

The social philosophy of the Reactionaries has some traits in common with that of their opponents, whom we may term the Socialists. The latter declared for an

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been too little recognised in this country till Lord Morley drew attention to it in one of the most interesting and luminous of that series of Essays in which he, with unrivalled mastery, expounded to English readers the principal doctrines of French political philosophy from the middle of the eighteenth century down to Auguste Comte. His Essay on "Joseph de Maistre" ('Critical Miscellanies,' vol. ii., 1886, pp. 257-338) is a masterpiece of exposition by one who belongs to the very opposite school of thought, and it amply suffices to impress upon the reader the strong points of de Maistre's position as well as the political and social surroundings among which his philosophy sprang up. This is shown to be an emphatic appeal to the restoration of Order in a state of social and political anarchy, maintaining that there must exist a supreme tribunal of appeal, which is to solve not only, and not in the first instance, questions of truth, but questions of law and order. The regulation of society under a Supreme Power which is recognised to be infallible is more important than the discussion of the proofs of such infallibility. The burning problem of the time was a practical not a theoretical one. The only power which after the great Revolution still existed, and which would be able to restore Order was, according to de Maistre, the organisation of the Roman Catholic Church with the Pope at its head; so he devoted his literary ability to preach the restoration of the Roman Catholic power in the most celebrated of his works ('Du Pape,' 1817), the enormous influence of which he did not live to witness

himself. In this work he proved his thesis through an historical exposition of the work of the Church and a series of practical reflections tending to show that it was the only remaining power which could regenerate and tranquillise society. In discountenancing the modern scientific spirit proclaimed by the new school of thought as the salvation of humanity, de Maistre "had no selfish or official interest in taking away the keys of knowledge, entering not in himself, and them that would enter in hindering. The true reasons for his detestation of the eighteenth century philosophers, science and literature, are simple enough. Like every wise man, he felt that the end of all philosophy and science is emphatically social, the construction and maintenance and improvement of a fabric under which the communities of men may find shelter, and may secure all the conditions for living their lives with dignity and service. Then he held that no truth can be harmful to society. If he found any system of opinions, any given attitude of the mind, injurious to tranquillity and the public order, he hastily concluded that, however plausible they might seem when tested by logic and demonstration, they were fundamentally untrue and deceptive. What is logic compared with eternal salvation in the next world, and the practice of virtue in this? The recommendation of such a mind as de Maistre's is the intensity of its appreciation of order and social happiness. The obvious weakness of such a mind, and the curse inherent in its influence, is that it overlooks the prime condition of all; that social order