

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

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"There is in human affairs one order which is the best. That order is not always the one which exists; but it is the order which should exist for the greatest good of humanity. God knows it, and wills it : man's duty it is to discover and establish it." — EMILE DE LAVELEYE

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., i,
FATERNOSTER SQUARE
1884

Then shall they also answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?"

Then shall he answer them, saying, " Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."—MATTHEW.

TO THE MEMORY OF FRANCIS GEORGE SHAW.

(The rights of translation and of reproduction are reserved.) " Yea," saith the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them"

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PREFACE.

To explain some allusions to time and place it may be well to say that this book was written in New York during 1883. Though the standpoint is American, the subjects treated have as much interest and importance on one side of the Atlantic as the other. Such differences as there are in the conditions of the two peoples serve to throw light upon problems which are presenting themselves to both.

LONDON, *January*, 1884.

CHAPTER I. THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

There come moments in our lives that summon all our powers — when we feel that, casting away illusions, we must decide and act with our utmost intelligence and energy. So in the lives of peoples come periods specially calling for earnestness and intelligence.

We seem to have entered one of these periods. Over and over again have nations and civilizations been confronted with problems which, like the riddle of the Sphinx, not to answer was to be destroyed; but never before have problems so vast and intricate been presented. This is not strange. That the closing years of this century must bring up momentous social questions follows from the material and intellectual progress that has marked its course.

Between the development of society and the development of species there is a close analogy. In the lowest forms of animal life there is little difference of parts; both wants and powers are few and simple; movement seems automatic; and instincts are scarcely distinguishable from those of the vegetable. So homogeneous are some of these living things, that if cut in pieces, each piece still lives. But as life rises into higher manifestations, simplicity gives way to complexity, the parts develop into organs having separate functions and reciprocal relations, new wants and powers arise, and a greater and greater degree of intelligence is needed to secure food and avoid danger. Did fish, bird, or beast possess no higher intelligence than the polyp, Nature could bring them forth only to die.

This law — that the increasing complexity and delicacy of organization which give higher capacity and increased power are accompanied by increased wants and dangers, and require, therefore, increased intelligence — runs through nature. In the ascending scale of life at last comes man, the most highly and