifications of gain and greed. Is it therefore, because some have made their Utopias too perfect, that we shall not strive to realise something better than the Pandemonium we have now? (Cheers.) But Mr. Foote says they were not only Utopian, but that many of those who have started Socialistic experiments were only held together by the bands of fanaticism, or religion, or by sheer imbecility. I am not so sure that the desire of persons to make a life of brotherhood—although imperfectly carried out—should be characterised as an attempt in which they were only held by sheer imbecility. (Cheers.) And I doubt whether the use of words such as that will lead us to any satisfactory result in this debate. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote said that some of the nobler minds now approve of Socialism, and that large numbers of the ignorant and the poor also join them from baser motives, and he was kind enough to say that I was one of the dreamers of the former class, while he put the mass of Socialists in the other. He also said that many of the members of the Social Democratic Federation were going into the streets to advertise themselves. And is it in this hall—the hall which is the very centre in London of Freethought, of aggressive Radicalism—that the going out into the streets to reach the poor is to be pointed and scoffed at as being an unworthy attempt at self-advertisement? (Cheers.) How else are we to reach many of the poor? Mr. Foote may say that I do not go out street-preaching. It is true I do not speak in the streets, because I have not the physical strength, and because I believe that the work I do is more useful when I speak in this hall and elsewhere, and when I use my pen—(cheers)—then if I did work others can do more effectively. But if there were no others to do the street-work—if there were no Socialists able and willing to do it—then would I too take my share in it and speak in the streets. (Cheers, and cries of "Bravo".) But whilst there are others willing to do it, and whilst they are also willing that I should do the other part of the work for

which I am more fitted, I will not scoff at them because some of them may not always be wise in their speech, because some may be even reckless in their utterances. (Hear, hear.) I will thank them, despite even their recklessness and their passion, for that they at least see the evil of the present, and long for some nobler and better form of brotherhood, instead of the struggle in which the weaker are trampled out of life. (Cheers.)

We are next told that Socialism is a symptom of distress, and there is truth in that. The desire to make things better comes from the recognition of the sufferings of others. While everything goes on smoothly and easily, it is quite possible that men's minds may not turn towards a change. But I think that trade depression has lasted quite long enough to teach the lesson of Socialism, and that the lesson being learned that poverty must grow out of the form of proprietorship to which Socialists object, an improvement in trade will only make the workers stronger to effect the necessary change. (Cheers.)

I am a little surprised at—if Mr. Foote will pardon me the phrase—what seems to me Mr. Foote's somewhat rough and inaccurate translation of Proudhon's phrase "*la propriété c'est le vol*", as "property is theft". Mr. Foote, is, I know, well acquainted with the French language, and he will bear me out in saying that "property" in the English sense is not the equivalent of "propriété" in the French. A Frenchman would no more speak of his hat or his stick as his "propriété" than an Englishman would say that similar articles were his "estate". In fact, the word estate is a nearer equivalent for "propriété", and it is used for land, or for wealth in a wide sense, not for the personal property of individuals in small articles. I put this, not as agreeing with Proudhon, but as doing him justice in a matter in which he is very generally misunderstood. (Hear, hear.) As to Mr. Foote's remark that my presentation of the Socialist arguments is designed to hide the bad side of my case, I cannot help thinking that the debate will proceed more smoothly if such imputations be omitted. The distinction that I made between wealth in general, and wealth which is set apart for purposes of production, is not a distinction invented by myself, but is one which is made by every political economist. There is a very wide distinction between the ownership by the com-

munity of land and capital, that is, of the raw and wrought materials for the production of wealth, and the enjoyment by individuals of their share of the products of labor. It is perfectly possible to have public property in the one existing simultaneously with private property in the other. (Cheers.) Mr. Foote, as a land nationaliser, is face to face with a similar difficulty with respect to the land. He surely thinks that a man might pay rent to the State, and yet remain owner of a vegetable he had raised on State land. That is, that there might be public property in the material for wealth production, and private property in the wealth produced. Then why might not the distinction be equally maintained between public property in capital, and private in the products of labor when once they had been acquired? The difficulty is of words not of things, and affects all change in the ownership of raw, as much as it does change in the ownership of wrought, material. Ought I then to say to Mr. Foote, in his own words, that his argument was a sheet of "thin tissue paper" intended to hide the true state of his case? (Laughter and applause.)

In my next speech I will say something on the possible methods of appropriation of the material we claim for society, though on questions of method there is much divergence of opinion among Socialists, and in dealing with them I can give only my personal views. Let me, in conclusion, express my dissent from the doctrine of the natural, or imprescriptible rights of man. These supposed rights have no historical basis, they have no answering realities in life. The natural right of a man is to grab as much as he can, and to hold all he can grab as long as he can. "The spoils to the victor" is the natural law. Rights were not anterior to society, but grew slowly out of society. They grew out of the desire of each to be safe and free from oppression, and from the union of many to restrain the aggressor, from public opinion codified as law. Anterior to society and to law there were no rights. The doctrine is an idle metaphysical theory, and what we now call the "rights of man" are those conditions which human experience has shown to be most conducive to happiness. The idea of a "right" has been slowly evolved in, slowly recognised by, society, and society exists to secure these rights for the weaker, who can only obtain them by law,

and to guard for all those advantages which are naturally enjoyed only by the strong. (Loud applause.)

Mr. FOOTE: Mrs. Besant seems to have perverted many things I said, or perhaps she misunderstood them. A little sense of humor would have prevented these blunders. Mrs. Besant might, for instance, have seen that I was speaking as euphemistically as I could of the Social Democratic Federation; that I meant a good deal more than I said, but I did not care to use strong language. Since I must speak plainly, however, to make myself properly understood, I will do so at once. I did not complain *simply* because the more eager Socialists went into the streets. Mrs. Besant says she would go into the streets and speak herself if there were no others to do the work. Well, I *have* gone into the streets. (Cheers.) I have done it repeatedly, and when the summer months come round I shall probably do it again. (Applause). But I have never assembled men and led them to places of worship, where neither they nor I have any business. (Hisses and cheers.) I have strongly opposed the teaching given in such places, but I have no right to obtrude my opinions there. (Hear, hear.) Nor have I ever sought to gain a hearing by appealing to the basest passion of the human mind, the passion of envy. (Hear, hear.) I have never addressed half-starved men, or men out of work, in such a way as would encourage them to commit offences which the law would punish; nor afterwards, when brought before a jury, have I pitifully pleaded "It was not I that did it". (Loud and repeated applause, hisses, and cries of "order".) I have stood before juries, and I may have to do so again. Who knows? What has happened may happen once more. But whatever I may be tried for, in the matter of advocacy of opinion, I shall, as before, defend what I have done. (Loud applause.)

Mrs. Besant says I mistranslated the sentence I quoted from Proudhon. But I had at least the honesty to give the French original before I gave my translation. It is impossible to translate with absolute precision from one language into another, especially in the case of two such different languages as the French and English. I might have said "Owning is theft", or "Ownership is theft"—which is perhaps the nearest translation. But really, what difference is there between that and "Pro-

perty is theft?". It is simply a quarrel about words. (Hear, hear).

Mrs. Besant also said I was unfortunate in my reference to Cromwell. But was I? It is true he did not work simply for mercenary motives, but there was in him a mixture of regard for his own interest. Cromwell did not refuse substantial rewards. He was exceedingly well paid for what he did. He had something like £10,000 a year, a palace to live in, and many acres of confiscated royalist estates. I do not deny Cromwell's earnestness, but I say it was not unalloyed; and there are other generals who would be patriots on the same terms. (Cheers.)

Again, I adhere to all I said about the destruction of French capital by the Germans. They did not destroy the permanent capital of the country, but only some of its floating capital, and that chiefly food. In fact, they merely helped to consume what the French would otherwise have consumed by themselves. When the French were left in peace with their railways, docks, canals, fields, houses, and machinery, all they had to do was to go on working as before, and the replacement of floating capital was an easy task. (Hear, hear.)

I have been accused by Mrs. Besant of not representing Mr. Giffen fairly. Well, Mr. Giffen gives a great quantity of figures, and I could only select what suited my purpose. With respect, however, to the proportion of the national income taken by labor as against capital, Mr. Giffen distinctly says that he has, if anything, understated it. I am also aware that he says the early figures are not quite satisfactory. But they are satisfactory as far as they go. Mr. Giffen takes the actual wages, for instance, of many parts of the country. They are numerous and far apart, so that he gets a very fair average. How otherwise would you have him proceed? (Hear, hear.) Mrs. Besant says that Mr. Giffen holds a brief for the capitalists. I don't quite see it. But suppose he does; might I not reply that Mrs. Besant holds a brief for the Socialists? (Hear, hear.) It seems that we must listen to nothing here but Socialist facts, and by a judicious selection and a judicious use they may be made to prove anything. (Cheers.) If Mr. Giffen's figures are wrong, let the Socialists furnish other figures that are right and that will controvert his. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Besant said that trade unions are carried out on Socialistic lines. But is thst so? Any member of a trade union may leave it to-morrow if he chooses. But if you socialise everything, the only way to leave it will be to go to another planet. (Laughter.) Then trade unions do not prescribe an absolute uniformity of wage, but only a minimum, and even that breaks down where piece-work is taken. The reason of the uniform minimum is obvious. Trade unions are to some extent fighting organisations, and under a fighting system you must submit to the common law of the machine, otherwise united action in warfare would be impossible. But I maintain that if it were not for that necessity there would be nothing like uniformity of wage, and the men themselves would reject it. The tailors' establishment at Clichy started by Louis Blanc, despite his sentimentalism, gave up equal payment. It was found to be unworkable. The men would not put up with it. In the great house of Leclaire, which is worked on the co-partnership principle, the men would laugh at you if you suggested that they should all have the same wages. The difference in the skill and application to the work makes all the difference in the result of the man's labor, and, as Mrs. Besant says everyone should have the result of his labor, why should not everyone in the ideal state of things have the wage for which he honorably works and which he has actually earned? (Applause.)

It is not fair to say that I did not refer to the increased incomes of the rich during the last fifty years. I stated that the rate of the working men's wages had increased during the last fifty years to counteract Mrs. Besant's picture of the gradual deterioration of the workman and the poverty in which he was found now. Next, Mrs. Besant wishes me to give her an explanation of how the land is to be nationalised without falling into the very evils which she will fall into with her nationalisation of capital. I dealt with that last Wednesday, when I stated that if land were to be nationalised, the use of it would would have to be paid for as now. There would be competition amongst those who wanted to use the land, and those able to give the best rent would get it. But there would be this difference—that rent, when paid by the individual cultivators of the soil, competing against each other in the open market, instead of often going as un-

earned increment into the pockets of the absolute idlers, who do not co-operate to produce the general result, would go into the national exchequer, for the benefit of all. (Cheers.)

What is the State? asks Mrs. Besant. The State, always and everywhere, is a body of men appointed by other men, or self-elected, or coming in by what is called hereditary right, to manage the affairs of the people. (Hear, hear, and "No, no".) That is *not* a State? Then I will ask Mrs. Besant to give me her definition of a State. I know what some of you may mean. You may have in your mind the idea of society. But society, consisting of everybody under the State, is a very different thing. (Hear, hear.) The State itself is the government of the country, no matter how it be appointed or held. It involves coercive power. That coercive power is rightfully used for some things, and is wrongfully used for others. The difference between us is that Mrs. Besant says it rightly covers everything, while I say it only rightly covers some things. Against its exercise in some things she rebels, and I rebel, and every man or woman here also rebels. (Applause.)

But let us return to our old friend "cut-throat competition". (Laughter.) Mrs. Besant is, of course, aware of the fact that we largely depend upon foreign trade. Until the world is Socialised—and that will be a very long time, for before you convert the Chinese and the Hindoos, the Central Asians, the South Americans, and the Central Africans, a good period must naturally elapse, even under the most hopeful prospects—(laughter)—we shall have to depend largely on foreign trade. How are we to hold our own in that open market of the world where we are now obliged to trade, unless we compete with the foreigner in respect to the prices at which we can offer our goods for sale? And if we are obliged to compete as to prices, we must compete as to labor, and consequently, to that extent at least, competition is inevitable. (Hear, hear.)

Now, I come to a point which Mrs. Besant did not deal with, although I invited her to do so last Wednesday, and that is, What are you going to do with the population question? Mrs. Besant says, in her pamphlet on Socialism, that "Under a Socialist régime the community will have something to say as to the numbers of the new

members that are to be introduced into it". I urge that the community must say its word *first*. All your construction, if you do not settle the population question, is like erecting castles on the sand of the sea-shore in front of an advancing tide. (Hear, hear.) It is a peculiarity of Socialists that they laugh at the population question. Gronlund says of Malthus that "This doctrine of his is a vicious monstrosity, hatched in the saloons of the wealthy, and flattering to the conscience of the ruling classes, and *therefore* it has been so widely accepted". Mrs. Besant does not argue thus. She argues quite to the contrary. The law of population is an absolute fact, and if anyone cannot see it it shows the deficiency of his sight. If the State finds everybody with work—and Mrs. Besant holds it must—the Socialist state, with respect to population, would be in the same position as a Communistic state; because, if it cannot provide everyone with work, it must provide everyone with food; for, if it takes all the capital and leaves none for private enterprise, it is bound to furnish food for the starving. (Hear, hear.) If you find everybody with food, how are you going to prevent overpopulation by those who have no sense of responsibility? Under the present system, conjugal prudence and parental responsibility prompt those who possess them not to produce a larger offspring than they are able to rear, and they have thus an advantage in the struggle for existence. I know the struggle is hard. Therefore it is better to breed from the fit than from the unfit. It is better for posterity that the stronger should survive than that the weaker should hand down their weakness to subsequent generations. (Hear, hear.) Mrs. Besant and her friends must settle this problem, not *after* but *before* they ask us to inaugurate Socialism. She understands the vital importance of this point, and I ask her to speak out clearly. She was never grander than when she defended the right to publish the truth on this subject. It is one of the regrets of my life that I misinterpreted her motives, and I take this public opportunity of saying so. But I also ask her to be true to the great cause now as she was true to it then, to champion still the theory of population which she maintained in the face of danger and in front of the gaol. (Loud applause.)

ANNIE BESANT: Mr. Foote asks me, How do you pro-

pose to nationalise the land and capital? and he quotes a phrase—I think it is from the manifesto of the Social Democratic Federation—about taking over the railways "with or without compensation". The phrase is not difficult to understand. If the change be made in peace, it would be possible to make it with reasonable compensation to the holders, the unjust holders, of land and capital. But if the change be made, not by law but by force, then the question of compensation would be swamped in the rush of revolution. That is probably what is meant when the phrase is used "with or without compensation". If the present holders are wise, then, remembering that society has made them, and that, unsatisfactory results as they are, we are responsible for them, we may still keep them for the remainder of their unprofitable lives; but if they are not wise, and set themselves against the people, then they will have to take their chance in the struggle which they have provoked. (Hear, hear.) How should we make the change? I grant that is a question for discussion. My point, as a Socialist, is to persuade people it would be a good thing to make the change, and until that is done all the talk about the methods of doing it is almost useless. (Cries of "No, no".) You say no. But Radicals' proposals for sweeping changes are open to a similar objection. Do you mean to say that in dealing with proposals for change that you do not always first try to persuade people that change is desirable before going into the methods? How many imperfect schemes of nationalisation of the land are there? The land nationalisers are not agreed as to the method, although they are agreed on the principle. (Hear, hear.) Socialists are not agreed as to the method, although they are agreed that they must do something to bring that nationalisation about. (Hear, hear.) My view of the easiest way to do it is to try and make a reasonable allowance to the present holders of land and capital, to terminate with their lives. That is more than just; it is generous in the extreme. You must remember that in dealing with human affairs you have not always the choice between good and evil, but you have to choose the lesser of two evils. At the present time a small class lives idly because they possess these monopolies. It would be better that that small class should be deprived of that monopoly without compensation, rather than

myriads of the people should continue to live as they live to-day. (Cheers.) But I do not believe that absolute confiscation is necessary. I believe we can find a method by which, with the least possible suffering to any, this great change can be made. But I say frankly that this question needs very full and very complete discussion. It is a question for Socialists to discuss amongst themselves rather than for Socialists to discuss with their antagonists. We want to convince you first that it would be well for us to cross to the other side of the river, and when that is done we will consult as to the best methods of building the bridge that will take us over. (Hear, hear.) But, as I have said before, it may be done simply by making a number of those persons life-charges on the rents of the monopolies. I believe it might be done in that fashion to a large extent. Then the National Debt should be gradually paid off, so that those who live on the interest of the National Debt may be got rid of even though it be done by very considerable taxation. I should not propose to continue to pay interest, but to pay off the value of their stock; because I know that when you have once closed the source of idle living by stopping the interest, small harm would be done by letting them have what they originally invested; but you must stop them from levying a perpetual tax upon industry by the interest which they are able to draw. I put it to you that these and similar methods of turning these people into life annuitants is a practical reasonable way of making the great transition, and of getting rid, in a generation, of the idle class. I admit there are many difficulties, but they are not always insuperable. What is wanted is, first to get the idea clearly before the people that these monopolies for the few mean poverty for the many, and that we must use our brains to discover the best method of destroying them, and so of striking at the root of our social evils. (Hear, hear.)

After dealing with that point, Mr. Foote went on to the case of Clement Duval, but I fail to follow his argument. Clement Duval was said to be an Anarchist, and was clearly a thief. But is it because a thief calls himself an Anarchist that Socialism is to be condemned? If so, as Individualism produces most of the thieves, Individualism stands condemned in the same way. (Hear, hear.) And I must remind you that your legalised thievings breed

illegal thefts. If a man like Clement Duval sees a wealthy man taking wealth that he has not earned, how is he to distinguish in principle between the capitalist's right to take the wealth he has not earned from the worker, and his own right to take that for which he gives no equivalent from a private house? If you destroy men's sense of honesty by your legalised system of thieving—called capitalism—you cannot wonder that men, with somewhat muddled brains, imitate on a small scale what is done on a large by the leaders of society. (Hear, hear,) Mr. Foote says that the majority has only the right to protect life, liberty, and property. But society, in its supreme right over its members, very often tramples on the whole of those rights, and I think with the approval, to some extent, of Mr. Foote himself. What about taking the life of a man who has committed a murder? I do not say it is right. I do not think it is consistent with the highest morality; but if society is formed for the protection of life, speaking generally and universally, it seems strange that the life of man should be taken by society, and this action seems to support the view that society can claim supremacy even over the lives of those who are its members. Mr. Foote says that society defends liberty and property. Liberty and property are very fine words, but we complain that the present organised system defends neither liberty nor property for the majority. We allege that instead of defending property, it confiscates the property of the workers, and places it in the hands of those who do not labor. We allege that it only protects the property of the rich, and authorises the constant robbery of the poor. When you are dealing with this question of property, has it ever struck you to turn to some statistics—not made by Socialists, but issued by a benevolent Government for the instruction of its subjects—and to read there that out of every 1,000 persons who die—I am dealing with the probate and legacy returns—only thirty-nine leave behind them £300 worth of personal property, including furniture. So that, on the whole, the protection of property in our country is scarcely satisfactory, since it can hardly be contended that the worker in a whole life would not have made more than that to leave behind him when he dies. And again, when you have the idler who leaves hundreds and thousands of pounds behind him when he dies,

although he has done nothing, then your view as to the value of society in protecting property will have to undergo some modification before being accepted. (Hear, hear.)

I am told that poverty is now redressed, and stress is laid on the spread of education and on the decrease of crime, and when Mr. Foote urged that I found myself very much in agreement with him. The statistics quoted as to education and diminution of crime are such as we must all be glad to know; but as to the decrease of pauperism, the statistics are not so satisfactory, because we know how it has been caused; we know that the poor-law officers have made the conditions of relief much more stringent, and the taking away of out-door relief has diminished the number of paupers, in consequence of the shrinking of the people from going into the workhouse. This has made the diminution shown by the statistics not so real as it looks. (Hear, hear.) Then we are told as to the growth of savings in banks, and so on, and we are asked why not go on in this particular line. I answer, because if we go on in this line the masses will continue to get so little and the few will still get so much; because although in savings banks you may get a large sum in the aggregate, if you work it out and compare it with the number of the population you will find it amounts to a contemptibly small amount per head, and even then we have no right to say that all is the savings of the workers. But still all those points are points which show some sort of slight improvement here and there. But they are balanced by an amount of misery, by an amount of wretchedness, that surely should urge us to some method of dividing the nation's produce which shall not leave only one-third of it in the hands of 5,000,000 families, while the remaining two-thirds go to 2,000,000 families to keep them in wealth. (Hear, hear.)

But, Mr. Foote says, why use the phrase, "cut-throat competition", and he says it suggests a razor and blood. But how many of our people are killed out in this struggle for life? (Hear, hear.) I speak of cut-throat competition, and I base that phrase, not on Socialist figures, but on the report of the Registrar-General, where I find the average life of the workers is very little more than one half the average age of the idlers, and it makes no difference to me in looking at the effect of things whether a man has his

life cut short by direct violence, or if his throat is cut by the razor of semi-starvation carried on during a great part of his childhood and manhood, sinking him to the grave sooner by half a life than if he shared the better food and sanitary conditions of the wealthy class. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote made another attack on the Social Democratic Federation, into which I will not again follow him, for this debate is on the question, "Is Socialism Sound?", not on whether it is wise for persons to enter a church and hiss at the Queen. Supposing these things were done over and over again by foolish persons that does not touch the subject of this debate. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote tells me that Oliver Cromwell was well paid in the end. Mr. Foote will not say that that payment was Cromwell's motive in his work. In fact, all the great works of genius are done because the genius is there, impelling the man to act. It was not money that made Milton write "Paradise Lost". It is the imperious faculty in the artist that makes him create, and makes him find a joy in his creative work. Little cares he whether money come to him as payment; his payment comes in men's love, in men's gratitude, and the memory they keep of him; he knows that the future is his, and herein is his reward, rather than in the mere cash amount that may be paid over to him. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE: I have again and again heard Mrs. Besant say what the facts of life strictly disprove—that men of genius are simply moved by their creative impulse. If Mrs. Besant went and told the members of the Royal Academy that they only painted for public applause, they would probably all laugh at her. Certainly the artist does like public applause, just as Mr. Gladstone or any minister of the crown likes public applause. But somehow they all like to be as well paid as possible too. (Hear, hear.) Gronlund supposes—and I have heard the same thing from other Socialists—that it would be absurd to think of a great man of genius painting or writing for payment. The name of Raphæl was given as one instance, but Raphæl painted for popes and cardinals, and other men of great eminence and great wealth. It is well to keep the facts of history before you. (Hear, hear.)

When Mrs. Besant says that the suffering of to-day is a balance against the improvement that I indicated, she is

also conflicting with the facts of history. I have read something of the history of my country, and Mrs. Besant probably has too. I have also spoken to old men belonging to the party with which I have the honor to work, up and down the country in the manufacturing districts, who remember what was the state of things thirty and forty years ago, and they corroborate what I have read in the pages of recent history. If I may trust these reports, the state of the worker forty years ago was greatly worse than it is to-day. (Hear, hear.) It is easy enough for a man who feels the distress to-day to exclaim like mourners are always apt to do, "Never was grief like unto mine". But if you look at the real facts you will find that in your deepest misery others suffer as greatly; and if you now suffer from distress, there was greater distress forty years ago. However, Mrs. Besant says—and true it is—that poverty is to be redressed. But it does not at all follow that mere benevolence is likely to redress it. It does not follow that rash action is likely to redress it. (Hear, hear.) If a man is in dire agony, it does not follow that the first half-a-dozen persons who drop in to see him in a neighborly way, and to sympathise with him, will do him any good. The surgeon who is called in must keep his sympathy in the background. He must use his skill with the utmost callousness. He must not allow his sympathy to affect his nerves. He must work in the cold, dry light of the intellect. Unless he does that the patient will suffer more from his sympathy than he will gain from it. So with this great social question. You cannot eradicate the evils of human nature in a moment or in a generation. I tell Mrs. Besant she takes too optimistic a view of human nature. I know there are heroes in the world, but there are also cowards; there are wise men, and there are fools; there are Shaksperes, and there are Silly Billys. (Laughter.) You cannot with the same old human nature work a new scheme simply because you have devised it on the strictest rules of altruism. (Hear, hear.) The same human nature that produces to-day's evils will reassert itself. No matter what your social mechanism is, it will show the same old fruit. Covetousness will not be abolished by Socialism. Idleness will not be abolished because the whole community will find work or food. Thrift will not be increased

because you say that a man should work for all instead of for himself. (Applause.) If this human nature could be twisted and turned like dough, and we were to agree that the most benevolent scheme of the loftiest dreamer should be put into operation, we might perhaps do some good. But if it were applied to ordinary human nature it would not, it could not, work. (Cheers.) Why, if ever a Socialistic experiment could have succeeded, surely it would have been the Brook Farm in America. Surely it might be thought that persons like Emerson, Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, and the others assembled together in a Socialistic system, had the wisdom and the lofty nature for the purpose. But there was the old human nature in every one of them. There it was, deeper down than their intellect and their aspirations, and asserting itself in its own way. In the end the experiment broke up, as all others have done, except when supported by fanaticism and religious bigotry. (Applause.)

Mrs. Besant says that she does not quite understand my saying that society, or rather the State, exists for the protection of life, liberty, and property. She carefully refrains from saying a word about liberty. In the last night of this discussion, when my turn comes to open again, I shall perhaps have enough to say about liberty, which I believe Communism, Socialism, or any such system, would crush from off the face of the earth. (Cheers.) Meanwhile, I will say that I cannot understand how Mrs. Besant thinks that hanging a murderer is a violation of the principle that the State is organised for the protection of life. Why is the murderer hanged or incarcerated for the rest of his days? Because he has taken life; because he has violated the very principle for which the State is organised. Unless the State protects the people, you have anarchy instead of organised society. (Cheers.)

It may, perhaps, be clever, but it is on the whole a little too clever, to say that the protection of property means merely the protection of idlers. Are all the members of building societies idlers? Are all the men who own—as many do throughout England—the freehold of their houses, idlers? Are all the men who deposit in savings banks, idlers? Are all those who have paid money year by year in fire and life insurance societies, idlers? (Cries of "No, no".) You will find that if John Smith thinks the fate of his

fifty pounds is bound up with that of the Duke of Bedford's millions, he will fight in defence of his own and the Duke's too. (Applause.) It is easy enough to under-estimate the power which is held by those who own small properties in this country. Socialists may laugh, but the moment they thought they were in the majority, and tried to put their proposals into execution, they would find a million bayonets lifted in defence of property. (Cheers.) The right of property is not simply a principle that covers the idler; it covers the worker too.

Mrs. Besant allows that we both agree that poverty should be redressed. Before this debate is over it will be my duty to show that I am not simply occupying a negative position, although I am doing so to-night. (Hear, hear.) I will attempt to show that without the Collectivist system, or any of its dangers, by a gradual and sure process we can emancipate the worker in the true sense of the word. For what is it he suffers from? Competition? I say, nonsense! (Hear, hear.) Competition gives a hard-working man an advantage over a lazy man. Competition gives a skilful man an advantage over a man who will not take the trouble to be skilful. What the worker really suffers from is the subordination of labour to capital. Aye, and that subordination can be remedied just in proportion as the workers show that they possess the moral and intellectual qualifications without which their emancipation is an impossibility. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Besant has not yet touched the population question. I want to know how she proposes to deal with it. She says that under Socialism the necessity of conjugal prudence would be obvious to the blindest. Why is it not obvious now, when the parents have to bear the whole responsibility, unless the poor-law or private benevolence intervenes? How will it be obvious to the blindest when the whole burden is thrown on collective society? I did not make the world, and I am glad of it. I did not lay down the law of natural selection, and I am glad of it. But nature has laid it down. It is a sure sign of a fool to fancy that if you walk and talk round a fact it will change or vanish. Facts must be met. If you go on breeding population you must meet the question somewhere. If you keep all that are not working, or for whom work cannot be found, you will have the unfit, the scrofulous, the con-

sumptive, the indolent, and the stupid, exactly on a par, as respects their offspring, with the more capable and energetic, from whom it would be far better that the race should be continued. It is better to face these facts instead of blinking them. (Cheers.)

In concluding my last speech to-night, let me draw your attention to something curious in Socialism. In every other system, persons all say "experiment will show the thing can be done". Why do not the Socialists try an experiment and see whether they can manage to succeed. (A voice: "We are not organised".) In this world we do not make discoveries, we do not make inventions, we do not make any progress, except by the one method of experiment. We try fifty or a hundred wrong ways until we find the right one. By closing the avenues to experiment with a cut-and-dried universal system, you really block progress. Instead of doing this, let the Socialists show us by experiment that Socialism *can* succeed. Why wait for the whole world to join you before you make a move? Why don't the Socialists give their scheme a trial on a fair if modest scale, and show us that they can produce better results than are obtained under Individualism. (Cheers.) But Mrs. Besant's Socialism cannot be practised tilll the whole world is converted. There never was such a Gospel before. She invites us all to ascend Mount Pisgah, or some other height, and view the beauties of the Socialist promised-land. Some of us think it is nothing but a mirage, a mere haze on the horizon, or only a dream of the prophet's brain. But Mrs. Besant asks us to ascend with her, and she will provide us with a patent Socialistic flying-machine. We are not to go on in the old plodding way, step by step, but we are to try our wings, we are to fly instead of walking. It will be fortunate for those who hold back when the flight begins. (Laughter.) There is only one true method of progress in this world. It is step by step, line upon line, here a little and there a little. (Applause.) Pessimism is probably false, and Optimism is probably false, but there is sound philosophy in Meliorism, or making things a little better day by day. When Louis Blanc, after years of sentimentalising, had an opportunity of doing something after the fall of the Empire, he went on sentimentalising as before. He kept talking and writing about "the social question", until he provoked Gam-

betta into saying: "There is no one social question; there are many social questions, and each must be dealt with when it is ripe". Every stimulation of the intellect and higher feelings of the people, every fresh advance in public education, every new political reform, every gradual improvement of the relations between labor and capital, every sure step of the workers in the direction of self-help through voluntary co-operation, is of more advantage to the world than all the fanciful Utopias ever spun by metaphysical spiders. (Loud applause.)

ANNIE BESANT: Let me dispose first of the Royal Academy. I quite grant that the members of the Royal Academy paint for money. My words only applied to geniuses. I quite admit that where you are dealing with mental ability short of genius, it may be necessary for some time to come to have some difference of remuneration. That is not in any sort of way necessarily antagonistic to Socialism, and the confusing of the two things may give a dialectical triumph, but will hardly stand much investigation. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote says I take too optimist a view of things. Socialism urges itself upon the world, not because it takes an optimist view, but because it tries to take a real one. It believes that where one man can live idly on the labor of others, that man will live idly on other's labor. That is, it realises that unless you can make it impossible for men to live in idleness, and can thwart men's evil instincts by arrangements which do not permit of their having full play, these instincts will triumph and cause misery in society. It is because we believe this that Socialists propose to take away the possibility of idle living, so as to be able to say to a man, "If you do not work you will starve". (Hear, hear.) It is because we know men will live idly if they can, that we want to destroy the means of their living on the labor of others. (Hear, hear.) Socialism tries to destroy the monopolies in the material for wealth, because only by that destruction can the men who own them be prevented from preying on their fellows. Hear, hear.) Well, Mr. Foote says that the Socialistic experiment at Brook Farm did not succeed, and that, if that failed, where can we hope for success. And he asks, why do you not try your Socialist experiments yourself? We say that the failure of the previous experiments has convinced us that small

Socialist societies living in the midst of a competitive system can never realise our idea of what true Socialism is. It can only be done by the conversion of the majority to Socialism, and by that majority taking over the means of production already in existence. And when we are asked why do we not now make our experiment, we say that we are not going to surrender our right to the accumulations of previous labor, and that by leaving these in the hands of the present owners, and starting afresh, we should be only playing into the hands of the plunderers. (Cheers.) The workers have already made the capital; why should they leave it in the hands of the appropriating class, and set to work to build it all up anew? Then Mr. Foote challenges me—and rightly—to speak on the population question, and he uttered words of generous recognition of what I have done in the matter in the past, for which I earnestly and cordially thank him. (Hear, hear.) I do not move from the position I took up in 1877. I would stand as readily on my trial now, as then, for the right to teach the people how to limit their families within their means. I know I am in a minority on this question in the Socialist party. I know that the majority of my Socialist friends, realising rightly, as they do, that the population question alone cannot solve this problem of poverty, at present shut their eyes too much on this matter, and turn their backs too angrily on a truth which they ought to realise. (Hear, hear.) But none the less is it true that if you solved the population question to-morrow your people would still remain exploited for the benefit of others; if the population were so reduced that the masters were left to compete for labor as laborers now compete for employment, justice would still be left undone. Why do masters try to get hold of the laborers but in order to make a profit out of them—that is, to deprive them of some of the result of their labor? and whilst, given the same amount of employment, the laborer's wage with a small population would be higher than with a larger population, it would still only be a wage—a share of what he earned—and the idler would still live on the industrious man. (Cheers.) Socialists see this; but they very unwisely, as I often tell them, go out of their way and put themselves into a false position by setting themselves against a law of nature, instead of recognising and utilising the truth for them-

selves. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote says, how will your Socialist State prevent over-population? and I might answer him by saying, How would your Individualist State prevent it? But that is no answer. The Socialist State would probably prevent it by law. (Laughter, and "Oh, oh".) Yes, by law. The Socialists will be forced to understand that the children are a burden on the community; education being supported out of the taxes and education going on from childhood until the citizen is almost an adult—education will be a very heavy burden which the producers will have to bear. When they feel that the undue increase of their families makes that burden too great, when they realise that the multiplication of non-producing consumers means more work, less leisure, more hardship for themselves, can it be pretended that they will be likely to leave the comfort of the community at the mercy of its most reckless members? And when you are dealing with society organised as we propose it should be organised, it will be far easier to stop these mischiefs even by public opinion than it is now. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote speaks about breeding from the fit and from the unfit. But is it from the fit only that the population is recruited under the Individualist system? Are the Brunswicks then among the fit? The idlers of the country add largely to the numbers of the population, and we want to strike at all idle living, and we believe that by doing that we shall be able the sooner to educate the people to realise the full scope of this question of population. But I say again, as before, that every system which does not realise or recognise this law of population will break down. (Hear, hear.) Socialism without it would break down, and even Bebel himself, who speaks against Malthusianism now, admits that under the Socialist *régime* we shall come face to face with this increase of population, and that the time will come for dealing with it. (Hear, hear.)

I will now pass on from that to another point raised. Mr. Foote says why not have free competition? You cannot have free competition whilst you have monopolies in land and capital. You can only get anything of the value of free competition when every man shall be able to reach the land and have the use of capital, so that each shall be really free. (Hear, hear.) There is no freedom of contract between the proprietors and the proletariat. For one

is clogged by the absolute necessity of having to get his livelihood from the other, and to talk of free competition under such conditions is a mere hypocrisy. Then Mr. Foote says that the State under Socialism would interfere with everything. We do not allege that the State should do everything and interfere with everything. We allege that you should have an organisation elected by the people, responsible to the people, removable by the people, which should administer for the general good the material for the production of wealth in the country. (Hear, hear.) But such a State, or rather the Executive of such a State, would be nothing more than a body or bodies of officers elected by the people, much as your municipalities are now elected to discharge certain functions for the benefit of the towns whose business they administer. (Hear, hear.) Next, Mr. Foote asks, what about foreign countries? and he says truly that it will take a long time before China, India, and various barbarous races will be socialised. Then, he says, we should have to compete with these non-Socialist States in the markets of the world. I am not aware that we compete with the negro or with these lower races in the world's markets; and is it quite fair to use the argument that it will be a long time before these lower races are socialised, and then the next moment to speak of them as if they were our competitors, whereas the only relation between us and them is that we plunder and murder them, and that they resist us? (Hear, hear.) It will indeed be a long time before the negro is socialised; but we hope it will not be long before England, France, Germany, America, and Italy will be socialised. (Cheers.) These are the nations with which we have to compete in the world's markets, and these are the nations in which the Socialists are winning over the majority of the working population, and are obtaining adherents in every circle of society. (Hear, hear.)

Then Mr. Foote says, poverty will not be redressed by benevolence and sympathy. I admit it; and it is because of that that Socialism tries to trace the poverty to its source. I reiterate the statement that the source of poverty is private ownership in the material necessary to produce wealth, and so long as private ownership in this material continues, so long will poverty be found to be its inevitable result. (Hear, hear.) That is not talking

benevolence; that is not simply acting on sympathy or appealing to your emotions. It is laying down a hard economical fact out of which the whole of Socialism grows, and that fact it is with which our opponents must deal. And Mr. Foote has not attempted to do so. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote finally spoke about liberty. Mr. Foote urges apparently, and he has said that he will strengthen his contention hereafter, that under Socialism liberty would disappear, that tyranny would override society. Never from my lips shall come one word of attack upon liberty—that liberty which is the source of human progress, which is the condition of human growth. (Hear, hear.) But even liberty is not all. Nearly one hundred years ago a cry broke out from an awakening people, and that cry had in it the word "liberty", but it had joined with it as watchword for the Revolution "Liberty, equality, fraternity". (Cheers.) That cry rang over to England, and the Radicals caught it up, and on their banner they put the motto, they named the indivisible three which make human progress safe. (Cheers.) And are the modern Radicals going to drop the last two words, and in the exaggeration of the importance of liberty forget that of equality and fraternity, which are its sisters and inseparable? (Cheers.) Liberty! What liberty under your Individualistic society for the poor sempstress stitching in the garret for the pittance of a shilling a day? (Cheers.) What equality possible between your duke and your dock laborer? What fraternity to be hoped for between your millowner and his hands? (Hear, hear.) Is equality to become only a word? Has fraternity passed into a dream for the modern Radical? O my Radical brothers, who turn deaf ears against our Socialist plea: you who dream in your zeal for liberty that by this you will win everything, no matter over what human lives your car travels, I remind you of your older days; I recall you to your older traditions. (Cheers.) I appeal to you for help for the movement which began a hundred years ago, and which is going on among us still; I appeal to you—do not use against us the weapons which of old Toryism used against you; do not throw at us the old taunts and scoffs which were thrown at you by our common enemies. I appeal to you to remember your past. (Hear, hear.) If you would have liberty to work for progress have also

fraternity and equality, and let us work together for that nobler society where all shall be free, where all shall be equal, and where all shall be brothers because masterhood shall have passed away. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE: I beg to propose a hearty vote of thanks to our chairman.

ANNIE BESANT: I second it.

The vote having been carried,

The CHAIRMAN said: I thank you for your vote of thanks, and I ask you to attend in large numbers next week, when Mrs. Besant will open the discussion.

THIRD NIGHT.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW IN THE CHAIR.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen; our business to-night is the continuation of the debate on the subject, "Is Socialism Sound?". Mrs. Besant says that it is sound. Mr. Foote contends that it is not. The arrangements of the debate this evening will be: each debater will speak three times—once for half-an-hour, and twice for fifteen minutes, the speakers speaking, of course, alternately. On the last evening the debate was commenced by Mr. Foote. It is therefore Mrs. Besant's duty to open to-night; and I now call upon her.

ANNIE BESANT: Friends, as I said on the first night of the debate, I propose to deal to-night with the historical evolution of Socialism, and with the absolute necessity for its adoption in this and in other civilised countries, if the civilisation of the present is not to break down as past civilisations have done. I am, of course, aware that there is something of rather portentous impudence in the attempt to sketch the evolution of society in the space of half-an-hour; but as I am limited to that time, I must do the best I can, merely giving you the landmarks of the chief stages through which, as I contend, society has passed. And to begin with, we will go back to that condition which Mr. Foote fairly enough described as the condition of primitive Communism; this you find in a few cases of tribes in a very low condition of civilisation; this is found only where life-conditions are easy, where the soil is fertile, and where food is abundant, and can be obtained without very much trouble. Under those conditions you will occasionally find what may be called primitive Communism—a condition of things in which private property has practically no existence, and there being abundance for everyone, each man takes according to his own needs. These communities, however, are very few in number, for the simple reason

that the parts of the earth where such abundance is easily obtained, are themselves very limited in number. And the moment that you come under harsher life-conditions, then over the greater part of the habitable globe you will very soon find a struggle for existence going on amongst men, which makes anything like Communism absolutely impossible. You then get the right of the strongest to take what he can and to keep what he can. Thus you get what we may call a primitive Individualism, where strength is the supreme law, and where the individual's rights are only measured by his power of enforcing them. (Hear, hear.) Under those conditions private property very rapidly springs up; for when a man has to work hard for that which he obtains, he naturally feels resentment, and desires to punish those who, without labor, would deprive him of the results of his own toil. And so, as practically there is only one man who is the strongest in the tribe and only a few who are above the average strength, the resentment of the majority who are plundered finds expression in the form of law and of punishment; and private property becomes recognised as a right by the limitation of the power of the stronger and by the defence of the weaker who form the majority of the community. (Cheers.) And when that stage has been reached, the next one is the condition in which civilisation, having somewhat advanced, and the cultivation of the ground having taken the place of hunting and fishing, and of that particular form of war in which war and the chase are united—I mean the institution of cannibalism—when society has passed beyond that stage into the agricultural stage, you find appear in practically every early community a form of labor which is known as slavery. (Hear, hear.) Men who are taken in war, instead of being used as food immediately, are used as food in a less direct fashion. And you find the owners of these captives taken in war setting the captives to labor, turning them into slaves who produce for their master's benefit, and who have no rights beyond those which their masters may bestow upon them for their own advantage. And you then get this property in man. This is one of the results of the growing civilisation under the Individualistic condition, and you find society divided into the propertied and the non-propertied classes—the non-propertied class in these early conditions being literally

slaves—chattel slaves—who produced for their owners, who took the result of their labor, giving back in return sufficient to keep them in healthy working order. (Hear, hear.) If you look back to the various stages of civilisation which we should class as ancient, you will find that they were all very largely based on this institution of slavery. You will find that in Greece and in Rome you have a vast mass of the population absolutely without property, absolutely without rights; and the nation was considered to consist of the higher classes of the community who owned the slave, no rights of the commonest citizenship being given to the slaves themselves, who labored for their masters. (Hear, hear.) And on that rock of utter division of classes—of the breaking up of society into practically two nations in every community—on that rock ancient civilisations split, and every one of them in turn went down before a flood of barbarism. (Cheers.) I pass now to the next stage that I mark on this brief sketch of historical evolution. Of collective property in land you find traces practically down to our own time, and I must ask you in thought to distinguish between the less numerous cases where the property in land was really of a collective kind, and the far more numerous cases which were more analogous to peasant proprietorship, where families inherited certain plots of land to which they had a special right, in which each member of the community had his own piece, as it were, of the ground, none being left absolutely landless. But still all the community, with this sort of limitation, owned property in land, though not having absolute collectivism. But you do find in some communities absolute collective property in land, and I suppose there is no better instance of that at present than you will find in the case of some Slavonic tribes, such as you may see a good example of in the Russian Mir. In the western parts of Europe the property in land was of a very different character. There you find—in countries like our own, in France, and in other western lands of Europe—there is a kind of holding of land known as feudal, that is practically the result of the military state in which the people lived. The nations of the north, urged on by the necessity for subsistence and the pressure of the population, were constantly overrunning the more fertile lands, and the conquering tribes set up the system which grew into feudalism

in the lands of which they were the conquerors. And then you find the Danes and the Northmen spreading over France and settling in England; and then some passing from Normandy into England, destroying the old fashion of land-holding and establishing feudalism in its stead. (Hear, hear.) Under these conditions the king was really the one owner of the whole of the soil. I know that it is said that the king was the representative of the nation. But that is a myth, a mere figure of speech. The king was really the owner, for he granted the land to his barons. (Hear, hear.) What is, however, very important to us is that the baron's rights in these lands were strictly limited, and under feudalism these barons had duties connected with their ownership of the soil, and one special duty was that of defending it from all outside attack. (Cheers.) In Scotland and Ireland the method of holding land was somewhat different. There you had the clansmen living on the land. There were clans under a chief who was autocratic, but still the clansmen had certain rights in the soil, and the very chief himself would have been careful how he touched them. (Hear, hear.) And the result of that was that there was a feeling on the part of those who then dwelt on the land that they had rights in the soil as sacred as any of the rights of their chief. And if you enquire into the traditions of these people—which are now held by men like the Scotch crofters and the Irish peasants—you will find that the root of these men's resistance to the modern landlord is not so much that they are fighting against the rights of property of the landlord, as that they are fighting for their own right of property in the soil upon which they were born. (Cheers.) And you will never convince a Highland crofter or an Irish peasant that justice is not on his side, however much landlord-made law may be against him. (Hear, hear.) In passing from the feudal system, I pause for a moment to remind you of that great act of robbery whereby the landlords conveyed the land into their own complete possession, throwing off the rental which in the feudal days they had to pay in dues and various charges to the king, and they thus became practically absolute owners of the soil. (Hear, hear.) I am of course aware that there is no such thing as absolute ownership of land known to our law; but for all practical purposes the landlords are

absolute owners; and that act of theirs was really a great act of expropriation, a robbery, whereby they made themselves the real owners of the land which they had up to that time only held by payment of dues. (Hear, hear.)

We find, upon turning from these various stages through which this land-holding went, that the claim for collective property in capital is of comparatively very modern origin. (Hear, hear.) And naturally so, because until very modern times there have been no vast accumulations of capital for the purpose of wealth production. You have the small industries of the Middle Ages—you have the handicraftsmen banded together in guilds, but you have no great accumulations of capital; nor have you anything which is at all analogous to our modern system of factory labor of gathering together great crowds of men to co-operate in the formation of a common product. And it is only from the sixteenth century upwards that you will find the struggle beginning between traders and landowners; and only practically from the end of the last century will you find the true beginning of the industrial difficulties with which we are dealing at the present time. (Cheers.) From 1760 to 1781 you get the great age of invention in machinery; the destruction —not of industries themselves but—of the small methods of manufacture, and the putting in their stead of the modern method of manufacture by which hundreds of men work together to make a common product, dividing the various parts of the labor amongst them. It is thus only for the last 100 years that society has been face to face with this great difficulty of the aggregation of capital in the hands of a few. (Hear, hear.) What was the immediate result of this sudden outburst of mechanical energy? It was the revival of slavery under a new name. (Cheers.) Just as when society, taking up agricultural pursuits and working on the land, found that by enslaving men and making them work their masters would be raised to a position of wealth and of luxury which they could not reach by their own toil, so in modern times, when this sudden productivity of machinery was discovered or practically started—we may say just about a century ago—then you get the beginning of a similar division of propertied and unpropertied classes — the employing class and the employed class—the one completely at the mercy of

the other. (Hear, hear.) And although it is true that the slavery was a wage and not a chattel slavery, still fundamentally the two things are identical; for you have in each case one man taking another man and using his labor for his own purposes—taking the product that the laborer has produced and giving back to him only enough to keep him in working order. (Cheers.) It is true that in the chattel slavery the produce—or the share of the produce—that the laborer got was given to him in the form of food, clothing, and shelter. It is true that in the modern substitute for slavery that part of the produce the laborer gets is given to him in the form of money, with which he buys food and clothing and shelter. But the principle is exactly the same—(hear, hear)—men working for a master not for themselves; men with no control over the product of their own labor, but the product passing into another man's hands, and the laborer in each case getting in return the possibility of subsistence; getting in return sufficient to keep him in fair working order. (Hear, hear.) But there is this difference. Under the old system the slave really did get sufficient to keep his body in the best possible condition for labor. (Cheers.) Not only so, but as a child he was maintained, as an aged man he was fed and he was sheltered. The chattel slave was a valuable property as the horse is valuable and the ox—(hear, hear. A Voice: "And no more")—and the owner of the slave kept him in a condition of the highest efficiency. (Hear, hear.) But the modern slave owners have found out a cheaper method than that of breeding and of owning slaves. (Cheers.) They have found that it is cheaper to hire than to buy them. They have found that it pays better to take them only for their working life and to have no responsibility beyond it. (Hear, hear.) And the advantage is a very simple one. James Nasmyth, the great engineer, was being examined before a Parliamentary Committee on the subject of trade unions, and he explained that he constantly increased his receipts by substituting apprentices at a low wage for able-bodied men who demanded payment of the full wage that was paid in their trade. And the questiou was asked him, "What becomes of the men you discharge: of their wives, and of their families?" Nasmyth answered: "I do not know. I leave their fate to the natural forces that govern society".

Now that is exactly what the slave owner could not do. (Hear, hear.) But it is what the modern capitalist can do, and does do, although very few of them are honest enough to speak out as frankly as James Nasmyth spoke before that Parliamentary Committee. (Cheers.)

I pass for a moment from that to the next point in my argument. We have to trace in that growing industrialism the growing interference of the State. I will just remind you of the early attempts of the State to regulate Middle Age industries. You will remember that the first edict fixing wages was in the Fourteenth Century, and that the Statute as to laborers that followed it tried to fix the laborer's wage at a definite sum, and that it failed, and failed for a very simple reason. (Hear, hear.) It failed because the men wanted higher wages than were specified, and because it paid the masters to give a higher wage. (Hear, hear.) And as the men were anxious to get the higher wage and the masters were ready to give it, the law became practically inoperative. It was a regulation between two classes, neither of whom was willing to accept that regulation of the State. But it is not because that one case failed that any student of history can pretend that it is true that all attempts at wage-fixing have been inoperative. (Hear, hear.) Take, for instance, the Statute of Apprentices. It was successful to such an extent that when it became an anachronism it was difficult to get rid of it. And one half of the difficulty of the administration of the old Poor Law was due to the attempt to circumvent in some sort of fashion this Statute with its fixed wages, and out of the rates they tried to make up more than the wage which ought legally to have been given. Then you have a mass of laws interfering with workmen's combinations. And then, going on again, we come to the time which I previously spoke of, when machinery was introduced, and you have the struggle between the workmen who were fettered by the laws against combination, and the employers, who were absolutely free—absolutely unfettered by law. (Hear, hear.) What was the result of this condition of things? Vast fortunes on the side of the propertied class; frightful degradation on the side of the unpropertied class—(cheers)—degradation so horrible as to frighten Parliament itself. The death-rate of children so great; the deterioration of the factory population so

terrible, that even Parliament itself—composed as it was chiefly of the propertied class—found itself forced to pass the first Factory Act, which interfered with this condition of so-called free contract and free labor. (Cheers.) Then you had—first, interference with child labor; next, interference with woman labor. And the result of this interference with the child's and with the woman's labor was practically a limitation of that of the man's. (Hear, hear.) Because since these three worked together in the factories—and since the female and the male labor were practically complementary to each other—the limitation of the women's hours of labor indirectly brought about a limitation of the men's hours. (Hear, hear.) And so this legislation went further than those who initiated it intended, and it acted as a very general limitation of the hours of labor. (Hear, hear.) And then you had still further State interference—interference with contracts over and over again, as when rent-courts and so on were established in Ireland and in the northern parts of Scotland. And step by step as that legislation has progressed, the condition of the laboring classes has to some slight extent been improved. (Hear, hear.) That is to say: the growing Socialism has brought about a growing improvement, and the gradual interference of the community to make the conditions more equal on the side of the men has really given them opportunities of rising which were utterly out of their reach in the earlier years of the present century. (Cheers.) Nor has that been all. There has been a growing recognition on the part of the community that it is concerned with something more than the regulation of business relations. The responsibility of the community for the feeding of its helpless members had long been recognised. (Hear, hear.) The recognition of its responsibility for the curing of its sick members had also to a considerable extent been recognised. But the fault in both these cases has been that the conditions for getting food or medicine were, with the object of discouraging people from embracing them, made so degrading that those who may be considered the least worthy accepted the opportunity of relief, whereas those who were self-respecting and independent found the conditions so insulting that many a one would rather starve than condescend to accept the relief. (Cheers.) Next, society recognised its duty in matters of education. It

recognised that it was a thing in which the community had a right of interference, and it went on the plan of taxing everyone, although only some had the immediate benefit of the taxation. (Hear, hear.) And rightly so; because you cannot divide off society into small cliques and tax each for its own necessities. And although it may be true that only some profit directly by the taxation for education, yet the whole community profits indirectly; not only in the greater utility of the educated man or woman, but also from the decrease of crime which is one of the most marked results of our Socialist plan of national education. (Cheers.) Next came the acceptance of responsibility to a considerable extent on the part of society even for the health and amusement of its members; and parks were made and kept up out of the public rates; galleries and museums were provided out of the national taxation; libraries were adopted by parish after parish taxing itself directly for this benefit to all. And so, step by step, and more rapidly than ever during the last twenty years, this growth of practical Socialism has been spreading amongst our people, so that John Morley truly said, in his "Life of Cobden", that England, although Socialism was little spoken of, had a greater mass of Socialistic legislation than any other country in the world. (Hear, hear.) And at the same time the Socialist spirit is spreading in the smaller representative bodies in our country; corporations and municipalities, passing beyond their at first very limited duties, have been gradually taking over more and more administrative and trading work into their hands. And so you find municipalities now beginning to trade in water and in gas; and wherever that has commenced, the advantages of that kind of Socialist trading become patent to the town that adopts it. And the result is a gradual but more and more rapid growth of Socialist feeling. (Cheers.) Take a town like Nottingham—a town I happened to visit recently. There the municipality has taken over the supply of gas. What has been the result? Not only that the gas has been very much cheapened to the citizens—although that is something—but that out of the profits obtained from the cheapened gas-rate, at the same time that the people of Nottingham can get their light for very much less than ever before, instead of the profits going to the shareholders of a company and being divided

amongst them, and so keeping in idleness men who did nothing for the town, those profits on the gas have been utilised to build a great college, fitted up with everything that is wanted for literary, for scientific, and for artistic training. (Hear, hear.) There in that college, paid for out of the profits of the town's gas, are professors for instruction in the various branches of learning; and there every night classes are held at merely nominal prices, to which every citizen of Nottingham can go and train himself into wider knowledge, into deeper enjoyment of life. (Hear, hear.) And that is the result of Socialist legislation. (Cheers.) Under Individualism the profits would go to enrich shareholders. Under Socialism the profits go to be used for the benefit of the town, and that grand educational experiment is the result of practical Socialism in Nottingham. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE: Last Wednesday evening Mrs. Besant occupied the first half of her first speech in replying to what I had said on the previous evening. She cannot therefore complain if I follow her excellent example to-night. And I feel that I shall be all the more entitled to do so because a considerable quantity of Mrs. Besant's first speech to-night is the kind of thing you may read in any primer of universal history, and which therefore I do not feel called upon to dispute. (Hear, hear.) It will be remembered that last Wednesday I pressed Mrs. Besant in two speeches to say how she proposed to take over capital and land, and how she proposed to deal with the population question. Now either by design or inadvertence—I prefer to think the latter—Mrs. Besant left these two questions unanswered, although she had two opportunities of replying, until her last speech, when of course I had no opportunity of rejoining, and therefore it had necessarily to be left until this evening. Now how does Mrs. Besant propose to take over capital and land? A great many Socialists say, following Gronlund, "the matter of compensation will not trouble us much"—(hear, hear, and laughter)—and evidently when Socialists speak out in unguarded moments—(hear, hear)—Mr. Gronlund and the Social Democratic Federation have a very large amount of sympathy. But Mrs. Besant says—and in this as in so many other points she follows Gronlund—"we would give capitalists and landowners life annuities". Gronlund's proposal is a little more sensible, if Mrs. Besant will allow me to say so. By Mrs. Besant's

plan all the capitalists would be given life annuities. Some of them would live a great while, but some of them would die to-morrow, and their wives and families would be swept among the wreckage of society—("Oh, oh")—to find some kind of compensation of a character which I think it is far better to contemplate than to realise. (Cheers.) Gronlund proposed that they should all be paid off; so that, supposing Vanderbilt were worth eighty millions, he should have a million a year for eighty years. I very much doubt if a Socialistic Society would have the million a year to pay for eighty years—(hear, hear)—I still more gravely doubt whether the ease with which the first measure of confiscation were passed would not speedily raise an agitation for complete repudiation of the obligations that were incurred. The great difference between Mrs. Besant and myself on this point is that I deny her *right* to do this; I say that the man who owns property under the existing law, which he has not stolen in violation of any law, has a right not only to get his price for it, if someone else demands it, but a right to withhold it from sale if he chooses. (Cheers.) So that there is a moral difference here between myself and Mrs. Besant, and I do not see how it can be easily bridged over. I fancy it must leave Mrs. Besant and myself on two different sides of a chasm, across which she strikes me in vain, and across which I strike her in vain. And I can only leave the moral aspect of that question to every man and woman, to be decided by such instincts of justice and fair play as they may happen to possess. (Hear, hear.)

With respect to the population question, which Mrs. Besant does not appear to treat with quite her old seriousness, she says that the new society—whatever that may be; it is largely a question of prophecy—will deal by law with the progress of population. But if law can deal with it, why does not the law deal with it now? And how are you to get your law? Under Socialism everybody will have a vote. Of course, everything will be decided by the vote of the majority. If Mrs. Besant thinks that the human nature, which we all know, will by a majority of voters pass a law making the procreating of offspring over a certain number penal, she is a great deal more sanguine than I happen to be. (Cheers.) But if human nature can assent to such a law, why does not human nature

assent to such a law now? Mrs. Besant says that the workers only breed slaves for the capitalist. (Hear, hear.) She says that all their children are kept, or nearly all of them—the exceptions being hardly worth counting—in the state of society in which they are born. Well, if this is so, and if the fact is obvious, how is it that the workers do not voluntarily restrict population now? Because it is much easier to ask somebody else to come under a law than to come under it yourself. (Cheers.) I cannot help contrasting the almost Bacchanalian fury with which Mrs. Besant incites the workers to take possession of other people's property—(cries of "No, no")—and the bated breath and whispering humbleness with which she reminds her Socialist friends that they really do not attach quite sufficient importance to this law of population. Mrs. Besant did not use to speak so. She spoke in sterner accents years ago. (Cries of "Oh" and "Question".) Is it not a fact, after all, that great as may be the courage required to face juries and judges and prisons, a still higher and rarer courage is required to turn on friends who are mistaken and tell them in the stern accents of verity what they have neglected or forgotten? (A Voice: "She has the courage".) A gentleman, who has I fancy interrupted me more than once, says Mrs. Besant has courage. I have not said she has not. (Cheers.) Now, what kind of law is it to be that will deal with population? Are you going to have public committees watching young couples? (Laughter.) Are you going to say a husband and wife shall have two, three, or four children as the case may be? And if they have more children than the law prescribes, how will you deal with them? Are you going to put them in prison? If so, you must keep them there. And when they come out they will violate the law with the same equanimity as before. (Cheers.)

This law of population is the rock on which all communistic and Socialistic schemes must founder. (Cries of "No, no.") Suppose you have Socialism inaugurated tomorrow. Suppose you remove the competition which Mrs. Besant detests. Suppose you guarantee, as she undertakes to guarantee, productive work for everybody. Suppose you monopolise all the means of subsistence. You are then bound to do what the law of England does at present: make the possessors of the means of sub-

sistence find food for those who are out of employment. (Cheers.) The State would be obliged to feed everybody who was starving for want of work. ("Oh, oh.") The lady or gentleman who disputes that is really without a rudimentary acquaintance with the subject. Persons out of work have to be fed now, and persons out of work under Socialism will also have to be fed. (A Voice: "There will be none".) A gentleman says, "there will be none". Well, he and I differ on that point. You *will* have to find food for all your population. You remove competition, and you remove parental responsibility for offspring. The feeding of the children will be done by the State if the parents are unable to do it, and what will be the result? (A Voice: "Enough to eat".) The result will be—(dissent)—Well, really, it appears that the manners of economical atavism are quite what one might expect. (Laughter.) You would have to do one of two things. Either you would have to weed out the utterly incapable—the semi-idiotic, the scrofulous, the consumptive, and all those whom a sensible doctor would declare to be unfit to procreate—and sternly forbid them to do so. Otherwise you would have a perennial supply of the unfit, who would all flourish; whereas, under the present competitive system, notwithstanding our hospitals, our charities, and our workhouses, they get gradually eliminated, because the odds are against them from the very beginning. (Cheers, and cries of "No, no".) If you are not prepared to do that, you would have swarms of population beyond your power to maintain. Then what would happen? Either there would be such anarchy, such poverty, that society would remould itself round some stable centre—perhaps in the form of a military conqueror—figuring once more as a savior of society; or else the more vigorous and more progressive members would separate themselves from the rest, form new communities of their own, strike out in fresh directions, and so restore the old competive system which was abolished in a moment of Socialistic folly. (Cheers.)

I am very sorry to spoil a pretty peroration. I am very sorry to throw a cold shower of common sense upon what was a glowing piece of rhetoric. But at the same time I would ask Mrs. Besant, who accuses me of mistranslating Proudhon without giving a better translation herself, how she comes to read *Liberté, Egalité, et Fraternité* as meaning

anything Socialistic? "Egalité", which we translate equality—very roughly, by the way, though—has never meant in the mouths of the French people who used it anything like equality in the Socialistic or Communistic sense. Nor has "fraternity" meant anything like Communism. Liberty and equality were both meant as a protest against the privilege created by law under the *ancien régime*. *Egalité* meant equality before the law for everyone, high and low, rich and poor; the abolition of all law-created distinctions; the placing of everybody on what Thomas Paine called the "democratic floor", where he is entitled to no more consideration than his own energy, intellect, and character entitle him to. (Cheers.) Perhaps Mrs. Besant will tell me what great leader of the French Revolution used the word *égalité* as meaning anything like Socialistic equality. If she cannot point to any such leader, and if the word has never been used in that sense, it appears to me that her peroration was far more misleading than my translation of Proudhon's definition of property. My translation was as near as possible, considering the difference between the genius of the two languages, which makes it utterly impossible to translate epigrams from one into the other without some roughness and some loss of the finer shades of meaning. (Cheers.)

Practically Mrs. Besant, in one of her remarks, gave up the whole of the debate. She said that it was perfectly absurd—and I agree with her—to start Socialistic experiments in the midst of a competitive society; or, as Mr. Hyndman grandiosely called it in his debate with Mr. Bradlaugh, "making Socialistic oases in a howling desert of competition". By the way, Arabs and other people do keep up oases in the desert, where they cheer and refresh the traveller with palm trees and water. Mr. Hyndman and his friends might try to do the same kind of thing. But what is their admission? Why is it that Socialistic experiments cannot succeed in the midst of a competitive state of society? Because competitive society is more robust and virile, calling forth the energies of the people, and producing grander results. Socialism cannot succeed by experiment because competitive society would beat it and kill it in the open field. ("Oh, oh.") Mrs. Besant shows a wise and true instinct in asking that everybody shall join Socialism at once before it is carried out.

Socialism could never hold its own unless, by means of an overwhelming majority, it got the power to make the laws into its own hands, and used that power to proscribe every form of rivalry with itself. (Cheers.)

Monarchy, aristocracy, and such things, I am quite as much prepared to deal with as Mrs. Besant can be, and therefore they may as well be eliminated from the debate. (Cries of "No, no".) My opinion is that if many things Mrs. Besant and I equally object to were remedied there would be very little distress now or at any time. But we need not dwell upon these. They are common points of agreement. But let me say that Mrs. Besant attaches a little too much economical importance to a Duke with £200,000 a year or a rich capitalist with £50,000 a year. As a matter of fact, a man with that immense income cannot eat it and drink it. (Laughter.) A laborer once facetiously remarked, though with a great deal of truth, when someone was talking to him about a rich man: "Well, I guess he has not a bigger stomach than I have". (Laughter.) Now, what does a rich man do with his wealth? He spends nearly all of it in employing some kind of labor. (Laughter and cries of "Oh, oh".) One moment. It may be the labor of domestic servants; it may be the labor of men engaged in various forms of fine art, it may be the labor of men engaged in painting pictures, it may be the labor of men engaged in carving statuary, it may be the labor of men employed in one or other of the twelve thousand different trades that are tabulated by the Registrar-General. Well if this be so, and all the rich men were immediately abolished, all the persons who follow the trades they maintain would be thrown helplessly on the labor market. ("Oh, oh.") I say they would if it were done at once. ("Oh, oh," and cheers.) I say that the peculiar kind of work they do is only such as rich men can pay for. (Hear.) That is no argument against any kind of reform, but it certainly is an argument for gradual proceeding, instead of revolutionary haste. (Cheers.) The real grievance is that so much is spent in non-productive labor. That is the true economical grievance; and I should very much like to see less money spent in non-productive labor. But there will always be a great deal of money spent in that way, unless you widen the term productive so as to include everything that can be

done. Mrs. Besant might think that publishing a book is productive work. It is in a sense, but I doubt whether it is in a Socialistic sense. I do not know what particular value a book has. If it is printed and sells, it is worth something; but if it is not instructive or interesting, or too good for the public, and does not sell, it is only worth waste paper. It is not like a commodity turned out in the open market which has a natural value, and will always fetch it. I will turn to another point. Mrs. Besant overestimates the amount which would be distributed amongst the workers if capital were appropriated by them "with or without compensation". A fact is worth any quantity of theory, especially if the theory conflicts with it. (Laughter.) I have taken the trouble, as I have on previous occasions, to put together a few statistics. I find that in 1884 our total output of coals and metals was of the value of £64,000,000. I find also that the number of miners was about 441,000. Now if you divide the output by the number of miners, you will find it gives a total sum for each worker of £145 per year. But mark, the £64,000,000 is the *total* value of the output. In addition to the miners' wages there are other expenses, a few of which I will recite. First taxes, including income tax, as now paid; secondly, rates on the property; thirdly, interest on the capital, or sinking fund; fourthly, savings for increasing, maintaining, and extending the business; fifthly, extra payments for skill, such as foremen, engineers and managers; sixthly, rent, or royalty to the Government; seventhly, payment for clerks, surveyors, etc.; eighthly, payment for materials, machinery and ventilating apparatus; ninthly, payment for tramways, horses, and so forth; tenthly, payment for insurance and employers' liability. Now, if you took all those expenses for each colliery from the total output, you would find that they made a very serious diminution in the amount that would be available for distribution amongst the workers themselves. The total only comes to £145 for each worker, and the nett amount could not come to anything like that sum. Surely the difference between the wages now paid to the miners and the amount they would receive if the whole value of the output, minus the working expenses, were distributed amongst them, is not sufficient to justify Mrs. Besant's revolutionary proposals. She asks us to leave

the shore we are accustomed to, where great possibilities of improvement still remain, and embark with her for the opposite shore. It is politic to ask us all to go at once, for if we succeed in crossing safely the pilot will be universally praised, and if we sink there will be nobody to utter a word of blame. (Cheers.)

I will deal in my next speech, and more fully, with what Mrs. Besant has advanced to-night. What she said does not seem to have any particular relation to Socialism. The great questions of universal history—how States arose and fell, how slavery originated, how it affected civilisations, how far it helped to break them up, the growth and progress of education, and so forth—have nothing to do with the distinctive question "Is Socialism Sound?". (Cheers.) Mrs. Besant has to deal with the economical and practical objections to Socialism. She has to show, by an effort of constructive imagination, how Socialism would work in practice. But she has done nothing of the kind. She has denounced evils that we all deplore; she has urged that they should be remedied, and we all wish to remedy them. The question at issue is: Is her remedy a good one? Denouncing evil is beside the point. She must show that her remedy will cure it; and unless she does that, she has no right to invite us to follow her prescriptions. (Applause.)

ANNIE BESANT: I am almost sorry that Mr. Foote did not think it worth while to deal with the speech with which I opened, because one of the great differences between modern thought and older thought is the tendency of modern thought to study how things evolve. (Hear, hear.) And that can only be done by studying the past, and tracing through the past up to the present. The modern progress of science is based largely on that method. (Cheers.) And to renounce that, or to treat it with contempt, is to turn your back on the truth which has made the scientific progress of the last twenty years. (Hear, hear.) I pass from that, and I will deal very briefly with my peroration of last week, to which Mr. Foote objected. Now I am sure that Mr. Foote knows as well as I know that you cannot destroy the effect of a peroration after a week has elapsed. A peroration moves for the moment; it is the arguments before it that remain. A peroration is like the closing passage of a sonata, bring-

ing the music to an effective conclusion. You remember the sonata, and you cannot destroy its effect even when the chord which concluded it no longer fills the ears that listened to it. I make Mr. Foote a present of my peroration without any further remark, save this: that I admit at once that the Frenchmen who used that cry did not mean Socialism when they spoke of "liberty, equality, and fraternity". They were not face to face with a condition of society in which Socialism was possible. But what I meant in applying their phrase was that just as in those days equality meant the destruction of the privileged classes, which were then kings and nobles, so the cry of equality now means the destruction of that aristocracy of wealth which is more highly privileged and more mischievous to society than the old one. (Cheers.)

I now come to the points raised by Mr. Foote in his speech. Mr. Foote spoke as to compensation. Let me put very clearly what I said. I said that I should be willing to give life annuities to the expropriated owners. The income of the Duke of Westminster will shortly, as the building leases fall in, reach a million and a half a year. The way in which I should deal with the Duke of Westminster would be something like this: I should say—"My lord duke, you are not of the very least good in the world; you are the result of a very bad system, and we are even more responsible for that than you are, because you are only one and we are many. We have practically made you the very unprofitable creature that you are. You cannot use your hands to keep yourself. You cannot earn your living by any useful work. Although this is our fault more than yours, we cannot allow you to keep on robbing others for an income. We will therefore give you for the rest of your unprofitable life a decent little income, say of £500 a year." (Hear, hear, and laughter.) That is the sort of compensation which I meant when I spoke of life annuities. And I should be willing, in a case where a man died and left a widow, to continue the annuity to her; and I might be generous enough, if there was a son left about forty years of age, too old to learn to be of any use, to continue the annuity to him. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) I do not desire to make these people a wreckage on society—I see too much social wreckage as it is. (Cheers.) And I do not desire to add one single life to it. (Hear, hear.)

But what I do desire is to prevent these men continuing to make wreckage of thousands in order to keep themselves. (Cheers.) Then Mr. Foote says man has a right to withhold his property from sale if he chooses. Would he have used that argument in the Southern States of America to defend slavery? I deny that a man has any absolute right to withhold property from sale if he chooses. (Hear, hear.) The rights of property were made by society, and society is supreme over them. No man has a right to hold his property to the injury of the greater number among whom he lives, and you do not even now allow him so to hold it. (Hear, hear.) You force men to sell now by law, if they will not sell of their own good will, when their property is wanted for the community; and you must, if you are going to have society at all, admit the right of society to control the property of the members of the community to an enormous extent. (Hear, hear.) And if a man usurps property which he has not made, that he has no right to—property which he only holds by virtue of bad laws—then the majority has the right to repeal those laws and destroy his power of exploiting, and thus, by destroying his property in man, to free the men who must remain slaves whilst he holds them. (Cheers.) Mr. Foote says there is a moral difference between us. I grant there is an enormous moral difference between Socialism and Individualism, and the whole of the moral difference is this—that from Mr. Foote's point of view a small number of persons have the right to rob other persons and get the result of their labor, whereas Socialism says that theft is wrong in the prince as much as in the peasant, and that neither shall be allowed to rob his neighbors and live upon the labors of the industrious. (Cheers.)

Mr. Foote challenges me again on the question of the law of population, and asks me how it is possible by law to limit the population, and why not pass such a law, and why don't the workers see the difficulty now. There are several reasons why the workers of this country do not see the bearing of the law of population. In the first place, they have so little property themselves that they do not see the mischief done by making too many claimants among whom it is divided. They are already so poor that they cannot well be poorer, and they are careless and indifferent, thinking it matters comparatively little

whether twelve are starving on 12s. a week or four are starving on the same sum. (Cheers.) One important step towards limiting the population is to raise the standard of comfort; because when you do that you make the people anxious not to fall back from the comfort they have obtained. (Hear, hear.) But if always on the verge of starvation they do not feel the fall, because practically they cannot fall very much further in position. (Hear, hear.) And, unfortunately, through our history there has been an opposition from the time of Malthus between those who consider that the remedy for poverty lies in State interference and those who believe it lies in limitation of the family. The result of that has been a certain antagonism between those who would improve matters by legislative action, and those who would only deal with the law of population. And that hereditary antagonism, like the fighting of dogs and cats, comes out rather as a matter of instinct than of intelligence. Nor is that all. I ask Mr. Foote to notice that in France where you have, to some extent, raised the standard of comfort for a great part of the population, that part of the population has recognised the law of population, and has voluntarily limited its own increase. (Hear, hear.) And in every Socialist experiment in America it has been found necessary to recognise the law by the very condition of their living. And whatever steps they took—whether by preventive checks of various kinds—in every case limitation of the population has been one of the primary conditions insisted on in these communities. That is, the moment you establish Socialism, even among a limited number of persons, they recognise that you must keep the balance between the arms that produce and the mouths that eat. (Cheers.) Another reason why I think the law of population is not now seen by Socialists as it ought to be, is because of the blundering way in which it has been put by many economists. I think I have mentioned before that the old wage-fund theory on which it was based has been given up. But as this law was based by economists on an economical theory now discredited, it is not wonderful that with the discredit of the theory the other theory based on it disappears from the thoughts of Socialists. And when you take these facts into consideration—the raising of the standard of comfort; the recognition that society

must maintain its members, and that therefore every man is interested in the limitation of the family; it being then seen—as it will be then seen—that for every large family there is less leisure and more labor for the producing community, then you will have made a public opinion in favor of the limitation of the family, which is utterly impossible at the present time. (Hear, hear.) Then, again, Mr. Foote asks: How are you going to limit the number? Are you going to imprison the parents? If you do, the multiplication will go on as soon as the people come out of prison. (Hear, hear.) But you don't use such arguments against imprisonment for theft. (Hear, hear.) We know that penalties practically make conscience and public opinion. But, at the same time, I very much doubt whether for the limitation of the family you would want anything more than the education, especially, of the women, and a rather stern social boycotting for those who transgressed the limit too recklessly. (Cheers.) Nor is that all. I believe that one of the strongest arguments in favor of the limitation of the population will come from the women; as you educate your women more highly, as they take part in public life, as they become more economically independent than they are to-day, your women will refuse to be mere nurses of children throughout the whole of their active life. (Cheers.) They will be willing to give all the care that is necessary for two or three children, but will refuse to have their health ruined, and the whole of public life shut to them, by having families of ten or twelve, which are practically destructive of motherly feeling as well as of happiness and comfort in the home. (Cheers.) Mr. Foote suggests that under the present conditions the sickly, the scrofulous, and so on, get killed out amongst the poor. You do not kill them out from among the rich. And what I want is a public opinion to make it a crime for a diseased man or woman to transmit their disease to a child. (Cheers.) And it is public opinion that will do this better than any other way; and that public opinion I am trying to make. (Cheers.) But Mr. Foote says that I used to use stronger language on this question than I do now: and that it requires more courage to speak out to friends things they do not like, than even to face a judge and jury. I do not think I have softened my language on the population theory. (Hear, hear.)

I say now, as I said long ago, that the limitation of the family, if it stood by itself, would never remedy poverty. I pointed then to the changes which we wanted in the land laws and in other ways, side by side with the law of population, and I say the same still. I say the law of population alone is not our most important matter. It is more important to get the right idea on the production of wealth to-day even than it is to press—as I still press—the duty of the limitation of the family. (Cheers.) I thoroughly agree with Mr. Foote, that it does need more courage to speak unpalatable truths to friends than to face judge and jury. (Hear, hear.) And I can assure him that, in my own experience, I stood before judge and jury, and lay under sentence of imprisonment, with a far lighter heart, and with a far less troubled mind, than I have felt in taking the name of Socialist, and thus setting myself against some of those with whom I have worked for the last thirteen years—(hear, hear,)—and when I have seen faces grow cold and friends grow distant, because I have dared to speak a truth unpalatable to them. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, in calling upon Mr. Foote this time will you allow me to say that the way in which you have listened to Mrs. Besant's speech is very greatly to the credit of those who disagree with her. I want to appeal therefore to those who disagree with Mr. Foote not to allow themselves to be outdone in patience and courtesy. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. FOOTE: Unfortunately, I and the chairman misunderstood each other towards the close of my first speech. He said something about my having half-a-minute more, but he told me afterwards that I had three and a-half minutes, so I am to have my compensation in this speech. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs. Besant says you cannot spoil the effect of a peroration a week after. It depends upon the circumstances. She says a peroration is something that influences people at the moment. That is not quite my notion of a peroration. If a peroration is something that cannot subsequently be defended, I do not think it is a right thing to try to influence people with it at any moment. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs. Besant says she would compensate the Duke of Westminster in the way you heard. It is a curious thing that Mrs. Besant avoids all the ticklish parts of her case.

The Duke of Westminster, as an English nobleman, has no right whatever in the land except the right which he holds legally under the Crown. The Duke of Westminster, as a peer of the realm, can be dealt with by Parliament, with the Crown's sanction, differently from men who have purchased the land, or men who are holders of land in the sense that their small moneys, collected together in fire and life insurance and other societies, are invested in that way. I want Mrs. Besant to tell us, not how she proposes to deal with the Duke of Westminster—with whom I, as an Individualist, believe we can deal by law—but how she proposes to deal with the hundreds and thousands of poorer persons who own smaller quantities of land—(hear, hear)—and how she proposes to deal not only with the big capitalist who makes a fortune, but with the thousands of little capitalists, some of whom only get a bare living, and others not a much better living than the highest form of skilled labor which they happen to employ.

Mrs. Besant says a man has no right to do as he pleases with his property. Aye, but what property? Mrs. Besant has referred to land, but the law of England does not recognise private property in land—not absolute private property. The soil of England is always held under law. But I do not hold my watch under law. A capitalist does not hold his capital under law, except in the sense that the law protects him against the thief who wishes to appropriate it. The land, of course, has to be sold if it stands in the way of a public improvement, but the Bill which empowers the public improvement also provides for fair compensation. I want Mrs. Besant not to be merely facetious about the Duke of Westminster—as to whom I don't care very much—but to deal with the interests of all these other persons—hundreds and thousands of our fellow-countrymen, as honest as Mrs. Besant and I, as honest as all of us here—who, with their wives and children, if they have any, must all be considered in your scheme, unless you are going to violate all the instincts that throb in the heart of every man with a feeling for his fellows. (Cheers.)

As to population, Mrs. Besant says she would somehow deal with it by law. But she takes particularly good care not to tell us what kind of law she would put in operation. She trusts more to public opinion, however, in the long

run. That is exactly what I trust to, and public opinion grows under our Individualist system quite as much as it could under a Collectivist system. (Hear, hear.) It is true that the prejudiced jury, representing a mistaken majority, found Mrs. Besant guilty of an obscenity which she never committed. Yet at the same time, notwithstanding these occasional outbursts of bigotry, Individualist society is more and more willing to act fairly, and to allow discussion on vital subjects. (Hear, hear.) The proof of it lies in the fact that Mrs. Besant can go on, despite that verdict, advocating the very same principles for which the jury condemned her. (Hear, hear.) Public opinion is growing, and it cannot very well be forced. Collectivist social machinery won't, as Herbert Spencer says, produce golden actions out of leaden instincts. You have to wait. Progress is slow. Jumping at the moon is sport for lunatics. Our way in this world, set for us by nature, is steady plodding, step by step. We make some advances even on the question of population. Mrs. Besant says by-and-bye women will be educated. But we are not waiting for Collectivism to educate women. (Hear.) The Education Act of 1870, passed under an Individualist state of society, provides for the education not only of every boy, but of every girl, in the State. (Hear, hear.) Girton College, University examinations for women, education in the fine arts for girls, and tutorship even at the Royal Academy—these things are not the gift of Collectivist Socialism. (Hear, hear.) Women are being educated, and all of us are glad of it. (Cheers.) I quite believe with Mrs. Besant that as women become more educated, and take a larger interest in public affairs, and think more about general questions, they will not oppose that prejudice, which they now oppose more than men, to a prudent restriction of offspring. (Cheers.) They will refuse, as Mrs. Besant well says, when their standard of comfort and feeling and education is raised, to become mere domestic drudges from the beginning to the end of their married life. We do not want Socialism to tell us that. We see the improvement of woman going on now. If Socialism disappeared to-morrow, and was never heard of again, the cause of woman would be safe. When a great cause has raised its head from the dust, and begun to boldly challenge opposing prejudices, it must win in the long run, unless you can

crush it by law. But the time for that is gone by, and the elevation and emancipation of woman is assured. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Besant says that under a Socialistic state of society the workers would see that if they bred too fast they would injure themselves. Here is a man who is earning two pounds a week. He has four children, and the fifth is coming. He says "It is hard"; he knows his two pounds a week is becoming relatively less and less. He knows he must keep himself and all the children he brings into existence. Yet although the burden of keeping them falls directly, obviously, perceptibly, beyond all question, upon his own shoulders, Mrs. Besant says he has no inducement to refrain from breeding, but that under a Collectivist state of society the inducement will be perfectly clear. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

I will deal now with Mrs. Besant's first speech. She told us how tribes began, and as I think, quite wrongly. She said that in the tribe one man was stronger than the others and he gained the predominance. But one strong man cannot terrorise five thousand by his physical power. The five thousand could break him in a moment. Why is he the head of the tribe? The whole explanation of it is, that tribes war against tribes, and military organisation is necessary. The military machine must be worked from one centre, with one controlling mind. A debating society, as Lord Macaulay said, never fights. A general, whether he be a tribal chief, or a Duke of Marlborough, or a Napoleon, must have absolute control, otherwise the whole business will come to grief. Savages are subordinated to chiefs because everything must be subordinated to the tribal law of self-preservation. They are obliged to protect themselves against the attacks of the predatory tribes about them. There thus arises a military state of society, entirely because of the militancy of the populations surrounding the tribe, and the constant necessity of self-defence. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Besant told us quite rightly that slaves were originally captives in war. That clearly shows that slavery did not begin out of the mere lust of slavery. (Hear, hear.) Originally, as you will read in many ancient scriptures the captives taken in war were slain—immolated on the altars of cruelty. But as men got a little more intelligent and a little more humane they discontinued this, and all

the captives in war became slaves. All the various castes in India and elsewhere are simply the results of so many waves of conquest sweeping over the land, the conquerors establishing themselves as rulers, and subordinating those whom they conquered. But I do not see what that has to do with Individualism. I do not propose that we should go prowling over the world, and imposing ourselves on subordinate populations. Unfortunately we are in India, and we shall have to face many difficulties before we can clear out of it. (Hear, hear.) But if we were not in India, what sensible man would ever propose that Englishmen should go there? (Cheers.) How slavery arose is a very long question, and how it developed is a longer question still. But when Mrs. Besant says that slavery broke up all the ancient civilisations, I have to differ from her. What broke the power of Greece? The greater power of Rome. Both of them were founded on slavery. What ultimately broke the great power of Rome? Was it slavery? No. It was the employment of mercenary troops, by which the Romans themselves grew out of the habit of war, lost their old instinctive valor, and so the barbarians from the north were able to overrun them. The barbarians, who overran them, brought Feudalism. Feudalism was established by the Goths upon the ruins of the Roman Empire, and that Feudalism was slavery in another form. (Hear, hear.) The serf of the soil was no better off than the ancient slave. He was really in a worse position than the slave in the best days of the Roman Empire, when many of the leading men—artists and thinkers—were slaves. They were protected by the law then. No owner was allowed to do as he liked with his slaves. If maltreated, the slave could appeal to the tribunals, and obtain his freedom or a better master. But under Feudalism the lord was practically absolute. Out of that Feudalism our modern system has arisen. (Hear, hear.) Mrs. Besant points to the Act of 1694—I presume—by which the English aristocracy threw off from themselves the burdens of Feudalism, which went with the holdership of land, and practically threw those burdens upon the shoulders of the industrial community. I should be as glad to undo that as Mrs. Besant, but I do not see how the undoing of it conflicts with the principles of Individualism, which I am here to maintain. (Hear, hear.)

Let me now deal with something which Mrs. Besant says is Socialistic and which she claims for the principle of Socialism. She speaks of the town of Nottingham. But she might, without going to Nottingham, have found at Birmingham many years ago that the Municipality had taken over the gas supply. The Municipality may also take over the water supply. But, as I said in a previous part of this debate, no Municipality, no State, ever did, or ever will, inaugurate a new thing. (Hear, hear.) The State and the Municipality can only take over what has been begun and perfected by individual enterprise. (Cheers.) Mrs. Besant says that education is Socialistic. I hope not, I believe not. What is public education founded upon? Upon Socialism? No. Upon Individualism, upon the right of every individual brought into the world to have those duties performed that are involved in the obligation which the parents undertake. (Hear, hear.) A parent is forced to find education for his child, but the duty had been so long neglected that the State had to say—"The child, who is an individual as well as the parent, the child towards whom the parent has contracted obligations, shall be sent to school". (Hear, hear.) And as the State made it compulsory, the State had to find the machinery. It was a question of ways and means. The easiest method was to establish School Boards all over the country. And that education does not in any way interfere with competition. Certainly that education does not diminish competition. That education gives all the children brighter minds, more knowledge, keener faculties, to start with some measure of equality in that great race of life, where the prize is to the swift, and the victory to the strong. And that law—the law of all struggle, and the law of all progress—cannot be set aside by all the devices of all the dreamers in the world. (Cheers.)

ANNIE BESANT: Doubtless, from the brevity with which I had to make my opening statements, Mr. Foote did not quite catch my idea in dealing with slavery in connexion with the downfall of the older civilisations. I alleged that they fell from the great division between the proprietary and the unpropertied classes, caused by the slavery on which they were founded. And the reason why they fell was chiefly this: that those who did not labor, in their idleness grew luxurious, effeminate, and careless. (Hear,

hear.) That happened in Greece and it happened in Rome. (Cheers.) The earlier strength of Rome broke down Greece where the slave canker had existed longer, and had made these idle, useless classes unable to defend themselves. The younger vigor of the Goths broke down Rome when the sloth made possible by the slave-class had destroyed the manhood of those who possessed them. And so in England the upper classes are growing, as the upper classes of Greece and Rome grew, luxurious, effeminate, caring more for soft living than for hard thinking. And for them, living on a vast and degraded population, there is the danger of a similar fall to that which wrecked both Greece and Rome. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote repeated the statement that no municipality had ever taken up a new thing. But he appears to have ignored the fact which I stated that the only bodies which had taken up the hydraulic machine for supplying water at high pressure were municipalities, and that that fact was fatal to the whole of the argument that the State can never inaugurate an improvement. (Cheers.) Mr. Foote ignores the fact, and simply repeats the statement.

I go back to Mr. Foote's earlier speech. He asks once more, Why do we not make a Socialist oasis, and he says: Because Socialism could not hold its own against competition. It is true that a small number of Socialists, who are poor, entirely without plant, without accumulated capital, cannot hold their own against the vast accumulated capital which is in the hands of the supporters of the competitive system to-day. (Hear, hear.) The competitors have the railways, the great carrying companies, the canals; they have a vast store of goods and of accumulated wealth of every kind. It is not reasonable that a few of those who have helped to make this wealth should go outside, and, practically without capital, begin a fresh accumulation with the hope of being able to hold their own against the results of the robbery of their rights for centuries. (Cheers.) Such a proposal is a proposal utterly unworthy of consideration. The Socialists mean to have the railways and the canals and the plant that they and their fellows have made, and not to leave these to the competitive system whilst they go out naked into the wilderness to make more. (Cheers.) Then Mr. Foote stated that a very rich man cannot eat his income,

and he told us of a not very clear-sighted agricultural laborer who said that the rich man had not a bigger stomach than he had. The agricultural laborer wanted more education, and then he would have seen a little further, for he would have seen that the rich man with his servants—the domestics, the gardeners, and the gamekeepers—has a hundred stomachs to fill, and fills them all out of the produce of the laboring classes who support him. (Cheers.) It is quite true that a Vanderbilt cannot eat up the whole of his income; but he can get a lot of lazy persons to hang on to him; and that is where the mischief of these very wealthy men is shown. And if the agricultural laborer had been able to see a little further he would have seen a multiplication of stomachs feeding on other men's labor, which is the result of the very wealthy classes. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote says that all the servants and others employed by the wealthy would be idle if capital were abolished. He threatened us with 12,000 trades—all the members of which would be thrown helpless on the world. But why so? A large number of trades would, I admit, fall out of existence in a healthy and rational condition of society. Those trading in jewels, which have only their value for show; traders in many articles which are utterly worthless, and which are simply bought by persons who do not know how to waste their money fast enough—these useless trades would fall out under Socialism; and the men who used to make so many articles of luxury for the idle and the rich would be employed in making useful and beautiful articles for the masses of the community whose wider wealth would enable them to purchase them, and would multiply a hundred fold the commodities which would be wanted for the comfort of the whole of the community. (Hear, hear.) For what you have got is so much human labor to be utilised in the best way; and while it makes useless articles and luxuries for the wealthy, you are depriving those who are wanting absolute necessaries of the results of labor in which they have a right to share. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote spoke of productive and non-productive work. I object to the phrase. Useful and useless work are better terms. It would be far better to speak of useful work, when the work done supplies anything to society of which society stands in need. (Hear, hear.) I draw no distinc-

tion in usefulness between the teacher and the grower of corn, between the author of a great book and the man who builds a useful house. Society has many needs, and they all have to be supplied; and any man who fulfils a function that is useful—that man deserves his place in society. There is no sense in the distinctions between productive and non-productive work, which took John Stuart Mill into the absurdity of calling the work of an artist who painted a picture productive work, whereas the work of the man who played a sonata on the piano he called non-productive work. These distinctions are idle and useless, and the sooner we get rid of them the better. (Cheers.)

Then Mr. Foote says to me: I do not care what you do with the Duke of Westminster, but how will you deal with the poor men who have their own freeholds and a little money invested.

Mr. Foote: As a point of order, I did not say I did not care, but that I did not care *much*.

Annie Besant: I should suggest to Mr. Foote as I did before that that lies quite as much on him as a land nationaliser as on me as a Socialist. I challenged him on that point, and he avoided it. I said I should have the same law for the rich as for the poor. I should destroy private property in land completely and utterly. But I would make this distinction: Where a man had earned money and invested his savings in the land, I should admit that he had a right to the usufruct of that land during his life, or else to receive back the sum he invested in it—without payment of interest—if he preferred so to receive it; and I should certainly in this case give full compensation on this principle, that you may compensate a man fully when you are dealing with what he has absolutely earned, but there is no need to compensate a man fully when you are taking from him what he did not earn and what he became possessed of by the labor of others. (Cheers.) Mr. Foote spoke of dealing with thousands of poor capitalists barely getting a living now. Socialism will put them in the way of getting more than a bare living, and so they will profit by Socialism. And the result, we say, of your competition is to make the lives of the poor capitalists a burden and misery; more and more of the wealth is going into the hands of the few, and all these little fishes will get

swallowed up by the big ones. (Hear, hear.) We want to save them from this misery by placing the distribution of wealth in the hands of organised societies, so that there may not be so many competing in getting a living out of a small amount of capital, but rather that they may be in the position of acting as functionaries of society, fulfilling useful work for which they would receive full and complete remuneration. (Hear, hear.) Then there again I ought to say that where any small capitalist had made his capital himself I should be prepared to fully restore to him anything he had himself earned. The difference would be that he would not be able to employ it as he had been used to do in simply appropriating his neighbor's labor, but would have the result of his own work without being able to get interest upon it—without being able to make money from another person's labor. Then Mr. Foote says land is held under law, but he does not hold his watch under law. I do not understand in what other fashion he does hold it. If it were held without law probably that watch would not remain long in his pocket. As a matter of fact every right in a civilised community is based on and defended by law. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote says public opinion grows under Individualism. I have not denied it. I say that probably it would grow faster under Socialism if we may draw conclusions from analogy. Take the force of trade public opinion within a trade union. Public opinion where men are brought close together works far more strongly on them and influences them much more than it can do under our present condition of struggling. (Hear, hear.) And I agree again with Mr. Foote that public opinion cannot be forced. But public opinion can be educated, and Socialists are trying to educate the public opinion which they know will bring about changes in these matters. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote says that the Education Act was passed in an Individualistic State. Not quite so. The Education Act was passed in a State undergoing transition from Individualism to Socialism, and it is a mark of the growing Socialist feeling which is forcing these changed measures on the legislature. And the thorough Individualists—take men like Auberon Herbert and Herbert Spencer—admit this with regard to State education, and point to the growing Socialism in legislation, which they contend is a danger. But Mr. Foote, in

legislation from his Individualistic standpoint, accepts the fruit of Socialism, and then abuses the very tree from which it comes. Mr. Foote says, "We don't want Collectivism to raise women". Don't you? The Socialist body, as a body, is the only one that claims complete equality in every respect for women. (Cheers.) The old Radicals are not sound upon it; some of them are in favor of it, and some are against it. You find some Radicals everywhere denying equality to women, and trying to keep them out even from the rights of citizenship. There is no body in the world save the Socialist, whether you take them in England, or in America, or in Germany, or among the Nihilists in Russia, there is no other body where you find the absolute independence and equality of women proclaimed as one of the cardinal points in their creed. (Cheers.) That was one of the things that attracted me to the Socialist party, because they do claim absolute economical independence for women; because they do claim absolute equality for her; and because in Russia, above all, they have never grudged to women the place of danger, but have stood side by side with her in conspiracy, in peril, aye, and in the very worst prisons and on the scaffold. (Hear, hear.) They have never said, Your sex disqualifies you for the post of danger; our strength shall guard your weakness. And this is the noblest thing which Socialism has to say—there is no distinction of class, no distinction of sex. It destroys every distinction and every enmity, and places men and women on one platform of duty and of right. (Cheers.) And when Mr. Foote tells us we do not need Socialism to do this, my answer is, only under Socialism is that complete enfranchisement of women possible. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote says slavery existed under feudalism. It has existed under every Individualistic condition of society, and it must so be if the race is always to be to the swiftest and the victory of the battle always to be with the strongest; for if this is to be taken as meaning absolute muscular ability and absolute want of scruples of conscience and human sympathy, then, indeed, no true equality is possible. But, as I believe, real individuality will only become possible under Socialism —(hear, hear)—no Individualism is possible while men are struggling for bare life. So long as they have to think only of food there is no possibility of that brighter day of

progress to a higher future. And only as you free them from that continual want; only as you secure to them the necessities of existence; only as you destroy monopoly of that material for the production of wealth on which this controversy really turns; only as you destroy that monopoly can you have the leisure for the possibility of culture, the possibility of refinement, and the possibility of time, for that great effort which will change the masses of the people from the drudges they are to-day into the cultured men and women who shall form our Socialist Commonwealth. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE: Mrs. Besant gave us another very glowing picture of what Socialism would do for women. It is all future tense with her. She plays the *rôle* of the prophet throughout. Socialism may do this and that, and Socialism may not do it. But when Mrs. Besant says that Socialists are the only body who proclaim, and have proclaimed, equality between man and woman—by which I suppose she means legal equality, for otherwise the word can have no meaning—I happen to remember that a body with which I have had the honor to work for many years, and with which Mrs. Besant had the honor to work before ever she joined the Socialists, not only proclaimed that equality, but in practice made no distinction whatever between the sexes. (Cheers.) The best way to promote the equality of the sexes is not to be always shouting it, but to practise it. If you treat women as though they were men's equals you will do far more than by the most ardent declamation. (Hear, hear.) I happen also to belong to one of the largest Radical societies in London—the Metropolitan Radical Federation, which is an organisation of nearly all the workmen's and Radical clubs in the metropolis. When the programme was drawn up one gentleman withdrew because adult suffrage was carried instead of manhood suffrage. Only one withdrew, and all the rest laughed at him. So I do not think Mrs. Besant is quite right in saying that Radicals, here, there, and everywhere, are opposed to woman suffrage. (Hear, hear.) I know that Admiral Maxse and Mr. Cremer are opposed to woman suffrage; but does Mrs. Besant mean to say that every Socialist is prepared to defend it? (Cries of "Yes".) I doubt it. Mr. Belfort Bax, who is one of the leading Socialist writers, calls woman suffrage a *bourgeois* superstition, and

says that as women are numerically the majority, it would be handing over political power absolutely into their hands. (Cheers.) That is pretty much the view which Admiral Maxse takes. But I quite agree that neither Radicalism nor Socialism is to be judged by an individual member. The great body of Radicals are in favor of woman suffrage. I do not see what is to be gained by charging on them what they are not guilty of. (Hear, hear.)

Again, we are told by Mrs. Besant that I claimed for my Individualism all that has been done from her principles in a transition state of society. But how does she know this is a transition state of society? How does she know that Socialism is going to win? (Hear, hear.) It is all prophecy. She cannot *know* that Socialism is going to succeed. I don't say it won't, but I don't think it will —(hear, hear)—and I deny Mrs. Besant's right to claim that we are in a transition state of society. Time will show. I have my opinion about it as well as she, and I have quite as much right to my opinion as she has to hers. (Hear, hear.)

As to the difference between productive and non-productive labor, Mrs. Besant says there is none, or it is not worth taking notice of. She says the difference is between useful and useless labor. Permit me to say that in the long run it comes to very much the same thing. When John Stuart Mill was dealing with productive and non-productive labor, he was dealing with it simply as an economist, who was considering the laws of the production and distribution of material wealth. The man who plays a sonata does not produce a material thing, but the man who carves a beautiful statue produces something which has a market value—something which could be put into the market and sold. Mill was drawing a real and not a fanciful distinction, without being concerned at all, as an economist, with the moral or æsthetic aspects of the matter. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs. Besant comments upon my allusion to the facetious laborer, and says that he had a good deal to learn. Undoubtedly he had; but not as to the dimensions of their respective stomachs. (Laughter.) Mrs. Besant says that a rich man gets a lot of idle persons about him. They are not always idle. The real fact is, as I said, that the man of wealth gets about him a lot of persons whom he employs

in labor which in non-productive. That is the whole gravamen of the charge. I am not sure that all the rich men who employ labor are idle. Some of them have to work very hard, and some of the persons they employ have to work hard, although their labor produces nothing, and does not help to swell the material, or intellectual, or moral wealth of the community. (Hear, hear.) Mrs. Besant thinks that a large number of the twelve thousand trades I referred to are useless. (Hear, hear.) But if she looks at the names of many of them she will see that most of them are not employed by rich persons. They are trades of all sorts and kinds and descriptions. It appears to me that Mrs. Besant does not really see the gravity of the proposals she is making. She does not seem to see that the labor in these industries will have to be organised. She does not seem to see that Collectivism, if it were agreed to, would have to face tremendous difficulties. She does not seem to see that it would have to provide by sheer foresight the machinery for carrying out all the multifarious labors of society, that are now done by individuals finding out the proper spheres for their operations. (Cheers.)

Socialistic experiments, Mrs. Besant says, could not be expected to succeed. I know it. I agree with her. I think they will never succeed, except occasionally here and there, as in America where the ordinary laws of human society are contravened. (Hear, hear.) Mrs. Besant referred to the way in which they dealt with the population question. Yes, and in one of the communities, owing to the religious principle, or, as I should prefer to call it, the principle of fanaticism, they had only two babies in twelve months among two hundred and fifty adults. (Laughter.) I know very well, in a small community like that, you can deal with the population question. I know that in a small community, which is recruited from all the cranks of the world, you can hold men together by a principle which the general run of humanity would not tolerate. Mrs. Besant says that Socialism would fail because it has not possession of all the railways, canals, etc. I fail to understand this. The railways will carry your Socialist produce, as well as Individualist produce, and at the same rates to the same markets. You do not want to take over the railways in order to be put on an equality with Indi-

vidualists. If your produce will compete successfully with theirs you will beat them, but not else. You know better than to try it. (Cheers.) You say you cannot get capital now. I pointed in my previous speech to the fact that trades unions have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds in their strikes and in resisting lock-outs—in many cases justifiably, but in some cases not—but they have not started, as far as I am aware, a single concern for the production of commodities, under organised, voluntary, co-operative labor. (Cheers.) And why have they not done it? Because they are not yet ripe for it. Again, in the co-operative societies that distribute—and those are the general body of co-operative societies in our country—that sell goods in the course of a year to the amount of over £26,000,000 in value, you find that a great difficulty is to find proper managers, and a greater difficulty still is, how to keep them. (Hear, hear.) They have also found it exceedingly difficult to produce their own goods, for they generally find that they can buy in the open market the produce of Individualist enterprise better and cheaper than they can make for themselves. (Hear, hear.) If they could produce better and cheaper themselves, they would do so to-morrow. But distribution is one thing, and production is quite another. (Hear, hear.) What does the State produce? What *did* the State ever produce? What *can* the State ever produce? Water, gas? When Individualism has once produced these the question is mainly one of distribution. Mrs. Besant says that somebody has invented an improvement in water-supply and that municipalities are taking it up. Well, I have not much information on that point. Mrs. Besant does not say who the man is, or what the invention is. I should like to investigate it before I take a mere statement like that absolutely. Not that I distrust Mrs. Besant, but when a statement passes from one to another, although there may be no intention to exaggerate, there may be some exaggeration. I should like to investigate it fully before I dealt with that improved machine. But meanwhile I will say this: No municipality invented it. It was invented by an individual seeking his own gain. (Cheers.) Then again, education is not production. It is a question of distribution; the State does not produce its schoolmasters; the State does not produce its scholars. All the State does is to put the children and

the teachers into juxtaposition. It is a question of distribution. (Hear, hear.) The Post Office itself is simply a question of distribution. Our Socialist friends often attach great importance to it, and I find Mrs. Besant's colleagues introducing it as a very fine Socialistic experiment. But let us see. The Post Office produces nothing. It distributes an article which is peculiarly imperishable. It is not like meat, or fish, or tea, or sugar. Letters, newspapers, and book-post parcels, whatever the climate or the temperature may be, whether it be wet or dry, hot or cold, arrive at their destination pretty much what they were when they were posted. (Hear, hear, and a voice: "What about the parcels post?".) I will say a word about that in a moment. The Post Office is also protected by law against competition. The Post Office is allowed to charge its own price. And how is the work done under these conditions? There is no datum to go upon in deciding whether the Post Office is cheap or not. You have no private enterprise competing with it, for competition is prevented by law. But here and there an illustration does sometimes arise which shows that the Post Office is not so cheap after all. The Post Office says it carries letters from one part of England to another for one penny, just as it carries a letter round the corner. But the cost is nearly the same, whether the letter is carried round the corner or to Newcastle. The difference is simply in the cost of the transit paid to the railway company. The labor of collecting letters, sorting them, and delivering them, is the same whether they go to the next street or to Scotland. (Hear, hear.) It was found, even in the old coaching days, that the cost of taking a letter to Edinburgh was only the fraction of a farthing, and that all the other expense was incurred in collecting and distributing and other forms of labor. The other day I had to send a parcel across London. The Post Office wanted eighteenpence, but the Parcels Delivery Company wanted fourpence. Of course, I sent it by the latter. This is a good illustration of the advantage of private competition. Individualism will beat your Socialist production or distribution right out. You know it. You are afraid to compete with it. Therefore you want the law to crush all rivalry. You would show Socialism the brightest star by darkening all the rest of the sky. (Cheers.)

FOURTH NIGHT.

MR. ÆNEAS SMITH IN THE CHAIR.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure the debate to-night will require little preface from me. Will you allow me to impress upon you the absolute necessity of attention to the speakers? The turn of a word, or even an emphasis, may affect the meaning; and as this debate is intended for others besides those who are here, I am sure you will see the necessity of paying attention to both sides. (Hear, hear.) I will now call upon Mr. Foote.

Mr. FOOTE: Although we have occupied three evenings in discussing this question, there remains very much still to be said—so much, indeed, that I shall, if possible, keep straight on on my own lines this evening, leaving Mrs. Besant to reply in her speeches to what I say. As on last Wednesday, I prefer to begin with a few figures. Figures are facts—or should be; and there can be little dispute as to the truth of the old proverb that an ounce of fact is worth a pound of theory. Mrs. Besant proposes as a Socialist that all capital as well as land should be appropriated by the State. (Hear, hear.) And I can quite understand that a large number of persons who are not much accustomed to analysing figures, and who see wealth which they can never hope to possess often massed in the hands of one man, fancy that if the State did appropriate all the land and all the capital, there would be such an extraordinary increase in the earnings, or at any rate in the receipts, of the masses of the people, that the millennium might almost be thought to have arrived. Now I am really sorry to say that figures do not support this enchanting prospect. The Socialists are very fond of saying that Mr. Giffen holds a brief for the capitalists. (Hear, hear.) In fact, Mrs. Besant has said it in this debate. Yet I notice that whenever Mr. Giffen serves their turn, they use his figures without the least scruple, and only raise objec-

tions when the figures seem to go in the opposite direction. It seems to me that if Mr. Giffen's figures are not correct, and the Socialists know it, they should compile a different set of statistics, and let us see what, according to Socialistic research, the real facts of the case are. (Hear, hear.) But fortunately for my purpose Mrs. Besant has, in one of her articles in her magazine, virtually admitted, with respect to Mr. Giffen's division of the £1,200,000,000 at which he places the annual income of this country, that he is practically right. Now the £1,200,000,000 is divided as follows. Capital, according to Mr. Giffen's figures, and according to Mrs. Besant's admission, receives £400,000,000, although on that point, I think it only fair to say that Mr. Giffen thinks the amount is relatively exaggerated; but still he puts it at the highest possible figure. Working incomes that are taxed amount to £180,000,000; and the working classes receive incomes which are not assessed amounting to £620,000,000. Now that £400,000,000 which capital receives undoubtedly looks a large sum. At a superficial glance, it may seem that Mrs. Besant is perfectly right when she contends that what she calls idle capital ought not to receive this large amount every year in the shape of interest. (Hear.) But let us look below the surface, and see what this £400,000,000 return on capital really implies. Of this amount, I think, Mrs. Besant is prepared to admit that something like £100,000,000 comes as return on English capital invested abroad. Now if the Socialists appropriated all the capital in this country, unless all the world were socialised at the same time—which is very much of a dream—it would be impossible to exploit that hundred millions. It is paid by foreign countries, and foreign countries would in all probability continue to pay the interest on these investments to the persons who made them. This sum must therefore be deducted. It is not a sum which can by any means be appropriated. Next, Mr. Giffen states—and I think he cannot be far from the truth—that about £200,000,000 every year are added to the amount of the national capital, which is, of course, required to find employment for the increasing number of the workers; for although the law of population is going to be dealt with in the Socialist millenium, it is not dealt with at present, and it requires more capital to keep a larger number of persons every

year in productive work. There would, therefore, only remain £100,000,000, if so much as that, to be seized, or appropriated, or rescued, according as Mrs. Besant pleases to term it, and to be distributed among the workers. Now if we take the workers as the main body of the population, and I presume Mrs. Besant would agree to that, this £100,000,000 would only amount to about one shilling a week, or less than three pounds per year. If the whole of the £180,000,000 at present received by skilled labor, either of hand or head, should also be appropriated, there would be a further sum of from five to six pounds a year for each person available, the total amount thus obtained coming to about eight pounds a year per head, or in other words about three shillings a week. Now is that three shillings a week anything like what Mrs. Besant's picture of the Socialist millenium implies? To my mind it is not. And that amount could not be increased unless we found some means of increasing, first the sum total of the capital of the country, and next the income of the country which arises from the productive use of that capital. (Hear, hear.)

Now let us look at these figures in another way. The total income of the country, setting aside nearly £100,000,000 derived from foreign investments, and £200,000,000 saved every year to increase the capital for further production, amounts to about £900,000,000. Taking the entire population of the country, it amounts, roughly speaking, to £20 per head. That is, for a family of five there would be an income of £120. Of course this implies that the present long hours of labor are to continue, and the extensive employment of women and children as at present. But if the hours of labor were shortened, if only the adult males were employed, if the females and the children were no longer allowed to engage in industrial pursuits as they now do, you would probably have little more than half that sum; that is something over £60 per family of five. (Hear, hear.) But I will take it at the outside, and regard the total for a family of five as £120. On the most sanguine estimate then, by equalising everybody all round, there would only be £2 6s. a week for every family; and that wage would have to be made up to the inferior workers by taking from the reward of skilled labor. There is no escape from this dilemma that I can perceive. Perhaps

Mrs. Besant may be more sagacious. If so, all the better for her position. But if she cannot see any escape it simply comes to this: that unless you can exploit the wages of skilled labor, and give a portion of them to unskilled labor, the millenium would be as far off as ever. (Hear, hear.) Now I deny that that would be right, to begin with. And I deny, in the second place, that it would be economically sound. (Hear, hear.) Not only is skill necessary, but I venture to say the reward of unskilled labor is greater where skill directs it than it could be without that direction, even if skilled labor takes what seems to unskilled labor a preposterous share. (Cheers.) If you contravene this, by all means let us see on what grounds you contravene it. It will not do simply to say the wages of superintendence are too high, or that skill receives too much. I say that skill will be paid. (Hear, hear.) I say that if you don't pay in our country for skill it will emigrate to countries where it would find its proper reward. (Cheers.)

Now having adduced these figures, which are at least worthy of some attention, I propose to deal with some of the practical difficulties of Mrs. Besant's scheme. You will perhaps remember that I said she had not by an effort of constructive imagination attempted to show us that her scheme would work well in practice. But that is absolutely necessary. Any scheme can be made to look well on paper. (Hear, hear.) Any scheme which can put its good side forward, and never have any of its ill aspects presented, would naturally gain a great deal of acceptance among the unthinking, and a good deal of applause among those whose hearts on this subject are a good deal bigger than their heads. (Cries of "Oh, oh".) I am sorry that any gentleman should resent the idea that he has a big heart, and if it pains him to think so I will retract the observation. (Cheers and laughter.) Unfortunately whatever scheme you propose would have to work in practice with the same old human nature we all know. (Hear, hear.) I have said that in my opinion Mrs. Besant takes too optimistic a view of human nature. That is not a matter we can easily discuss, because all people differ more or less in their estimate of human nature, and the thing must be left for everyone to decide for himself. But certainly there is a great deal of improvidence in human nature.

There is a great of want of forethought in human nature. There is a great deal of stupidity in human nature. (Laughter.) There is a great deal of idleness in human nature. (Hear, hear.) If you have a scheme which looks excellent on paper, promising to work with a brand-new form of human nature, in which all the old evils are eliminated and only its better qualities survive, naturally you have not a very difficult task before you. But taking human nature as we know it, leaving a slight margin for probable improvement in the immediate future, let us see how this scheme of Mrs. Besants would be likely to work. First let us deal with its economical aspect. Mrs. Besant holds—following Gronlund in this, as she follows him in so many other points—that the industries of the country would be conducted by groups of workers holding capital—that is holding all the machinery and all the tools, every kind of plant and every kind of structure necessary for carrying on their trade. Now as I pointed out in a previous part of this discussion there are no fewer than twelve thousand different trades tabulated by the Registrar General. At the outset it looks an extremely difficult thing for nominees of the State, public committees, or what not, to decide how much capital is the proper amount for each of these twelve thousand groups. I should be very sorry to sit on the committee myself. (Laughter.) It would tax more powers than I possess. But as very sensible persons are going to turn up in the immediate future, that may not be a very great difficulty after all. (Laughter and hear, hear.)

Now I put it to Mrs. Besant that these groups would either be related to each other under a central Board, or they would be separate. In either case you would have to face one of two evils. If they are connected together under one Board, if they have all the capital necessary to conduct their enterprise, if they also have complete control over it so that they can fix their wages and decide the prices of the commodities which they will put into the market, all the community will be absolutely at the mercy of any particular group; and if the group be the producers of one of the prime necessaries of life, in a manufacturing country like ours, the dependence of the rest of the community upon it would be something shocking to contemplate. (Hear, hear.) Now suppose the groups are separate. Then the competition which Mrs. Besant so

much dreads will simply continue—for group will still compete with group. I suppose people will not be obliged to purchase from whatever group the committee may specify. The better kinds of work would, of course, be done by the better kinds of workmen, and these would gradually find each other out. They would group together, and the most skilled groups would get the largest share of public support, while the unskilled would be gradually driven out of employment, and in all periods of commercial distress they would be thrown upon the community, who would have to be responsible for their support. (Cheers.) Even if all your groups were connected under one Board, you would have the evils of competition, because the groups of persons in similar industries in other countries would compete with ours in the general market. In fact, as I have said before, you could not by any mechanism destroy that competition, which is not a hindrance to progress, but rather, as I hold, the very essence of progress, stringing the faculties of men in the great battle of life, where if occasionally the sluggish are left behind, there is reward for those who have the courage and the energy to hold their own. And this applies to the great mass of the people. Even in the greatest commercial crisis—and you hear so much now in the papers about public distress—the great majority of the workers are in fair remunerative employment. It is only a small percentage who are out of work, depending upon public or upon private charity. (Hear, hear.)

I should like to know how these groups are going to settle prices. Suppose a group fixes the price of an article, and says, "That is what it takes us to produce it"? Who is to estimate this? There is a very good way of estimating whether a thing is offered at the right price or not now. Supply and demand settles it in the open market. But if the price is to be fixed by a group, then one of two things would happen—either that group would be able to exact something which under the present competitive system it would not be able to get from the community, or else all the other groups would raise their prices as well, and I need not say that a common rise of prices would leave things exactly the same as before, without the least advantage to anybody concerned. (Hear, hear.)

Next, I should like to know whether foreign compe-

tition would not have something to do with the price of commodities in our own country even under Socialism. All the world is some day to be Socialised, but still it will take a good deal of time. Perhaps it may be said that the Social Democrats are making advances in Germany. (Cheers.) Well, perhaps so; but if you were to ask the Social Democrats of Germany to sit down and write out what they all want, you would find there are large differences between them. In my opinion, the social democracy of Germany is largely a reaction against the oppressive militarism of Bismarck and Moltke. (Hear, hear.) If the country were allowed, not only nominal, but actual free institutions, we should hear a great deal less of fanciful schemes and extreme ideas. (Cheers.)

I should also like to know how wages are to be settled. Mrs. Besant says in one of her pamphlets that the worker would have control over the price of his own labor, exactly as he has now. Well, I fail to see this. Wages would have to be fixed by a committee, and from what I know of human nature I should think it highly probable, if there are eleven commonly skilled persons and one exceptionally skilled person, that they would pull him down to their economical level. (Hear, hear.) I believe that if salaries had to be fixed, salaries would be fixed by the vast majority pretty much on their own level, and in that case, as I have said before, I believe they would drive skill out of the market. (Hear, hear.) But how would the wages of the general run of workers be fixed? How *could* it be fixed, in the long run, except by the market value of the commodities they produced? Well, that is exactly how wages are fixed, in the long run, now. There would have to be a return on capital, as there is now. There would have to be, if your industrial enterprises are to be fairly successful, the same payments for skill as at present. Then, if the groups were overrun, as many of them would be, owing to the pressure of population; if the lower unskilled labor-market were flooded by this growth of population—a disaster to which the higher skilled groups would be less subject; then wages would gradually get lower and lower. The only remedy would be to raise prices. But that is impossible. In the long run the only way of fixing wages is leaving it to be determined by the price of the commodity; and the price

of the commodity in the open market, no matter whatever Socialism may do, would inevitably be determined by the great economical law of supply and demand. (Cheers.)

Next, I should like to know how you are going to settle the question of occupations. Mrs. Besant thinks it would be pretty much the same as now, and that if a particular trade were flooded, a man would have to go into something else—or rather a boy, for that is the end of life at which you begin learning a business. Well, that may seem very nice to some people, but to my mind it seems an intolerable tyranny. (Hear, hear.) Occupations are not so easily settled. There would, of course, be a rush for the best kind of work. Who is to settle who shall have them? Would it not be a question of first come first served? And would not those who got inside stand as a rampart to guard the rings, and keep outsiders from coming in and lowering the wages of their privileged groups. (Cheers.) The inferior groups would naturally take all the rest. But suppose you had a more ideal system, and the occupations were determined by fitness. How will you estimate the fitness? Who is to decide whether a gloomy, melancholy youth like James Watt has in him the capacity which he manifests in after life? Who is to decide whether Shakspere, running away from home, is going to be the mightiest poet in the world? (Cheers.) Who is to decide whether Robert Burns at the plough-tail is to be the greatest glory of Scotland? (Cheers.) Who is to decide these things? You cannot decide them by forethought. You can only allow them to be decided by Nature herself, giving free play and exercise to all qualities, and letting the highest and the best come to the front. (Cheers.)

Then, of course, in all societies there is a great deal of dirty and irksome work to be done. (Hear, hear.) It is idle to shun facts. I have said before in this debate, and I repeat it now, that the sure sign of a man of judgment is the recognition of a fact as unalterable, and the sure sign of a fool is the inability to recognise that facts *are* unalterable. Now, this dirty and irksome work would have to be performed by somebody. Mrs. Besant thinks that in the Socialist State there will be a much greater mixture of labor than at present. She says the clerk will be as ready to fill the cart as a carter, and that the carter

will be as ready to handle the pen as the clerk. (Laughter.) I do not believe it. Still, I do not deny Mrs. Besant her right to believe it. What is the fact at present? The fact is, human nature consists of all levels—from Newton and Shakspere to the lowest forms of mentality outside the walls of a lunatic asylum. There are all grades. What to one man is utterly disgusting, to another man is scarcely irksome. What to a man of very fine tastes and feelings would be simply intolerable, to another man would be simply something which he would perhaps rather avoid, but it does not make his daily life a burden, and his nightly life sleepless. (Hear, hear.) Now, at present the lower forms of human nature fall into positions where they do the more irksome and dirty work, and it is less irksome and disagreeable to them than to others. (Hear, hear, and "Oh, oh.") If you were to put Shakspere, if you were to put a highly skilled physician, or a consummate artist, to the same kind of labor which is done as a matter of course by some of the coarser human organisms, it would be infinitely more distressing to them. (Hear, hear.) And I say that generally the finer intellect goes with finer tastes. (Hear, hear.) But suppose this dirty work, this irksome work—as Mrs. Besant proposes—should be divided among all. What would be the result? Here is a skilled surgeon who has to perform the most delicate operations. With a sensitive touch, the lancet being inside the skin and invisible, he has to discriminate between one tissue and another, and the life or death of the patient depends upon his hand not swerving a hair's-breadth from the right line. To tell me that that man can go out for half-an-hour to fill the place of a carter, and come back retaining his previous fine skill, is to tell me something utterly repugnant to common-sense. (Cheers.)

I shall conclude this half-hour's speech—for I have a good deal more to urge—by dealing with the question of amusements. All theatres, concert rooms, parks, public galleries, museums, etc., are to be regulated by State committees. Fancy a State committee trying to manage the Lyceum Theatre. (Laughter.) Fancy a State committee dictating what Mr. Irving shall play. Fancy a State committee deciding all these things. What would happen? The great general average of low taste would swamp the better taste. The average taste, I believe, would not be

for Patti, but for Jenny Hill. (Hear, hear.) Those who wanted the higher and better forms of amusement would be asked if they were so much better than their neighbors, and whether what was good enough for Smith, Brown, Jones, and Robinson, was not good enough for all the rest. (Cheers, and hear, hear.) I am not surprised at that "hear, hear", but I am sorry. I say that the better forms of amusement suit the better natures. The highest natures require the highest forms of recreation. Under the present system they can gratify their tastes. But if all the means of production, all the capital of the country, all the halls, and all the theatres, are to be under State regulation, the great mass of lower tastes will swamp the superior. Instead of the world being advanced in all those higher qualities that are of the very essence of progress, it would be driven back, generation after generation, until in the course of time we should return to the savagery and anarchy from which we have emerged. (Great cheers.)

ANNIE BESANT: Friends, in making my last half hour's speech in this debate, I propose to mark exactly the stage that we have reached; to note what are the difficulties that I have put before Mr. Foote, which he has not met, and to point out also how many of the difficulties that he has raised are difficulties of the nature of a nightmare rather than of reality. The position that I put first in this debate was, that so long as private property existed in the material necessary for wealth-production then whether you take the theory of political economy, or whether you take the facts of society around you, you find that that property in the material of wealth-production must result in the continued subjection of the wage-earners, and in the impossibility of the masses rising far above the level of subsistence. I put that to Mr. Foote first as a fair deduction made by the leading economists of our own times; and next, as proved by the facts of society visible to us as we study the phænomena around us. I pointed out to him the fact that in every civilised country that result had followed from the appropriation, that in every civilisation around you, you had the extreme of wealth and the extreme of poverty. That central proposition has only been met by raising difficulties in the details of its possible application, and not by grappling with it; not by showing us how these evils might be prevented while private pro-

perty in those materials remained, but only by asking us how, in a variety of minute details, are you going to try to apply it, and how are you going to try to work out your new system; and my answer to that is, that difficulties in the way of application are difficulties in the way of every reforming body—(cheers)—and that while those difficulties are, as I put it to you the first night, a reason for caution in our movement, they are no reason for despair. And I pointed out to him, and he never tried to answer the difficulty—that every difficulty of detail that he put to me with regard to the total material for wealth-production was an equal difficulty on his own shoulders with respect to the nationalisation of the land, or to that half-and-half Socialism which he advocates without knowing the principle which underlies it, and the results that would flow from it. (Cheers.) I put to him on the next night on which I led the debate the historical difficulty, that every civilisation in which this private property had existed had its proprietary and its slave classes. I pointed out to him that on that division of classes each civilisation in its turn had been wrecked; that the upper classes grew effeminate, lazy, and luxurious, while the lower class were degraded, helpless, without self-respect. I pointed out to him that in the older ones we had chattel slaves, in the Middle Ages we had serfs, and in our own times we have wage slaves; and I showed him that the difficulties on which the other civilisations had been wrecked were difficulties in our own time. Yet he never tried to meet that position, but simply sneered at my raising a historical question. (Cheers.) I submit to you that in dealing with a question like this you must try and go to the root of the matter. I submit to you that the causes which have destroyed every previous Individualistic society are at work in your own society. Take America, where the land in proportion to the population is practically boundless. The difficulties in America are as great as in our own country, the same extremes of wealth and poverty, the same subjection of the workers, the same divorce between classes; even wider divisions than we have here; for here they are modified by some of the old traditions of feudal duty on the one side and feudal looking for help on the other; whereas in America you have your modern Individualistic system utterly naked, utterly unashamed, and you have the whole mass of society there

restless and troubled, and giving rise to the same Socialist agitation that you find yourself face to face with at your own doors. (Cheers.) Your Individualistic society is being destroyed from within more than it is in danger of being overthrown from without. The causes of its failure are within itself, and those causes are becoming more and more palpable, and their results more clear. The result of the international capitalism is the driving of our home trades down to the lowest level of the worst paid foreign workmen. (Hear, hear.) Even during the last week, with all the difficulties in our own coal trade, the difficulty is increased by the joining together of a number of capitalists to bring over Belgian coal raised by Belgian miners at the starvation wage paid in the Charleroi basin; this is to be put on the London market at 2s. 6d. per ton cheaper than any coal which can be brought from South Wales. How are you going to deal with that under the Individualistic system? It can only be met in two ways: either by your capital, or so much of it as can do so, leaving the country to be invested in lands where labor is cheaper than at home; or in the way it will be chiefly done, by the sinking of your mining population to the level of the worst paid workmen; and the degradation of our Northumberland, of our Durham, of our Yorkshire, and of our South Wales miners to the miserable condition in which the Belgian miners are starving at the present time. (Cheers.) Not only so, but I say that the present system of competition leads to monopoly more and more. Your great industries are falling into fewer hands, more and more they are passing into joint stock companies, and in America you see this system carried further yet. But when they become monopolies, as they are becoming; when the smaller men are crushed out, as they are being crushed out at the present time; then you will be face to face with an absolute tyranny over society as you have got it in America, where a ring of capitalists simply plays with the market for its own profit and plunders the community for its own gain. You must either submit to that or you must adopt the Socialist plan, and take over those monopolies into the power of the community, and make them social instead of anti-social as they are under your Individualistic system. (Cheers.)

And at this point I naturally come to those figures with

which Mr. Foote dealt in the early part of his speech. Mr. Foote stated—and stated accurately enough—that there would not be an enormous increase of wage if the proportion of land and of capital he mentioned were divided up among the workers. But he will pardon me, I am sure, for saying that he very much understated it, because I have the figures here to prove the contention that I shall put to you. In the first place the 400 millions which Mr. Giffen gives include not only interest on capital, as Mr. Foote was putting it, but the whole of the rental also which goes into the pocket of the landlord. (Hear, hear.) These do not include the wages of superintendence at all. I am not dwelling on the fact that Mr. Giffen gives his figures on one occasion as 407 millions, and at another as 400 millions, because seven millions are a trifle for the purpose of this argument. But I would point out to you that you practically get 400 millions to dispose of by the admission of Mr. Giffen, and that Mr. Foote in his argument managed to whittle the 400 millions down to 100 millions, and then to base the rise that would take place in the wages of workers on the lower figure. And let me say why it is I take Mr. Giffen's figures, although I—to quote his own phrase—think that he was fairly accused of holding a brief for the capitalists. I take them because, although they are understated and unfair to our side of the question, they are quite strong enough to bear the weight of the whole of the Socialists' contention. (Hear, hear.) Out of our enemies' mouth we can prove our case. For what are Mr. Giffen's figures? According to Mr. Giffen 400 millions go for rent and interest to idle capitalists—(cries of "Shame")—out of the total income of 1,200 millions, from which we are to take 100 millions for interest on foreign investments. The wages for special ability are variously reckoned by Mr. Giffen, Mr. Mulhall, and Professor Leoni Levi, but we find that they come roughly to 350 millions. That is to say: that out of the produce of the country, when you have taken interest on capital and rent of land, when you have taken higher salaries and wages, which are sometimes called rent of ability, then you have left to divide amongst the manual labor class only 450 millions out of 1,250 millions, with which you started; that is 800 millions of pounds made by the workers go

completely out of their hands. And now what does that mean? It means in the first place that those who get these three rents, as the economists call them—of land, of capital, and of special ability—numbering, as they do, according to Mr. Giffen's computation, two millions of families, take 800 millions out of the national income; and the producers, numbering five million families, get 450 millions; that is, that the two million families get 800 millions, and the 5,000,000 get 450 millions. Then I find Mr. Giffen again stating that out of the 16½ millions of separate incomes, which are made in this country only 1½ millions are over £150 a year. I find Mulhall, in the "Dictionary of Statistics," giving 222,000 families of the very rich, that is with incomes over £1,600 a year, and 604,000 families of the rich, that is with incomes of £320 a year, and 1,220,000 in the middle and trading classes; and that if those figures are added together you get two-thirds of the total income of the country. Now I submit that if you recovered even one-third of the income of the country for the producers, and distributed it among them in addition to the one-third already held by them, no twisting of figures can leave the wages at the point at which they are to-day, for you would at least increase them by bringing that one-third more within the workers' reach to be used for their benefit. (Cheers.) No Socialist pretends that the whole of that rent and the whole of that interest on capital can ever under a Socialistic condition go directly into the hands of manual workers: but it says this—that while your economic rent must remain, while your payment for advantages in productivity in machinery must remain, to equalise the condition of the workers; that that rent, and that interest on capital, instead of going to the support of the class who are absolutely idle, and who therefore act as a poison to the community, will go into the national exchequer to be used for national purposes, to remove the burden of taxation from labor, and to be utilised for the benefit of those from whom it came, and to whom it should go. (Cheers.)

Now what is the result of your present industrial system? Compare your death-rate of rich and poor. Mr. Foote wants figures. I intend to-night to give him some. You can go to the Registrar-General's report and compare the death-rates of rich and poor. I will first take

children under five years of age; you will find that according to Dr. Playfair the death-rate of children of the upper classes is only 18 per cent., as against tradesmen 36 per cent., and workmen 55 per cent. (A Voice: "Horrible.") That is, more than half the children of the workers die before they reach the age of five years. And it is not only amongst the children. The children, inheriting feeble frames from underfed parents, die very fast, and the underfeeding, the slow starvation, of the parents shortens their lives even when they reach the adult condition; and I find in the report made by Dr. Drysdale to the Industrial Remuneration Conference that, comparing the average age at death among the nobility and professional classes with that of some classes of the poor, that the average age of death of the so-called higher classes was fifty-five years, while the average age amongst the artisan class of Lambeth only amounted to twenty-nine years. Now, I want to know why that is, if everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds; if the division of profits is so admirably made by the law of supply and demand, and by those laws of which we hear so much, why is it that those who supply the demand supply death also with so many? (Cheers.) Why is it that the poor man's child has so much less chance of life than the rich man's, if it is not that your society is built up on the plan of putting at the base of your social pyramid a class which you exploit to the uttermost, and of whose life you are absolutely careless; while at the apex you have persons whom you point to as products of your magnificent civilisation, and who are as useless in their lives as they are mischievous in their action on society. (Cheers.) I admit that under any conditions life for some time to come will be a hard struggle. I admit that the conditions that surround us are such that life without hard labor is impossible; and I say that that fact is no reason for allowing a class that earns nothing to appropriate so much, and that the very fact that much work is wanted to produce the necessities of life is a reason for getting rid of the drones who eat so much honey while they do nothing to increase the store. (Cheers.) I will go a step further. I find Mr. Mulhall, reckoning the pauper class from the figures of paupers receiving relief in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, and reckoning the whole pauper class, put it at three million persons, or one

in eight of the manual labor class. I find Mr. Giffen, the great authority, talking of the residuum of five millions whose condition is a stain on our civilisation. Mr. Foote talks of a small minority, but one in eight is not a small minority—when that means a pauper class in the midst of industrial civilisation, and when you take five millions of residuum whose condition is a disgrace to our civilisation. When you remember that the total number of manual workers in the country only amounts to not quite 16 millions, I ask you to think of the five millions who are, according to Mr. Giffen's own account, a stain on our civilisation. (Cheers.)

Well, but, says Mr. Foote, when you deal with this question how are you going to get on with your change? I submit that if I show a grave cause for change; if I prove that the result of the present economical and industrial system is the degradation which we see around us, and which is proved by figures, that then the question is no longer—"is the change needed?" but "how shall that change be made in the most rapid and most efficient way?" (Cheers.) And I come to the points which were put by Mr. Foote. Mr. Foote states that I take a too optimistic view of human nature. No, it is because I do not take an optimistic view of human nature that I advocate Socialism. (Hear, hear.) I believe that men are selfish; I believe that men are apt to trample on their fellows; I believe that the result of centuries of struggling for life has been to make men much more hard-hearted than they ought to be, and that when they can take advantage of their fellows they will do so; and therefore I want to do away with the opportunities of living on other persons which human selfishness, sloth, and greed will most certainly take advantage of. (Hear, hear.) I want to say to the selfish man living on his brother, "We will take away from you the possibility of living upon another by making you work for anything you desire to get". It is because I do not believe that human nature is perfect that I want to take away the opportunities of exploitation which are enjoyed by men under the present conditions of society. But Mr. Foote goes on to say that an unskilled man gets more by being directed by the skilled; and I am not prepared to challenge that statement. I believe the working together of skilled and unskilled is good for both, but I do not want

to try to keep the unskilled class where they are, but to raise them up into the skilled; and while I admit the value of skilled over unskilled labor, I say that the amount it gets as proved by the figures of the other side is far too high. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote says that skilled labor will emigrate; but there are two sides to that question. If all the skilled persons go out of the country to foreign countries they will become a drug in the foreign market, and will drive down their own wages by competition among themselves. If they desert us, they will at least no longer exploit the laborers. (Hear, hear.) But I am inclined to think that it may be worth our while to keep some of them, and that until they are civilised into beings with higher sense of duty to society than they have now, it may be worth while to grant them some exceptional pay for the work that they do, and so keep some of them to direct our industrial enterprises. I believe amongst Socialists I am in a minority in thinking that the various forms of labor should be equally paid; I believe the majority are in favor of unequal payment, so that you may still be able to give some extra advantages to the extra skill. But however that may be, equal or unequal remuneration is not of the essence of Socialism. But it is of the essence of Socialism that you should not have any payment whatever made to an idle class. (Hear, hear.) And that is why I pointed out before that Mr. Foote was confusing wages of superintendence with the interest paid on capital to persons who do nothing at all. That 407 millions are rent and interest on capital without one stroke of work being done in return; and it is not fair to speak as though the whole or any of that came as remuneration for skill, when really it only comes as remuneration for being born the eldest son of your father and your mother.

Let us take a step further. Mr. Foote raised a great many difficulties about occupations. He wanted to know how Socialists were going to manage the 12,000 trades; he wanted to know how prices were to be fixed either by the groups or federations of groups; he said if *one* group stood out you would have the whole community at its mercy, or the groups thrown on the community for support. But is there any reason why the Socialists should be such fools as Mr. Foote supposes? He is good enough to tell us that our hearts are bigger than our heads, and then he

complained that his sneer was not taken as a compliment, as if he had dealt with the largeness of our hearts and not with the smallness of our heads. But I would point out to Mr. Foote that Socialists are not fools enough to believe that they can settle beforehand every detail of a future condition of society. (Hear, hear.) What the Individualist prefers to do is to get away from the central principle on which we stand, and put conundrums of this kind to which he challenges us to find an answer. Our answer is that you will have working then the natural laws of society as you have them now. Demand and supply will still exist; prices will still be fixed by demand and supply; and when you deal with foreign goods taken in exchange for your own products, if the foreigner has a more limited amount to exchange and you are in need of it, his price will go up, that is, you will have to give more of your commodities in exchange for his goods; and you will have to require more labor here from those who desire to possess a portion of that which has been obtained at the higher price. We do not propose to start a new heaven and a new earth with laws different from what they are now. (Hear, hear.) We propose to destroy private property in the material of production, and then to let economic forces mould the details of the new condition of things, as they have moulded the old. But we say, if we start on a basis which is sound instead of on one that is rotten, we may reasonably hope that the structure will be sounder than the one you have to-day. (Cheers.) Then Mr. Foote put the difficulty of the division of labor, and spoke about the refined man feeling the intolerable burden of heavy work and the lower human organism who is only fit for the work he does. Then I ask Mr. Foote whether he deliberately means that his Individualist society is based on the existence of a helot-class, in which every taste, every feeling of art, every longing for beauty and refinement, is to be crushed out in order that a small minority may usurp all. (Hear, hear.) If that be what he means, then the moral difference between us is indeed deep and wide. (Hear, hear.) We deny that there should be a helot-class. We do not ask that a physician with his delicate fingers should go into the streets and sweep up, nor do the scavanger's work there, for every society must have division of labor. But we say that the physician is useful to society and the scavenger is

useful to society; that under Socialism the scavenger's work will be honorable; that he shall not be a mere helot, a mere drudge, but shall have the enjoyment of hearing a Patti and of higher art, and we say that the civilisation which is based on helotry will fall. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE: Sometimes I envy Mrs. Besant's power of appealing to people's feelings. (Hear, hear.) Fortunately this debate will be reported verbatim, and will be read in cold blood. Mrs. Besant says that she objects to a helot class. At the same time she says that under Socialism there will be men set apart for surgery and men set apart for scavenging. Exactly so. And why? Because some are fit for surgery and some are fit for scavenging. Otherwise you are going to appoint them because they are *unfit* for the special work they have to do. (Hear, hear.) But mark. Mrs. Besant says the scavenger who does this—I am but speaking the plain truth—disgusting work—(Interruption)—why this complaint, when under Socialism somebody will have to do it? Mrs. Besant says that the scavenger shall, under Socialism, hear Patti. Well, if he has a taste for Patti, he can hear her now. (Cries of "No, no".) Can't he? I can remember the time when my earnings were not greater than any scavenger's in the country, yet I still saved my two shillings for a treat at the Italian opera, climbing the flight of stairs that led to the gallery. Although I did not sit in a luxurious seat, I heard Patti and Albani as well as the man who paid his guinea. (Cries of "No, no".) I say, yes. I heard the music and the singing, and he could do no more. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Besant says that if we do not pay for skill, and it emigrates, it will bring down the value of the skill abroad. But that depends upon where the skill goes. There is Australia, there is South Africa, there are large parts of North America, there are other portions of the globe at present being colonised by the English-speaking race, which could take as much skill as ever the old countries could send them. (Hear, hear.) It is not skill that they object to. Skill can always find its reward. (Cries of "No, no".) It is persons going there with no skill and no means that they object to. (Hear, hear, and "No, no".) Why, even now, on the landing-stage at New York they turn emigrants back if they have not a fair prospect before

them, and make them return to the country they came from or anywhere else they can go to.

Mrs. Besant also says there is a great deal of selfishness in human nature. She believes that human nature has a large amount of ingrained selfishness. Yet she proposes to take away all opportunity for using a faculty which is more or less in everybody. You will need a very stringent law to frustrate a faculty in everybody, and a faculty which has hitherto been legitimate, and will not therefore feel criminal all at once. It is very much like saying that because persons sometimes cut their throats with razors, no more razors shall be made. Is selfishness a bad thing? It is more than selfishness when it steps out of its way to inflict suffering upon others. That is not mere selfishness, but crime. It is aggressive egoism, which the law of every civilised society represses and punishes. But that is not a bad selfishness which enables a man to work hard, to foresee consequences, to make provision for the morrow, to forego a present gratification for a more important future one, and to strive to make provision for the wife and children in his own home, whom he must love more than the wives and the children of society in general. That selfishness is not a crime. If you could eliminate it from society you would kill society. But the passion is indestructible and society is safe. (Cheers.)

I did not say in any part of this debate that everything was for the best. I said that man was a gradually improving creature. I did not say there was no room for improvement. Mrs. Besant cannot deplore more than I do the evils that afflict mankind. (Hear, hear.) And I have in my own way done my little share towards making the world a trifle better. (Cheers.) The question between us is not whether the world requires reform, but what is the kind of reform it requires. (Hear, hear.) If a patient is sick, Mrs. Besant and I may both deplore his condition, but the question of what is the best remedy for his disorder is entirely independent of our appreciation of the fact that he is ill. You may as well say there is no use in discussing the merits of allopathy and homœopathy while patients are sick. I say our patient must be treated carefully in cold blood, by persons who subordinate their feelings to their skill. You may work as much mischief by good feeling wrongly directed as by bad feeling itself.

If you could measure all the evil done in society by misdirected benevolence it would appal you. (Hear, hear.) Pauperism itself is intensified by this evil. I admit that society requires change; but how is the change to be brought about? Mrs. Besant says let us turn over a brand-new leaf. I say there is plenty of good message on the leaf we have not yet exhausted. It is not a fact that in our present system we have merely exchanged the old slavery for a new one. (Cries of "Oh, oh".) It is not a fact. Words often cheat people. They fancy that two different things, because they can be called by the same word, are really identical. Do you mean to tell me there is any identity between the black slave, put up in the market for sale, and knocked down to the highest bidder, separated from his wife and family probably never to see them more, driven to work in the fields with a whip, and not having a single thing to call his own, even his life being almost absolutely at the mercy of his master—and the skilled mechanic—(Cries of "Oh, oh".) One moment. If there are persons who are unskilled, whose fault is it? Cannot the unskilled laborer become a skilled laborer? (Cries of "No, no".) Is there any penal statute in the wide universe to prevent any man with the capacity getting as much skill as any other man with the same capacity. (Cheers.) I repeat, then, What analogy is there between that black slave and the skilled or half-skilled mechanic, who goes to work five and a half days in the week, and has his evenings to himself; who, if he does not live altogether on the fat of the land, at least has his own inviolable domicile, where he can shut his door, and enjoy unmolested the society of those he loves? It may not be quite so large as he might like; but it is his. (Hear, hear.) Why, if you were to call half the working men in this country in their own workshops slaves, they would feel insulted. (Hear, hear.) Although I daresay some will go to a public hall and cheer the utterance when it serves their side of the dispute. These workers are not slaves. (Cries of "We are".) Well, if any gentleman feels he *is* a slave, I will not dispute the fact any further. (Laughter.)

Now is it a fact that the working classes have no means of redress? I said before that they had. I say their proper road to salvation is not through enforced co-operation, but through voluntary co-operation. (Cheers.) No

State co-operation can succeed until the necessary qualities are there; and if they were there, they would make voluntary co-operation possible to-morrow. (Hear, hear.) Voluntary associations have succeeded; succeeded with picked men it is true, but no new enterprise, no progressive movement, can ever succeed except with picked men. (Hear, hear.) The mass of mankind go on doing pretty much the same thing from the cradle to the grave. It is only the exceptional persons who strike out in fresh directions, and they are followed by-and-bye when the experiment they began has proved a success. Many co-operative societies have succeeded. Mill mentions some of them in his chapter on the Probable Future of the Working Classes. Others are mentioned by Thornton. You will also find others in the Government "Report on Co-operation in Foreign Countries" issued last summer. Mrs. Besant says the workers cannot obtain capital, but she is entirely wrong. These experiments prove the very opposite. Nay more, while nearly all—I believe absolutely all—the State subventioned enterprises failed in France in 1849, the successful ones were those animated wholly by the spirit of self-help. Let me cite a few instances from the Government Report:

"In 1849, fifty-nine tailors started with some assistance from outsiders, a co-operative tailors' shop. They soon raised a business capital of 200,000 francs in fifty franc shares, which were to be paid for in weekly one franc instalments. In 1851 this association was doing work on a large scale, and had at the same time a benefit fund formed by retaining five per cent. on salaries, and ten per cent. on profits."

"Fourteen piano makers in 1848, without any means of their own, or Government aid, after great hardships and difficulties in starting, founded and carried on successfully, a business which two years afterwards owned 40,000 francs' worth of property."

"A small association of armchair makers, which started in 1849 with 135 francs, made 37,000 francs of net profits, and could afford to pay 5,500 francs per annum for their workshop."

"A co-operation of file-makers, starting with fourteen members and 500 francs, acquired a capital of 150,000 francs, and two houses of business, one in Paris, the other in the provinces."

"A successful co-operation of boot-form makers began with two francs. One of spectacle makers, with 650 francs, had in 1883 a capital of over 1,270,000 francs." (Cheers.)

You see, then, that the statement that labor, if it be energetic, earnest, possessed with the necessary intellectual and moral qualities, cannot get capital, is belied by these facts, which are of infinitely more value than all the declamations and theories in the world. (Cheers.)

Now just a word in concluding this speech. Mrs. Besant says she is not here to solve conundrums. I never asked her to. She says she is not going to trouble herself about details, as it is not necessary to work them out. But everything in the long run consists of details. (Hear, hear.) Great masses are made up of small quantities. Details mean everything in the end. Mind you, the question between us is, not whether society requires improvement, but whether Mrs. Besant's particular scheme for improvement is likely to turn out a good one. You may as well say that a Prime Minister should bring in a Bill for Home Rule, without telling the House or the country any of the details of the scheme by which he proposes to carry his principles out, as shirk the practical details of a question like Socialism. Mr. Gladstone was opposed by many who approved his object but disapproved his method. They agreed on the principle, but split on the ways and means. So I approve Mrs. Besant's principle of agitating for the improvement of society, but I object to her method. I know that reform is wanted, but I also know that to shirk the details of new proposals is to overlook the fact that life is made up of details, and that men must be guided by experience. If you *will* shirk the practical difficulties of your scheme, you have no right to ask us to accept it. (Applause.)

ANNIE BESANT: Let me say at once that I thoroughly and gladly admit that Mr. Foote is as earnest for social reform as I am myself. (Hear, hear.) I should be sorry in the strictures I level against the system of society he supports, to be supposed in any way to make any kind of imputation against his sincerity or against his earnest desire to see improvement. It is the system he advocates I am attacking, without throwing any kind of slur on his own desire of making any improvement. And on the question of detail there is

one more word I should like to say. Suppose a naturalist desires to breed to any particular type, he will select his type, and then basing his actions on scientific principles, he will try to breed towards that type, knowing generally what he desires to attain. But he will not be able to tell you the exact length of the animal's ears, the number of curls there will be in his tail, or the particular direction in which his eyes may slope. (Laughter.) Those are the kind of details about which the scientific naturalist would not try to prophesy. (Hear, hear.) He would take his general type as I have done in this subject, but he would not commit himself to prophecies for which the foundation is not in any way attainable. Mr. Foote gives me an illustration of the present Socialist policy by referring to a Prime Minister. He says that a Prime Minister must not bring in a mere abstract of a Bill without details; but I ask Mr. Foote whether anything is more common than that a statesman should bring in an abstract resolution embodying some particular principle, and try to carry that resolution, and thus to gather the general sense of the House before he passes into the details of the Bill, details which are, I grant, necessary, when it becomes a project for immediate legislation. (Cheers.) That is exactly our Socialist position at the present time. (Hear, hear.) We are trying to carry a resolution before the public in favor of the Socialist principle; and, mark you, we are giving our definite reason for doing it. We have said over and over again, and I say it now for the last time in this debate, that we allege that private property in the material of wealth-production is at the root of poverty. (Hear, hear.) That as long as that lasts you must have your propertied and your slave classes. We allege that this is the source from which the evils flow, and we must fight out that question of principle before it is even worth while to go into minute details, which must be considered, I thoroughly accept that, before you can make a Socialist community; but it is idle to discuss the details so long as the main principle of difference between the Individualists and the Socialists remains undecided by the public voice. (Hear, hear.) I go back to the speech of Mr. Foote, which, he very fairly said, I did not completely answer. There was a slight error in quotation Mr. Foote made in connexion with the question—How wages should

be settled, when he quoted me as saying the worker should have control over the value of his labor. The whole context of the passage shows that what I was arguing was that when the workmen had received a return for the labor he had done, that amount which he received would be entirely under his own control. Just as now, a man receiving wage from an employer can spend that wage as he pleases; so the workman employed, as he may be, by a group of workers, or by whatever other phrase you may use, when he receives the recompense of his labor, would be able to use that recompense as he chose, as he thought best. (Hear, hear.) That is the point I put in my essay, and it appears that Mr. Foote has entirely misconceived it, and has turned it into the man fixing his own wage instead of controlling the equivalent for his own labor. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote asks us to take a case which we find in our present society—take the case of men like Burns or Watt—what shall they do, and who shall decide in what way they shall be employed? One of the reasons why we want to press the Socialist solution is because, under your present Individualistic system, you crush out such an enormous amount of talent that might make its way if it only had the opportunity. (Cheers.) If, as the Socialists propose, the people were educated thoroughly and completely in the years of their childhood and of their youth, do you mean to say that it would be possible that the talent of a Burns would escape notice, as it did when he was sent to the plough-tail in his childhood, and had no possibility of education which would enable him to show his literary power? (Hear, hear.) Under your present system it is but a mere chance whether the child of great ability succeeds or not. It depends largely on the rank of society in which he is born. (Hear, hear.) I do not say that you may not here and there have a child born under unfavorable conditions, who has talent which amounts to absolute genius, and a strength of will as of iron, so that even circumstances cannot break it. I do not say that such a one amongst a myriad may not fight his way to the front despite all that is against him. But I do say that under your present system you practically lose to society thousands upon thousands of persons dowered with real ability, whose ability would have been discovered had they had a reasonable and rational educa-

tion, but whose ability is crushed out of them in their childhood and their youth by the hard circumstances of their life. (Cheers.) And that is why we say that your Individualistic system crushes Individualism. That is why we say that only under Socialism can you hope to get all the benefit through individual development which comes from removing persons from the constant strain and struggle for existence, and, by securing the means of livelihood to all, give time and opportunity for the development of the particular capacity. (Hear, hear.)

Then Mr. Foote asks, are you going to have all your amusements arranged by public committees, because if so their low tastes will swamp the higher tastes for the fine arts. Now that is exactly what happens at the present time, because the managers are now ruled by the receipts, and the receipts come from the majority. Mr. Foote says that low tastes are the tastes of the majority, and that it is only the small minority that have the higher tastes. And what is the result? Your wretched melodrama and the comic opera are what the manager readily accepts, because they appeal to the majority. (Hear, hear.) And even Irving, great as he is, has his genius stunted, and, like a fine jewel in tawdry setting, he has to fall back on fine upholstery and limelight because he dares not trust to the attraction of his own genius, for he knows it would not pay. (Hear, hear.) It is the testimony of everyone who has looked into the subject—(cries of "No, no")—I am going to give you a fact—(cries of "Question!")—the question is that of amusements under Socialism, and I am dealing with that. (Hear, hear.) It is a fact which everyone knows who has looked into the subject that the only countries in which new genius—either dramatic or artistic of any kind—can really make its way and be heard by the public are those countries where theatres and places of amusement are endowed by the State. (Hear, hear.) The French stage is the very model of the other European theatres. And why? Because there a man of genius can really bring forward a play that has to wait before it is appreciated. But your stage here falls back upon the off-scourings of the French theatres, and plays adapted from the lower stage of France are played at your best theatres here. (Hear, hear.) And so in Germany. Take the case of Wagner. He was on the verge of starvation, was nearly

killed by your Individualistic system, until an endowed theatre made it possible for him to get his music heard. And these are facts for Mr. Foote to deal with instead of theorising and floating about in the clouds. (Hear, hear.) But Mr. Foote argues that the scavenger can hear Patti if he is prepared to pay his two shillings, and to wait two hours at the doors. But the scavenger cannot easily pay that money and wait two hours or more. I have paid that and waited—(A Voice : "It's half-a-crown")—the gentleman is quite right, it is half-a-crown and not two shillings. (Laughter.) But I do not think that a scavenger with a small family of hungry children at home, can afford to spend 2s. 6d. and to wait two hours, and then spend three or four more in listening to Patti. (Cheers.) And what is worse, he does not want to do so. He has not had the education which would make it possible for him to enjoy such music; and he won't have the desire until the education given by the community includes art and literary culture as well as the mere elements it now gives. (Cheers.)

I pass on to yield my perfect agreement to Mr. Foote's statement of what we are seeking—viz., the best remedy. And that is why I complain that he has not tried to deal with the fundamental remedy of Socialism, and has appealed to feeling and prejudice instead of dealing with my proposals. (Hear, hear.) I pointed out to Mr. Foote that, if he speaks of words leading to mistakes, that is the very complaint which the Socialists make. We say that the word "freedom", applied to any laborer who has only a choice of accepting the contract offered him and starvation, is but a word, and is not a thing. (Hear, hear.) When freedom of contract is spoken of, I say that that can only take place between persons tolerably equal; and when Mr. Foote speaks of the tension of muscles caused by competition, I answer that such benefit can only result when each competitor has a chance of reaching the winning-post. There is no stimulating competition, but only a crushing feeling of disqualification, if you set to race one man who is only allowed to go on one leg and is carrying a heavy chain, and another man who is allowed to use a bicycle to get round the course. (Hear, hear.) The man with the disadvantage finds it practically impossible for him to race at all. And I allege that in your modern society the man of the bicycle is the landlord and the capitalist who has

everything made easy for him in the life-race; and the man with one leg and the chain, who is asked to compete with him, and to feel the benefit of freedom of competition and free contract, is the laborer who has nothing whatever but his labor to sell, and who must starve unless he can sell it. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE: Mrs. Besant says that if a naturalist wishes to produce a particular variety of dog, he does not beforehand say what length its tail is going to be, or how many hairs it is going to have on its body. But if he proposes to breed a long-tailed dog, surely the length of the tail would have something to do with his prevision. If that naturalist proposed to produce a special variety of dog, and made it a condition of his experiment that he should have every dog in the country under his control, the rest of us would want to know what he was going to do before consenting to allow him to make such a vast experiment. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs. Besant reiterates that private property in capital is at the root of all the poverty there is. Now we have had three nights of this debate already. This point has been debated over and over again, and why Mrs. Besant wants that particular point debated afresh to-night I do not understand. I contravene it. I say there is no *one* root, but many roots of evil, and the cause of *all* the roots of evil lies in the fact that man is as yet only partially evolved. He has advanced a long way from his brutish progenitors, but he has yet higher ranges of capacity, of thought, and of feeling, to reach in his development. (Hear, hear.) You cannot do with your present human nature what you could do with a better human nature. The better human nature will come in time, for the Darwinian theory which gives us a certitude of progress in the past gives us a reasonable guarantee of progress in the future.

I gave as one of the causes of poverty the pressure of population on the means of subsistence. (Cheers.) Mrs. Besant herself has given it. She has to-night told you that the death-rate is lower among the upper classes than among the lower classes. (Hear, hear.) If I had known that Mrs. Besant was going to use those particular statistics to-night, instead of following my lead, I should have come prepared with some counter statistics. But I

now make the broad statement that the birth-rate among the lower classes is as high as their death-rate relatively to the upper classes. (Hear, hear.) They marry earlier, breed faster, and therefore their numbers are kept down by a heavy death-rate. I never said that the poor man was in as good a condition as the man who is better off. (Laughter.) But that is not our argument. How are the great mass of people to be improved? is the question at issue. And after all, it is not my remedy, but Mrs. Besant's remedy, that is under discussion. When she says I have not dealt with the difficulties she raised, I beg to say that she has to deal with the difficulties which I have raised against the system she wants us to embrace. (Hear, hear.) She says that, under the Individualist system, talent is crushed down for want of education. We all know that to some extent, but we did not wait for Socialism to provide education in the Board Schools for every boy and girl. We did not wait for Socialism to found our system of secondary education, and we shall not wait for Socialism to realise the dream of Radicals that the endowments of the universities shall be put to their right purposes, and applied to the education of those higher capacities that are selected from the lower schools to which all the mass of the children go. (Cheers.)

It is perfectly true that to some extent the lower taste at present swamps the higher taste. But if the lower taste gets the reins of power in its hands it will be an overwhelming deluge. Now you can paddle your own boat, but then you will have no boat to paddle. (Hear, hear.) It is perfectly true that what pays best is put on the stage; but I said that there was a select circle of finer tastes, and that they can get what they want. It may be true that Mr. Irving has too much recourse to upholstery and limelight, but that may be due to his melodramatic instincts. He has played in many Shaksperian characters, however, and in other legitimate dramas, and I do not see how his posturing in "Faust" proves that he is a panderer to the lowest tastes of the day. (Hear, hear.) If you can go and see low comedy, you can also go and see high comedy. If you want your tastes gratified with the best music, or drama, or literature, you can have it. Shakspere is brought into our homes, decently printed, for a shilling; and in all sorts of ways the highest taste in such things can be

gratified without a very great expenditure. The poorest, even, can sometimes have the pleasure of hearing a great singer like Patti; and even under Socialism she could not sing every night to everybody, unless the opera house were large enough to hold the nation. Wagner was a poor illustration. He was outlawed for fighting on behalf of liberty against what turned out to be the majority of his countrymen. Mrs. Besant says his musical genius stood no chance till he was endowed. But the person who assisted him with money was the mad King of Bavaria. That fact does not favor Mrs. Besant's position. It rather tells, if at all, on behalf of the monarchy which she and I are both opposed to. (Hear, hear.)

I will now take a few more difficulties. I do not know much about carpentering, and I think Mrs. Besant knows as little. (Laughter.) I have no practical knowledge of a variety of trades. But I do know something about writing and publishing, and so does Mrs. Besant. Under Socialism, Mrs. Besant would like to write and publish articles and pamphlets maintaining her Freethought, Malthusian, and other views. Yet if all the means of production were in the hands of State officials, or under the control of industrial groups, how does she know that she would be able to do what she wanted? Gronlund says that society would not allow anything and everything to be printed. It would draw the line somewhere. Yes, and I think the line would be very hard upon the minority and all unpopular ideas. It would seriously hamper the advanced few who are the cream of every generation, and whose thought to-day decides the action of to-morrow. (Cheers.) Mrs. Besant knows very well that she is not in the majority at present. Her Malthusianism is unpopular with general society, and she regrets to say that among her Socialist friends it is more unpopular still. She and I would continne to hold unpopular opinions, and if we did not, other persons would. Now those opinions would have to be ventilated, and in a highly organised society like ours they cannot be ventilated, except through the press and the platform. But all the halls, all kinds of meeting-places, are to be controlled by public committees, and all printing plant is to be under similar management. Would Mrs. Besant get what she wanted printed, if it were generally distasteful? Would not the managers of the

printing group be very reluctant to offend their constituents and imperil their prospect of re-election to office? She would also probably find that if the hall she wanted was not absolutely refused, it would be required for something else on that date. The free play of mind would thus be checked. But upon that very thing all progress hinges. What is progress? The only valuable, or indeed intelligible definition I know of is Sir Henry Maine's "progress is the constant production of fresh ideas". Fresh ideas might be produced, but they would be absolutely abortive, unless there were the means of disseminating them and carrying them out. Could those means be counted on when all the agencies were in the hands of the majority who would naturally be content with the state of things in which they exercised supreme power? How can you praise liberty, when under your system liberty would be arrested at its source? Mrs. Besant may smile at this. She may say, as she has said, that if you cannot get a hearing in a hall you must go to some open space. But if the officials would not let you speak in public halls, they would put obstacles in the way of your speaking in public places of other kinds. (Hear, hear.) You would then have to hold forth on Dartmoor or the Yorkshire wolds, where the chances of finding an audience are exceedingly limited. (Laughter.) I really wish Mrs. Besant would tell us how these difficulties are to be surmounted.

Individualism will produce all the benefits Socialism could possibly bestow, and it gives us other benefits which Socialism would destroy. It was finely said by Channing that you may spring a bird into the air by mechanism, but its flight is only admirable when it soars with its own vital power. So the mechanism which would elevate people despite themselves does not really elevate them. They are only lifted up when their life is improved by their own energy, foresight, and capacity. (Cheers.) If you gave a man with the lowest tastes ten times his present income, do you mean to tell me that he would be ten times better? He would probably spend it all very much as he spends his money now. But if he got more by voluntary co-operation with his fellows, his character would be elevated in the very process of bettering his material condition. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Besant complains that competition is impossible

with those who have personal advantages. Yes, and I know that without riding on bicycles there are some stronger and fleeter than others. Those with the most powerful and subtle brains must win the first prizes in the race of life. But there are many competitions and millions of minor prizes of all degrees. We cannot all run in the race for the Premiership. Only a few can compete for that, and let us hope the best man gets it. But if a man cannot compete for the Premiership, he may be first in the making of good honest boots. (Hear, hear.) There are thousands of races, and if a man cannot succeed in one he may enter another. Competition is not the frightful thing Mrs. Besant supposes. It does not imply that only one wins and all the rest absolutely lose. In our competition there is a first prize, a second, a third, a fourth, and so on down to the point at which there really is complete failure, and a man is thrown out of employment. But the great mass of workers are *in* employment, and there is something even for those who are farthest behind. The vast majority get what is worth having, though all cannot be first. (Hear, hear.)

Now, in conclusion, let me say a word as to what Individualism has done. There was a time when man fought for the possession of caves with his brute contemporaries. There was a time when man was so low in the scale of life that he could scarcely be discriminated from his ape-like progenitor. Through countless ages he has advanced to his present position. And that position gives only a foretaste of what he will realise in the days to come. The science which affords us so many benefits is still in its childhood, and what it has done is but "an earnest of the things that it shall do". Individualist competition, man wrestling with nature and the brutes, man matched against man, thrift against improvidence, sagacity against dulness, energy against indolence, courage against cowardice, sense against stupidity—this has brought civilisation to its present pitch. Individualism has constructed railways, made the steam-engine, bridged rivers, covered the ocean with ships, invented the printing press, and given us all our science and art. Individualism has given to "the poor" what they consider necessaries of life, but what once were luxuries to princes and kings. And what has your State done? It has always been trying to "regulate" things,

making mistake after mistake with the best intentions, and failing again and again because it could not possibly succeed. It has tried to take men's religion under its control; it has tried to take all their thoughts and all their actions under its control. It decreed the status in which men should remain from the cradle to the grave. It hemmed them in on every side. And while individual Europeans have gone all over the world, colonising and founding new empires, what have the Europeans States done? They have hurled people against people. They have contracted four thousand five hundred millions of debt in senseless quarrels. The "State" has done more harm than good. Individualism has made progress. Without it none is possible. Collectivism, State control, crushes liberty, hinders Individualism, and prevents that noble progress which we all see brightening and heightening in the great future before us. (Prolonged applause.)

ANNIE BESANT: I did not state in my last speech that the present system of private property in the material of wealth production is at the root of *all* the poverty. Mr. Foote has put in the word *all*. I quite admit that there are other influences at work as well; and you know that in dealing with the question of population I have pointed to that cause. But Mr. Foote rightly said in an earlier speech that under the present system that difficulty was not dealt with, because it is to the interest of the capitalist that the workers should rapidly increase, that he may play off the one against the other. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote stated—and I agree with him—that society will improve by evolution. And it is because I am an evolutionist that I am a Socialist; it is because I see that society is evolving in the direction of Socialism, and that the tendency of the most Radical legislation is to promote the growth of Socialism. (Hear, hear.) And then Mr. Foote says that the birth-rate and the death-rate balance each other. But surely Mr. Foote must have noticed that I gave percentages, and not absolute numbers, of deaths, and that brief answer of his does not deal with my difficulty, which really was the price that society pays for the maintenance of the present system. (Hear, hear.) Then Mr. Foote says we don't wait for Socialism to get education. But your education is founded on the Socialist principle; you tax the community for a special benefit of

which some only take advantage; the State compels parents to do their duty towards their children, forcing upon them that which otherwise they would not do, and intruding even within the circle of the home; in fact, you treat the children as belonging in the highest sense to the community rather than to the parents, and you forbid the parent to inflict an injury upon the community by keeping the child in ignorance, and therefore in degradation. (Cheers.) I admit in that good work has been done; but it is work done by society—by the State that Mr. Foote attacks—and not by Individualistic effort. (Hear, hear.) The voluntary school system was the growth of Individualism; the national system is the growth of the tendency towards Socialism in the State.

Mr. Foote goes on to say a word about publishing papers and pamphlets: Here are Mrs. Besant and Mr. Foote. Their opinions are in a minority. How are they to publish their views under Socialism? But we are in a minority now, and we have paid for it under your Individualistic system. (Hear, hear.) We have found not only that it is very difficult to get a hearing for the views of the minority, but that a man may be sent to gaol for putting his views in print. What worse tyranny than this can Socialism inflict? (Hear, hear.) Individualistic society shuts up a man in prison because he dared to print something against the views of the majority. (Cheers.) What more could Socialism do? But let us be frank in this matter. Socialism will not at once quite alter human nature. These difficulties which Mr. Foote speaks of are the difficulties of minorities everywhere, and there is no way of getting over them save by courage on the part of the minority, and the gradual growth of education and of a feeling of respect in the majority for the opinions of others. (Hear, hear,) But I can tell you why we think that under Socialism the minority would have a better chance of making itself heard than it has now. It is because even under the present condition of things those institutions which are most nearly on the road to Socialism are those where the greatest liberty is already permitted. (Hear, hear.) Co-operation, for instance, which is the grouping of many together to work side by side and therefore is only in a small way—when it is real, and not mere dividend hunting—what the Socialist State will be in a

large form—co-operation may serve as an instance. Mr. Foote knows that it is the halls scattered over the country which have been built by the co-operative societies, and which are controlled by committees and not by individual owners, which are most readily granted for the propagation of the opinions of the minority. (Hear, hear.) Often when an individual owner refuses to let me his hall, I find the co-operative society readily grant it, although many members of their committee are in opposition to my views. (Hear, hear.) The truth is that where an individual refuses to let any views be heard but his own, the clash of opinions on a committee makes each member disposed to give others a hearing in order that his own views may obtain a hearing in turn. Take another case. You speak of the tyranny of the State. I take as an illustration of the difference between being under a State and being under the individual, an incident that happened at the British Museum. There was a gardener there who committed the horrible crime of calling by his first name the son of one of the officials—he called him George instead of Master George. (Laughter.) Such a piece of gross insolence on the part of a gardener could not be overlooked, and the result was that he was dismissed. So far he shared the fate which would have befallen him had he been hired by an individual owner. But as he was a servant of the State and not the mere hired servant of an individual owner, his complaint was listened to, an inquiry ordered, and the result was that a fresh post was found for the gardener to compensate him for the loss he had undergone. If he had called an individual's son George he would have been thrown out into the world to seek a fresh livelihood for himself; but as he called the State functionary's son George, the State interfered in order to protect him, and gave him another place instead of the one he lost. (Cheers.)

But Mr. Foote points to what Individualism has done—it has covered the sea with ships. Aye, with coffin ships, which went to the bottom until the State interfered to save life. (Hear, hear.) Individualism has done much. On my very first night I said that being an evolutionist I recognised the fashion in which society had grown; from my point of view it is idle to find fault with what has been done in the past; it is for us to try with the experience of the race, by the study of history, by the growing knowledge

of man, and by our increased scientific ability, to find a better road for the future, than our ancestors have struggled along in the past. (Hear, hear.) And the difference between Mr. Foote and myself is this—that I recognise that evolution has brought us to the point where this Individualistic struggle must give way to organised action. And I notice that we have grown from the Individualism of the savage up to the co-operative Socialism of civilisation: because as Mr. Foote truly says—civilisation is co-operation; that is, it is the raising of the group and the group interests above the interests of the units who compose the group.

I put to you now in closing this debate one or two points which I venture to think are not unworthy your careful consideration. Mr. Foote says that we have been making progress, we have been improving in the past. I have urged on him, on the other side, that the improvement has been far slower than it need be, and that the root of the question of poverty must be dealt with if improvement is to go on. I have pointed out to him that while there is improvement in one part of society there is retrogression in another. I have pointed out to him the ever-widening of the gulf between the rich and the poor—the ever-growing division between the cultured and the masses of the people—the ever-increasing danger of that which Sidgwick pointed out, viz., that the tendency of our present industrial system is to make the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer. (Cheers.) That I hold to be the position in which we stand to-day; and I, a Socialist, come forward, and pointing to these evils in modern society say they are evils which are inherent in the system. Under a Socialist system—and only under that system—is the change and the remedy for us possible. Mr. Foote, I recognise, desires that improvement should go on. He says to us: Your Socialism will fail when it is tried. I answer him: Your Individualism has been tried and has failed—(cries of "No, no!")—and our wars, our poverty, our misery, our ignorance, our wretchedness, are the proofs of the failure of an Individualistic system of society. (Cheers.) You say it has not failed. How then is it that in every civilised country the millionaire and the pauper stand side by side? How is it, if it be a success, that in this great metropolis of ours

where thousands of pounds are given for a china dish hundreds of men and women are dying of slow starvation? (Hear, hear, and cries of "Shame".) Go down to Shadwell High Street when the crowds are turning out of the music rooms and gin palaces, and next morning go to the Ladies' Mile; see how the West End differs from the East End, and then ask yourself, can a civilisation last where the contrasts are so glaring, where the divisions are so extreme? (Hear, hear.) For remember that you have no longer the safety of the past—the safety of the ignorance of the masses of your people. (Hear, hear.) While there was no penny press, while there was no public education, much of the luxury of the rich man remained hidden from the eyes of the poor, starving in their cellars and in their garrets. But to day your halfpenny paper takes the news everywhere. The sempstress reads of the great ladies decked in diamonds at a Court ball, and the costermonger reads of the millionaire giving thousands for a race horse, spending thousands in luxury and in vice. These are beginning to think—beginning to ask questions; beginning to ask, must these things always be? is there not something fundamentally wrong in a condition of society where such things exist? And that is not all. Your idle classes are the very cancer of society. (Hear, hear.) The luxury in which they live makes them rotten by its very idleness. They consume without producing; they enjoy without discharging a duty; they live easily, smoothly, without difficulty, and society takes nothing from them in exchange for what they take from it. And what is the result? Your higher classes with their profligacy are the scandal of the whole civilised world at the present time. A press, greedy for profit, tears down every curtain in the desecrated home, and exhibits it to the eyes of the whole of Europe, until the very noblest of human passions becomes as filth, fit only to roll through the sewer which runs beneath your streets. (Cheers.) And this is the outcome of the Individualistic system. This is the result of luxury and idleness, the result of the neglecting of duty, and of the making possible of luxury without service done in exchange for those who give it. And one plea I make to you—to you, the majority of whom in this Hall are against me—the large majority of whom judge us harshly and blame us sternly, because looking at the misery and

the luxury of society we strive to bring about a remedy which may make things other than they are to-day. (Hear, hear.) Many of us are ignorant; most of us are poor. Tongues of education and of culture are but here and there amongst us, and rough men speak for us out of the miseries that they feel. What wonder that sometimes the tongues should be reckless; what wonder that sometimes the speech should be bitter; what wonder that men, feeling what they might have been, and knowing what they are, speak words that may not be measured as carefully as the perfectly cultured and the unsuffering may measure theirs; what wonder if their indignation grows hot against the wrongs they know. But this I ask of you. If sometimes we speak too hotly; if sometimes our passion gets the better of our judgment; if sometimes the misery of the poor voices itself too sharply in our words and rings out in a fashion that the easy and idle class may not like; at least do us this justice: that in a society where the stronger trample upon the weak; in a society where most men seek for power, for luxury, or for money; at least admit this to the despised Socialists amongst you—that in that society we have withdrawn from the strife for gold, we have turned aside from the struggle for power, and we have eyes that see and hearts that love some nobler ideal of society than you have yet found possible in your Individualistic life. (Great cheering.)

Mr. Foote: I rise to propose with great pleasure a very hearty vote of thanks to the chairman.

Annie Besant: I second that.

The motion was carried, and the meeting dispersed.