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THE STATE:
Its Historic Role

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THE STATE: ITS HISTORIC ROLE.

By PETER KROPOTKIN.

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I.

IN taking as subject for this lecture the State and the part it played in history I thought it would respond to a need which is greatly felt at this moment: that of thoroughly examining the very idea of the State, of studying its essence, its *rôle* in the past, and the part it may be called upon to play in the future.

It is especially on the "State" question that Socialists are divided. Amidst the number of fractions existing among us and corresponding to different temperaments, to different ways of thinking, and especially to the degree of confidence in the coming Revolution, two main currents can be traced.

On the one hand, there are those who hope to accomplish the Social Revolution by means of the State: by upholding most of its functions, by even extending them and making use of them for the Revolution. And there are those who, like us, see in the State, not only in its actual form and in all forms that it might assume, but in its very essence, an obstacle to the Social Revolution: the most serious hindrance to the budding of a society based on equality and liberty; the historic form elaborated to impede this budding—and who consequently work to abolish the State, and not to reform it.

The division, as you see, is deep. It corresponds to two divergent currents which clash in all philosophy, literature, and action of our times. And if the prevalent notions about the State remain as obscure as they are today, it will be, without doubt, over this question that the most obstinate struggles will be entered upon, when—as I hope soon—Communist ideas will seek for their practical realisation in the life of societies.

It is therefore of consequence, after having so often criticised the present State, to seek the cause of its appearance, to investigate the part played by it in the past, to compare it with the institutions which it superseded.

Let us first agree as to what we mean by the word State.

There is, as you know, the German school that likes to confuse the *State* with *Society*. This confusion is to be met with even among the best German thinkers and many French ones, who cannot conceive society without State concentration; and thence arises the habitual re-

proach cast on Anarchists of wanting to "destroy society" and of "preaching the return of perpetual war of each against all."

Yet to reason thus is to entirely ignore the progress made in the domain of history during the last thirty years; it is to ignore that men have lived in societies during thousands of years before having known the State; it is to forget that for European nations the State is of recent origin—that it hardly dates from the sixteenth century; it is to fail to recognise that the most glorious epochs in humanity were those in which the liberties and local life were not yet destroyed by the State, and when masses of men lived in communes and free federations.

The State is but one of the forms taken by society in the course of history. How can one be confused with the other?

On the other hand, the *State* has also been confused with *government*. As there can be no State without government, it has been sometimes said that it is the absence of government, and not the abolition of the State, that should be the aim.

It seems to me, however, that State and government represent two ideas of a different kind. The State idea implies quite another idea to that of government. It not only includes the existence of a power placed above society, but also a *territorial concentration* and a *concentration of many functions of the life of society in the hands of a few or even of all.* It implies new relations among the members of society.

This characteristic distinction, which perhaps escapes notice at first sight, appears clearly when the origin of the State is studied.

To really understand the State, there is, in fact, but one way: it is to study it in its historical development, and that is what I am going to endeavour to do.

The Roman Empire was a State in the true sense of the word. Up till now it is the ideal of the students of law.

Its organs covered a vast domain with a close network. Everything flowed towards Rome: economic life, military life, judicial relations, riches, education, even religion. From Rome came laws, magistrates, legions to defend their territory, governors to rule the provinces, gods. The whole life of the Empire could be traced back to the Senate; later on to the Cæsar, the omnipotent, omniscient, the god of the Empire. Every province, every district had its miniature Capitol, its little share of Roman sovereignty to direct its whole life. One law, the law imposed by Rome, governed the Empire; and that Empire did not represent a confederation of citizens: it was only a flock of *subjects.*

Even at present, the students of law and the authoritarians altogether admire the unity of that Empire, the spirit of unity of those laws, the beauty—they say—the harmony of that organisation.

But the internal decomposition furthered by barbarian invasion—the death of local life, henceforth unable to resist attacks from without, and the gangrene spreading from the centre—pulled that empire to pieces, and on its ruins was established and developed a new civilisation, which is ours to-day.

And if, putting aside antique empires, we study the origin and development of that young barbarian civilisation till the time when it gave birth to our modern States, we shall be able to grasp the essence of the State. We shall do it better than we should have done, if we had launched ourselves in the study of the Roman Empire, or the empire of Alexander, or else of despotic Eastern monarchies.

In taking these powerful barbarian destroyers of the Roman Empire as a starting point, we can retrace the evolution of all civilisation from its origin till it reaches the stage of the State.

II.

Most of the philosophers of the last century had conceived very elementary notions about the origin of societies.

At the beginning, they said, men lived in small, isolated families, and perpetual war among these families represented the normal condition of existence. But one fine day, perceiving the drawbacks of these endless struggles, they decided to form a society. A social contract was agreed upon among scattered families, who willingly submitted to an authority, which authority—need I tell you?—became the starting point and the initiative of all progress. Must I add, as you have already been told in school, that our present governments have up till now impersonated the noble part of salt of the earth, of pacifiers and civilisers of humanity?

This conception, which was born at a time when little was known about the origin of man, prevailed in the last century; and we must say that in the hands of the encyclopedists and of Rousseau, the idea of a "social contract" became a powerful weapon with which to fight royalty and divine right. Nevertheless, in spite of services it may have rendered in the past, that theory must now be recognised as false.

The fact is that all animals, save some beasts and birds of prey, and a few species that are in course of extinction, live in societies. In the struggle for existence it is the sociable species that get the better of those who are not. In every class of animals they occupy the top of the ladder, and there cannot be the least doubt that the first beings of

human aspect already lived in societies. Man did not create society; society is anterior to man.

We also know today—anthropology has clearly demonstrated it—that the starting point of humanity was not the family, but the clan, the tribe. The paternal family such as we have it, or such as is depicted in Hebrew tradition, appeared only very much later. Men lived tens of thousands of years in the stage of clan or tribe, and during that first stage—let us call it primitive or savage tribe, if you will—man already developed a whole series of institutions, habits, and customs, far anterior to the paternal family institutions.

In those tribes, the separate family existed no more than it exists among so many other sociable mammalia. Divisions in the midst of the tribe itself were formed by generations; and since the earliest periods of tribal life limitations were established to hinder marriage relations between divers generations, while they were freely practised between members of the same generation. Traces of that period are still extant in certain contemporary tribes, and we find them again in the language, the customs, the superstitions of nations who were far more advanced in civilisation.

The whole tribe hunted and harvested in common, and when they were satisfied they gave themselves up with passion to their dramatic dances. Nowadays we still find tribes, very near to this primitive phase, driven back to the outskirts of the large continents, or in Alpine regions, the least accessible of our globe.

The accumulation of private property could not take place, because each thing that had been the personal property of a member of the tribe was destroyed or burned on the spot where his corpse was buried. This is even still done by gipsies in England, and the funeral rites of the "civilised" still bear its traces: the Chinese burn paper models of what the dead possessed; and we lead the military chief's horse, and carry his sword and decorations as far as the grave. The meaning of the institution is lost: only the form survives.

Far from professing contempt for human life, these primitive individuals had a horror of blood and murder. Shedding blood was considered a deed of such gravity that each drop of blood shed—not only the blood of men, but also that of certain animals—required that the aggressor should lose an equal quantity of blood.

In fact, a murder within the tribe itself was a deed *absolutely unknown*; you may see it till now, among the Inoïts or Esquimaux—those survivors of the stone age that inhabit the Arctic regions. But when tribes of different origin, colour, or tongue met during their migrations,

war was often the result. It is true that then already men tried to mitigate the effect of these shocks. Already then, as has so well been demonstrated by Maine, Post, Nys, the tribes agreed upon and respected certain rules and limitations of war which contained the germs of what was to become international law later on. For example, a village was not to be attacked without giving warning to the inhabitants. Never would anyone have dared to kill on a path trodden by women going to the well. And, to come to terms, the balance of the men killed on both sides had to be paid.

However, from that time forward, a general law overruled all others :—"Your people have killed or wounded one of ours, therefore we have the right to kill one of yours, or to inflict an absolutely similar wound on one of yours"—never mind which, as it is always the tribe that is responsible for every act of its members. The well-known biblical verses, "Blood for blood, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a wound for a wound, a life for a life,"—but no more !—thence derive their origin, as was so well remarked by Koenigswarter. It was their conception of justice, and we have not much reason to boast; as the principle of "a life for a life" which prevails in our codes is but one of its numerous survivals

As you see, a whole series of institutions, and many others which I must pass over in silence—a whole code of tribal morals was already elaborated during this primitive stage. And to maintain this kernel of social customs in force, habit, custom, tradition sufficed. There was no authority to impose it.

Primitive individuals had, no doubt, temporary leaders. The sorcerer, the rain-maker—the scientist of that epoch—sought to profit by what they knew, or thought they knew about nature, to rule over their fellow men. Likewise, he who could best remember proverbs and songs, in which tradition was embodied, became powerful. And, since then, these "educated" men endeavoured to secure their rulership by only transmitting their knowledge to the elect. All religions, and even all arts and crafts, have begun, you know, by "mysteries."

Also the brave, the bold, and the cunning man became the temporary leader during conflicts with other tribes, or during migrations. But an alliance between the "law" bearer, the military chief and the witch-doctor did not exist, and there can be no more question of a State with these tribes than there is in a society of bees or ants, or among our contemporaries the Patagonians or the Esquimaux.

This stage, however, lasted thousands upon thousands of years, and the barbarians who invaded the Roman empire had just passed through it. In fact, they had hardly emerged from it.

In the first centuries of our era, immense migrations took place among the tribes and confederations of tribes that inhabited Central and Northern Asia. A stream of peoples, driven by more or less civilised tribes, came down from the table-lands of Asia—probably driven away by the rapid drying-up of those plateaux—inundated Europe, impelling one another onward, mingling with one another in their overflow towards the West.

During these migrations, when so many tribes of diverse origin were intermixed, the primitive tribe which still existed among them and the primitive inhabitants of Europe necessarily became disaggregated. The tribe was based on its common origin, on the worship of common ancestors; but what common origin could be invoked by the agglomerations that emerged from the hurly-burly of migrations, collisions, wars between tribes, during which we see the paternal family spring up here and there—the kernel formed by some men appropriating women they had conquered or kidnapped from neighbouring tribes?

Ancient ties were rent asunder, and under pain of a general break-up (that took place, in fact, for many a tribe, which then disappeared from history) it was essential that new ties should spring up. And they sprung up. They were found in the communal possession of *land*—of a territory, on which such an agglomeration ended by settling down.

The possession in common of a certain territory, of certain valleys, plains or mountains, became the basis of a new agreement. Ancient gods had lost all meaning; and the local gods of a valley, river or forest, gave the religious consecration to the new agglomeration, substituting themselves for the gods of the primitive tribe. Later on, Christianity, always ready to accommodate itself to pagan survivals, made local saints of them.

Henceforth, the village community, composed partly or entirely of separate families—all united, nevertheless, by the possession in common of the land—became the necessary bond of union for centuries to come.

On the immense stretches of land in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, it still exists to-day. The barbarians who destroyed the Roman empire—Scandinavians, Germans, Celts, Slavs, etc.—lived under this kind of organization. And, in studying the ancient barbarian codes, as well as the laws and customs of the confederations of village communes among the Kabyles, Mongols, Hindoos, Africans, etc., which still exist, it become possible to reconstitutes in its entirety that form of society, which was the starting point of our present civilization.

Let us therefore, cast a glance on that institution.

III.

The village community was composed, as it still is, of separate families; but the families of a village possessed the land in common. They looked upon it as their common patrimony and allotted it according to the size of the families. Hundreds of millions of men live still under this system in Eastern Europe, India, Java, etc. It is the same system that Russian peasants have established nowadays, when the State left them free to occupy the immense Siberian territory as they thought best.

At first the cultivation of the land was also done in common, and this custom still obtains in many places—at least, the cultivation of certain plots of land. As to deforestation and clearings made in the woods, construction of bridges, building of fortlets and turrets which served as refuge in case of invasion, they were done in common—as hundreds of millions of peasants still do—wherever the village commune has resisted State encroachments. But consumption, to use a modern expression, already took place by family—each having its own cattle, kitchen garden and provisions; the means of hoarding and transmitting wealth accumulated by inheritance already existed.

In all its business, the village commune was sovereign. Local custom was law and the plenary council of all chiefs of families—men and women—was judge, the only judge, in civil and criminal affairs. When one of the inhabitants, complaining of another, planted his knife in the ground at the spot where the commune was wont to assemble, the commune had to "find the sentence" according to local custom, after the fact had been proved by the jurors of both litigant parties.

Time would fail me were I to tell you everything of interest presented by this stage. Suffice it for me to observe that *all* institutions, which States took possession of later on for the benefit of minorities, all notions of right which we find in our codes (mutilated to the advantage of minorities), and all forms of judicial procedure, in as far as they offer guarantees to the individual, had their origin in the village community. Thus, when we imagine we have made great progress—in introducing the jury, for example,—we have only returned to the institution of the barbarians, after having modified it to the advantage of the ruling classes. Roman law was only superposed to customary law.

The sentiment of national unity was developing at the same time, by great free federations of village communes.

Based on the possession, and very often on the cultivation of the soil in common, sovereign as judge and legislator of customary law,—the village community satisfied most needs of the social being.

But not all his needs: there were still others to be satisfied. However, the spirit of the age was not for calling upon a government as soon as a new need was felt. It was, on the contrary, to take the initiative oneself, to unite, to league, to federate, to create an understanding, great or small, numerous or restricted, which would correspond to the new need. And society of that time was literally covered, as by a network, with sworn fraternities, guilds for mutual support, "con-jurations," within and without the village, and in the federation. We can observe this stage and spirit at work, even to-day, among many a barbarian federation having remained outside modern States modelled on the Roman or rather the Byzantine type.

Thus, to take an example among many others, the Kabyles have retained their village community with the powers I have just mentioned. But man feels the necessity of action outside the narrow limits of his hamlet. Some like to wander about in quest of adventures, in the capacity of merchants. Some take to a craft, "an art" of some kind. And these merchants and artisans, unite in "fraternities," even when they belong to different villages, tribes and confederations. There must be union for mutual help in distant adventures or to mutually transmit the mysteries of the craft—and they unite. They swear brotherhood, and practice it in a way that strikes Europeans: in deed and not in words only.

Besides, misfortune can overtake anyone. Who knows that to-morrow, perhaps, in a brawl, a man, gentle and peaceful as a rule, will not exceed the established limits of good behaviour and sociability? Very heavy compensation will then have to be paid to the insulted or wounded; the aggressor will have to defend himself before the village council and prove facts on the oath of six, ten or twelve "con-jurors." This is another reason for belonging to a fraternity.

Moreover, man feels the necessity of talking politics and perhaps even intriguing, the necessity of propagating some moral opinion or custom. There is, also, external peace to be safeguarded; alliances to be concluded with other tribes; federations to be constituted far off; the idea of intertribal law to be propagated. Well, then, to satisfy all these needs of an emotional and intellectual kind the Kabyles, the Mongols, the Malays do not turn to a government: they have none. Men of customary law and individual initiative, they have not been perverted by the corrupted idea of a government and a church which would be supposed to do everything. They unite directly. They constitute sworn fraternities, political and religious societies, unions of crafts—*guilds* as they were called in the Middle Ages, *sofs* as Kabyles call them to-day. And these *sofs* go beyond the boundaries of hamlets; they flourish far out in the desert and in foreign cities; and fraternity

is practised in these unions. To refuse to help a member of your *sof*, even at the risk of losing all your belongings and your life, is an act of treason to the fraternity and exposes the traitor to be treated as the murderer of a "brother."

What we find to-day among Kabyles, Mongols, Malays, etc., was the very essence of life of so-called barbarians in Europe from the fifth to the twelfth, even till the fifteenth century. Under the name of *guilds*, *friendships*, *universitates*, etc., unions swarmed for mutual defence and for solidarily avenging offences against each member of the union: for substituting compensation instead of the vengeance of an "eye for an eye," followed by the reception of the aggressor into the fraternity; for the exercise of crafts, for helping in case of illness, for the defence of territory, for resisting the encroachments of nascent authority, for commerce, for the practice of "good neighbourship;" for propaganda, for everything, in a word, that the European, educated by the Rome of the Cæsars and the Popes, asks of the State to-day. It is even very doubtful that there existed at that time one single man, free or serf (save those who were outlawed by their own fraternities), who did not belong to some fraternity or guild, besides his commune.

Scandinavian *Sagas* sing their exploits. The devotion of sworn brothers is the theme of the most beautiful of these epical songs; whereas the Church and the rising kings, representatives of Byzantine or Roman law which reappears, hurl against them their anathemas and decrees, which happily remain a dead letter.

The whole history of that period loses its significance, and becomes absolutely incomprehensible, if we do not take the fraternities into account—these unions of brothers and sisters that spring up everywhere to satisfy the multiple needs of both economic and emotional life of man.

Nevertheless, black spots accumulate on the horizon. Other unions —those of ruling minorities—are also formed; and they endeavour, little by little, to transform these free men into serfs, into subjects. Rome is dead, but its tradition revives; and the Christian Church, haunted by Oriental theocratic visions, gives its powerful support to the new powers that are seeking to constitute themselves.

Far from being the sanguinary beast that he is represented to be, in order to prove the necessity of ruling over him, man has always loved tranquility and peace. He fights rather by necessity than by ferocity, and prefers his cattle and his land to the profession of arms. Therefore, hardly had the great migration of barbarians begun to abate, hardly had hordes and tribes more or less cantoned themselves on their respective lands than we see the care of the defence of territory against new waves of immigrants confided to a man who engages a small band

of adventurers, men hardened in wars, or brigands, to be his followers; while the great mass raises cattle or cultivates the soil. And this defender soon begins to amass wealth. He gives a horse and armour (very dear at that time) to the poor man, and reduces him to servitude; he begins to conquer the germ of military power. On the other hand, little by little, tradition, which constituted law in those times, is forgotten by the masses. There hardly remains an old man who in his memory keeps the verses and songs which tell of the "precedents," of which customary law consists, and recites them on great festival days before the commune. And, little by little, some families made a speciality, transmitted from father to son, of retaining these songs and verses in their memory and of preserving "the law" in its purity. To them villagers apply to judge differences in intricate cases, especially when two villages or confederations refuse to accept the decisions of arbitrators taken from their midst.

The germ of princely or royal authority is already sown in these families; and the more I study the institutions of that time, the more I see that the knowledge of customary law did far more to constitute that authority than the power of the sword. Man allowed himself to be enslaved far more by his desire to "punish according to law" than by direct military conquest.

And gradually the first "concentration of powers," the first mutual insurance for domination—that of the judge and the military chief—grew to the detriment of the village commune. A single man assumed these two functions. He surrounded himself with armed men to put his judicial decisions into execution; he fortified himself in his turret; he accumulated the wealth of the epoch, viz. bread, cattle and iron, for his family; and little by little he forced his rule upon the neighbouring peasants. The scientific man of the age, that is to say, the witch-doctor or priest, lost no time in bringing him his support and in sharing his domination; or else, adding the sword to his power of redoubtable magician, he seized the domination for his own account.

A course of lectures, rather than a simple lecture, would be needed to deal thoroughly with this subject, so full of new teachings, and to tell how free men became gradually serfs, forced to work for the lay or clerical lord of the manor; how authority was constituted, in a tentative way, over villages and boroughs; how peasants leagued, revolted, struggled to fight the advancing domination, and how they succumbed in those struggles against the strong castle walls, against the men in armour who defended them.

Suffice it for me to say, that towards the tenth and eleventh centuries, Europe seemed to be drifting straight towards the constitution of those

barbarous kingdoms such as we now discover in the heart of Africa, or those Eastern theocracies which we know through history. This could not take place in a day; but the germs of those little kingdoms and those little theocracies were already there and were developing more and more.

Happily, the "barbarian" spirit—Scandinavian, Saxon, Celt, German, Slav—that had led men for about seven or eight centuries to seek for the satisfaction of their needs in individual initiative and in free agreement of fraternities and guilds—happily that spirit still lived in the villages and boroughs. The barbarians allowed themselves to be enslaved, they worked for a master, but their spirit of free action and free agreement was not yet corrupted. Their fraternities flourished more than ever, and the crusades had but roused and developed them in the West.

Then the revolution of the commune, long since prepared by that federative spirit and born of the union of sworn fraternity with the village community, burst forth in the twelfth century with a striking spontaneity all over Europe.

This revolution, which the mass of university historians prefer to ignore, saved Europe from the calamity with which it was menaced. It arrested the evolution of theocratic and despotic monarchies in which our civilisation would probably have gone down after a few centuries of pompous expansion, as the civilisations of Mesopotamia, Assyria and Babylon had done. This revolution opened up a new phase of life—that of the free communes.

IV.

It is easy to understand why modern historians, nurtured as they are in the spirit of the Roman law, and accustomed to look to Roman law for the origin of every political institution, are incapable of understanding the spirit of the communalist movement of the twelfth century. This manly affirmation of the rights of the Individual, who managed to constitute Society through the federation of individuals, villages and towns, was an absolute negation of the centralising spirit of ancient Rome, which spirit penetrates all historical conceptions of the present day university teaching.

The uprising of the twelfth century cannot even be attributed to any personality of mark, or to any central institution. It is a natural, anthropological phasis of human development; and, as such, it belongs to *human* evolution like the tribe and the village-community periods, but belongs to no nation in particular, to no special region of Europe, is the work of no special hero.

This is why University science which is based upon Roman law, centralisation and hero-worship, is absolutely incapable of understanding the substance of that movement which came from beneath.

In France, Augustin Thierry and Sismondi, who both wrote in the first half of this century and who had really understood that period, have had no followers up to the present time; and only now M. Lachaire timidly tries to follow the lines of research indicated by the great historian of the Merovingian and the communalist period (Augustin Thierry). This is why in Germany, the awakening of studies of this period and a vague comprehension of its spirit are only just now coming to the front. And this is why, in this country, one finds a true comprehension of the twelfth century in the poet William Morris rather than amongst the historians,—Green having been only the one who was capable (in the later part of his life) of understanding it at all.

The Commune of the middle ages takes its origin, on the one hand, from the village community, on the other from those thousands fraternities and guilds which were constituted outside territorial unions. It was a federation of these two kinds of unions, developed under the protection of the fortified enclosure and the turrets of the city.

In many a region it was a natural growth. Elsewhere—and this is the rule in Western Europe,—it was the result of a revolution. When the inhabitants of a borough felt themselves sufficiently protected by their walls, they made a "con-juration". They mutually took the oath to put aside all pending questions concerning feuds arisen from insults' assaults or wounds, and they swore that henceforth in the quarrels that should arise, they never again would have recourse to personal revenge or to a judge other than the syndics nominated by themselves in the guild and the city.

It was long since the regular practice in every art or good-neighbourship guild, in every sworn fraternity. In every village commune, such had formerly been the custom, before bishop or kinglet had succeeded in introducing—and later in enforcing—his judge. Now the hamlets and the parishes which constituted the borough, as well as all the guilds and fraternities that had developed there, considered themselves a single *amitas*. They named their judges and swore permanent union between all these groups.

A charter was hastily drawn up and accepted. In case of need they sent for the copy of a charter to some small neighbouring commune. (we know hundreds of these charters to-day,) and the commune was constituted. The bishop or prince, who had up till then been judge of the commune and had often become more or less its master, had only

to recognize the accomplished fact—or else to fight the young "conjuration" by force of arms. Often the king—that is to say the prince who tried to gain superiority over other princes, and whose coffers were always empty,—"granted" the charter, for ready money. He thus renounced imposing *his* judge on the commune, while giving himself importance before other feudal lords. But it was in nowise the rule: hundreds of communes lived without any other sanction than their good pleasure, their ramparts and their lances.

In a hundred years this movement spread, with striking unity, to the whole of Europe,—by imitation, observe well,—including Scotland, France, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland and Russia. And to-day, when we compare the charters and internal organisation of French, English, Scotch, Irish, Scandinavian, German, Bohemian, Russian, Swiss, Italian and Spanish communes, we are struck with the almost complete sameness of these charters, and of the organisation which grew up under the shelter of these "social contracts." What a striking lesson for Romanists and Hegelists who know no other means to obtain similarity of institutions than servitude before the law!

From the Atlantic to the middle course of the Volga, and from Norway to Italy, Europe was covered with similar communes—some becoming populous cities like Florence, Venice, Nuremberg or Novgorod, others remaining boroughs of a hundred or even twenty families, and nevertheless treated as equals by their more or less prosperous sisters.

Organisms full of vigour, the communes evidently grew dissimilar in their evolution. The geographical position, the character of external commerce, the obstacles to be vanquished outside, gave every commune its own history. But for all, the principle was the same. Pskov in Russia and Brugge in Flanders, a Scotch borough of three hundred inhabitants and rich Venice with its islands, a borough in the North of France or in Poland, and Florence the Beautiful represent the same *amitas*. The same fellowship of village communes and of associated guilds; the same constitution in its general outline.

Generally, the town, whose enclosure grows in length and breadth with the population and surrounds itself with higher and higher towers, erected, each, by such and such a parish or such guild, and having its own individual character,—generally, I say, the town is divided into four, five or six districts or sections which radiate from the citadel to the ramparts. In preference these districts are inhabitated, each, by one "art" or craft, whereas new trades—the "young arts"—occupy the suburbs, which will soon be enclosed in a new fortified circle.

The street or parish, represents a territorial unit, corresponding to

the ancient village community. Each street or parish has its popular assembly, its forum, its popular tribunal, its elected priest, militia, banner, and often its seal as a symbol of sovereignty. It is federated with other streets, but it nevertheless keeps its independence.

The professional unit, which often corresponds, or nearly so, with the district or section, is the guild—the trade union. This union also retains its saints, its assembly, its forum, its judges. It has its treasury, its landed property, its militia and banner. It also has its seal and it remains sovereign. In case of war, should it think right, its militia will march and join forces with those of other guilds, and it will plant its banner side by side with the great banner, or *carosse* (cart) of the city.

And lastly the city is the union of districts, streets, parishes and guilds, and it has its plenary assembly of all inhabitants in the large forum, its great belfry, its elected judges, its banner for rallying the militia of the guilds and districts. It negociates as a sovereign with other cities, federates with whom it likes, concludes national and foreign alliances. Thus the English "Cinque Ports" round Dover are federated with French and Netherland ports on the other side of the Channel; the Russian Novgorod is the ally of Scandinavian, Germanic Hansa, and so on. In its external relations, every city possesses all the prerogatives of the modern State, and from that time forth is constituted, by free contracts, that body of agreements which later on became known as International law, and was placed under the sanction of public opinion of all cities, while it was more often violated than respected by the States later on.

How often a city, not being able to decide a dispute in a complicated case, sends for "finding the sentence" to a neighbouring city! How often the ruling spirit of the time—arbitration, rather than the judge's authority—is manifested in the fact of two communes taking a third as arbitrator!

Trade unions behave in the same way. They carry on their commercial and trade affairs beyond the cities and make treaties, without taking their nationalities into account. And when, in our ignorance, we talk boastingly of our international workers' congresses, we forget that international trade congresses and even apprentice congresses were already held in the fifteenth century.

Lastly, the city either defends itself against aggressors and wages its own stubborn wars against neighbouring feudal lords, nominating each year one or rather two military commanders of its militias; or else it accepts a "military defender"—a prince or duke, who is chosen by the city for a year, and whom it can dismiss when it pleases. It usually

delivers up to him the produces of judicial fines for the maintenance of his soldiers; but it forbids him to interfere with the business of the city. Or, lastly, too feeble to emancipate itself entirely from its neighbours,—the feudal vultures,—the city will retain, as a more or less permanent military protector, a bishop or a prince of some family—Guelf or Ghibelline in Italy, from the family of Rurik in Russia, or of Olgerd in Lithuania,—but it will watch with jealousy that the bishop's or prince's authority shall not extend beyond the soldiers encamped in the castle. It will even forbid them to enter the town without permission. You no doubt know that even at the present day the Queen of England cannot enter the city of London without the Lord Mayor's permission.

I should like to speak to you at length about the economic life of cities in the Middle Ages; but I am obliged to pass it over in silence. It was so varied that it would need rather long developments. Suffice it to remark that internal commerce was always carried on by the guilds—not by isolated artisans—prices being fixed by mutual agreement; that at the beginning of that period, external commerce was carried on *exclusively* by the city; that it only became the monopoly of the merchants' guild later on, and still later of isolated individuals; that never was any work done on Sunday or on Saturday afternoon (bathing day); lastly that the city purchased the chief necessaries for the life of its inhabitants (corn, coal, etc.) and delivered them to the inhabitants at cost price. That custom of the city making the purchases of grain was retained in Switzerland till the middle of our century. In fact, it is proved by a mass of documents of all kinds, that humanity has never known, neither before nor after, a period of relative well-being as perfectly assured to all, as existed in the cities of the Middle Ages. The present poverty, insecurity and over-work were absolutely unknown then.

V.

With these elements—liberty, organisation from simple to complex, production and exchange by trade-unions (guilds), commerce with foreign parts carried on by the city itself, and the buying of main provisions by the city—with these elements, the towns of the Middle Ages, during the first two centuries of their free life, became centres of well-being for all the inhabitants. They were centres of opulence, civilization, such as we have not seen since then.

Consult documents that allow of establishing the rates of wages for work, compared to the price of provisions,—Rogers has done it for

England and a great number of writers have done it for Germany,—and we see that the work of the artisan, and even of a simple day-labourer, was remunerated at the time by a wage not even reached by skilled workmen nowadays. The account-books of the University of Oxford and certain English estates, also those of a great number of German and Swiss towns are there to testify to it.

On the other hand, consider the artistic finish and the quantity of decorative work which a workman of those days used to put into the beautiful work of art he did. as well as in the simplest thing of domestic life,—a railing, a candelstick, an article of pottery—and you see at once that he did not know the pressure, the hurry, the overwork of our times; he could forge, sculpture, weave, embroider at his leisure—as but a very small number of artist-workers can do nowadays. And if we glance over the donations to the churches and to houses which belonged to the parish, to the guild or to the city, be it in works of art—in decorative panels, sculptures, cast or wrought iron and even silver works—or in simple mason's or carpenter's work, we understand what degree of well-being those cities had realized in their midst. We can conceive the spirit of research and invention that prevailed, the breath of liberty that inspired their works, the sentiment of fraternal solidarity that grew in those guilds in which men of a same craft were united, not only by the mercantile and technical side of a trade but also by bonds of sociability and fraternity. Was it not, in fact, the guild-law that two brothers were to watch at the bedside of every sick brother? or that the guild would take care of burying the dead brother or sister—a custom which called for devotion, in those times of contagious diseases and plagues,—follow him to the grave, and take care of his widow and children?

Black misery, depression, the uncertainty of to-morrow for the greater number, which characterize our modern cities, were absolutely unknown in those "oases sprung up in the twelfth century in the middle of the feudal forest." In those cities, under the shelter of their liberties acquired under the impulse of free agreement and free initiative, a whole new civilization grew up and attained such expansion, that the like has not been seen up till now.

All modern industry comes to us from those cities. In three centuries, industries and arts developed there to such perfection that our century has been able to surpass them only in rapidity of production, but rarely in quality, and very rarely in beauty of the produce. In the higher arts which we try to revive in vain to-day, have we surpassed the beauty of Raphael? the vigour and audacity of Michel Angelo? the science and art of Leonardo da Vinci? the poetry and language of Dante? or the architecture to which we owe the cathedrals of Laon,

Rheims, Cologne—" the people were its masons " Victor Hugo has said so well—the treasures of beauty of Florence and Venice, the town halls of Bremen and Prague, the towers of Nuremberg and Pisa, and so on *ad infinitum*? All these great conquests of art were the product of that period.

Do you wish to measure the progress of that civilization at a glance? Compare the Dome of St. Marc in Venice to the rustic arch of the Normands, Raphael's pictures to the naive embroideries and carpets of Bayeux, the mathematical and physical instruments and clocks of Nuremberg to the sand clocks of the preceding centuries, Dante's sonorous language to the barbarous Latin of the tenth century. A new world has opened up between the two!

Never, with the exception of that other glorious period of ancient Greece—free cities again—had humanity made such a stride forwards. Never in two or three centuries, had man undergone so profound a change nor so extended his power over the forces of nature.

You perhaps may think of the progress of civilisation in our own century which is ceaselessly boasted of? But in each of its manifestations it is but the child of the civilization which grew up in the midst of free communes! All the great discoveries which have made modern science,—the compass, the clock, the watch, printing, the maritime discoveries, gunpowder, the law of gravitation, the law of atmospheric pressure, of which the steam-engine is but a development, the rudiments of chemistry, the scientific method already pointed out by Roger Bacon, and practised in Italian universities,—where does that all come from, if not from the free cities which developed under the shelter of communal liberties?

But you may say perhaps, that I forget the conflicts, the internal struggles of which the history of these communes is full; the street tumults, the ferocious battles sustained against the landlords; the insurrections of " young arts " against the " ancient arts "; the blood that was shed and the reprisals which took place in these struggles....

I forget nothing. But, like Leo and Botta, the two historians of medieval Italy, like Sismondi, like Ferrari, Gino Capponi, and so many others, I see that these struggles were the guarantee itself of free life in a free city. I perceive a renewal of and a new flight towards progress after each one of these struggles. After having described these struggles and conflicts in detail, and after having measured the immensity of progress realized while these struggles stained the streets with blood, viz: well-being assured to all the inhabitants, and a renovation of civilization, Leo and Botta concluded by this thought, so true, that so often comes to my mind:

"A commune," they said, "only then represents the picture of a moral whole, only then appears universal in its behaviour, like the human mind itself, *when it has admitted conflict and opposition in its midst.*"

Yes, conflict, freely thrashed out, without an external power, the State, throwing its immense weight into the balance, in favor of one of the struggling forces.

Like those two authors, I also think that "far more misery has often been caused by imposing peace, because in such cases contradictory things were forcibly allied in order to create a general politic order, and by sacrificing individualities, and little organisms, in order to absorb them in a vast body without colour and without life."

This is why the communes,—so long as they themselves did not strive to become States and to impose submission around them, so as to create "a vast body without colour or life"—always grew up, always came out younger and stronger after every struggle; this is why they flourished at the sound of arms in the street, while two centuries later that same civilization was crumbling at the noise of wars brought about by States.

In the commune, the struggle was for the conquest and maintenance of the liberty of the individual, for the principle of federation, for the right to unite and act; whereas the wars of the States aimed to destroy these liberties, to subjugate the individual, to annihilate free agreement, to unite men in one and the same servitude before the king, the judge, the priest, and the State.

There lies all the difference. There are struggles and conflicts that kill. And there are those that launch humanity forwards.

VI.

In the course of the sixteenth century, modern barbarians come and destroy the whole civilization of the cities of the Middle Ages. These barbarians do not completely annihilate it; they cannot do so, but they check it, at least, in its progress for two or three centuries. They drive it in a new direction.

They fetter the individual, they take all his liberties away, they order him to forget the unions which formerly were based on free initiative and free agreement, and their aim is to level the whole of society in the same submission to the master. They destroy all bonds between men, by declaring that State and Church alone must henceforth constitute the union between the subjects of a State; that only Church and State have the mission of watching over industrial, commercial, judiciary

artistic and passional interests, for which men of the twelfth century had been wont to unite directly.

And who are those barbarians? It is the State: the Triple Alliance, constituted at last, of the military chief, the Roman judge, and the priest, the three forming a mutual insurance for domination; the three united in one power that will command in the name of the interests of society and will crush that society.

We naturally ask ourselves, how these new barbarians could get the mastery over communes, formerly so powerful? Where did they get their strength for conquest from?

That strength, they first of all found in the village. Just like the communes of ancient Greece, who did not manage to abolish slavery, so the communes of the Middle Ages were not able to emancipate the peasant from serfdom, at the same time as they emancipated the citizen.

It is true that nearly everywhere, at the time of his emancipation, the citizen—himself an artisan-cultivator—had tried to induce country folk to help in his enfranchisement. During two centuries, the citizens of Italy, Spain and Germany carried on a stubborn war against feudal lords. Prodigies of heroism and perseverance were displayed by citizens in that war against the feudal castles. They drained themselves to become masters of the castles of feudalism and to cut down the feudal forest that enveloped them.

But they only half succeeded. Then, tired of war, they made peace over the head of the peasant. To buy peace they delivered the peasant up to the lord, outside the territory which was conquered by the commune. In Italy and Germany they even ended by recognizing the lord as fellow citizen on condition that he should reside within the commune. In other parts they ended by sharing his domination over the peasant. And the lord avenged himself on these common people, whom he hated and despised, by drenching their streets in blood during the struggles and acts of revenge of noble families, that were not carried before communal judges and syndics, whom the nobles despised, but were settled by the sword in the street.

The nobles demoralised the towns by their munificence, their intrigues, their great style of living, by their education received at the bishop's or the king's court. They made the citizens espouse their family struggles. And the citizen ended by imitating the lord, and became a lord in his turn, enriching himself, he too, by the labour of serfs encamped in the villages outside the city walls.

After which, the peasant lent assistance to nascent Kings, Emperors, Tsars and to Popes, when they began to build their kingdoms and to

bring the towns under subjection. When not marching by their orders the peasant left them free to act.

It is in the country, in a fortified castle, situated in the midst of rural populations, that royalty was slowly constituted. In the twelfth century it existed but in name, and to-day we know what to think of the rogues, chiefs of little bands of brigands, who adorned themselves with this title, which after all—Augustin Thierry has so well demonstrated it—had very little meaning at that time; in fact the Norse fishermen had their "Nets' Kings," even the beggars had their "Kings" —the word having then simply the signification of "temporary leader."

Slowly, tentatively, a baron more powerful or more cunning than the others, succeeded here and there in rising above the others. The Church no doubt bestirred itself to support him. And by force, cunning, money, sword, and poison in case of need, one of these feudal barons became great at the expense of the others. But it was never in one of the free cities, which had their noisy forum, their Tarpeian rock, or their river for the tyrants, that royal authority succeeded in constituting itself: it was always in the country in the village.

After having vainly tried to constitute this authority in Rheims or in Lyons, it was established in Paris,—an agglomeration of villages and boroughs surrounded by a rich country, which had not yet known the life of free cities; it was establisehd in Westminster, at the gates of populous London City; it was established in the Kremlin which was built in the midst of rich villages on the banks of the Moskva, after having failed at Souzdal and Vladimir,—but never in Novgorod or Pskov, in Nuremberg or Florence could royal authority be consolidated.

The neighbouring peasants supplied them with grain, horses and men; and commerce—royal, not communal—increased the wealth of the growing tyrants. The Church looked after their interests. It protected them, came to their succour with its treasure chests; it invented a saint and miracles for their royal town. It encircled with its veneration Notre-Dame of Paris or the Virgin of Iberia at Moscow. And while the civilization of free cities, emancipated from the bishops, took its youthful bound, the Church worked steadily to reconstitute its authority by the intermediary of nascent royalty, it surrounded with its tender care, its incense and its ducats, the family cradle of the one whom it had finally chosen, in order to rebuild with him, and through him, the ecclesiastical authority. In Paris, Moscow, Madrid and Prague, you see the Church bending over the royal cradle, a lighted torch in its hand.

Hard at work, strong in its State education, leaning on the man of will or cunning whom it sought out in any class of society, learned in intrigue as well as in Roman and Byzantine law—you see the Church marching without respite towards its ideal: the Hebrew King, absolute

but obeying the high priest—the simple secular arm of ecclesiastical power.

In the sixteenth century, the long work of the two conspirators is already in full force. A king already rules over the barons, his rivals, and that force will alight on the free cities to crush them in their turn.

Besides, the towns of the sixteenth century were not what they were in the twelfth, thirteenth or fourteenth centuries.

They were born out of a libertarian revolution. But they had not the courage to extend their ideas of equality, neither to the neighbouring rural districts nor even to those citizens who had later on established themselves in their enclosures, refuges of liberty, there to create industrial arts. A distinction between the *old* families who had made the revolution of the twelfth century—or curtly "the families"—and the others who established themselves later on in the city, is to be met with in all towns. The old "Merchant Guild" had no desire to receive the new-comers. It refused to incorporate the "young arts" for commerce. And from simple clerk of the city, it became the go-between, the intermediary, who enriched himself by distant commerce, and who imported oriental ostentation. Later on, the "Merchant Guild" allied itself to the lord and the priest, or it went and sought the support of the nascent king, to maintain its monopoly, its right to enrichment. Having thus become *personal*, instead of *communal*, commerce killed the free city.

Besides, the guilds of ancient trades, of which the city and its government were composed at the outset, would not recognise the same rights to the young guilds, formed later on by the younger trades. These had to conquer their rights by a revolution. And that is what they did everywhere. But while that revolution became, in most big cities, the starting of a renewal of life and arts (this is so well seen in Florence), in other cities it ended in the victory of the *richer orders* over the *poorer ones*—of the "fat people" (*popolo grasso*) over the "low people (*popolo basso*)—in a despotic crushing of the masses, in numberless transportations and executions, especially when lords and priests took part in it.

And—need we say it?—it was "the defence of the poorer orders" that the king, who had received Macchiavelli's lessons, took later on as a pretext when he came to knock at the gates of the free cities!

And then the cities had to die, because the *ideas themselves of men had changed*. The teaching of canonical and Roman law had perverted them.

The twelfth century European was essentially a federalist. A man

of free initiative, of free agreement, of unions freely consented to. He saw in the individual the starting point of all society. He did not seek salvation in obedience; he did not ask for a savior of society. The idea of Christian or Roman discipline was unknown to him.

But under the influence of the Christian Church—always fond of authority, always zealous to impose its rule on the souls and especially on the arms of the faithful; and on the other hand, under the influence of Roman law, which already, since the twelfth century, invaded the courts of the powerful lords, the kings and the popes, and soon became a favorite study in the universities—under the influence of these two teachings, which agreed so well although they were enemies at the beginning,—minds grew depraved in proportion as priest and legist triumphed.

Men became enamoured of authority. If a revolution of the lower trades was accomplished in a commune, the commune called in a saviour. It gave itself a dictator, a municipal Cæsar, and it endowed him with full powers to exterminate the opposite party. And the dictator profited by it, with all the refinement of cruelty that the Church or the examples which were brought from the despotic kingdoms of the East inspired him with.

The Church, of course, supported that Cæsar. Had it not always dreamt of the biblical king, who kneels before the high priest, and is his docile tool? Had it not, with all its might, hated the ideas of rationalism which inspired the free towns during the first Renaissance,—that of the Twelfth century—as also those "pagan" ideas which brought man back to Nature under the influence of the rediscovery of Greek civilisation? as also, later on, those ideas which in the name of primitive Christianity incited men against the Pope, the priest and Faith in general? Fire, wheel, gibbet—these weapons so dear to the Church in all times—were put into play against those heritics. And whoever was the tool, pope, king or dictator, it was of little importance to the Church, so long as the wheel and the gibbet worked against heretics....

And under the twofold teaching of the Roman legist and the priest, the old federalist spirit, the spirit of free initiative and free agreement, was dying out to make room for the spirit of discipline, organisation and pyramidal authority. The rich and the poor alike asked for a saviour.

And when the saviour presented himself; when the king, who had become enriched far from the Forum's tumult, in some town of his creation, leaning on the wealthy Church, and followed by vanquished nobles and peasants, when the king knocked at the city gates, promising the "lower orders" his mighty protection against the rich, and to the obedient rich his protection against the revolting poor—the towns, which

themselves were already undermined by the canker of authority, had no longer the strength to resist. They opened their gates to the King.

And then, the Mongols had conquered and devastated Eastern Europe in the thirteenth century and an Empire was springing up out there in Moscow, under the protection of the Tartar Khans and the Russian Christian Church. The Turks had come and settled in Europe, and pushed as far as Vienna in 1453, devastating everything on their path; and powerful States were being constituted in Poland, Bohemia, Hungary and in the centre of Europe.... While at the other extremity, the war of extermination against the Moors in Spain allowed of another powerful Empire to constitute itself in Castille and Aragon, supported by the Roman Church, and the inquisition—the sword and the stake.

As the communes themselves were becoming little States, the little States were inevitably doomed to be swallowed up by the big ones....

VII.

The victory of the State over the communes and the federalist institutions of the Middle Ages did not take place straightway. At one time the State was so threatened that its victory seemed doubtful.

A great popular movement—religious in form and expression, but eminently communistic in its aspirations and striving at equality—originated in the towns and rural parts of central Europe.

Already in the fourteenth century (in 1358 in France and in 1381 in England), two great similar movements had taken place. Two powerful revolts, that of the Jacquerie and that of Wat Tyler had shaken society to its foundations. Both, however, had been principally directed against feudal lords. Both were defeated; but the peasant revolt in England completely put an end to serfdom, and the Jacquerie in France so checked it in its development that henceforth the institution of serfdom could only vegetate, without ever attaining the development it subsequently attained in Germany and in Eastern Europe.

Now, in the sixteenth cemtury, a similar movement took place in central Europe. Under the name of "Hussite" in Bohemia, "Anabaptist" in Germany, in Switzerland and in the Netherlands, and of "Troubled Times" in Russia (at the beginning of the next century), it was over and above a struggle against feudal lords—a complete revolt against Church and State, against Canonic and Roman law, in the name of primitive Christianity.

This movement which is hardly just beginning to be understood, was for many years travestied by State and ecclesiastical historians.

The absolute liberty of the individual—who must only obey the commandments of his conscience—and Communism, were the watchwords of this revolt. And it was only later, when Church and State succeeded in exterminating its most ardent defenders, and juggled with it to their own profit, that this movement, diminished and deprived of its revolutionary character, became Luther's Reformation.

It began by Communist Anarchism preached, and in some places, practised. And if we set aside the religious formulæ, which are a tribute to that epoch, we find in it the very essence of the current of ideas which we represent to-day: the negation of all law, both State or divine; the conscience of each individual thus being his one and only law; the commune—absolute master of its destinies, retaking its lands from feudal lords, and refusing all personal or monetary service to the State. In fact, Communism and equality put into practice. Moreover when Denck, one of the philosophers of the Anabaptist movement, was asked if he did not at least recognise the authority of the Bible, he answered that the only obligatory rule of conduct is the one that each individual finds, *for himself*, in the Bible. And yet these very formulæ, so vague, borrowed from ecclesiastical slang,—this authority "of the book" from which it is so easy to borrow arguments for and against Communism, for and against authority, and so uncertain when it comes to clearly define what liberty is,—these very religious tendencies of the revolt, did they not already contain the germ of an unavoidable defeat?

Originating in towns, the movement soon spread to the country. The peasants refused to obey anybody, and planting and old shoe on a pike by way of a flag, they took back the lands which the lords had seized from the village communities; they broke their bonds of serfdom, drove away priest and judge, and constituted themselves into free communes. And it was only by the stake, the wheel, the gibbet—it was only by massacring more than a hundred thousand peasants in a few years, that royal or imperial power, allied to the papal or reformed church,—Luther inciting to massacre peasants more violently even than the Pope,—put an end to these risings that had for a moment threatened the constitution of nascent States.

Born of popular Anabaptism, the Lutheran Reformation, leaning on the State, massacred the people and crushed the movement from which it originally had derived its strength. The survivors of this immense wave of thought took refuge in the communities of the "Moravian Brothers," who, in their turn, were destroyed by Church and State. Those among them who were not exterminated, sought shelter, some in

the South-East of Russia, others in Greenland, where to this day they have been able to live in communities and to refuse all service to the State.

Henceforth, the State's existence was secure. The lawyer, the priest and the soldier-lord, having consiituted a solidary alliance around the thrones, they could carry on their work of annihilation.

How many lies have been accumulated by State-paid historians, concerning that period!

In fact, have we not all learned at school that the State rendered great service in constituting national unions on the ruins of feudal society; unions made impracticable in earlier times by the rivalry of cities? We have all learned it in school and we have all believed it in manhood.

And nevertheless, to-day we learn that in spite of all rivalries, medieval cities had already worked during four ceuturies to constitute these unions by federation, freely consented to, and that they had fully succeeded in that work of consolidation.

The Lombard union, for example, included the cities of Upper Italy and had its federal treasury in safe keeping in Genoa and Venice. Other federations, such as the Tuscan Union, the Rhenan Union (comprising sixty towns), the federations of Westphalia, of Bohemia, of Servia, of Poland, and of Russian towns covered Europe. At the same time, the commercial union of the Hansa included Scandinavian, German, Polish, and Russian towns throughout the basin of the Baltic.

All the elements were there already, as well as the fact itself, of large human agglomerations, freely constituted.

Do you wish for a living proof of these groups?—You have it in Switzerland! There the union asserted itself first between village commnnes (the old Cantons), in the same way as it was constituted in France in the Laonnais. And as in Switzerland the separation between town and village was never so great as it was for towns carrying on an extensive and distant commerce, the Swiss towns lent a hand to the peasant insurrections of the sixteenth century, and the union encompassed both towns and villages, and constituted a federation that still exists to-day.

But the State, by its very essence, cannot tolerate free federation; because the latter represents this nightmare of the legist: "The State within the State." The State does not recognize a freely adopted union working within itself. It only deals with *subjects*. The State alone and its prop, the Church, arrogate to themselves the right of being the connecting link between men.

Consequently the State must perforce annihilate cities based on direct

union between citizens. It *must* abolish all union in the city, abolish the city itself, abolish all direct union between cities. To the federative principle it must substitute the principle of submission and discipline. Submission is its substance. Without this principle it leaves off being *the State*: it becomes a federation.

And the sixteenth century—century of carnage and wars—is entirely summed up in this war waged by the growing States against the cities and their federations. The towns are besieged, taken by assault, pillaged; their inhabitants are decimated or transported. The State is victorious all along the line. And the consequences are these.

In the fifteenth century, Europe was covered by rich cities, whose artisans, masons, weavers and carvers, produced marvels of art, whose universities laid the foundations of science, whose caravans travelled over continents, and whose vessels ploughed rivers and seas.

What was left of them two centuries later?—Towns that had numbered fifty and a hundred thousand inhabitants and that had possessed (it was so in Florence) more schools, and, in the communal hospitals, more beds per inhabitant than are possessed to-day by the towns best endowed in this respect, had become rotten boroughs. Their inhabitants having been massacred or transported, the State and Church were seiziug their riches. Industry was fading under the minute tutelage of State officials. Commerce was dead. The very roads that formerly united the cities, had become absolutely impracticable in the seventeeth century

The State spelt warfare, and wars were devastating Europe and completing the ruin of those towns, which the State had not yet ruined direct. But—had not the villages, at least, gained by State centralisation?—Certainly not!—Read what historians tell us about the style of living in the rural districts of Scotland, Tuscany, and Germany in the fourteenth century, and compare their descriptions of that time with the misery in England at the beginning of 1648, in France under the "sun-king" Louis XIV, in Germany, in Italy, everywhere after hundred years of State domination.

Misery everywhere. All unanimously recognize it and point it out. Wherever serfdom had been abolished, it was reconstituted in a hundred different forms; wherever it had not yet been destroyed, it was shaped, under State protection, into a ferocious institution, bearing all the characteristics of antique slavery, or even worse.

And could anything else evolve out of this State-produced misery, as the State's chief anxiety was to annihilate the village community after the town, to destroy all bonds existing between peasants, to give up

their lands to be pillaged by the rich, and to subject them, each individually, to the functionary, the priest and the lord?

VIII.

To annihilate the independence of cities; to plunder merchants' and artisans' rich guilds; to centralise the foreign trade of cities into its hands and ruin it; to seize the internal administration of guilds, and subject home trade, as well as all manufactures, even in the slightest detail, to a swarm of functionaries; and by these means kill both industry and arts; to seize upon local militias and all municipal administration, to crush the weak by taxation for the benefit of the strong and to ruin countries by war,—such was the nascent State's behaviour towards urban agglomerations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The same tactics were evidently employed towards villages and peasants. As soon as the State felt itself strong enough, it destroyed the village commune, ruined the peasants committed to its mercy and plundered the common lands.

Historians and economists paid by the State have no doubt taught us that the village commune, having become an obsolete form of land-ownership obstructing agricultural progress, was bound to disappear by the action of natural economic forces. Politicians and bourgeois economists do not tire of repeating this even nowadays, and there are revolutionists and socialists (those who pretend to be scientific) who recite this fable learned in school.

Yet a more odious falsehood has never been affirmed by science. A deliberate falsehood, for history swarms with documents amply proving to those who wish to know—for France it would almost suffice to read Dalloz—that the village commune was first of all deprived of its privileges by the State, of its independence, of its juridical and legislative powers; and that later on its lands were, either simply stolen by the rich under State protection, or else confiscated by the State itself.

Plundering began as early as the sixteenth century in France, and grew apace in the following century. As early as 1659 the State took the communes under its superior protection and we need only read Louis XIV's edict of 1667 to learn what plundering of communal lands took place at that period.—"Men have taken possession of lands when it suited them... lands have been divided,... in order to plunder the communes fictitious debts have been devised,"—said the "Sun-King" in this edict... and two years later he confiscated for his own benefit

all the revenues of the communes.—This is what is called a "natural death" in so-called scientific language.

In the following century it is estimated that at least half the communal lands were simply appropriated by the aristocracy and the clergy under State patronage. And yet communes continued to exist till 1787. The village council met under the elm, granted lands, appointed taxes —the documents relating to this are to be fouud in Babeau (*Le village sous l'ancien régime*). Turgot, in the province of which he was governor, found however the village councils "too noisy" and abolished them during his governorship, substituting for them assemblies elected among the well-to-do of the village. In 1787, on the eve of the Revolution, the State made this measure general in its application. The *mir* was abolished and thus communal affairs fell into the hands of a few syndics, elected by the richest bourgeois and peasants. The "Constituante" sanctioned this law in December 1789, and the bourgeois, substituting themselves for the nobles, plundered what remained of communal lands. Many a peasant revolt was necessary to force the "Convention" in 1792 to sanction what the rebellious peasants had accomplished in the Eastern part of France. That is to say, the Convention ordered the restitution of communal lands to the peasants. This only took place *there, when the land had already been retaken by revolutionary means.* It is the fate of all revolutionary laws to be put into action when they are already an accomplished fact.

Nevertheless the Convention tainted this law with bourgeois gall. It decreed that lands retaken from nobles should be divided into equal parts among "active citizens" only—that is to say among the village bourgeois. By one stroke of the pen it thus dispossessed "passive citizens," that is to say the mass of impoverished peasants, who had most need of these communal lands. Upon which, fortunately, the peasants again revolted and in 1793 the Convention passed a new law decreeing the division of communal lands among *all* inhabitants. This was never put into practice and only served as an excuse for new thefts of communal lands.

Would not such measures suffice to bring about what these gentlemen call "the natural death" of communes? Yet communes still existed. On August 24th 1794, the reaction, being in power, struck the final blow. The State confiscated all communal lands and made of them a guarantee fund for the public debt, putting them up to auction and selling them to its creatures the "Thermidorians."

This law was happily repealed on Prairal 2nd, in the year V, after being in force for three years. But at the same time, communes were abolished, and replaced by cantonal councils in order that the State

might the more easily fill them with its creatures. This lasted till 1801 when village communes wers revived; but then the government took it upon itself to appoint mayors and syndics in each of the 36,000 communes! And this absurdity lasted till the revolution of July 1830, after which the law of 1789 was again put into force. And in the interval communal lands were again wholly confiscated by the State in 1813 and plundered anew during three years. What remained of them was only returned to the communes in 1816.

This was by no means the end. Every new régime saw in communal lands a source of reward for its supporters. Therefore at three different intervals since 1830—the first time in 1837 and the last under Napoleon III—laws were promulgated to *force* peasants to divide what they possessed of forests and common pasture-lands, and three times the government was compelled to abrogate this law on account of the peasants resistance. All the same Napoleon the third was able to profit by it and bag several large estates for his favorites.

These are facts, and this is what, in scientific language, these gentlemen call the "natural death" of the communal landed property under the influence of economic laws? As well call the massacre of a hundred thousand soldiers on a battlefield "natural death."

What happened in France happened also in Belgium, England, Germany, Austria; in fact everywhere in Europe, Slav countries excepted. Strange that the periods of plundering communes should correspond in all Western Europe. The methods alone vary. Thus in England they did not dare to enact sweeping measures; they preferred passing several thousands of separate *enclosure acts* by which, in each special case, parliament sanctioned the confiscation of land—it does so still—and gave to the squire the right of keeping common lands he had fenced in. And notwithstanding that nature has up till now respected the narrow furrows by which communal fields were temporarily divided among families in the villages of England, and that we have clear descriptions of this form of landed property at the beginning of the century in the books of a certain Marshall, scientific men (such as Seebohm, worthy emulator of Fustel de Coulanges) are not wanting to maintain and teach that communes have never existed in England save in the form of serfdom!

We find the same thing going on in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Spain. And in one way or another personal appropriation of lands formerly communal was almost brought to completion towards the fifties in this century. Peasants have only kept scraps of their common lands. This is the way in which the mutual assurance of lord, priest,

soldier and judge—the State—has behaved towards peasants in order to despoil them of their last guarantee against misery and economic servitude.

But while organising and sanctioning this pluuder, could the State respect the institution of the commune as an organ of local life?

—Evidently not.

To allow citizens to constitute a federation among themselves in order to appropriate some functions of the State would have been a contradiction of principle· The State demands personal and direct submission of its subjects without intermediate agents; it requires equality in servitude; it cannot allow the State within the State.

Therefore as soon as the State began to constitute itself in the sixteenth century it set to work to destroy all bonds of union that existed among citizens, both in towns and villages. If under the name of municipal institutions it tolerated any vestiges of autonomy—never of independence,—it was only with a fiscal aim. to lighten the central budget as far as possible; or else to allow the provincial well-to-do to enrich themselves at the people's expense, as was the case in England up till now, and is so still in institutions and in customs.

This is easily understood. Customary law is naturally pertaining to local life and Roman law to centralisation of power. The two cannot live side by side and the one must kill the other.

That is why under French rule in Algeria, when a Kabyle *djemmah* —a village commune—wants to plead for its lands, every inhabitant of the commune must bring his isolated action before the judge, who will hear fifty or two hundred isolated actions sooner than hear the collective suit of the *djemmah*. The Jacobin code of the Convention (known under the name of Code Napoleon) does not recognize customary law, it only recognizes Roman law, or rather Byzantine law.

That is why in France when the wind blows down a tree on the National highway, or a peasant prefers giving a stonebreaker two or three francs to the unpleasant task of repairing the communal road himself, it is necessary for twelve or fifteen employees of the home office and treasury to be put in motion, and for more than fifty documents to be exchanged between these austere functionaries, before the tree can be sold, or the peasant receives permission to deposit two or three francs into the communal treasury.

Should you have any doubts about it you will find these fifty documents recapitulated and duly numbered by M. Tricoche in the *Journal des Economistes.*

This under the third Republic, be it understood, for I do not speak of the barbarous methods of the ancient régime that limited itself to

five or six documents. No doubt scientists will tell you that at that barbarous period State control was only fictitious.

And if it were only this. After all it would be but twenty thousand functionaries too many, and a thousand million francs more added to the budget. A detail for the lovers of "order" and levelling!

But there is worse at the bottom of all this. The *principle* kills everything.

The peasants of a village have a thousand interests in common: interests of economy, neighbourhood and constant intercourse. They are perforce compelled to unite for a thousand divers things. But the State cannot allow them to unite! It gives them school and priest, police and judge; that must suffice them, and should other interests arise, they must apply in the regular way to Church and State.

Thus till 1883 it was severely forbidden to the villagers of France to unite, were it only to buy chemical manure or to irrigate their fields. It was only in 1883-1886 that the Republic granted this right to peasants when it voted the law on unions, hampered by many a precaution and obstacle.

And we with our faculties blunted by State education rejoice at the sudden progress accomplished by agricultural syndicates, without blushing at the idea that this right of union of which peasants were deprived for centuries belonged to them without contention in the Middle Ages. Belonged to every man—free or serf. Slaves that we are, we believe it to be a "conquest of democracy."

This is the pitch of stupidity we have reached by our own warped and vitiated State education, and by our own State prejudices.

IX.

"If you have any common interests in the city or the village, ask the Church and the State to look after them. But you are forbidden to combine in a direct way to settle matters for yourselves!" Such is the formula reechoing throughout Europe since the sixteenth century. Already in an edict of Edward III, issued at the end of the fourteenth century, we read that "all unions, combinations, meetings, organised societies, statutes and oaths already established or to be established by carpenters and masons, will henceforth be null and void." But when the defeat of the towns and of the popular insurrection of which we have spoken was completed, the State boldly laid hands on all the institutions (guilds, fraternities, etc.) which used to bound artisans and peasants together, and annihilated them.

This is plainly seen in England where a mass of documents exists

showing every step of that annihilation. Little by little the State laid hands on all guilds and fraternities. It pressed them closely, abolished their leagues, their festivals, their aldermen and replaced them by its own functionaries and tribunals, and at the beginning of the fifteenth century, under Henry VIII, the State simply confiscated everything possessed by the guilds without further ado. The heir to the great protestant king finished his father's work.[1]

It was robbery carried on in open daylight, "without excuse" as Thorold Rogers has so well put it. And it is this robbery which the so-called 'scientific' economists represent as the "natural" death of the guilds under the influence of economic laws!

In truth, was it possible for the State to tolerate a guild or corporation of a trade, with its tribunal, its militia, its treasury, its sworn organisation? It was for the statesmen "a State within the State"! The State was to destroy the guild, and it destroyed it everywhere: in England, in France, in Germany, in Bohemia, preserving only the semblance of the guild as an instrument of the exchequer, as a part of the vast administrative machine.

And—should we be astonished that guilds, trade-unions and wardenships, deprived of everything that was formerly their life and placed under royal functionaries, became in the eighteenth century nought but encumbrances and obstacles to the development of industry, after having been the very life of progress four centuries before? The State had killed them.

In fact it did not content itself with destroying the autonomous organisation which was necessary for the very life of the guilds and impeded the encroachments of the State; it did not content itself with confiscating all riches and property of the guilds: it appropriated for itself all their economical functions as well.

In a city of the Middle Ages, when interests conflicted in a trade, or when two guilds disagreed, there was no other appeal than to the city. They were forced to settle matters, to find some compromise, as all guilds were mutually allied in the city. And a compromise was always arrived at—by calling in another city to artitrate, if necessary.

Henceforth the only arbitrator was the State. All local disputes, sometimes of the most insignificant kind, in the smallest town of a few hundred inhabitants, had to be piled up in the shape of useless documents in the offices of king and parliament. We see the English parliament literally inundated with these thousands of petty local squabbles. It then became necessary to have thousands of functionaries in the capital

[1] See Toulmin Smith's work on Guilds.

(venal for the greater part) to classify, read, judge all these documents, to pass judgment on every detail; to regulate the way to forge a horse's hoof, bleach linen, salt herrings, make a barrel, and so on *ad infinitum*... and the tide still rose!

But this was not all. Soon the State laid hands on exportation. It saw in this commerce a means of enrichment,—and seized upon it. Formerly, when a dispute arose between two towns about the value of exported cloth, the purity of wool, or the capacity of barrels of herrings, the two towns made remonstrances to each other. If the dispute lasted long, they addressed themselves to a third town to step in as arbitrator (this happened constantly); or else a congress of guilds of weavers and coopers was convened to regulate internationally the quality and value of cloth or the capacity of barrels.

Now, however, the State had stepped in and taken upon itself to regulate all these contentions from the centre, in Paris or in London. Through its functionaries it regulated the capacity of barrels, specified the quality of cloth, ordered the number of threads and their thickness in the warp and the woof and interfered in the smallest details of each industry.

You know the result. Industry under this control was dying out in the eighteenth century.

What had in fact become of Benvenuto Cellini's art under State tutelage?—Vanished.—And the architecture of those guilds of masons and carpenters whose works of art we still admire?—Only look at the hideous monuments of the State period, and at one glance you will know that architecture was dead, so dead that up till now it has not been able to recover from the blow dealt it by the State.

What became of the fabrics of Bruges, of the cloth from Holland? What became of those blacksmiths, so skilled in manipulating iron, and who, in each European borough, knew how to turn this ungrateful metal into the most exquisite decorations? What became of those turners, those clock-makers, those fitters who had made Nuremberg one of the glories of the Middle Ages by their instruments of precision? Speak of them to James Watt who for his steam engine, looked in vain during thirty years for a man who could make a fairly round cylinder, and whose machine remained thirty years a rough model for want of workmen to construct it!

Such was the result of State interference in the domain of industry. All that the State managed to do was to tighten the screw on the worker, depopulate the land, sow misery in the towns, reduce thousands of beings to the state of starvelings and impose industrial slavery.

And it is these miserable wrecks of ancient guilds, these organisms,

mangled and oppressed by the State that "scientific" economists have the ignorance to confound with the guilds of the Middle Ages! What the great Revolution swept away as harmful to industry was not the guild, nor even the trade-union; it was a piece of machinery both useless and harmful.

But what the Revolution took good care not to sweep away—was the power of the State over industry and over the factory-serf.

Do you remember the discussion which took place at the Convention—at the terrible Convention—about a strike? To the grievances of the strikers the Convention answered (I quote from memory): "The State alone has a right to watch over the interests of all citizens. In striking, you are organising a coalition, you are creating a State within the State. Therefore—death!"

In this answer we see the bourgeois character of the French Revolution. But—has that answer not a still deeper meaning? Does it not summarize the attitude of the State that found its most complete and logical expression towards the whole of society in the Jacobinism of 1793?

"If you have a grievance, complain to the State! It alone has the right to redress its subjects' grievances. As to combining to protect yourselves—never!" It was in this sense that the Republic called itself one and *indivisible*.

Does not the modern Jacobin-Socialist think the same? Has not the Convention expressed the depth of his thought with the severe logic peculiar to it?

In this answer of the Convention is summed up the attitude of all States towards all combinations and all private societies, whatever be their aim.

As to a strike it is even now in Russia considered a crime of high treason against the State. In a great measure too in Germany, where young William said the other day: "Appeal to me; but if you ever allow yourselves to take action on your own behalf, you will make the acquaintance of my soldiers' bayonets!" It is still almost always the case in France. And even in England, it is only after struggling a hundred years by means of secret societies, dagger thrusts for traitors and masters, explosive powder under machinery (not further back than 1860), emery thrown into axle-boxes, and so forth, that English workmen have begun to conquer the right to strike; and they will soon have it entirely, if they do not fall into the traps that the State is already laying for them in trying to impose its obligatory arbitration in exchange for an eight-hour law.

More than a century of terrible struggles! And what sufferings!

How many men have died in prisons, how many have been transported to Australia, shot and hanged, to reconquer the right of combination, which (I am not tired of repeating) every man, free or serf, practised freely, before the State had laid its heavy hand on societies.

But was it the workman only who was treated in this fashion?

Think of the struggles the bourgeoisie itself had to carry on against the State in order to conquer the right of constituting themselves into commercial societies; a right which the State only conceded when it discovered in it an easy method of creating monopolies to the advantage of its creatures and to re-fill its treasury. And the struggles for the right to write, to speak, or simply to think differently from what the State orders through its academies, universities or churches? And the struggles for the right to teach, be it only reading, a right which the State reserves to itself without making use of it! And the struggles even to obtain the right of amusing oneself in common; not to mention those wars which would still have to be fought for conquering the right to choose one's judge or one's law (a thing which was before the growth of the State of daily occurence), or the struggles that separate us from the day when they will burn the book of infamous punishments, invented by the spirit of the inquisition and of the despotic empires of the East, and known under the name of penal code!

Then look at taxation, an institution of purely State origin, that formidable weapon which the State makes use of in Europe as well as in young societies in the United States to keep the masses under its heel, to favour friends, to ruin the greater number to the advantage of those who govern, and to uphold the old divisions and castes.

Then take the wars, without which States can neither constitute themselves nor stand—wars that become fatal, inevitable, as soon as we admit that a certain region (because it is a State) can have interests opposed to those of its neighbours Think of past wars and of those we are threatened with before the conquered races will be admitted to breathe freely; of wars for commercial markets; of wars to create colonial empires. And in France we only know too well what servitude each war, whether victorious or not, brings in its train.

And what is worse than all that I have enumerated, is that the education we all receive from the State, at school and later on in our life, has so vitiated our brains that the idea of liberty itself goes astray and is travestied into servitude.

Sad is the sight of those who believe themselves to be revolutionists, vowing their deepest hatred to Anarchists—because the Anarchists

conception of liberty surpasses their own narrow and mean conception culled from State teaching. And yet this sight is a fact.

It is because the spirit of voluntary servitude has always been artfully nourished in young brains, and is so still, so as to perpetuate the slavery of the subject to the State.

Libertarian philosophy is suffocated by pseudo-Roman and Catholic State philosophy. History is vitiated from the first page where it lies about the Merovingian and Carlovingian dynasties, to its last page, on which it glorifies Jacobinism and ignores the people and their work in the creation of institutions. Natural sciences are perverted to the benefit of the dual idol Church and State. The psychology of the individual, and still more that of societies, is falsified in each of its assertions to justify the triple alliance of soldier, priest and executioner. Even morality, which for centuries in succession has preached obedience to the Church or to some so-called divine book, only emancipates itself today to preach servility to the State.—"You have no direct moral obligations towards your neighbour, not even a sentiment of solidarity; all your obligations are to the State,"—we are told, we are taught by this new religion of the old Roman and Cæsarian divinity. Neighbours, comrades, companions, forget them! You must know them only through the intermediary of an organ of your State. And all of you must practise the virtue of being equally slaves to it.

And the glorification of State and discipline, at which Church and University, the press and political parties work, is so well preached that even revolutionists dare not look this fetish straight in the face.

The modern radical is a centralizer, a State partisan, a Jacobin to the core. And the Socialist walks in his footsteps. Like the Florentines at the end of the fifteenth century, who could only invoke the dictatorship of the State, to save them from the patricians, the Socialists know only how to invoke the same gods, the same dictatorship and the same State, to save us from the abominations of an economic system, created by that very State!

X.

If you look still deeper into all the categories of facts which have been hardly touched upon this evening, if you see the State as it was in history, and as it is in its very essence to-day, and if you consider moreover that a social institution cannot serve *all* aims indifferently, because, like every other organ, it is developed for a certain purpose, and not for all purposes,—if you take all that into consideration, you will understand why we desire the abolition of the State.

We see in it an institution developed in the history of human societies to hinder union among men, to obstruct the development of local initiative, to crush existing liberties and prevent their restoration.

And we know that an institution, which has a whole past dating some thousands of years back, cannot lend itself to a function opposed to the one for which it was developed in the course of history.

To this argument, absolutely unassailable to anyone who has reflected on history, what replies do we get?

We are answered by an almost childish argument: "The State is there,"—we are told—"it exists, it represents a ready made powerful organisation. Why destroy it instead of making use of it? It works for ill, that is true, but that is due to its being in the hands of exploiters. Having fallen into the hands of the people, why should it not be utilised for a better end and for the good of the people?"

Always the same dream, the dream of Schiller's Marquis of Posa trying to make autocracy an instrument of enfranchisement, or the dream of the gentle priest Peter in Zola's *Rome*, wishing to make the Church a lever of Socialism!...

Is it not sad to have to answer such arguments? For, those who reason in this way either have not the least notion of the real historical role of the State, or else conceive the Social Revolution under such an insignificant form, and so tame, that it has nothing more in common with Socialist aspirations.

Take a concrete example, France.

All of us, all here present, have noticed the glaring fact that the Third Republic, in spite of its republican form of government, has remained monarchical in its essence. Every one has reproached it with not having republicanised France. I do not speak of its not having done anything for the Social Revolution, but of its not having even introduced the simple republican habits and customs and spirit. Because the little that *has* been done during the last twenty-five years to democratize customs, or to spread a little enlightenment, has been done everywhere,—even in the European monarchies, under the very pressure of the times through which we are passing. Whence comes then the strange anomaly that we have in France—a Republican Monarchy?

It comes from France having remained a State to the same extent it was thirty years ago. The holders of power have changed their name; but all the immense scaffolding of centralised organisation, the imitation of the Rome of the Cæsars which had been elaborated in France, have remained. The wheels of this huge machinery continue, as of old,

to exchange their fifty documents when the wind has blown down a tree on the national route. The stamp on the documents has changed; but the State, its spirit, its organs, its territorial centralisation, and its centralisation of functions, have remained unaltered. Worse than that: like so many blood-suckers, they extend from day to day over the country.

Republicans (I speak of sincere ones) nourished the illusion that the State organisation could be utilised to operate a change in a republican sense; and here is the result. When they ought to have destroyed the old organisation, destroyed the *State*, and constructed a *new* organisation, by beginning at the basis itself of society—the free village commune, the free workers' union, and so on—they thought to utilise "the organisation that already existed." And for not having understood that you cannot make an historical institution go in any direction you would have it go—that it must go its own way—they were swallowed up by the institution.

And yet, in this case, there was no question of modifying the whole of the economic relations of society, as is the case with us. It was only a question of reforming certain points in the political relations among men!

But after this complete failure and in face of such a conclusive experience, they obstinately continue to say that the conquest of power in the State by the people will suffice to accomplish the Social Revolution! That the old machine, the old organism, slowly elaborated in the course of history to mangle liberty, to crush the individual, to seat oppression on a legal basis, to lead the brain astray in accustoming it to servitude—will lend itself marvellously to new functions: that it will become the instrument, the means of making a new life germinate, that it will seat liberty and equality on an economic basis, awaken society, and march to the conquest of a better future!... What an absurdity! what a miscomprehension of history!

To give free scope to Socialism, it is necessary to reconstruct society, which is based to-day on the narrow individualism of the shopkeeper, from top to bottom. It is not only, as they have been pleased sometimes to say in a vague metaphysical way, a question of returning to the worker "the integral product of his work," but a question of remodelling in their entirety all relations among men, from those existing to-day between every individual and his churchwarden or his station master, to those existing between trades, hamlets, cities and regions. In every street, in every hamlet, in every group of men assembled about a factory or along a railroad, you must awaken the creative, construct-

ive, organising spirit, in order to reconstruct the whole of life in the factory, on the railroad, in the village, in the stores, in taking supplies, in production, in distribution. All relations between individuals and between human agglomerations must begin to be remodelled on the very day, at the very moment we begin to reform any part of the present commercial or administrative organisation...

And they expect this immense work, demanding the full and free exercise of popular genius, to be carried out within the frame-work of the State, within the pyramidal scale of organisation that constitutes the essence of each State! They want the State, whose very reason for existence lies in the crushing of the individual, in the destruction of all free grouping and free creation, in the hatred of initiative and in the triumph of *one* idea (which must necessarily be that of the mediocrity), to become the lever to accomplish this immense transformation!... They want to govern a newborn society by decrees and electoral majorities!... What childishness!

Throughout the whole history of our civilisation, two traditions, two opposed tendencies, have been in conflict: the Roman tradition and the popular tradition; the imperial tradition and the federalist tradition; the authoritarian one and the libertarian one.

And again, on the eve of the great Social Revolution these two traditions stand face to face.

Between these two currents, always full of life, always battling in humanity,—the current of the people and the current of the minorities which thirst for political and religious domination,—our choice is made.

We again take up the current which led men, in the twelfth century, to organise themselves on the basis of a free understanding, of free initiative of the individual, of free federation of those interested. And we leave the others to cling to the Roman, Canonic, and Imperial tradition.

History has not been an uninterrupted evolution. At different intervals evolution has been broken in a certain region, to begin again elsewhere. Egypt, Asia, the banks of the Mediterranean, Central Europe have in turn been the scene of historical development. But in every case, the first phase of the evolution has been the primitive tribe, passing on into a village commune, then into that of the free city, and finally dying out when it reached the phase of the State.

In Egypt, civilization began by the primitive tribe. It reached the village community phasis, and later on the period of free cities; still

later that of the State, which, after a flourishing period, resulted in the death of the country.

The evolution began again in Assyria, in Persia, in Palestine. Again it traversed the same phasis: the tribe, the village community, the free city, the all-powerful State, and finally the result was—death!

A new civilization then sprang up in Greece. Always beginning by the tribe, it slowly reached the village commune, then the period of republican cities. In these cities, civilization reached its highest summits. But the East brought to them its poisened breath, its traditions of despotism. Wars and conquests created Alexander's empire of Macedonia. The State enthroned itself, the blood-sucker grew, killed all civilization, and then came—death!

Rome in its turn restored civilization. Again we find the primitive tribe at its origin; then, the village commune; then, the free city. At that stage, it reached the apex of its civilization. But then came the State, the Empire, and then—death!

On the ruins of the Roman Empire, Celtic, Germanic, Slavonian and Scandinavian tribes began civilization anew. Slowly the primitive tribe elaborated its institutions and reached the village commune. It remained at that stage till the twelfth century. Then rose the Republican cities which produced the glorious expansion of the human mind, attested by the monuments of architecture, the grand development of arts, the discoveries that laid the basis of natural sciences. But then came the State...

Will it again produce death?—Of course it will, unless we reconstitute society on a libertarian and anti-State basis. Either the State will be destroyed and a new life will begin in thousands of centres, on the principle of an energetic initiative of the individual, of groups, and of free agreement; or else the State must crush the individual and local life, it must become the master of all the domains of human activity, must bring with it its wars and internal struggles for the possession of power, its surface-revolutions which only change one tyrant for another, and inevitably, at the end of this evolution,—death!

Choose yourselves which of the two issues you prefer.

THE END.

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