

## The American Movement<sup>1</sup> (August 1904)

The twentieth century, according to the prophecy of Victor Hugo, is to be the century of humanity.

In all the procession of the centuries gone, not one was for humanity. From the very first tyranny has flourished, freedom has failed; the few have ruled, the many have served; the parasite has worn the purple of power, while honest industry has lived in poverty and died in despair.

But the eternal years, the centuries yet to come, are for humanity and out of the misery of the past will rise the civilization of the future.

The nineteenth century evolved the liberating and humanizing movement; the twentieth century will doubtless witness its culmination in the crash of despotisms and the rise of worldwide democracy, freedom and brotherhood.

It was while in exile, in 1864, that Hugo wrote:

The transformation of the crowd into the people — profound task! It is to this labor that the men called Socialists have devoted themselves during the last 40 years. The author of this book, however insignificant he may be, is one of the oldest in this labor. If he claims his place among these philosophers, it is because it is a place of persecution. A certain hatred of Socialism, very blind, but very general, has raged for 15 or 16 years, and is still raging most bitterly among the influential classes. Let it not be forgotten that true Socialism has for its end the elevation of the masses to the civic dignity, and that, therefore, the principal care is for moral and intellectual cultivation.<sup>2</sup>

If, as we are quite ready to believe, the twentieth century realizes the prophecy of the French poet and “bursts full-blossomed on the thorny stem of time” as the century of humanity — it will be the denouement of the socialist agitation that began in the preceding century — the fruition of the international socialist movement.

In the closing years of the last century, following in the wake of the French Revolution, the tendencies in Europe were unmistakably toward what has since developed into modern socialism. Of course the early

stages were nebulous and vague, and the trend was not yet strongly marked or clearly disclosed.

But as the inventive genius of man asserted itself in the industrial world; as the use of steam as motive power expanded and machinery was introduced and its application to industry became more general, with its inevitable effects upon artisans, laborers and small tradesmen, the movement was accelerated in varying forms, chiefly utopian, until many years afterward, toward the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was crystallized by the genius of Marx, Engels, Lassalle, and others, who caught the revolutionary current, clarified it and sent it circling round the globe on its mission of freedom and fraternity.

The earliest traces of socialism in the United States had their origin in the stream of immigration that flowed from the old world to the new and bore upon its bosom the germs of discontent warmed into life in the effete feudalism of European civilization. We shall not here undertake to chronicle the many attempts, covering more than half a century, or until about 1840, to spread socialism or semi-socialistic doctrine among the American people and thus turn the tide of labor agitation in that direction. The times were fruitful of industrial and social unrest and the many schemes and plans that were proposed, utopian, impractical, impossible though they undoubtedly were, were at the same time the signs and symptoms of social gestation, the forerunners of the mighty change that was laying hold of governments and institutions and destined to revolutionize them all and level the human race upward to the plane of all-embracing civilization.

Almost 80 years ago, Robert Owen,<sup>3</sup> dreamer, enthusiast, and humanitarian, came from England to America, to make the new continent blossom with utopian splendor. His series of experiments in communism, doomed to disappointment and failure, are an interesting study in the early years of the American movement; and although in the light of our present knowledge of industrial evolution his undertaking may seem visionary and foolish to some, he rendered invaluable service in clearing away the brush and dispelling the fog; and the history of socialism can not be written without his name.

Decidedly less utopian and more practical and promising were the developments in the '40s when what is known as Fourierism played its interesting and historic role in America. Many of the most intellectual men and women of the day were attracted to the movement. The most ardent enthusiasm seized the devotees and they set to work with hand and heart

to convert the American wilderness into the promised land of milk and honey. Of course the dominant strain was emotional and sympathetic, but there was nevertheless a solid substratum of scientific soundness in the undertaking as is proved conclusively by the writings of the men who so heartily gave it support.

Brook Farm, a beautiful reminiscence, tinged with disappointment, was founded near Boston in 1841. Among the many illustrious names associated with Brook Farm the following have peculiar interest after 60 years: George Ripley,<sup>4</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson,<sup>5</sup> Horace Greeley, James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier, William Cullen Bryant, Albert Brisbane,<sup>6</sup> Ellery Channing,<sup>7</sup> James Freeman Clarke,<sup>8</sup> Theodore Parker,<sup>9</sup> A. Bronson Alcott,<sup>10</sup> John Thomas Codman,<sup>11</sup> Henry D. Thoreau,<sup>12</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne,<sup>13</sup> George Bancroft,<sup>14</sup> Charles A. Dana,<sup>15</sup> and George William Curtis.<sup>16</sup>

The Brook Farm Association, organized by “intellectuals” who had no knowledge of the laws of economic determinism or of the historic evolution of society, was ideal in conception and breathed the air of equality and brotherhood. The association declared its object to be “a radical and universal reform, rather than to redress any particular wrong...” In the “preliminary statement” the members announced that the work they had undertaken was not a “mere resolution, but a necessary step in the progress which no one can be blind enough to think has yet reached its limit.”

They said, furthermore:

We believe that humanity, trained by these long centuries of suffering and struggle, led onward by so many saints and heroes and sages, is at length prepared to enter into that universal order toward which it has perpetually moved. Thus...we declare that the imperative duty of this time and this country, nay, more, that its only salvation, and the salvation of civilized countries, lies in the reorganization of society according to the unchanging laws of human nature and of universal harmony....

These passages are indicative of a clear perception for that time and would require but little remodeling to adapt them for incorporation into a modern scientific socialist platform.

The closing paragraph, which follows, is worthy to be preserved in socialist literature. It voices in lofty strain the conviction of the Brook

Farmers in the ultimate realization of their hope for something like a co-operative commonwealth.

They say:

And whatever may be the result of any special efforts, we can never doubt that the object we have in view shall be finally attained; that human life shall yet be developed, not in discord and misery, but in harmony and joy, and that the perfected earth shall at last bear on her bosom a race of men worthy of the name.

This was written in January, 1844, and the whole document bears evidence of socialistic thought and tendencies.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "And truly, I honor the generous ideas of the socialists, the magnificence of their theories, and the enthusiasm with which they have been urged."

Albert Brisbane, Parke Godwin,<sup>17</sup> and Horace Greeley, the latter unique and in some respects the most clear-sighted and practical of them all, were commanding figures in that day. All of them had human blood in their veins — all had democratic instincts and perceived more or less clearly the drift of the time, the tendency toward collective society, industrial freedom, and social justice.

In the meantime Marx and his coadjutors were clearing the murky atmosphere of the old world. They were dissecting the prevailing mode of production and capitalist society in general and in their researches discovered the fundamental law of social development in the "materialistic conception of history," the scientific basis of socialist thought and activity throughout the world. From this time forward the working class movement had a scientific foundation, the scattered and contentious factions were gradually united and harmonized, and socialism became a distinct and recognized factor in the industrial and political destiny of the race.

Following the example and taking inspiration from the pioneers of the old world, and reinforced by the socialists who crossed the water and at once began the proselyting inherent in the revolutionary spirit, the Americans took heart; they entered upon their labors with renewed zeal, scattered the seed of the socialist philosophy and it struck root in American soil.

Albert Brisbane was one of the commanding figures in inspiring and directing the American movement. He was a pronounced socialist and as

early as 1840 set forth his views in a volume entitled *Social Destiny of Man; or, Association and Reorganization of Industry*.<sup>18</sup> In this work Brisbane made a strong plea and cogent argument in favor of cooperative industry and “an equitable distribution of profits to each individual.”

Going to Europe in 1848 Brisbane for the first time met Karl Marx at Cologne of whom he afterward wrote as follows:

I found there Karl Marx, the leader of the popular movement. The writings of Marx on labor and capital and the social theories he then elaborated, have had more influence on the great socialistic movement of Europe than that of any other man. He it was who laid the foundation of that modern collectivism which at present bids fair to become the leading socialist doctrine of Europe. He was then just rising into prominence; a man of some thirty years, short, solidly built, with a fine face and bushy black hair. His expression was that of great energy, and behind his self-contained reserve of manner were visible the fire and passion of a great soul....

Briefly stated, as represented by the collectivism of today, his doctrine demands the abolition of individual ownership of the natural wealth of the world — the soil, the mines, the inventions and creations of industry which are the means of production, as well as of the machinery of the world. This wealth, furnished by nature, or created by the genius of humanity, is to be made collective property, held by the state (collectively) for the equal advantage of the whole body of the people. Governments are to represent the collective intelligence of the nation; to manage, direct and supervise all general operations and relations of an industrial character...

Brisbane traveled extensively in Europe, met the men of note in the principal countries. and studied the industrial and social conditions with a view to propagating the collectivist movement in the United States. On his return, filled with the spirit of enthusiasm, he vigorously entered upon his work of agitation and is fairly entitled to the credit of having rendered great service in the pioneer work of starting the socialist movement in America.

Without desire to disparage any of the men of that time by invidious comparison, the immense personality and rustic simplicity, coupled with the keen perception, rugged honesty and intense earnestness of Horace Greeley command special admiration. The power of Greeley's influence in the early history of the socialist movement in America, when hate and persecution were aroused by the mere mention of it, has never yet been

fairly recognized. He has been called “our later Franklin” and deserves the title.

Parton, the biographer of Greeley, said:

The subject of Greeley’s oratory is one alone; it is ever the same; the object of his public life is single. It is the “emancipation of labor,” its emancipation from ignorance, vice, servitude, insecurity, poverty. This is his chosen, only theme, whether he speaks from the platform or writes for the *Tribune*.<sup>19</sup>

Horace Greeley was in the true sense a labor leader. He was the first president of Typographical Union No. 6 of New York City and took advanced ground on every question that affected, not only the printers, but the whole working class. There was nothing conservative about the views of Greeley on the labor question. He was, above all else, radical and progressive, that is to say, revolutionary, and the labor leaders of today could with credit to themselves and benefit to their organizations study his character and writings and follow his example.

The upheaval in Europe in 1848 forced many of the radicals and socialists into exile; and the general tide that set in toward the western world bore many of these restless spirits to our shores; and no sooner were they landed before they began to sow the revolutionary seed and organize the propaganda they had been compelled to abandon on the other side.

The German socialists who came over were the very men needed here at that time. They were trained and disciplined in the “old guard;” they had the rugged bearing and fearlessness of army veterans and they knew no such word as discouragement or failure. Among these sturdy agitators William Weitling<sup>20</sup> bore a conspicuous part in preparing the way for organization and for action along political lines.

From this time the propaganda became more active and also clearer and more definite in character. The movement was gradually evolving from the haze of communism that clung to it through all its early years and was beginning to take form as an independent political organization with the central object of conquering the powers of government as a means of emancipating the working class from wage-slavery. Labor unions, turner bunds, and singing societies were organized all through the ’50s, all tending in the same direction and though not all pronounced, having substantially the same end in view.

In this brief sketch we have not the space to record in detail the many attempts that were made to organize a national working class political movement in the United States. This must be the work of the historian and fortunately for the reader and student he has recently appeared. The first authentic volume upon the subject is the *History of Socialism in the United States*, by Morris Hillquit,<sup>21</sup> a book of over 350 pages, written in excellent style and treating ably and exhaustively the various stages of the development from its inception to the large and growing movement of our day.

The little volume entitled *A Brief History of Socialism in America*, by Frederic Heath,<sup>22</sup> editor of the *Social Democratic Herald*, a valuable collection of historical data to which has been added much original matter, both interesting and instructive, is also well worthy of perusal.

Professor Richard T. Ely, in his *Labor Movement in America*, discussing the "Beginnings of Modern Socialism," says in reference to the period we are now considering:

The socialism of today may be said to date from the European revolutions of 1848, all of which soon terminated disastrously for the people as opposed to their rulers. Many German refugees sought our shores, and some of them were ardent socialists and communists, who endeavored to propagate their ideas. Wilhelm Weitling, a tailor, born in Magdeburg in 1808, was prominent among these...became one of the first to scatter those seeds of economic radicalism which have brought forth such large increase in the social democracy of our own times.<sup>23</sup>

The first large society to adopt and propagate socialism in America was composed of the German Gymnastic Unions (Turnverein).<sup>24</sup> The Socialistic Turnverein of New York drew up a constitution for an association, to be composed of the various local gymnastic unions, and published it in 1850. A preliminary gathering of a few delegates was held in New York in the Shakespeare hotel, then the headquarters of the "progressive" elements among the Germans. It was finally decided to call a meeting of delegates, to be held in Philadelphia, on October 5th of the same year, to effect a permanent organization. Several Turnverein acted on the suggestion, and among others, delegates were present from New York, Boston and Baltimore. The first name adopted was "Associated Gymnastic Unions of North America" which was, however, changed the following year to "Socialistic Gymnastic Union."

Through '60s and '70s the agitation steadily increased, local organizations were formed in various parts of the country, but they were chiefly for the passing day and after serving their temporary purpose, disappeared.

The American Civil War and the emancipation of the Negro race which followed, resulting in millions of "free" Negroes being thrown upon the "labor market," had its effect in developing capitalist production.

The years following the war marked an era of extraordinary industrial and commercial activity. Inventive genius was taxed to provide machinery and the power necessary to operate it in factory, mill and mine. Manufacturing developed at an enormous rate. The railroads were penetrating the great West and the population spread over the vast domain. Then came the symptoms of congestion, the glutted markets and the clogging of the productive machinery. The "good times" had come to a sudden end; factories and workshops closed down; railroads reduced wages and discharged thousands. The country swarmed with unemployed workingmen; everybody was ominously discussing the "panic" and the "hard times." Discontent was brewing and strikes were threatened by the idle workers.

The railroad strikes and many others broke out in the financial crisis of 1873. It was a period of financial bankruptcy, industrial stagnation and general gloom. The sheriff's hammer was heard everywhere beating the dolorous funeral marches of departed prosperity. It was during this panic that the "tramp" era was inaugurated in the United States and the tramp became a recognized factor in our social life.

The trade union movement had organized rapidly during the years of industrial prosperity. Many of the trades had formed national organizations and when the crash came, the strikes followed in rapid order.

In July 1877, the railroad strikes, supported by the railroad brotherhoods, notably the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, waged with intense severity and resulting in widespread rioting, bloodshed, and destruction of property, spread over a vast area of the country and threatened the direst consequences if the grievances of the strikers were not adjusted. This was among the first strikes in which the writer had an active part and many incidents and scenes are remembered which would make an interesting chapter of proletarian history.<sup>25</sup>

The story of these strikes was written by Allan Pinkerton, the detective, in a curious volume entitled *Strikers, Communists, Tramps and Detectives*.<sup>26</sup> The volume has the portrait of the late P. M. Arthur, grand chief



of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, who was then regarded as a radical labor agitator, as the frontispiece. It also contains a complete expose of the brotherhood, illustrated with diagrams and including its ceremony of initiation, signs, passwords, and all of its secret inner workings.

The strikes spread rapidly East and West and were followed by rioting and violence in most of the railroad centers. The Pittsburgh riots were the most disastrous in the loss of life and destruction of property. In his account of it, Allan Pinkerton, describing the charge of the militia upon the mob, says:

Suddenly a little puff of smoke shot out from a second story window, followed by a ringing report and a quick cry from a soldier who had been struck, but not dangerously wounded.

Back along the column came the officers, exhorting the men to be patient and not return the fire.

The speed of the troops increased. The energy of the mob redoubled. The pistol shot from the window seemed almost a signal, for instantly afterwards, from along the crowd's front, several more shots were fired, and but a few minutes more had elapsed, until from behind every lamp-post, over every hydrant head, and from out every door and window, shot the flame, the smoke, and the bullets.

Soldiers fell; and now their comrades returned the fire, while, as in every other instance, the disorganized, howling mob received far the worst punishment. Some of the wounded soldiers would escape with their lives through the devices, and at the personal risk, of humane people along the street who gave them help and shelter. Others, not so fortunate, were heartlessly murdered when too helpless for defense.

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At one point near where a good deal of killing had been done the previous day, and where a building at the corner of the streets not only was completely riddled with bullets, but bore evidence of the earnest efforts in behalf of religion by the Young Men's Christian Association in the shape of a poster upon which was placarded the startling warning: "*Prepare to Meet Thy God!*"<sup>27</sup>

The strikes were finally crushed out and the leaders driven out and blacklisted.

It was in this struggle that the powers of the federal courts were first invoked to break a railroad strike. The strike leaders and committees were

arrested by order of the federal judges, sitting at Indianapolis, Ind., and committed to jail upon various trumped up charges.

The late President Benjamin Harrison had the exclusive distinction of having served the railway corporations in the dual capacity of lawyer and soldier. He prosecuted the strikers in the federal courts, securing prison sentences for them, and he also organized and commanded a company of soldiers during the strike, and made speeches denouncing the strikers.

Ten years later he was elevated to the presidency of the United States.

The loss of the strike was a staggering blow to organized labor, and many unions passed out of existence. Upon the railroads the mere suspicion of belonging to a union was sufficient ground for instant discharge.

In time, however, the ban was removed, the corporations feeling themselves the masters of the situation, and with returning financial and industrial activity, the work of organization was resumed with greater energy and determination than ever before.

In the events that followed swiftly during these years it will be noted that the United States had become entirely Europeanized in respect to the suppression of exploited and discontented workingmen.

It is scarcely necessary to observe in this connection that capitalism is the same everywhere, that like causes produce like results.

Wherever capitalism appears, in pursuit of its mission of exploitation there will Socialism, fertilized by misery, watered by tears, and vitalized by agitation be also found, unfurling its class-struggle banner and proclaiming its mission of emancipation.

During all these years of strikes and strife, of occasional victory and frequent defeat for labor, the socialist agitation was kept up as far as conditions and means would allow. Under the most unfavorable circumstances the comrades did what they could, held their ground and patiently waited for a more favorable turn in the situation.

Following the Paris Commune in 1871, and its tragic ending, many French radicals came to our shores and gave new spirit to the movement. Referring to these Professor Ely in his *Labor Movement in America*, says:

In 1871 a new impulse was received from the French refugees who came to America after the suppression of the uprising of the commune of Paris and brought with them a spirit of violence, but a more important event in this early period was the order of the congress of the International held in the Hague in 1872, which transferred to New York the "General Council"

of the Association. Modern socialism had then undoubtedly begun to exist in America. The first proclamation of the Council from their new headquarters was an appeal to workingmen "to emancipate labor and eradicate all international and national strife."

In the spring of 1872 "an imposing demonstration" in favor of eight hours took place in New York City. The paper before me estimates the number of those taking part in the procession through the principal streets at 20,000, and among the other societies were the various New York sections of the International Workingmen's Association bearing a banner with their motto "Workingmen of all Countries, Unite!" The following year witnessed the disasters in the industrial and commercial world...; and the distress consequent thereupon was an important aid to their propaganda. The "Exceptional Law" passed against socialists, by the German Parliament in 1878, drove many socialists from Germany to this country, and these have strengthened the cause of American socialism through membership in trade unions and in the Socialistic Labor Party.

There have been several changes among the socialists in party organization and name since 1873, and national conventions or congresses have met from time to time. Their dates and places of meeting have been Philadelphia, 1874; Pittsburgh, 1876; Newark, 1877; Allegheny City, 1880; Baltimore and Pittsburgh, 1883, and Cincinnati, 1885. The name Socialistic Labor Party was adopted in 1877 at the Newark convention. In 1883 the split between the moderates and extremists had become definite, and the latter held their congress in Pittsburgh and the former in Baltimore.<sup>28</sup>

In 1876 the Workingmen's Party was organized and in 1877, at the convention held at Newark, it became the Socialist Labor Party. The course of the party was marked by bitter internal dissension. While the membership was largely made up of radicals they were elementally inharmonious and at cross purposes.

The common point of union was hostility to the prevailing regime; beyond that the trouble began, for the anarchists and communists were still in the same movement with the socialists, having yet to be differentiated in the subsequent industrial and social development.

The socialists were intent upon building up a working class party for independent political action; the anarchists repudiated the ballot and advocated the overthrow of capitalist rule by any means, including force.

August Spies, who was afterward executed for his alleged complicity in the Haymarket riots was at this time a prominent member of the party. He used anarchism and socialism as synonymous terms. He said: "Anarchism, or socialism, means the reorganization of society upon scientific principles and the abolition of causes which produce vice and crime."

George Engel who shared the same cruel fate, said:

Anarchism and Socialism are as much alike, in my opinion, as one egg is to another. They differ only in their tactics. The anarchists have abandoned the way of liberating humanity which Socialists would take to accomplish this, I say: Believe no more in the ballot, and use all other means at your command.

These differences in tactics alluded to by Engel not only created violent dissensions in the party, but resulted in the withdrawal of the anarchists into groups of their own, followed later by the execution and imprisonment of their leaders because of their alleged participation in the Haymarket riots.

But with all the difficulties that confronted it on every hand and the fierce factional contention within its own ranks the Socialist Labor Party, composed of thoughtful, intelligent men, aggressive and progressive, of rugged honesty and thrilled with the revolutionary spirit and the aspiration for freedom, became from its inception a decided factor in the labor movement. It first appeared upon the scene when the country was seething with discontent, the result of the prolonged period of financial and industrial depression that began in 1873 and like a scourge spread rapidly over the country, leaving desolation and gloom in its wake. To the working class it was an ordeal of fire, but the suffering and sacrifice were not in vain. Economic necessity determined the course of events and the workers, some of them at least, had their eyes opened to the cause of their misery and were thus impelled to action looking to the abolition of the existing industrial order, based upon wage-slavery, rather than giving themselves wholly, as they had hitherto done, to the fruitless task, as it now appeared, of ameliorating its effects and consequences. It was these men, led by the foreign radicals, who had long before been scourged by the capitalist masters in their own lands, who rallied to the revolutionary standard of the new working class party.

That such a party was born to a tempestuous career was, of course, a foregone conclusion. Its early trials and struggles tested the dauntless spirit of the comrades who engaged in them and constitute a thrilling chapter — which one day will be adequately understood and appreciated — in the labor movement of the United States.

The busy, ignorant world about this revolutionary nucleus knew little or nothing about it; had no conception of its significance and looked upon its adherents as foolish fanatics whose antics were harmless and whose designs would dissolve like bubbles on the surface of a stream.

Looking backward it is not difficult to see what importance attaches to this beginning of the political organization of the working class, as a class, for the distinct purpose of conquering the public powers and emancipating the toilers from the inhumanity of wage-slavery.

Discussing, this period and the work covered by it Morris Hillquit, in his *History of Socialism in the United States*, says:

The Socialist Labor Party was the dominant factor in the socialist movement of this country for more than 20 years, and its variegated career forms the most intricate and interesting part of the history of American socialism.

At the first glance it appears a series of incoherent events, ill-considered political experiments, sudden changes of policy, incongruous alliances, internal and external strife, and a succession of unaccountable ups and downs, with no perceptible progress or gain.

But the confusion is only apparent. On closer analysis we find a logical thread running all through the seemingly devious course of the party, and a good reason for every one of its seemingly planless moves.

The difficulties which beset the path of the Socialist Labor Party were extraordinary. As one of the first socialist parties organized in this country on a national scale, it had to cope with the usual adversities which attend every radical reform movement at the outset of its career — weakness and diffidence in its own ranks, hostility and ridicule from the outside.<sup>29</sup>

These were stirring times. The trade union movement was entering upon a period of unprecedented activity. The Knights of Labor were in the ascendant and other labor unions were multiplying and rapidly increasing their membership. Everywhere the voice of the agitator was heard. In March, 1885, was inaugurated the strike of the Knights of Labor on the Gould Southwest Railway system, to be followed by the greater strike on

the same system in 1886, which spread rapidly over the states of Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas, Kansas, and Texas, and threatened to involve the railway traffic of all the western and southwestern states. It was one of the most notable labor strikes and brought the Knights of Labor conspicuously before the whole country. The Knights were finally beaten, although the fight was so stubbornly contested and the public was so thoroughly aroused that Congress was prevailed upon to investigate the trouble and the committee issued a detailed report in two parts containing about eleven hundred pages.

On May 1st of the same year, the general strikes for the eight hour work day broke out in various parts of the country, involving several hundred thousand organized workers, most of whom met with disappointment and failure.

The agitation carried on during this time for the shorter work day, known as the eight hour movement, culminated on May 4th, 1886, in the Haymarket riots at Chicago, and the outrageous execution of the anarchists on November 11th of the following year, a foul blot on our capitalistic civilization that will remain to damn it forever.

The murderous assaults upon peaceable meetings and the brutal clubbing of orderly workingmen by the police of Chicago at the behest of their political superiors, the tools of the capitalist class, goaded the leaders almost to desperation and led to the Haymarket massacre, a fiendish plot to silence the agitation and crush the movement for an eight hour work day which was spreading over the country; and, it must be confessed, it served for a time at least the malign purpose of the pretended supporters of "law and order." But as certain as retributive justice pursues her course, the dragon's teeth sown by the capitalist hand in the Haymarket tragedy, taking root in the blood of innocent workingmen, will yet spring from the pregnant soil of freedom to avenge the crimes of plutocratic tyranny and misrule.

In 1884 Laurence Gronlund published his *Cooperative Commonwealth* and he was doubtless right when he claimed, six years later, that this work had contributed its full share to the spread of socialism. Gronlund said that as late as 1880 he could count all the native American socialists on the fingers of one hand. When the patient labors, the bitter poverty and shocking privations of this pioneer socialist are taken into account, his untimely and almost tragic death seems to have been, after all,

a blessed balm to his weary soul. He gave his life to civilize the world and was rewarded with suffering and death.

Four years after Gronlund's *Cooperative Commonwealth* appeared, in 1888, Edward Bellamy published his *Looking Backward* and it had a most wonderful effect upon the people. He struck a responsive popular chord and his name was upon every tongue. The editions ran into the hundreds of thousands and the people were profoundly stirred by what was called the vision of a poetic dreamer. Although not an exposition of scientific socialism, Bellamy's social romance, *Looking Backward*, with its sequel, *Equality*, were valuable and timely contributions to the literature of socialism and not only aroused the people but started many on the road to the revolutionary movement. The quick and wide response to the author's plea for a new social arrangement evinced not only the discontent of the people, but their eager readiness to grasp at anything that might give promise of escape from the poverty, the insecurity, the daily horrors of the existing order. Thousands were moved to study the question by the books of Bellamy and thus became socialists and found their way into the socialist movement.

In February 1888 the strike occurred on the Burlington system involving all its engineers, and firemen and some of its brakemen and switchmen. P. M. Arthur, then grand chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, was threatened with federal court proceedings on account of a boycott which had been placed upon CB&Q cars and was so effective that it looked as if a complete tie-up of traffic would result from it. The boycott was raised and the strike began to wane. But the contest continued almost a year and it cost the brotherhoods fully \$2 million. At last, however, the strikers were exhausted and compelled to yield to total defeat.

Thus was it proved by the loss of another great railroad strike — not one of which was ever won by the brotherhoods — that when the supreme test of strength comes the railway unions are always crushed by the railway corporations.

The defeat of this and other strikes, together with the fact that most railway employees were ineligible to the then existing brotherhoods, led to the organization of the American Railway Union in 1893, which embraced all the employees in railway service. The new union grew rapidly. Soon after it was organized it engaged in and won several minor strikes. In April, 1894, the strike on the Great Northern, involving all the employees of the entire system, was fought and resulted in a complete victory for

the union in less than three weeks. A short time later another strike was threatened owing to disagreement growing out of the construction of the agreement. For the second time thousands were pouring into the union all over the country. Then followed the Pullman strike, in the latter part of June. The Pullman Company, backed by the combined railway corporations represented by the General Manager's Association, resolved to crush the union. They not only failed, but the union paralyzed their traffic and defeated them all. Seeing that the union was triumphant they changed their tactics. They had the United States marshal of Illinois swear in an army of deputies, ostensibly to protect property, but in fact to incite tumult. In his official report to the council of Chicago the Chief of Police said that these "deputies" consisted of thieves, thugs and ex-convicts, the worst element that had ever been turned loose on any city. As soon as the deputies began to operate, as directed by their leaders, and under cover of night, trouble began and this is what the corporations wanted. Peace and order were fatal to them as turbulence and violence were fatal to the union. They understood this perfectly. Hence the deputies and disorder. Immediately these thugs began to perform, the capitalist papers and Associated press flashed broadcast the falsehood that the strikers were on the warpath and threatened destruction to every living thing. The falsehood caught on like magic. Far and wide the cry went up: "Down with the ARU!" "Down with anarchy!" The tide turned. The triumphant union and defeated corporations changed places. With practically the whole population aroused against the ARU, every outrage upon it was not only possible, but perpetrated with enthusiasm in the name of patriotism. The ARU had no press, no way of getting its side before the people and thousands of the very workers in whose behalf it was fighting and had staked everything, turned upon it and joined in the flood of angry denunciation that was launched upon it.

Injunctions by the hundred were issued and served by all the courts between the Ohio and the Pacific. A half dozen burly ruffians, by order of the federal authorities — precisely who could never be learned — backed up a cart at the union headquarters, forced their way into the offices, sacked them, taking records, books, private papers, and unopened letters, without warrant of any description, nailing up the headquarters and hauling the booty to the federal building.

How is this for a specimen of "law and order," the capitalist class and their brood of hirelings so ceaselessly harp about?



In violation of law and precedent and in defiance of the protest of the governor of Illinois, the mayor of Chicago and an overwhelming majority of the people, Grover Cleveland, then president of the United States, forced the federal troops into the state for the sole purpose of aiding the corporations to crush the union and defeat the strike, and when history shall be truthfully written, this crime will make the name of Cleveland the synonym of infamy forever.

Thousands of falsehoods were coined and circulated by the capitalist press, shifting the blame for lawlessness and crime from the instigators to innocent men; the leaders were arrested without charges and jailed without trial, headquarters were broken up, a special grand jury was sworn in expressly to indict, a notorious capitalist union-hater being made foreman, and a hundred other flagrant violations of the law and outrages upon justice were committed in the name of law to defeat justice and enthrone corporate rapacity. The venality of capitalist government never made so bold an exhibition of itself. It was scandalous beyond expression and shocking to the last degree. Every department of the federal government was freely placed at the service of the railroad corporations and Republican and Democratic officials vied with each other in cheerful and servile obedience to their masters.

When the government and its capitalist lackeys had completed their service as corporation scavengers. General Miles, the military satrap, like a vulture stuffed with carrion, pompously exclaimed at a plutocratic banquet in honor of his gallant services: "I have broken the backbone of this strike."

Such sublime heroism in such a holy cause, Grover Cleveland, Nelson Miles, et al., will not be forgotten nor remain unrewarded.

*The Coming Nation*, started at Greensburg, Indiana, by J. A. Wayland, in 1893, was the first popular propaganda paper to be published in the interest of socialism in this country. It reached a large circulation and the proceeds were used in founding and developing the Ruskin Cooperative Colony in Tennessee. Later Mr. Wayland began the publication of the *Appeal to Reason* and it now numbers its subscribers by the hundreds of thousands. It is not saying too much for the *Appeal* that it has been a great factor in preparing the American soil for the seed of socialism. Its enormous editions have been and are being spread broadcast and copies may be found in the remotest recesses and the most inaccessible regions. The propaganda thus organized by Mr. Wayland, for which he has peculiar

genius, and carried forward and enlarged constantly with the aid of a corps of able comrades has been and is a source of incalculable strength in promoting education among the workers and building up the general movement.

The periodical and weekly press, so necessary to any political movement, is now developing rapidly and there is every reason to believe that within the next few years there will be a formidable array of reviews, magazines, illustrated journals and daily and weekly papers to represent the movement and do battle for its supremacy.

The last convention of the American Railway Union was the first convention of the Social Democracy of America, and this was held at Chicago in June 1897, the delegates' voting to change the railway union into a working class political party.

*The Railway Times*, the official paper of the union, became the *Social Democrat* and later the *Social Democratic Herald* and is now published at Milwaukee in the interest of the Socialist Party.

The Social Democracy, the evolution of unionism crushed by the weight of despotic power, was the logical extension and expansion of the American Railway Union, and the direct outgrowth of the great industrial uprising known as the Pullman strike and the brutal tyranny and relentless persecution that followed it. The General Managers' Association pursued the American Railway Union with fiendish ferocity, determined to stamp out the last spark of its life, and as a result, when the few surviving delegates met in national convention in the year named, the last they ever held as a railway labor union, the American Railway Union, loved and respected by labor, and feared and hated by capital, was metamorphosed into the Social Democracy.

At the national convention which followed a year later, in June 1898, a split occurred, one wing adhering to the colonization scheme, making that the chief end of their movement while the latter abandoned the colonization feature and struck out for political action as a working class party. The latter was known as the Social Democratic Party and progressed rapidly from the start, while the former soon exhausted its resources and passed out of existence.

The Socialist Labor Party, in which internal dissension had been brewing for some time, divided into separate factions in July 1899, the anti-administration faction uniting with the Social Democratic Party in the

following year, giving the united party the name of the Socialist Party, the name it bears today.

In the brief summary of the development of the American movement much has had to be omitted for the want of space. To sketch in outline merely, with the hope of stimulating to further reading and study of the history and literature of the Socialist movement has been the purpose of this brief treatise.

Scarcely, however, can reference be omitted to the helpful influence of the popular pen of Robert Blatchford, the author of *Merrie England* and other works and one of the most simple, attractive and convincing writers on socialism in all the world. Hundreds of thousands of copies of *Merrie England* have been sold and given away and the demand still continues. The work of Mr. Blatchford is specially adapted to beginners. He has the rare faculty of making himself interesting to the workingman and working woman, addressing himself to them in their own simple language and illustrating his argument in the same simple and convincing fashion. Robert Blatchford and his writings have contributed materially to the spread of Socialism in this country and are justly entitled to the grateful acknowledgment of the American movement.

Reference to Karl Marx, Ferdinand Lassalle, Frederick Engels, William Liebknecht, and August Bebel, the titans of revolutionary socialism, and their contemporaries and successors, need not be made in these brief pages, nor to the socialist classics which are so well known and may be read in all languages.

The immortal shibboleth of Marx: "Workingmen of all countries unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains — you have a world to gain" is the rallying cry of the class struggle, the inspiration of the working class and is heard echoing and re-echoing around the world.

The socialist vote in the United States shows a steady, and all things considered, satisfactory progress of the movement.

In the national election of 1898 the Socialist vote was 21,164.

In 1900 the Socialist Party cast 87,814 votes and the Socialist Labor Party 39,739 votes, a total of 127,553 votes.

Since the election of 1900 there has been greater activity in organizing and a more widespread propaganda than ever before. In the elections of the past it can scarcely be claimed that the Socialist movement was represented by a national party. It entered these contests with but few states

organized and with no resources worth mentioning to sustain it during the campaign.

It is far different today.

The Socialist Party is organized in almost every state and territory in the American union. Its members are filled with enthusiasm and working with an energy born of the throb and thrill of revolution. The party has a press supporting it that extends from sea to sea and is as vigilant and tireless in its labors as it is steadfast and true to the party principles.

The Socialist Party stands upon a sound platform, embodying the principles of international socialism, clearly and eloquently expressed, and proclaims its mission of conquest on the basis of the class struggle. Its tactics are in harmony with its principles, and both are absolutely uncompromising.

Viewed today from any intelligent standpoint the outlook of the Socialist movement is full of promise — to the capitalist, of struggle and defeat; to the worker, of coming freedom.

It is the break of dawn upon the horizon of human destiny and it has no limitations but the walls of the universe.

What party strife or factional turmoil may yet ensue we neither know nor care. We know only that the principles of Socialism are necessary to the emancipation of the working class and to the true happiness of all classes and that its historic mission is that of a conquering movement. We know that day by day, nourished by the misery and vitalized by the aspirations of the working class, the area of its activity widens, it grows in strength and increases its mental and moral grasp, and when the final hour of capitalism and wage slavery strikes, the Socialist movement, the greatest in all history — great enough to embrace the human race — will crown the class struggles of the centuries with victory and proclaim Freedom to all mankind.

Published as a pamphlet, *The American Movement*. Terre Haute, IN: Standard Publishing Co. 1904. Reprinted as a pamphlet by Charles H. Kerr & Co. and as a part of Rogers (ed.), *Debs: His Life, Writings, and Speeches* (1908), pp. 95-117.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised and substantially expanded version of the article "The Socialistic Movement in America" (April 26, 1902), see this volume above.

<sup>2</sup> From *William Shakespeare* (1864), by Victor Hugo (1802-1885).

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Owen (1771-1858) was a millionaire philanthropist, the owner of a large textile mill in New Lanark, Scotland. A socialist philosopher and experimenter, Owen sought to reduce working hours and improve conditions through cooperation in sizable production units that made provision for public housing, food preparation, and education. In 1825 Owen established a model cooperative colony in New Harmony, Indiana.

<sup>4</sup> George Ripley (1802-1880) was a Unitarian minister and journalist. Brook Farm, a utopian socialist colony, was started through Ripley's volition in 1841.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was a poet, philosopher, lecturer, and essayist known for developing and popularizing transcendentalism.

<sup>6</sup> Albert Brisbane (1809-1890) was a pioneer American socialist, the author of the influential book *Social Destiny of Man* (1840) and co-editor of the Fourierist journal *The Phalanx* (1843-1845).

<sup>7</sup> William Ellery Channing (1818-1901) was a poet and the first biographer of Henry David Thoreau.

<sup>8</sup> James Freeman Clarke (1810-1888) was a Unitarian minister and writer.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore Parker (1810-1860) was a Unitarian minister and prominent abolitionist. He suffered a premature death from tuberculosis.

<sup>10</sup> Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888) was a reform-minded educator and writer and the father of renowned novelist Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888).

<sup>11</sup> John Thomas Codman (1827-1907), a youthful member of Brook Farm, is best remembered for his book *Brook Farm: Historic and Personal Memoir*. New York: Arena Publishing Co., 1894.

<sup>12</sup> Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), an essayist and poet, is regarded as the leading figure of Transcendentalism and holds an iconic place in the world of American literature.

<sup>13</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) was a popular novelist and short-story writer best remembered for his 1850 work, *The Scarlet Letter*.

<sup>14</sup> George Bancroft (1800-1891), son of a Unitarian minister, was a prominent historian who authored a massive multivolume history of the United States.

<sup>15</sup> Charles A. Dana (1819-1897) was a prominent journalist and newspaper editor who was the right hand man of Horace Greeley at the New York Tribune. Dana met Karl Marx while covering the revolutions of 1848 in Europe and was influential in bringing Marx aboard as a correspondent to the paper, for which he wrote for more than a decade.

<sup>16</sup> George William Curtis (1824-1892) was a writer and public speaker.

<sup>17</sup> Parke Godwin (1816-1904) was a journalist and advocate of the ideas of François Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837).

<sup>18</sup> Albert Brisbane, *Social Destiny of Man; or, Association and Reorganization of Industry*. Philadelphia: C.F. Stollmeyer, 1840.

<sup>19</sup> James Parton, *The Life of Horace Greeley, Editor of the New York Tribune*. Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1869; pp. 334-335.

<sup>20</sup> Wilhelm Weitling (1808-1871), an émigré to the United States after the failure of the revolutions of 1848, was one of the earliest exponents of socialism in the United States. He launched a monthly journal, *Die Republik der Arbeiter* [The Republic of the Worker], in 1850.

<sup>21</sup> Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States*. New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1903.

<sup>22</sup> Frederic Heath, *Socialism in America*. Paperback title: *Social Democracy Red Book*. Terre Haute, IN: Debs Publishing Co., Jan. 1900.

<sup>23</sup> Richard T. Ely, *The Labor Movement in America*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1886; pp. 219-220.

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<sup>24</sup> Local German-American gymnastic clubs that also served a the function of social and political societies.

<sup>25</sup> It is disingenuous at best for Debs — who last worked as a locomotive fireman in October 1874 and was working days for a wholesale grocer — to intimate that he played any part whatsoever in the strike wave of 1877. See: *Selected Works of Eugene V. Debs: Volume 1*.

<sup>26</sup> Allan Pinkerton, *Strikers, Communists, Tramps, and Detectives*. New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., 1882.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 257-258, 267-268.

<sup>28</sup> Ely, *The Labor Movement in America*, pp. 227-228.

<sup>29</sup> Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States*, p. 213.