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***BRITAIN FOR
THE BRITISH***

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Britain for the British

EAN 8596547221067

DigiCat, 2022

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BOOKS BY ROBERT BLATCHFORD ("NUNQUAM.")

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK

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The motto of this book is expressed in its title: BRITAIN FOR THE BRITISH.

At present Britain does not belong to the British: it belongs to a few of the British, who employ the bulk of the population as servants or as workers.

It is because Britain does not belong to the British that a few are very rich and the many are very poor.

It is because Britain does not belong to the British that we find amongst the *owning* class a state of useless luxury and pernicious idleness, and amongst the *working* classes a state of drudging toil, of wearing poverty and anxious care.

This state of affairs is contrary to Christianity, is contrary to justice, and contrary to reason. It is bad for the rich, it is bad for the poor; it is against the best interests of the British nation and the human race.

The remedy for this evil state of things—the *only* remedy yet suggested—is *Socialism*. And *Socialism* is broadly expressed in the title and motto of this book: BRITAIN FOR THE BRITISH.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

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The purpose of this book is to convert the reader to *Socialism*: to convince him that the present system—political, industrial, and social—is bad; to explain to him why

it is bad, and to prove to him that Socialism is the only true remedy.



FOR WHOM THIS BOOK IS INTENDED

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This book is intended for any person who does not understand, or has, so far, refused to accept the principles of *Socialism*.

But it is especially addressed, as my previous book, *Merrie England*, was addressed, to JOHN SMITH, a typical British working man, not yet converted to *Socialism*.

I hope this book will be read by every opponent of *Socialism*; and I hope it will be read by all those good folks who, though not yet *Socialists*, are anxious to help their fellow-creatures, to do some good in their own day and generation, and to leave the world a little better than they found it.

I hope that all lovers of justice and of truth will read this book, and that many of them will be thereby led to a fuller study of *Socialism*.

To the Tory and the Radical; to the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, and the Nonconformist; to the workman and the employer; to the scholar and the peer; to the labourer's wife, the housemaid, and the duchess; to the advocates of Temperance and of Co-operation; to the Trade Unionist and the non-Unionist; to the potman, the bishop, and the brewer; to the artist and the merchant; to the poet and the navy; to the Idealist and the Materialist; to the poor clerk, the rich financier, the great scientist, and the little child, I commend the following beautiful prayer from the Litany of the Church of England:—

That it may please thee to bring into the way of truth *all* such as have erred, and are deceived.

That it may please thee to strengthen such as do stand; and to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that fall; and finally to beat down Satan under our feet.

That it may please thee to succour, help, and comfort *all* that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation.

That it may please thee to preserve *all* that travel by land or by water, *all* women labouring of child, *all* sick persons, and young children; and to shew thy pity upon *all* prisoners and captives.

That it may please thee to defend, and provide for, the fatherless children, and widows, and *all* that are desolate and oppressed.

That it may please thee to have mercy upon *all* men.

That it may please thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts.

That it may please thee to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them.

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

I have italicised the word "all" in that prayer to emphasise the fact that mercy, succour, comfort, and pardon are here asked for *all*, and not for a few.

I now ask the reader of this book, with those words of broad charity and sweet kindness still fresh in mind, to remember the unmerited miseries, the ill-requited labour, the gnawing penury, and the loveless and unhonoured lives to which an evil system dooms millions of British men and

women. I ask the reader to discover for himself how much pity we bestow upon our "prisoners and captives," how much provision we make for the "fatherless children and widows," what nature and amount of "succour, help, and comfort" we vouchsafe to "all who are in danger, necessity, and tribulation." I ask him to consider, with regard to those "kindly fruits of the earth," who produces, and who enjoys them; and I beg him next to proceed in a judicial spirit, by means of candour and right reason, to examine fairly and weigh justly the means proposed by Socialists for abolishing poverty and oppression, and for conferring prosperity, knowledge, and freedom upon *all* men.

BRITAIN FOR THE BRITISH: that is our motto. We ask for a fair and open trial. We solicit an impartial hearing of the case for *Socialism*. Listen patiently to our statements; consider our arguments; accord to us a fair field and no favour; and may the truth prevail.

THE METHOD OF THIS BOOK

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As to the method of this book, I shall begin by calling attention to some of the evils of the present industrial, social, and political system.

I shall next try to show the sources of those evils, the causes from which they arise.

I shall go on to explain what *Socialism* is, and what *Socialism* is not.

I shall answer the principal objections commonly urged against *Socialism*.

And I shall, in conclusion, point out the chief ways in which I think the reader of this book may help the cause of *Socialism* if he believes that cause to be just and wise.

FOREWORDS

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Years ago, before *Socialism* had gained a footing in this country, some of us democrats used often to wonder how any working man could be a Tory.

To-day we Socialists are still more puzzled by the fact that the majority of our working men are not Socialists.

How is it that middle class and even wealthy people often accept *Socialism* more readily than do the workers?

Perhaps it is because the men and women of the middle and upper classes are more in the habit of reading and thinking for themselves, whereas the workers take most of their opinions at second-hand from priests, parsons, journalists, employers, and members of Parliament, whose little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and whose interests lie in bolstering up class privilege by darkening counsel with a multitude of words.

I have been engaged for more than a dozen years in studying political economy and *Socialism*, and in trying, as a Socialist, pressman, and author, to explain *Socialism* and to confute the arguments and answer the objections of non-Socialists, and I say, without any hesitation, that I have never yet come across a single argument against practical *Socialism* that will hold water.

I do not believe that any person of fair intelligence and education, who will take the trouble to study *Socialism* fairly and thoroughly, will be able to avoid the conclusion that *Socialism* is just and wise.

I defy any man, of any nation, how learned, eminent, and intellectual soever, to shake the case for practical *Socialism*, or to refute the reasoning contained in this book.

And now I will address myself to Mr. John Smith, a typical British workman, not yet converted to *Socialism*.

Dear Mr. Smith, I assume that you are opposed to *Socialism*, and I assume that you would say that you are opposed to it for one or more of the following reasons:—

1. Because you think *Socialism* is unjust.
2. Because you think *Socialism* is unpractical.
3. Because you think that to establish *Socialism* is not possible.

But I suspect that the real reason for your opposition to *Socialism* is simply that you do not understand it.

The reasons you generally give for opposing *Socialism* are reasons suggested to you by pressmen or politicians who know very little about it, or are interested in its rejection.

I am strongly inclined to believe that the *Socialism* to which you are opposed is not *Socialism* at all, but only a bogey erected by the enemies of *Socialism* to scare you away from the genuine *Socialism*, which it would be so much to your advantage to discover.

Now you would not take your opinions of Trade Unionism from non-Unionists, and why, then, should you take your

opinions of *Socialism* from non-Socialists?

If you will be good enough to read this book you will find out what *Socialism* really is, and what it is not. If after reading this book you remain opposed to *Socialism*, I must leave it for some Socialist more able than I to convert you.

When it pleases those who call themselves your "betters" to flatter you, Mr. Smith (which happens oftener at election times than during strikes or lock-outs), you hear that you are a "shrewd, hard-headed, practical man." I hope that is true, whether your "betters" believe it or not.

I am a practical man myself, and shall offer you in this book nothing but hard fact and cold reason.

I assume, Mr. Smith, that you, as a hard-headed, practical man, would rather be well off than badly off, and that with regard to your own earnings you would rather be paid twenty shillings in the pound than five shillings or even nineteen shillings and elevenpence in the pound.

And I assume that as a family man you would rather live in a comfortable and healthy house than in an uncomfortable and unhealthy house; that you would be glad if you could buy beef, bread, gas, coal, water, tea, sugar, clothes, boots, and furniture for less money than you now pay for them; and that you would think it a good thing, and not a bad thing, if your wife had less work and more leisure, fewer worries and more nice dresses, and if your children had more sports, and better health, and better education.

And I assume that you would like to pay lower rents, even if some rich landlord had to keep fewer race-horses.

And I assume that as a humane man you would prefer that other men and women and their children should not

suffer if their sufferings could be prevented.

If, then, I assure you that you are paying too much and are being paid too little, and that many other Britons, especially weak women and young children, are enduring much preventible misery; and if I assert, further, that I know of a means whereby you might secure more ease and comfort, and they might secure more justice, you will, surely, as a kind and sensible man, consent to listen to the arguments and statements I propose to place before you.

Suppose a stranger came to tell you where you could get a better house at a lower rent, and suppose your present landlord assured you that the man who offered the information was a fool or a rogue, would you take the landlord's word without investigation? Would it not be more practical and hard-headed to hear first what the bringer of such good news had to tell?

Well, the Socialist brings you better news than that of a lower rent. Will you not hear him? Will you turn your back on him for no better reason than because he is denounced as a fraud by the rich men whose wealth depends upon the continuation of the present system?

Your "betters" tell you that you always display a wise distrust of new ideas. But to reject an idea because it is new is not a proof of shrewdness and good sense; it is a sign of bigotry and ignorance. Trade Unionism was new not so long ago, and was denounced, and is still denounced, by the very same persons who now denounce *Socialism*. If you find a newspaper or an employer to be wrong when he denounces Trade Unionism, which you do understand, why should you assume that the same authority is right in denouncing

Socialism, which you do not understand? You know that in attacking Trade Unionism the employer and the pressman are speaking in their own interest and against yours; why, then, should you be ready to believe that in counselling you against *Socialism* the same men are speaking in your interest and not in their own?

I ask you, as a practical man, to forget both the Socialist and the non-Socialist, and to consider the case for and against *Socialism* on its merits. As I said in *Merrie England*—

Forget that you are a joiner or a spinner, a Catholic or a Freethinker, a Liberal or a Tory, a moderate drinker or a teetotaler, and consider the problem as a *man*.

If you had to do a problem in arithmetic, or if you were cast adrift in an open boat at sea, you would not set to work as a Wesleyan, or a Liberal Unionist; but you would tackle the sum by the rules of arithmetic, and would row the boat by the strength of your own manhood, and keep a lookout for passing ships under *any* flag. I ask you, then, Mr. Smith, to hear what I have to say, and to decide by your own judgment whether I am right or wrong.

I was once opposed to *Socialism* myself; but it was before I understood it.

When you understand it you will, I feel sure, agree with me that it is perfectly logical, and just, and practical; and you will, I hope, yourself become a *Socialist*, and will help to abolish poverty and wrong by securing BRITAIN FOR THE BRITISH.



CHAPTER I THE UNEQUAL DIVISION OF WEALTH

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Section A: the Rich

Non-socialists say that self-interest is the strongest motive in human nature.

Let us take them at their word.

Self-interest being the universal ruling motive, it behoves you, Mr. Smith, to do the best you can for yourself and family.

Self-interest being the universal ruling motive, it is evident that the rich man will look out for his own advantage, and not for yours.

Therefore as a selfish man, alive to your own interests, it is clear that you will not trust the rich man, nor believe in the unselfishness of his motives.

As a selfish man you will look out first for yourself. If you can get more wages for the work you do, if you can get the same pay for fewer hours and lighter work, self-interest tells you that you would be a fool to go on as you are. If you can get cheaper houses, cheaper clothes, food, travelling, and amusement than you now get, self-interest tells you that you would be a fool to go on paying present prices.

Your landlord, your employer, your tradesman will not take less work or money from you if he can get more.

Self-interest counsels you not to pay a high price if you can get what you want at a lower price.

Your employer will not employ you unless you are useful to him, nor will he employ you if he can get another man as

useful to him as you at a lower wage.

Such persons as landlords, capitalists, employers, and contractors will tell you that they are useful, and even necessary, to the working class, of which class you are one.

Self-interest will counsel you, firstly, that if these persons are really useful or necessary to you, it is to your interest to secure their services at the lowest possible price; and, secondly, that if you can replace them by other persons more useful or less costly, you will be justified in dispensing with their services.

Now, the Socialist claims that it is cheaper and better for the people to manage their own affairs than to pay landlords, capitalists, employers, and contractors to manage their affairs for them.

That is to say, that as it is cheaper and better for a city to make its own gas, or to provide its own water, or to lay its own roads, so it would be cheaper and better for the nation to own its own land, its own mines, its own railways, houses, factories, ships, and workshops, and to manage them as the corporation tramways, gasworks, and waterworks are now owned and managed.

Your "betters," Mr. Smith, will tell you that you might be worse off than you are now. That is not the question. The question is, Might you be better off than you are now?

They will tell you that the working man is better off now than he was a hundred years ago. That is not the question. The question is, Are the workers as well off now as they ought to be and might be?

They will tell you that the British workers are better off than the workers of any other nation. That is not the

question. The question is, Are the British workers as well off as they ought to be and might be?

They will tell you that Socialists are discontented agitators, and that they exaggerate the evils of the present time. That is not the question. The question is, Do evils exist at all to-day, and if so, is no remedy available?

Your "betters" have admitted, and do admit, as I will show you presently, that evils do exist; but they have no remedy to propose.

The Socialist tells you that your "betters" are deceived or are deceiving you, and that *Socialism* is a remedy, and the only one possible.

Self-interest will counsel you to secure the best conditions you can for yourself, and will warn you not to expect unselfish service from selfish men.

Ask yourself, then, whether, since self-interest is the universal motive, it would not be wise for you to make some inquiry as to whether the persons intrusted by you with the management of your affairs are managing your affairs to your advantage or to their own.

As a selfish man, is it sensible to elect selfish men, or to accept selfish men, to govern you, to make your laws, to manage your business, and to affix your taxes, prices, and wages?

The mild Hindoo has a proverb which you might well remember in this connection. It is this—

The wise man is united in this life with that with which it is proper he should be united. I am bread; thou art the eater: how can harmony exist between us?

Appealing, then, entirely to your self-interest, I ask you to consider whether the workers of Britain to-day are making the best bargain possible with the other classes of society. Do the workers receive their full due? Do evils exist in this country to-day? and if so, is there a remedy? and if there is a remedy, what is it?

The first charge brought by Socialists against the present system is the charge of the unjust distribution of wealth.

The rich obtain wealth beyond their need, and beyond their deserving; the workers are, for the most part, condemned to lead laborious, anxious, and penurious lives. Nearly all the wealth of the nation is produced by the workers; most of it is consumed by the rich, who squander it in useless or harmful luxury, leaving the majority of those who produced it, not enough for human comfort, decency, and health.

If you wish for a plain and clear statement of the unequal distribution of wealth in this country, get Fabian Tract No. 5, price one penny, and study it well.

According to that tract, the total value of the wealth produced in this country is £1,700,000,000. Of this total £275,000,000 is paid in rent, £340,000,000 is paid in interest, £435,000,000 is paid in profits and salaries. That makes a total of £1,050,000,000 in rent, interest, profits, and salaries, nearly the whole of which goes to about 5,000,000 of people comprising the middle and upper classes.

The balance of £650,000,000 is paid in wages to the remaining 35,000,000 of people comprising the working classes. Roughly, then, two-thirds of the national wealth

goes to 5,000,000 of persons, quite half of whom are idle, and one-third is *shared* by seven times as many people, nearly half of whom are workers.

These figures have been before the public for many years, and so far as I know have never been questioned.

There are, say the Fabian tracts, more than 2,000,000 of men, women, and children living without any kind of occupation: that is, they live without working.

Ten-elevenths of all the land in the British Islands belong to 176,520 persons. The rest of the 40,000,000 own the other eleventh. Or, dividing Britain into eleven parts, you may say that one two-hundredth part of the population owns ten-elevenths of Britain, while the other one hundred and ninety-nine two-hundredths of the population own one-eleventh of Britain. That is as though a cake were divided amongst 200 persons by giving to one person ten slices, and dividing one slice amongst 199 persons. I told you just now that Britain does not belong to the British, but only to a few of the British.

In Fabian Tract No. 7 I read—

One-half of the *wealth* of the kingdom is held by persons who leave at death at least £20,000, exclusive of land and houses. *These persons form a class somewhat over 25,000 in number.*

Half the wealth of Britain, then, is held by one fifteen-hundredth part of the population. It is as if a cake were cut in half, one half being given to one man and the other half being divided amongst 1499 men.

How much cake does a working mechanic get?

In 1898 the estates of seven persons were proved at over £45,000,000. That is to say, those seven left £45,000,000 when they died.

Putting a workman's wages at £75 a year, and his working life at twenty years, it would take 30,000 workmen all their lives to *earn* (not to *save*) the money left by those seven rich men.

Many rich men have incomes of £150,000 a year. The skilled worker draws about £75 a year in wages.

Therefore one man with £150,000 a year gets more than 2000 skilled workmen, and the workmen have to do more than 600,000 days' work for their wages, while the rich man does *nothing*.

One of our richest dukes gets as much money in one year for doing nothing, as a skilled workman would get for 14,000 years of hard and useful work.

A landowner is a millionaire. He has £1,000,000. It would take an agricultural labourer, at 10s. a week wages, nearly 40,000 years to earn £1,000,000.

I need not burden you with figures. Look about you and you will see evidences of wealth on every side. Go through the suburbs of London, or any large town, and notice the large districts composed of villas and mansions, at rentals of from £100 to £1000 a year. Go through the streets of a big city, and observe the miles of great shops stored with flaming jewels, costly gold and silver plate, rich furs, silks, pictures, velvets, furniture, and upholsteries. Who buys all these expensive luxuries? They are not for you, nor for your wife, nor for your children.

You do not live in a £200 flat. Your floor is not covered with a £50 Persian rug; your wife does not wear diamond rings, nor silk underclothing, nor gowns of brocaded silk, nor sable collars, nor Maltese lace cuffs worth many guineas. She does not sit in the stalls at the opera, nor ride home in a brougham, nor sup on oysters and champagne, nor go, during the heat of the summer, on a yachting cruise in the Mediterranean. And is not your wife as much to you as the duchess to the duke?

And now let us go on to the next section, and see how it fares with the poor.

Section B: The Poor

At present the average age at death among the nobility, gentry, and professional classes in England and Wales is fifty-five years; but among the artisan classes of Lambeth it only amounts to twenty-nine years; and whilst the infantile death-rate among the well-to-do classes is such that only 8 children die in the first year of life out of 100 born, as many as 30 per cent. succumb at that age among the children of the poor in some districts of our large cities.

Dr. Playfair says that amongst the upper class 18 per cent. of the children die before they reach five years of age; of the tradesman class 36 per cent., and of the working class 55 per cent, of the children die before they reach five years of age.

Out of every 1000 persons 939 die without leaving any property at all worth mentioning.

About 8,000,000 persons exist always on the borders of starvation. About 20,000,000 are poor. More than half the national wealth belongs to about 25,000 people; the

remaining 39,000,000 share the other half unequally amongst them.

About 30,000 persons own fifty-five fifty-sixths of the land and capital of the nation; but of the 39,000,000 of other persons only 1,500,000 earn (or receive) as much as £3 a week.

In London 1,292,737 persons, or 37.8 per cent. of the whole population, get less than a guinea a week *per family*.

The number of persons in receipt of poor-law relief on any one day in the British Islands is over 1,000,000; but 2,360,000 persons receive poor-law relief during one year, or one in eleven of the whole manual labouring class.

In England and Wales alone 72,000 persons die each year in workhouse hospitals, infirmaries, or asylums.

In London alone there are 99,830 persons in workhouses, hospitals, prisons, or industrial schools.

In London one person out of every four will die in a workhouse, hospital, or lunatic asylum.

It is estimated that 3,225,000 persons in the British Islands live in overcrowded dwellings, with an average of three persons in each room.

There are 30,000 persons in London alone whose *home* is a common lodging-house. In London alone 1100 persons sleep every night in casual wards.

From Fabian Tract No. 75 I quote—

Much has been done in the way of improvement in various parts of Scotland, but 22 per cent. of Scottish families still dwell in a single room each, and the proportion in the case of Glasgow rises to 33 per cent. The little town of Kilmarnock, with only 28,447

inhabitants, huddles even a slightly larger proportion of its families into single-room tenements. Altogether, there are in Glasgow over 120,000, and in all Scotland 560,000 persons (more than one-eighth of the whole population), who do not know the decency of even a two-roomed home.

A similar state of things exists in nearly all our large towns, the colliery districts being amongst the worst.

The working class.—The great bulk of the British people are overworked, underpaid, badly housed, unfairly taxed but besides all that, they are exposed to serious risks.

Read *The Tragedy of Toil*, by John Burns, M.P. (Clarion Press, 1d.).

In sixty years 60,000 colliers have been accidentally killed. In the South Wales coalfield in 1896, 232 were killed out of 71,000. In 1897, out of 76,000 no less than 10,230 were injured.

In 1897, of the men employed in railway shunting, 1 in 203 was killed and 1 in 12 was injured.

In 1897, out of 465,112 railway workers, 510 were killed, 828 were permanently disabled, and 67,000 were temporarily disabled.

John Burns says—

This we do know, that 60 per cent. of the common labourers engaged on the Panama Canal were either killed, injured, or died from disease every year, whilst 80 per cent. of the Europeans died. Out of 70 French engineers, 45 died, and only 10 of the remainder were fit for subsequent work.

The men engaged on the Manchester Ship Canal claim that 1000 to 1100 men were killed and 1700 men were severely injured, whilst 2500 were temporarily disabled.

Again—

Taking mechanics first, and selecting one firm—Armstrong's, at Elswick—we find that in 1892 there were 588 accidents, or 7.9 per cent. of men engaged. They have steadily risen to 1512, or 13.9 per cent. of men engaged in 1897. In some departments, notably the blast furnace, 43 per cent. of the men employed were injured in 1897 The steel works had 296 injured, or 24.4 per cent. of its number.

Of sailors John Burns says—

The last thirteen years, 1884-85 to 1896-97, show a loss of 28,302 from wreck, casualties, and accidents, or an average of 2177 from the industrial risks of the sailor's life.

But the most startling statement is to come—

Sir A. Forwood has recently indicated, and recent facts confirm this general view, that

1 of every 1400 workmen is killed annually.

""2500" is totally disabled.

""300" is permanently partially disabled.