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# ESSAYS

ON THE

# Materialistic Conception of History

BY

ANTONIO LABRIOLA

*Professor in the University of Rome*

TRANSLATED BY

CHARLES H. KERR

CHICAGO

CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY

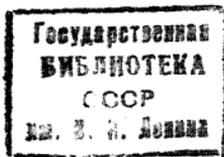
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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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On the tenth of March, 1896, the same year that the last despairing revolt of the small producer against capitalism in America was to end in the overwhelming defeat of Bryan, an Italian scholar published in the city of Rome the remarkable work which is now for the first time offered to American readers.

To publish this book in America at that time would have been an impossibility. The American socialist movement was then hardly more than an association of immigrants who had brought their socialism with them from Europe. Today it numbers at least half a million adherents, and its platform is an embodiment of the ideas first adequately stated in the Communist Manifesto of 1848, and now first adequately explained and elaborated in this remarkable work of Labriola.

The central and fundamental proposition of socialism is not any scheme for reconstructing society, on a cut-and-dried programme, nor again is it any particular mathematical formula showing to what extent the laborer is robbed by the present system of the fruits of his labor; it is precisely this Historical Materialism, which Labriola has so admirably explained in the present work.

Some idea of the place accorded to this book by European socialists may be gathered from the preface to the French edition by G. Sorel, one of the most prominent socialists of France.

He says: "The publication of this book marks a date in the history of socialism. The work of Labriola has its place reserved in our libraries by the side of the classic works of Marx and Engels. It constitutes an illumination and a methodical development of a theory which the masters of the new socialist thought have never yet treated in a didactic form. It is therefore an indispensable book for whoever wishes to understand something of *proletarian ideas*. More than the works of Marx and Engels it is addressed to that public which is unacquainted with socialist preconceptions. In these pages the historian will find substantial and valuable suggestion for the study of the origin and transformation of institutions."

The economic development of the United States has reached a point where the growth of the Socialist Party must henceforth go forward with startling rapidity. That the publication of this volume may have some effect in clarifying the ideas of those who discuss the principles of that party, whether with voice or pen, is the hope of the

TRANSLATOR.

# ESSAYS ON THE MATERIALISTIC CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

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