

CHAPTER X.

OF SOCIETY.

I.

MANY influences and interests have combined in the course of the nineteenth century to define and push into the foreground a problem which in its present comprehensive form did not occupy earlier philosophic thought. This is the social problem, the problem of human society, or, if we take it in the widest sense, the problem of the human race or humanity. Earlier philosophies, among which those of Plato and Aristotle in ancient times stand out prominently, have furnished contributions to the treatment of the problem; so have, in later centuries, from special points of view, such thinkers as St Augustine, Hobbes, Spinoza, Grotius, and others. But that the problem is a much larger one, and that its solution must be based on a natural and civil history, combined with a philosophy of the collective life of man, this does not seem to have been recognised before the latter half of the eighteenth century. Earlier writers dealt with special aspects of the great subject, starting from historical data or from dogmatic

1. The social problem in the largest sense not recognised before the eighteenth century.