

FREEDOM

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BENEATH THE THUNDER-CLOUD.

A HUSH pervades the atmosphere. The light is strange and garish. The distance between various objects contradicts our habitual impressions ; things seem startlingly near, startlingly definite. Birds appear to have vanished from the earth ; beasts stand as if turned to stone, or move with a scared langour. If the faintest breeze rustles the leaves, the eerie sharpness of the sound sends a chill through our blood. Every noise assumes a mysterious significance ; the mere shutting of a door makes us start and shiver. Our work drags heavily along ; our hands seem made of lead, our brains of wool. Like a pall the inky cloud with its yellowish glare hangs overhead and stifles all our energy, until the tension becomes unbearable and our jaded nerves quiver in anticipation of the crash which we almost long for in our dread.

Yet, perhaps, that crash may after all be indefinitely delayed. The threatening cloud, may be, vanishes silently into space. The atmosphere clears. Common sights and common sounds once more become common-place. The sun shines out, and life resumes its ordinary aspect. Nothing but the masses of cloud towering above the sky line and our own lurking sense of oppression remain to warn us that the storm has but temporarily dispersed, and that to-morrow may see it burst over our heads.

Just such weather has been frequent lately not only in the physical, but in the social world of Europe. A heavy thunder cloud of war and revolution hangs overhead. The moral atmosphere is charged with the consciousness that Germany, France and Russia are trembling upon the verge of a great war, a disturbance which promises to be as the breaking up of the well springs of existing conditions in the civilised world.

The great centralised States are tottering and crumbling ; held together solely by armed force. It is hardly possible that a European war should not end in the dismemberment of at least some of them. Not probably in the separation of nations held together by race sympathy, but in the destruction of the centralised administration of artificially constructed empires, such as Russia and Austria, and in the immense development of local self-administration and voluntary federation throughout the whole continent. It is hardly possible that such a war will not afford opportunities, which will be seized by the workers to take hold of the means of production and deprive the property owners of their monopoly. The consciousness of these mightier issues at stake conflicts with the greed of the traders for scarcity and war prices or for commercial supremacy, and the ambition and land hunger of the rulers. The immediate result hangs quivering in the balance, at the mercy of social forces beyond all human control.

Meanwhile the overcharged condition of the atmosphere seems to have momentarily checked the conscious activity of society. The public hide the prevailing sense of uneasiness beneath fictitious enthusiasms and hollow clamour. The canting festivities of the Jubilee being ended, we English are amusing ourselves by holding up hands of pious amazement at the unmanly vice of our idle classes, the petty barbarities of the police, and the incapacity and worse of ministers and officials ; whilst our neighbours across the channel throw up caps for the untried heroism of Boulanger and celebrate with much waving of flags the days when they were energetically revolutionary. And all Europe watches with languid eyes the fruitless struggles of Egypt and Bulgaria in the hands of the wire pullers ; the Great Powers contenting themselves with just putting out a foot and tripping up any sort of attempt at escape which looks as if it might possibly be successful. Little States only exist as pawns for the play of their big neighbours.

Sharp and clear, amidst these dreary trivialities and futilities, rings the cry of the evicted Irish peasants, still heroically persevering in their defence of house and land and social justice amongst men. The Emerald Isle is just now the gem of Europe. The one bright spot where the hope of the wronged still takes the shape of resolute action. Elsewhere the prevailing dulness and sense of oppression seem to hang heavy as lead over the workers, dismally toiling in dust and heat. It is a time, not of rest and refreshment, but of inaction and strained expectancy.

Where will the return of energy find us? To what deeds shall we

be hurried when it awakes? Those are questions which lie to some extent within our power to determine. This pause allows us breathing time to think and prepare, to study the lessons of the past that we may make ready for the chances of the future. Let us look to it that those chances do not present themselves in vain.

THE FIRST WORK OF THE REVOLUTION.

WHATEVER turn, pacific or warlike, events may take when the time has come for a thorough modification of present conditions, those who will take an active part in the movement will find two different courses open to them ; and upon their choice will depend the success or the failure of the attempt.

Deeply imbued with the teachings of Political Economy, which has devoted its chief attention to the best means of increasing the intensity of the present capitalist production ; accustomed to reason under the open or unspoken presumption that the economical life of a Society cannot but be organised on some kind of wage-system,—most social reformers have built up their schemes of reform on the supposition that our endeavours must be merely directed towards some improvement of the present system of wage-payment, and it is usually supposed that this improvement would result from the State, or the Municipality, taking industry under their management, and eliminating the present owners of land and capital.

In the opinion of these persons the Social Revolution, after having proclaimed the rights of the nation to its soil, mines, machinery, and means of communication, and after having expropriated the present owners of these necessities of production, ought to organise industry so as to guarantee to the worker "the full value of his labour," and thus to prevent anybody from pocketing for himself the surplus-value added by the labourer to the cotton and wool which he transforms into stuffs, to the coal which he brings to the surface of the earth, or to the metals he transforms into tools or machines. But, as far as we understand the social reformers belonging to this school, they consider it quite possible provisionally to maintain existing industry as it is, both as to the kinds of produce it brings to market, and the territorial distribution of the various workshops and manufactures. As to how the very first needs of the producers—those of food, of shelter, of clothing, and so on—should be satisfied, we must recognise that these grave questions are rather driven into the back-ground in the schemes of all social reformers of the Collectivist and previous schools.

Well, it seems to us Communist-Anarchists, that if the Social Revolution should really follow this course, it would be doomed beforehand to be defeated, and to be crushed in the blood of the working-classes.

We have already said that the abolition of private ownership of land, mines, machinery, and productive capital altogether, surely will be the distinctive feature of any movement worthy of the name of Socialist ; and we have said, moreover, that no Parliament, no Government *can* do this. The expropriation can be carried out only by local initiative, by local action, by being not only written on paper, but accomplished *de facto*.

But suppose it is done ; that is, suppose the nation has loudly proclaimed that the soil, the houses thereupon and the mines beneath, the factories and railways, are the property of the nation, and suppose that even the idea is so ripe that no serious objections are raised against it—what next?

It is not enough to proclaim, "These factories are ours," and to put on them the inscription, "National Property." They will become ours when we really bring them into action, when we use them and set their machinery at work. But how will that be done?

We are answered, "The State will do that, and it will pay wages, either in money or in 'labour notes.'" But it seems to us that those who answer the question in this way, are merely paying a tribute to the false and portentous pseudo-science which middle-class people have elaborated under the name of Political Economy. Their point of view is altogether wrong ; because, instead of basing our reasonings on the present *production* we ought to base them on *consumption*. Production is, for us, the mere servant of consumption ; it must mould itself on the wants of the consumer, not dictate to him conditions.

Suppose we have entered a revolutionary period, with or without civil war—it does not matter,—a period when old institutions are falling into ruins and new ones are growing in their place. The movement

NOTES.

THE admission made in the debate on the Navy Estimates by the First Lord of the Admiralty, that our dockyard management is nothing better than a gigantic job, somewhat tarnishes the glory of the brilliant naval review, for which the workers had to pay last month. No sooner is one government department officially whitewashed than another stands revealed as a den of uncleanness.

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The recently constructed Metropolitan Board of Works does not appear so very much more immaculate than the ancient Corporation of London. Why, in the name of human imbecility, do we continue tamely to submit our lives and delegate the management of our business to successive bands of self-interested irresponsibles? Practically irresponsibles, for our much vaunted right of calling them over the coals seems remarkable ineffective. These official administrators do nothing for the people which the people could not do directly for themselves by voluntary association.

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Prostitutes, salvationists, temperance lecturers, cab-drivers, and socialists are not by any means the only persons who have doubts as to the unmixed benefits of police supervision. Since its institution in 1829 the Metropolitan Police Force has managed to earn the detestation of the whole proletariat of London.

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Not that the police individually are at all worse than other men who are corrupted by a false position. How can a man be brotherly and honest when it is his business to be a human blood-hound hunting down to their destruction the unfortunate and erring amongst his fellows? How can he be just when it is his duty to maintain, by any means that fall short of raising a public scandal, the outward appearance of order, where disorder is only the natural and healthy revolt against deep-rooted social injustice and wrong? The paid guardians of class rule and the monopoly of property are, after all, men of the people who have thoughtlessly turned traitors to the popular cause, and sold themselves to do dirty work that the masters are ashamed to be seen doing for themselves.

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The proposed Land Bill is a public confession on the part of the most conservative of Englishmen of the justice of the Irish revolt, and therefore the injustice of coercion.

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Paris was in a state of siege on the commemoration of the taking of the Bastille. The Republican government ordered its soldiers to fire on the people if they showed the faintest inclination to follow in the steps of the ancestors whom they were assembled to honour!

* * *

The people are everywhere losing respect for authority, for everywhere they begin to perceive that it is nothing more respectable than the brute-force of the masters, wrapped round with a cloak of false morality. This mystification has been almost completely stripped away in France. Nothing but a few miserable shreds of legality and statecraft hang between the proletariat and middle class property-rule, and both sides have come to see plainly that it is but a question of opportunity and the best weapons between them.

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The Tzar is still busy concocting new measures wherewith to tighten his failing grip on the throat of the Russian nation. The intellectual life of the country is already all but stifled by the weight of police supervision, and now the new regulations for the University of St. Petersburg exclude all students who cannot produce a certificate showing them to be well affected towards the existing tyranny! Moreover, during their whole course of study they must reside with relatives or guardians responsible to the police for the young men's continued good behaviour—*i.e.*, indifference to the sufferings and wrongs of their unhappy country.

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It is with this same just and enlightened Russian Government that the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Daily Telegraph* are advocating a close British alliance, that the spoils of Central Asia may not be spilled in division between the two principal thieves.

SPONTANEITY.

"If there's a Government then I'm agin it." We are emphatically of the opinion of that oft quoted Irishman. We are opposed to all centralised administration whether of labour or of affairs. We are in revolt against all domination whether of majority or minority. Of course, therefore, we protest, as against means not in accordance with our ends, against every attempt of the popular party to liberate the people by making use of the machinery of Government.

All this is true of us Anarchists; is it the whole truth? Is this negative policy of perpetual protest essentially Anarchism? Active protest against evil is certainly better than dull submission to it; but he who whilst protesting against a wrong can point to no right capable of attainment, is likely to protest in vain. For does not all intelligent protest necessarily imply some vantage ground of definite and positive belief occupied by the protestant?

Now what is the positive belief of Anarchism? Clearly it cannot consist in *disbelief* in authority. We may disbelieve in the god of tradition, whom ignorant and foolish men have created in their own likeness. We may disbelieve in the right to govern which he is supposed to have delegated to the law-makers and rulers of mankind. We may disbelieve in the necessity or expediency of a centralised

State, and even in the usefulness of the attempt to administer justice by law. And all this will but make us sceptics; it is only our positive convictions that make us Anarchists.

Looking upon the life of society and of individual men, as we see that life to-day and catch glimpses of it in the past, we Anarchists recognise a fact which seems to us of the first importance. All growth, all development, all enlargement of life has come to men spontaneously. Some new way of putting materials together, some new thought, some new method of meeting difficulty or avoiding pain has flashed upon this man or that, suggested by he knows not what unforeseen, uncontrollable train of circumstances, stretching in endless procession into the unknown past, united by countless and almost imperceptible links with the almost equally uncomprehended present. The idea is in the air, as people say; it is the outcome of the combined efforts and strivings of many minds for many ages; but suddenly for some untraceable reason it impresses this mind or that in a newly definite shape, and through that mind takes its place in the world as an ascertained fact, a comprehensive generalisation, a useful discovery.

We are apt to talk as if this experience related only to exceptional natures, to genius. In reality these gleams of light, these flashes of creative activity leap up spontaneously in every healthy mind, which has any sort of room for free expansion. Look for a moment at only one department of human ingenuity, mechanical invention. In your dictionary of useful knowledge you will find each great discovery put down to one man, the steam engine to Watts, the spinning machine to Arkwright, and so on. But every workman knows that each machine owes its perfected form to the endless little or great improvements which have "come to" this man and that in the course of years. The inventive process is never at an end, and though the workman seems to gain little or nothing by his ingenuity, he is still driven to exercise it by imperious need to create, which even a life of servile toil has not crushed out of his manhood.

The invention of machinery, however, is by no means the sole outcome of human energy applied to surrounding conditions, and in every department of life the motive force of all advance in thought, in conduct, in action is spontaneous. All of us who are not squeezed out of human likeness by the brutal pressure of the existing social bondage, are struck unawares by ideas, which, if we be honest and true to ourselves, our whole nature constrains us to follow out to the end, be it sweet or bitter. All of us are now and again visited by a forcible impression, "I *must* do that. I *must* make so and so." If the desire be balked, we experience a weary sense of prostration and apathy. For the time being our energy is lost and we sink back into the dullness of routine. The most carefully reasoned examination into the origin of that sense of *must* only reveals an endless train of influences and impressions. Why at that special moment they culminated in that *must* it is impossible to say. We only feel to the bottom of our souls that that *must* was an outburst of the force that moves the world, though at the particular moment it may but have moved us to empty the dust-hole or to put together a rabbit hutch.

This spontaneous play of energy, which redeems the ordinary daily existence of each human being from the mill-round of habit, is also necessarily the all-powerful motive force of men in masses, of society. Some current of emotion, of strong desire, of indignation or dread rises at once in men's minds, and fed by hidden springs of tendency, whirls us collectively into sudden and rapid action. Afterwards, looking back, we can dimly trace some of its probable causes. But let any human beings, were they armed with the despotic powers of a Napoleon or a Peter the Great, deliberately set about reproducing or perpetuating the phenomenon, and their discomfiture will be aptly expressed in the homely proverb, "One man can bring a horse to the water, all the men in England cannot make him drink." An individual or assembly of individuals, gifted with constructive capacity, can arrange admirable social machinery, as the reforming Tsars introduced excellent Western institutions into Russia, or the successive popular assemblies of the Great Revolution manufactured constitutions for France. But the Western institutions died of inanition before they had well taken root, or served but to stifle the national life of Russia, and the French constitutions shared the fate of so many English Acts of Parliament and vanished into the waste paper basket. For without the animating spirit, the creative energy whose springs are beyond all control, the most perfect organisation but cumbers the ground.

That spirit, that energy is always at work in our midst; but, like the wind, it "bloweth where it listeth," it is spontaneous. A mastering impulse to feel, to think, to act comes to one and another, or to all collectively. We accept or reject it as our reason, our sincerity, our courage may decide, are swept on to a fuller development of life, or fall back into the stagnant round of fixed duties or fixed beliefs. The "godlike" reason, that faculty of comparison of which we are so proud, can criticise, modify, restrain, even kill our impulse. It can never supply motive power, and bid the dry bones of existence live. It stands second to the spontaneous ebullition of energy which is the creative cause of every invention, every new idea, every great individual act, every great social movement.

We may like the fact of the supreme importance of spontaneity in things human, or dislike it; call it, after our crude manner of classification, "bad" or "good"; but whether we approve or disapprove, the fact remains, and like all facts visits non-recognition with sharp suffering.

The full acknowledgment of this great fact of spontaneity and its importance is a first principle of Anarchism. In future articles we hope to follow out some of the consequences of this recognition and its bearing on the burning questions of our day.

PRISON LIFE.¹

[SECOND NOTICE.]

ARE Prisons Necessary? is the title of the concluding chapter of Kropotkin's account of his prison experiences. "Unhappily, hitherto," he goes on to remark, "our penal institutions have been nothing but a compromise between the old ideas of revenge, of punishment of the 'bad will' and 'sin,' and the modern ideas of 'detering from crime,' both softened to a very slight extent by some notions of philanthropy." But is it not time that we fully recognised the fact that crime, like bodily disease, is capable of scientific investigation, and of that scientific treatment which considers prevention the best of cures?

An energetic school of scientific students of crime has sprung up of late years in Italy and Germany, who have devoted themselves to searching out the main causes of this painful phenomenon. They have concluded that there are three groups of such principal causes: the cosmic, the antropological, and the social. All these causes, and especially the first, have as yet been but very imperfectly investigated; nevertheless, some very interesting facts have been conclusively established.

Cosmic influence, that is roughly speaking, the state of the weather, has been shown to have a strong and definitely ascertainable effect upon human action. To take one instance; an English writer (S. A. Hill, 'Nature,' Vol. XXIX., 1884, p. 338) has pointed out that in India crimes of violence correspond in frequency to the amount of moist heat in the atmosphere. The Italian Professor E. Ferri has collected statistics of temperature and of the prevalence of "crime against the person," which show the most striking correspondences.

The antropological, the distinctively human and individual causes of crime are still more important. Dr. Lombroso and his Italian colleagues have put together many valuable observations on the physical characteristics of criminals. They have shown that the majority of prisoners have some defect of brain organisation; that the most brutal murders have usually been committed by men afflicted with some serious physical imperfection; that most criminals have singularly long arms (suggestive of nearness to the monkey), etc., etc. Researches in interesting relation with the investigations of our English Dr. Maudsley, into what he calls the wide "borderland between crime and insanity."

A crime is rarely due to something which has suddenly sprung up in the criminal. "Take for instance," says Kropotkin, "a man who has committed an act of violence. . . . Before this time, probably, throughout his life, the same person has often manifested some anomaly of mind by noisy expression of his feelings, by crying loudly after some trifling disagreeable circumstance, by easily venting his bad temper on those who stood by him; and, unhappily, he has not from his childhood found anybody who was able to give a better direction to his nervous impressibility. . . . And if we push our analysis still deeper, we discover that this state of mind is itself a consequence of some physical disease, either inherited or developed by an abnormal life."

More than that. If we analyse ourselves, if everybody would frankly acknowledge the thoughts which have sometimes passed through his mind, we should see that all of us have had some feelings and thoughts such as constitute the motive of all acts considered as criminal. We have repudiated them at once; but if they have had the opportunity of recurring again and again; if they were nurtured by circumstances or by a want of exercise of the best passions—love, compassion, and all those which result from living in the joys and sufferings of those who surround us; then these passing influences, so brief that we hardly noticed them, would have degenerated into some morbid element in our character."

"Fraternal treatment to check the development of the anti-social feelings which grow up in some of us—not imprisonment—is the only means that we are authorised in applying, and can apply, with some effect to those in whom these feelings have developed in consequence of bodily disease or social influences." A remarkable instance of the healthy influence of fostering the self-respect and kindly feelings of criminals is given by Dr. Cameron. Speaking of his 30 years of experience as a prison surgeon, he says that by treating the convicts "with as much consideration as if they had been delicate ladies, the greatest order was generally maintained in the hospital." He was struck with "that estimable trait in the character of prisoners—observable even among the roughest criminals—I mean the great attention they bestow on the sick." These convict attendants are just those prisoners who have an opportunity of exercising their good feelings, and who enjoy the most freedom. "The most hardened criminals," Dr. Cameron adds, "are not exempt from this feeling" of kindly compassion.

The moral necessity for the adoption of a humane and brotherly method of treating criminals appears the stronger when we turn to consider the social causes of crime. "The feeling is growing amongst us that society is responsible for the anti-social deeds committed in its midst. . . ." From year to year thousands of children grow up in the filth—material and moral—of our great cities. The "father and mother leave the den they inhabit early in the morning in search of any job which may help them to get through the next week." "The children enter life without even knowing a handicraft."

"I never cease to wonder," adds Kropotkin, "at the deep rootedness of social feelings in the humanity of the nineteenth century, at the goodness of heart which still prevails in the dirty streets."

This social morality of the wretched is still more remarkable when we remember not only the continual flaunting display of the luxury and licence of the rich, but that "everything we see around us—the shops, the people we see in the street, the literature we read, the money-worship we meet with every day—tends to develop an insatiable thirst for unlimited wealth," and an impression that the *beau-ideal* of life is to make others work for us and to live in idleness.

About two-thirds of the actual breaches of the law, are so-called "crimes against property." And it is obvious that these will disappear with the removal of the social injustice which is their cause.

"As to 'crimes against persons,' already their numbers are rapidly decreasing, owing to the growth of moral and social habits which necessarily develop in each society, and can only grow when common interests contribute more and more to tighten the bonds which induce men to live a common life." "We live now too much in isolation. Everybody cares only for himself, or his nearest relatives. Egotistical—i.e., unintelligent—individualism in material life has necessarily brought about an individualism as egotistic and harmful in the mutual relations of human beings." "But men cannot live in this isolation, and the elements of new social groups—those ties arising between the inhabitants of the same spot having many interests in common, and those of people united by the prosecution of common aims—is growing." And where there is common life there is mutual moral as well as material support, influences calculated to draw forth the kindly feelings and counteract those morbid tendencies, which, if unchecked by the growth of better things, finally corrupt the mind. Where the bonds of common life are strong, as in the Chinese compound family or Swiss or Slavonian communes, we see its beneficial effects in the low level of crime. We may expect the like results from the new developments of social life now springing up around us. "Yet notwithstanding all this, there surely will remain a limited number of persons whose anti-social passions—the results of bodily disease—may still be a danger to the community."

Such men and women can only be treated as modern science and humanity are teaching us to treat the lunatic and idiot. We have ceased to whip and chain the madman, we are ceasing to lock him up in the mitigated imprisonment of an asylum. The plan tried by the kind hearted and brave peasants of Gheel, in Belgium, of taking the insane into their houses as members of the family has lately found warm advocates amongst medical men elsewhere, notably Dr. Arthur Mitchell in Scotland, where the practice of receiving lunatics in private families is rapidly gaining ground with markedly beneficial results.

It is by such self-devoted and compassionate fellowship, not by imprisonment, that we can hope to redeem the afflicted and erring amongst our brethren. "All that tends that way," concludes Kropotkin, "will bring us nearer to the solution of the great question which has not ceased to preoccupy human societies since the remotest antiquity, and which cannot be solved by prisons."

ANARCHIST LITERATURE.

THERE is a sad lack of Anarchist pamphlets in England, and we gladly welcome our comrade Joseph Lane's contribution of 'An Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto' (price 1d., Joseph Lane, 38, Ainsley Street, Bethnal Green Junction, E.), which is an energetic and earnest exposition of Anarchist Socialism from a worker's standpoint. The second portion, which deals with practical politics, is specially interesting. We hope the tract will have a wide circulation. But is it not a pity to use the somewhat clumsy title 'Anti-Statist' rather than the more definite and expressive 'Anarchist'? Why evade the fine old name which for years has rung out in the van of the Socialist movement throughout the world? It is flung at every energetic Socialist, of whatever school, by the privileged classes, just because it expresses so accurately the very climax of their dread. They are willing (under compulsion) to yield some of their spoils to keep the workers quiet by improving their material condition; but, resign their authority over them?—No, never! And yet it is this very claim to a free life that the people are now preparing to make good. Let us bear our title of Anarchist proudly in the sight of all men, till like the "Birchlegs" of Norway and the "Beggars" of Holland, we transform an epithet of reproach into a badge of victory.

A second article on "The Scientific Bases of Anarchy," by our comrade P. Kropotkin, appears in the *Nineteenth Century* for this month. Following the line of argument of his previous article on the same subject (February, 1887), he deduces the principles of Anarchism from the existing and growing tendencies of Society.

The Communist-Anarchist circle 'Humanitas,' at Naples, is publishing, besides its newspaper, a series of small pamphlets. We have received the first two, a criticism of the Parliamentary system by Dr. Merlino, and a manifesto of Anarchist Socialism; both of which are well worth reading. ('Biblioteca Humanitas,' Via S. Libro, 26, 27, Napoli. Price, No. 1, 20c.; No. 2, 10c.)

'Holy of Holies, Confessions of an Anarchist,' printed by J. H. Clarke, Chelmsford (priceless). Lamentations of an Egoist would have been more descriptive. "The Sweet Youth's in Love" and under the influence of this egotistical emotion pours forth with some force and facility a rhymed tirade against things in general and himself in particular, in which he characterises himself as a "sightless hulk," a "comet," a "plague wind," a "fenny swamp," and denounces the rest of mankind as "dogs."

NOTICES.

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¹ 'In Russian and French Prisons.' By P. Kropotkin. Ward and Downey.