Even those who refused to accept Socialism, and looked on Competition as the great producer of all improvement, acknowledged that State Interference might sometimes be useful, and the rigid 'laissez-faire' doctrine is now abandoned by all who have any connection with practical work. Indeed of late years socialistic legislation has become very common, and the State now recognises in England hardly anything with which it may not interfere. It compels Education, it regulates hours of labour, it forces landowners to sell their land to railways and to let it in allotments to labourers who wish to give their spare time to agriculture, it interferes between landlord and tenant and even breaks leases. In some respects, however, the 'laissez-faire' doctrine has had a practical lasting effect; for example, in the question of Pauperism. ...

In the question of Pauperism, then, Socialistic legislation has hitherto been prevented; but in most other Economic questions it has been steadily creeping in in practice, and Socialistic ideas have been steadily gaining ground among theorists. A narrow section of theorists, indeed, following Herbert Spencer and the Evolutionists, have raised the standard of thorough 'laissez-faire' once more, but at present they have no disciples among practical
politicians, and their ideas do not seem to be in any way gaining ground. On the contrary, in practical politics State Interference is becoming commoner and commoner, and although some of the great principles of the 'laissez-faire' school have been permanently established, yet Socialism both in theory and practice seems to be a growing force. The immense harm which it may do has been shown in the case of such Socialistic institutions as have from time to time been established (as the Poor Law for example); but if judiciously carried out it may improve the moral and intellectual as well as the physical condition of the poor, and it may prevent the evils of a floating population of unemployed. It is more likely, however, to produce apathy and laziness among labourers, to make their work less efficient, to remove the stimulus to improvement which is afforded by competition, and to sap our civilization at its foundation. It should, then, be fought against by all who wish sturdiness and energy to be maintained, and those forces which have produced our civilization to continue to perfect it.