

FREEDOM

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IRELAND FOR THE WORKERS.

ACCORDING to the politicians of the United Kingdom, there is but one great question before the country—Shall Ireland have Home Rule? On this issue alone has the Liberal party been disintegrated and reformed and the Tory party strengthened. On this issue alone have the political word-spinners of both parties spoken for hours at a stretch before enraptured audiences in every large hall in the country. Every comparatively small incident of despotism in Ireland has been published in bold type and commented upon by a host of journals. Mr. O'Brien and his breeches have formed the subject of innumerable leading articles in Radical, Liberal and Conservative papers and the eviction scenes in Donegal and elsewhere have had many and able chroniclers. Now of necessity, as Anarchists, we are Home-rulers in every sense of the word, and we are and have been delighted to see that the outrageous acts of the English Government in Ireland have been given the greatest publicity. We feel as strongly as any one possibly can do that no language can sufficiently denounce the tyranny carried on in the neighbouring isle in the name of the English people. But we also feel that Ireland is not alone, that there is misery elsewhere of quite as terrible a nature. Here in London, for example, which has almost as large a population as the whole of Ireland, there are heartrending incidents taking place every day, there are evictions, there are deaths from starvation, there are hundreds of thousands of people in a terrible state of degradation and ignorance; but there is very little space allowed even in the most Radical of newspapers to chronicle these near-at-home outrages of Capitalism, Landlordism and Government. Then again as to Mr. O'Brien and his resistance to the attempt to make him put on prison clothes. It was doubtless a very creditable action on his part to protest in such a manner against the outrages of the powers that be. But when his admirers set him up as so very much superior to the thousands of other men and women in our prisons, who are just as much creatures of circumstances as he is, we object. That Mr. O'Brien has become an Irish M.P., believing in a small reduction of rent and the establishment of a government in Ireland, is largely due to the conditions by which he has been surrounded. If he had been in the state of poverty which has forced many of the inmates of the prisons to steal, he himself might have been tempted to risk going to gaol on another count than that for which he has suffered. The late Henry Ward Beecher once said in his pulpit at Brooklyn that the laws against theft had no meaning to him as he was outside the sphere of temptation. The same thing might be said by Mr. O'Brien. We confess we do not like his contempt for his fellow prisoners. It is well not to despise one's companions in misery.

The Irish question is in reality and at bottom not a political question at all. It is a portion of the social question which is being exploited by a school of politicians for their own especial purposes. If the longed-for Irish government is ever established in Ireland it will be another form of the same despotism under which the Irish people suffer now. It may not be so severe. The condition of the peasant may be slightly improved, but only slightly. The intolerance displayed by the Conservatives towards the Parnellite party will be displayed by the College Green government to the people's party. The able editor of the *Star* has given us more than one proof of this. He is willing and anxious to do something towards ameliorating the condition of the people, not only in Ireland, but even here in England, if it will help to establish an Irish parliament. But go beyond his programme and he will excel in meanness Mr. Balfour himself. The peculiarly untruthful paragraphs which appeared in his paper about Anarchism and our Chicago comrades last year are an instance in point. Seeing this so clearly as we do, we are not particularly interested in the establishment of the sort of Home-rule which the politicians desire. We would prefer that the Dublin parliament should never be more than an idea, and that Irishmen should become really free by the establishment of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity in the merging of peasant, farmer, labourer, and capitalist in a community of workers freely combining to enjoy life in the best possible way. Just suppose the affairs of the community carried on for a day on the principle of equal brotherly love: the next morning the world would rise new born. No private property excluding the needy from the necessaries of existence, the worker from the produce of his labour. No bullying or ordering about of one man by another. No grabbing of opportunities and standing in other men's light regardless of their pain. No interfering for interference sake with other people's tastes and eccentricities: the widest possible scope for every one to be himself, to develop to the full his own nature. No judging of other men's conduct by the hard and fast rules of law or custom.

No punishment of erring humans by other humans no less faulty. Would the world the next morning rise in haste to return to the regime of law'n'order? We think not. A dream? Yes; but "dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?" Our life is what we make it, what our mental vision determines it shall be. Is not the tyranny of property, the domination of man by man also a dream, a nightmare rather, from which when the eyes of our mind are opened we shall shake ourselves free, marvelling that we were ever its slaves?

What Ireland might be if it were not for the brutalities of the English Government and the oppression of the landlord and capitalist, which Home-rule as it is understood by the politician will not alter very materially, very few of those who have not travelled extensively in Ireland are aware. As a matter of fact Ireland might be an earthly paradise. Its natural resources are tremendous. It could support with ease all the Irishmen in and out of Ireland. And when once the Irish people really do get rid of the exploiters in the shape of landlords, capitalists, and governments, when once they begin to co-operate in exploiting the treasures which nature has so freely bestowed upon them, utilising machinery to the fullest extent, and using the most improved methods of agriculture, Ireland will become a centre of civilisation and progress. Great cities—great that is to say, rather in the beauty of their architecture, and the happiness of the dwellers therein, than in extent—will spring up all over the land. The O'Donovans, and the Mahonys and the O'Kellys will be able to give full play to the exuberance of their spirits, the glory of Erin of old in the days of St. Patrick and Brian Boru will be revived but on a grander scale in the days of electricity and the printing press. The Hibernian renaissance following upon the universal Social Revolution of the 19th century's latter end will make of that country not the least beautiful of the lands upon which freedom will shine in the glorious dawn of the twentieth century. For the sorrows and trials of to-day Ireland will have a great recompense in the future, and undoubtedly she deserves it. Her sons have fought bravely for their liberty, although at times, as for example, at present, they have been taken off the track a bit by the specious political programmes of those who sometimes lead them. They have set a noble example by their resistance to oppression to the victims of tyranny in every country, which we can only hope will speedily be imitated. In the meantime, while the Social Revolution is still in the preparatory stage, we would urge upon our Irish comrades to do their level best to teach their fellow countrymen the principles of Socialism and Anarchy. Thus will they be hastening the day of the workers' triumph and Ireland's real emancipation.

THE MOVEMENT IN SPAIN.

(From our Collectivist Anarchist Correspondent in Barcelona.)

SOCIALISM in Spain is divided into a number of schools. There are the Anarchists, the "Workmen's Party" or Social-Democrats, and the Trade Unionists. The Anarchists are again divided into collectivists and communists. The "Workmen's Party" is the result of a split. The leaders of that party have taken up their position of isolation through a miserable personal quarrel and their propaganda is inspired by the commonplace stuff to be found in the French papers of the same school. They have formed about twenty committees in various towns. The "Workmen's Party" claims particularly to pin its faith to the teachings of Karl Marx, but this claim is scarcely borne out in fact, for they have never yet shown that they even comprehend the ideas he taught. The party is weak but presumptuous and it speaks as if it had the power to make a great social transformation to-morrow. It only succeeds in getting laughed at.

The trade unionists are of importance owing to their numbers. In Catalonia there is the Federacion de las Tres Clases de Vapor which includes all the workers, men and women, engaged in the manufacture of cotton goods. But the only object of this organisation is to maintain the scale and to pay the officials. It often happens that these officials come to a secret understanding with the employers and betray the interests of the workers while pretending to be their defenders. There is also the Federacion de Toncleros (Coopers), la Federacion Tipografica and several other trade unions established here and there who hold that to maintain the scale and to try and increase wages and diminish the hours of labour is all the workers ought to do. In the month of May last year the Federacion de Resistencia al Capital was constituted under special circumstances. Its object was to unite in a single organisation all the various trade unions, but not to include the revolutionary An-

archist groups whether collectivist or communist. This federation does very little.

The honour of the movement of the Spanish proletariat belongs to the Anarchists who in 1870 formed the Spanish section of the International Association of Workers at the congress held at Barcelona from the 19th to the 25th of June in that year. They changed this association into the *Federacion Regional Española de Trabajadores* at the congress held at Barcelona in 1881; and still later at the congress held at Valencia in 1888, they changed this federation into the *Agrupacion de los Anarquistas Españoles*.

In order to explain these various transformations it is necessary to refer to the position of the Anarchist ideas amongst us, including therein the development of what is called Spanish collectivism and the birth of the communist idea in this country. The International was first established in Spain by the efforts of Fanelli, a delegate of the Alliance de la Democratie Socialiste, followed by the work of the delegation of the workers societies of Barcelona to the congress of Lausanne, who received the revolutionary doctrine direct from the celebrated Bakounine.

The Spanish workers accept the principle of resistance to Capital as a means of carrying on the war against the middle-class, and propose the resumption of all the means of production by society, giving to the producer the whole produce of his labour. But note well the words *whole produce* signify for us only a negation to the capitalist exploitation and we have never presented it as a doctrinal aspiration or as definitely scientific. All that is said with more or less reason with regard to the collectivism of the French cannot be held to apply to the Spaniards; for disposed as we are to combat privilege we are willing to accept all that can be offered to our intelligence as more revolutionary and more scientific.

The communist propaganda is known in Spain by the French communist organs and notably by *Le Révolté*, the predecessor of *La Révolte*. Whilst not accepting these communist opinions we gladly recognise, as a tribute to truth, that the communists have benefitted us by drawing our attention to the works of the thinkers of that school, such as Kropotkin, and the result has been the transformation of our organisation, which was verified at the congress of Valencia, and the declaration that we affirm Anarchy as a fundamental principle, a supreme aspiration and criterion by which to judge our conduct and the revolutionary means, without giving preference to any prejudice of school; we are thus in a position to accept scientific demonstration.

We have left the trade societies to those who are imbued with the socialist routine of the International, and have proclaimed the necessity of the formation of groups with revolutionary objects conformable to their wishes and to their special aptitudes. The success of this transformation has been very considerable, for in all parts of Spain Anarchist groups have since sprung up full of life and activity and they are certainly the precursors of a revolutionary awakening which will attract the attention of the Anarchists of the whole world, just as in the old times of the International our early organisation was admired.

There is perhaps no country more disposed than Spain to reject error and to accept truth. This can be proved by historical examples. At first the workers did not appreciate the social question, and not having an existence as a distinct class, they followed the lead of the politicians and became republicans. When the Revolution of 1868 brought the fall of the monarchy and the International made its appearance, Socialism came and the militant proletariat was formed. All the workers then forsook politics and gathered to the International. The idea of resistance to Capitalism was welcomed with enthusiasm and led to some important strikes. After this came the developments of collectivism and anarchy and just as before the workers had applied themselves to the war against Capital in the shape of strikes now they went in for the study of the social problem. Then came communism, and although the Spanish workers as a body are not believers in the teachings of this school, they have thrown over their old form of organisation seeing that it tended to become an authoritarian danger. We are always ready like Hernan Cortes in the conquest of Mexico, to set fire to our ships if by so doing we can obtain truth.

We have always given a part of our activity to written propaganda and there have during all these changes been representatives of the working class amongst the newspapers. At the present time we publish *El Productor* at Barcelona. At one time this was a daily journal, but the funds ran short and we had to make it weekly. It valiantly defends Anarchy, opposing the politics, religion and economics of the middle class, and is devoted to putting before the workers the idea of their emancipation. It has the support of the Spanish revolutionists as well as the hatred of the privileged classes which has been manifested by the prosecution of its editors in the courts. *La Bandera Roja* (The Red Flag) of Madrid is published twice a month and belongs to the same school of thought. *La Solidarid* of Seville is a collectivist anarchist paper and is much opposed to the modifications made at the congress of Valencia, and to having anything to do with the communists. *El Socialismo* of Cadiz is a kind of tribune in which articles are reprinted from Spanish, French, English, Italian and Portuguese socialist papers without distinction of school. The communists of Barcelona published *Tierra y Libertad*, but it did not last very long. The "Workmen's Party" publishes at Madrid *El Socialista*; the trade unionists publish *El Obrero*, a wretched sheet which is good for nothing. The Barcelona Anarchists have published during the past two and a half years *La Acracia*, a sociological review which has been warmly praised by all true revolutionists for the able manner in which it treats the most complex questions of sociology. This review demonstrates the high degree of

knowledge at which the Spanish Anarchists have arrived. It appears from time to time as our other work permits.

Such is the present condition of the Spanish proletariat. We will give further information in our future letters. Meanwhile we salute the English workers to the cries of "Vive l'Anarchie!" "Vive la Revolution Sociale!"

EVENTS IN FRANCE.

(From our Paris correspondent.)

THE dissolution of the bourgeois world proceeds at an ever increasing pace: whilst the authoritarian Socialist parties go over some to the Government, others to Revisionism, that is to say in reality to Boulangism, turning their backs on the Revolution, the Anarchists continue their propaganda without intermission. They alone are striving to bring the inhabitants of the country districts into the Socialist movement. This very important work is by no means easy; for the French peasant, constantly deceived by the politicians, is full of savage scepticism. Besides, for a quarter of a century, the communist ideas which have reached him have been distorted, travestied and unfairly criticised. In many a hamlet the Anarchists are still represented as diabolical beings vomiting out fire and flames, dreaming only of murder, pillage, and the division of property. This accusation of division, so opposed to the communist conception, has been the masterpiece of the hypocrites who thought they could put a stop to Socialism by misrepresenting it.

In some towns in the North of France Possibilism has made some way, whilst the mining centres, formerly worked by the Marxists, contain a certain number of adherents of that school. The populations of the Centre (Touraine, Berry, Nivernais, Bourbonnais) who are impressionable and of an easy disposition are not hostile to the propaganda of our ideas. In the Cher, Anarchists and Blanquists face each other. With the exception of a few ambitious personalities who are very anxious to become prominent men, the Blanquists of this region are sincere Communist-Republicans hostile to Anarchy because it as yet appears to them too vague. When it is better understood many of them will rally to it. There is good reason to hope that before long all the region enclosed between Troyes, Dijon, Lyons, Limoges and Bourges will be an Anarchist centre. It is, however, especially in the South that Anarchist ideas gain ground. In certain great towns such as Bordeaux and Marseilles the Socialists are of various schools, but in the country districts Anarchy alone is represented. There are propagandist groups at Agen, Casteljaloux, Bouglon, Foix, Pamiers, Ganges, Cette, Beziers, Montauban, Toulouse, Nimes, Toulon, and Cannes. The country workers have not the energy and the spontaneousness of their brethren in Paris; but they show greater coolness, thought and tenacity; having a less artistic temperament they take little notice of the future developments of society, and sonorous declamation may astonish but it does not satisfy them. The Social Revolution will be able to succeed only if the inhabitants of the country districts declare for it. If it is confined to the towns it will be overwhelmed just as the Commune was in 1871; but supported by the risings of the rural population it will be invincible.

General Boulanger's flight to Belgium has caused a moment of indecision in the army whose chief he is. Several of his allies, such as Michelin, have withdrawn. It is probable that a certain number of the rank and file will desert. Still the Boulangist party is far from being destroyed as the official sheets pretend. It still has great chances of success at the general election. It is helped, moreover, by the blindness of the men in power who continue to commit stupidity after stupidity. The prosecution commenced against the Patriotic League terminated by a verdict that was almost an acquittal and which by showing the strength of the Boulangist position almost destroyed the bad effect of the flight to Brussels. The "brav" general will perhaps get into power, but if so will be only as the puppet of a gang of gamblers. He will be powerless to get rid of the economic crisis and will fall overthrown by the very people whose idol he is to-day.

ITALY.

(From our Italian Correspondent.)

THE English middle class papers seem to have just woken up to the existence of an agrarian war in Italy when in Como it has ended for the moment in the triumph of the peasants. These down-trodden, half-starved, uneducated cultivators have shown such firmness and resolution, such energy and courage in facing the proprietors and standing their ground against the soldiers sent against them, that the landlords have given in.

The Como peasants, whose strike and armed resistance we mentioned last month, have obtained the following terms: A reduction of 15 per cent on all rents, whether payable in money or in produce; an increase of 100 per cent on wages for labour and carting *i.e.*, 10d. instead of 5d. a day; a reduction of the hours of labour. They used to work from morning till night, now it is to be eleven hours in winter and seven in summer.

A microscopic reform, a petty triumph when we remember the mighty field to be won; but gained against such desperate odds, with such determined bravery that it may well cause those Socialists who profess so much diffidence about the possibility of genuine revolutionary activity amongst the poorest of the people to pause and reconsider their opinion.

A few facts may enable our readers to imagine somewhat of the degraded and abject lives of these poor North Italian peasants.

One proprietor of Olgiate used to excuse himself to his labourers for beating them, by saying that God or the Virgin Mary had appeared to him in a dream, advising him to chastise them in this life, that they might escape some of the pain due to them in the next!

Another landlord caused each peasant in his employ to pay 4s. 2d. a year for the use of a privy.

A third forced his tenant to insure his house for his benefit, so that if a fire broke out the poor farmer might lose furniture, implements, and whatnot, but the landlord would lose nothing.

The greater part of the landowners were moreover still exacting tithes, corvées (forced labour) and feudal dues and impositions of every sort, so that the Province of Como had sunk economically into the worse conditions of the Middle Ages.

The armed strike of the last month has put an end to this state of things. It has been a revolution. Above all it has shown that the peasantry of the outlying country districts, as well as the artisans of the towns, are awake and preparing for great social changes.

For the rest of Italy the situation continues extremely grave. Terror reigns in the southern province of Puglie. Here is one instance of the sort of measures to which the government has been driven by its alarm at the growing agitation throughout the country districts.

A cripple, confined to his room for 30 years, dared amidst his suffering to dream of a coming time of justice and well-being for the poor, and to write a pamphlet on "Misery and Revolution." For this crime the poor fellow was summoned to appear before the magistrate; being an Anarchist, he refused, and thereupon despite his feebleness, he was dragged off to prison as a dangerous criminal.

In Rome arrests, convictions, police regulation, sending the unemployed back to their own provinces, have all proved useless to check the revolutionary ferment. Fresh and tumultuous unemployed demonstrations are constantly terrifying the middle class and their defenders, and the situation continues extremely critical.

A VISIT TO A BELGIAN MINE

Our readers doubtless remember the spirited strike which broke out amongst the miners of the Borinage three years ago, its violent and brutal suppression, and the terrible facts as to the existence of the mining population afterwards published by the commission of enquiry. The following has been sent us by a comrade who has seen for himself the condition in which these multitudes of men, women and children drag out their existence day by day.

Frameries is a little village situated a few minutes' railway journey from Mons in the mining district known as Couchant de Mons or Borinage, the most important in Belgium.

The general aspect of the village is very poor. The houses are low and shabby; long dark shops serve for Sunday gatherings. The dirty pebbled streets seem made more for the conveyance of the combustibles than for the passage of men. Yet the unpleasantness of the external circumstances are counterbalanced by the goodness and kind feeling which reigns amongst the inhabitants, bound together by community of labour, of poverty, of misfortune and of family ties, mostly un-sanctioned by law. The great date in the history of the village is 1879, when 121 men perished in the very mine I have visited, only three years after another scarcely less murderous catastrophe.

The mine Agrappe is one of the most extensive of the whole district. It is owned, with others, by the Compagnie des Charbonnages Belges, whose great autocrat is Rothschild. 1100 adult miners, 114 women, 178 boys under 16, and 67 girls are employed in it, mostly for 12 hour shifts, at the rate of 2s. 5½d. to 1s. 7d., and from 2s. 0½d. to 11d. per day. It is obvious that these workmen of Rothschild's are not precisely the Rothschilds of the workmen.

The control of the Company's mines, together with the responsibility for many thousands of lives lies on engineer Legrand, an able but evidently overworked man.

Having obtained from him both the permission to visit the mine and a good-hearted and zealous man as a guide, I put on a miner's dress, and armed with the Davy lamp, which was to reveal to me such undreamed of secrets, I ascended the staircase which leads to the mouth of the pit No. 2, or La Cour.

The platform on which we now stood was traversed in all directions by rails for wagons running to and from the mouth of the pit. They worked so rapidly, and the space was so narrow, that whilst waiting for departure we were kept continually on the move. The platform ended on one side in a large store-room where the wagons were continually discharged, and the coal taken in carts to some other destination; on the other side a gigantic steam-engine, half sunk in the earth, drove the whole mechanism of extraction. At the mouth of the pit, which is a rectangular space, where two wagons can swing side by side, there was a continual procession of trucks and workmen's cages coming up and going down on an iron rope. The workmen cages consist of boards roughly nailed together.

We went down in an empty truck. The dark descent was rapid but not continuous. We stopped at every floor of galleries, left an empty wagon, and then began again to descend. The water trickled down from the walls; in spite of our woollen underclothing it was intensely cold. At a depth of 410 metres we got out of the truck and found ourselves in what seemed a real underground station.

Here the air was oppressive and the light of our lamps a feeble twinkle which dimly revealed some pale faces and moving rags. The gallery was full of wagons. We saw the train start for the pit, and then set forth on our walk through the galleries.

How long we wandered through these endless tortuous ways I know not. The rocky, uneven, projecting roof was supported by short beams. Here the height of the gallery was scarcely three feet; we went on our hands and knees, creeping over loose stones and fragments of all sorts. I soon felt tired, and my head, in spite of all attention, came often into conflict with the roof. Only the stiffness of my cap saved me from the consequence of the instinctive tendency of my backbone to straighten itself.

Thus we proceeded from gallery to gallery, crawling on the ground, continually alarmed by the passage of the trains. I only once or twice heard a bell announcing their arrival; generally the pony came close upon us heavy and dumb, and we felt his breath in our faces before we could perceive him. Up and down he went with striking regularity, the roof just clearing his body, his head eased at every slope in the beams. Where the gallery is too low even for the smallest ponies, boys take their place. The wagons, coupled together, have a fork dragging behind which if the couplings snap or break, would thrust itself in the ground and stop the train from running back.

I shall not pause to describe the steep inclines, the boarded ruins, the ventilation engine and air ducts, and other well-known features of mines. We now reached a coal seam. Climbing on a mound of coal we screwed ourselves into a crevice in the walls, which widened into a large low hole; there the scanty gleam of our lamps fell upon half-a-dozen workers of different ages and sexes, crouching in the darkness. Some broke the rock with picks, others discharged the loosened coal into the wagons. A wonderfully well-built man held a long iron stick to keep open a little hole in the rock, through which escaped the gaseous dust, that would otherwise have suffocated the miners. No one can continue this dangerous and tiresome work for more than three or four hours at a time.

Whilst observing all this, I exchanged a few words with the miners. In the course of the conversation I mentioned that the Italian workmen were in open revolt against their masters. They asked me if there were any soldiers in Italy, evidently recalling their own bitter experience of military brutality in 1886.

Before leaving I visited a safety shaft; in case of damage to the main shaft the only means of escape from this underground prison. We went through the smallest holes and narrowest dens I have ever seen in my life, whilst the noise of falling water grew louder and louder in our ears. At last our feet struck against an iron grate, surrounded by the walls of the shaft. Now we betook ourselves to a flight of steps covered with mud, and passing through the grating descended to another grating. Here we turned round and took to another flight, and so on. Eventually our lamp light was reflected on the surface of dark water; we had reached the bottom of the mine, 460 metres below ground. As we returned through the galleries we met with the night workmen coming to take possession of their living tomb. Some of them were leaning on short sticks, to relieve their weakened spines. When we reached the station some of the day shift were waiting to go up, and with them we entered the cage, where we had to crouch to avoid collision with the walls. The water dripped almost on our heads. When we were at last set free at the mouth of the pit, how happy we were to stand upright and to see light and breathe fresh air again.

A few minutes afterwards I was in a railway carriage, revolving in my mind the image of the miners rotting in cold and darkness to provide us with the material of heat and light, of the misery and brutality inflicted on them in exchange for the enormous benefits this work confers on society. I was haunted by the idea of the fearful dangers by which the lives of these human beings are beset and the horrible scenes attending a catastrophe in a mine. But my strongest impression was the utter indifference of the mine-owners to the needs of the miners in their daily work, the grudging of space, the fearful niggardliness in all that could render work supportable and healthy. The man working at the bottom of the mine has to be satisfied with the hole left by the coal seam; he is paid only for the time in which he is picking at coal, and if he is to gain enough to live, has not time or energy to care to hollow out sufficient space for his health and safety. All for the production, nothing for the producer, that is the device of our ultra-civilised economical system.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND RADICALISM.

The little skirmish in last month's *Star* must have revealed to many people that there is a difference of degree but in no wise of kind between Social Democracy and the New Radicalism, which is a real enough political departure, however formless at present. Both are parliamentary Socialism in the making. "If formulated in the shape of definite proposals," writes Comrade Hyndman, "the suggestions put forward by the *Star* would be found to agree tolerably well with the measures which have been advocated by the S. D. F. for the last seven or eight years." The only difference is that the Social Democrats are standing higher up the hill; they see a bit further ahead and get a wider view. The distant prospect of nationalising, not only land but the big industries and the means of communication and exchange, opens out before them, whilst it is hidden behind the intervening tracts of country for the New Radicals. Nevertheless an unbroken chain of those compromises with property and authority known as moderate reforms and palliative measures, stretches from the mildest New Radicalism up to the aforesaid nationalisation, etc.

The aim of all these more or less Socialistic Democrats is to improve the political machinery of old Europe until it is somewhere about on a level with the political machinery of the United States, and at the same time to enlarge its scope so that the same mechanism may work the economic administration as well as the judicial and other public

business now in its hands. So anxious are they to put this economic administration under state control, that they are perpetually urging us not to wait for the repair of the ancient political machine, *i.e.*, not to concern ourselves with mere politics, but to joyfully confide railways or land or what not, to the control of Salisbury and Balfour, or Gladstone and Morley, or Rosebery & Co., to-morrow, if only those chosen of the people can be persuaded to undertake the task.

And yet, as Comrade Quelch truly remarks, "municipalisation of rent would, under present conditions, materially benefit no one but the middle class ratepayers"; and, as he forgets to remark, the lowering of the cost of living by letting dwellings at cost, would enable capitalists to cut down wages. If a man gets rooms given him for a shilling a week instead of having to pay eight, he can afford to scrape along on 17s. a week where before he was scraping along on 24s., and shilling by shilling the capitalist will screw him down to it.

The same with the rest of these creeping reforms. Whilst the forces of tyranny are sheltered behind the vast protective system they have been erecting for themselves century by century, they snatch with one hand at what they give with another. And can any process be more degrading to self-reliance and human dignity than continually to terrorise a ruling clique into extorting a fragment of their wealth from the closed fists of the rich, and then to receive the proceeds as a dole or a bribe? We are continually lamenting the slavishness of the masses, the terrible loss of self-respect and individual initiative which the capitalist system has inflicted on the English workers with the loss of their free use of land and personal ownership of capital. Will it mend matters to hand over the control of land and capital to administrative cliques?

What all these people mean by a social revolution is the nationalisation of land and the larger industries by a political machinery resembling more or less that of the Republic of America, and meanwhile what we mean by the Social Revolution is the clearing out of men's brains the idea of property, *i.e.*, the imaginary "right" to grab and keep to one's self things which one is not using, the imaginary right to monopolise; and the idea of authority, *i.e.*, the imaginary "right" to rule one's neighbours, and the imaginary necessity to submit to such rule. And this clearance is slowly being effected day by day by the logic of facts. For as these imaginary rights and necessities have their moral basis solely in custom and expediency, they exist only as long as the custom remains unquestioned and the expediency seems to be on their side. Property and authority have for some time been making many people thoroughly uncomfortable and therefore they are beginning to see them to be inexpedient. It is our work as Communist Anarchists to do all that in us lies to explain to ourselves and our fellows the why and wherefore of this inexpediency, and to foster the growing sense of it in the community by word and deed; so that we may be ready to throw off as many as possible of the outward forms of property and authority whenever the opportunity occurs, and universal discontent has never yet failed to create such opportunities; human patience is happily not quite inexhaustible.

The clearance of these ancient cobwebs of superstition and prejudice is in no sense aided by compromises. It is one thing to accept perforce the compromises into which one is driven by the pressure of external circumstances; that we are each and all obliged to do in our daily life in a society where we disagree with most of those around us; it is entirely another thing to set a compromise before us as even a partial or temporary end in itself, and deliberately set ourselves to work for it.

THE REVOLT OF THE ENGLISH WORKERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

I. THE ROBBERY OF LAND—(continued).

THE last century, which at its beginning saw a comparatively large portion of the population of Great Britain enjoying free access to the soil, witnessed, ere its close, the climax of that terrible agricultural revolution that finally drove the mass of Englishmen off the land of their native country.

This revolution was itself but the last act of the long process of land-grabbing that has been carried on by divers methods all through our history; but space here fails us to dwell upon the earlier scenes of that woeful tale. Suffice it to remark that ever since the rise of the new aristocracy of court favourites and foreign adventurers and of the wealthy middle class, these gentry had run the old nobles and squires hard in their greed for land, and had neglected no opportunities of snapping up big slices as their own private property, "to use and abuse," as the Roman lawyers phrase it. But during the century from 1700 to 1800, this itch for title deeds in the fingers of the upper classes seems to have grown to a mania. Men who had made fortunes in business—especially the businesses of wringing wealth from the wretched natives of India and the colonies, from the slave trade and from usury—returned from abroad or retired from trade at home, with the one object of buying land. For in those days, far more than now, the mere possession of land meant the possession of wealth and power.

A hundred and fifty years ago the House of Lords consisted of the big landlords and the House of Commons of their nominees. Large estates meant pocket boroughs and bands of obedient voters and the power to govern the country, or, if one preferred gold to authority, the possibility of selling one's political influence to the highest bidder and living in luxury on the proceeds.

That was one way of making a fortune out of land. There was a second. England in those days largely produced and even exported raw material, especially wool and wheat. Now wool could be most profitably obtained from large sheep runs, and wheat most profitably grown

for the market on large arable farms, "capital" or "merchant" farms as they were called. Farms where the old three field system was set aside by chemical manures and rotation of crops; where wage-labour and machinery replaced the ancient family cultivation; where the produce was raised, not to supply the wants of the working farmer, his labourers, and the people of the neighbourhood, but to be sold at a profit to the capitalist farmer in some distant market.

Now these capitalist farmers were very different men from the yeomen. They aped the fine gentleman, lived apart and at ease, scorned to be seen between the plough stils, and despised the hired labourers who did all the work, their only connection with whom was to screw as much labour force out of them as possible for the lowest possible reward. They were hard masters, but just because of this, joined to their knowledge of improved methods of farming, they were good tenants and could afford a heavy rent. It paid well to be a landlord in those days.

More especially did it pay when, at the close of the last century, the great war broke out between England and revolutionary France, accompanied, as it was, by a succession of bad harvests. In times when wheat was £5 15s. 11d. a quarter, when a quarter loaf was 1s. 10d., and people were eating boiled nettles without salt (the salt tax was so heavy), huge fortunes were to be made by lucky corn speculators. With those who made no scruple of seeking wealth for themselves out of the sharpest need of their fellow countrymen, wheat gambling became the order of the day, and in consequence there was furious competition for arable land, and rents rose enormously.

Tempted by the dazzling possibility of obtaining wealth and power by the mere possession of title-deeds without doing one stroke of honest work, it is small wonder that covetous rich men set themselves to lay field to field and eat up the small proprietors. And the work was easy, as the small man was harder and harder pressed by the competition of the big capitalist-farmers and the loss of the common grazing ground, of which more anon. It was always easy for the steward of a large proprietor to harass and persecute the unlucky yeomen in his neighbourhood till he forced them to sell their little farms, often at ridiculously low prices. There is a curious old book, published in the last century, where, amongst other duties, "a good steward" is instructed how best to accomplish this service to his master's interests. The success with which this legal expropriation was carried on may be judged by two instances. Thomas Wright, in 1772, mentions "24 farms in Hertfordshire, which have melted into three." William Cobbett, in 1826, speaks of "one of Lord Carnarvon's farms, which had in the memory of the inhabitants of the district, been divided into 14 holdings." Throughout the country numberless small freeholders and small tenants were ousted in favour of a few large ones, and nothing but ruined farmhouses and sheds remained to tell of the little homesteads that from time immemorial had sheltered so many free and happy lives.

All this was bad enough; but the land greed of the rich took a less excusable form than the expropriation of peasant proprietors and small tenants: the enclosure of the commons.

With a parliament composed of landlords and their creatures, there was no difficulty about enclosure bills. The people wronged were poor and ignorant, shut out by bad roads and the absence of conveyances, by the expense of postage and want of newspapers, from all real knowledge of the doings of the fine gentlemen who sat up in London making laws for them and taxing them. They tried indeed in some cases to club together to resist the enclosures; even to turn the law itself against their masters who made the law; but it was useless. Those masters bought off the claims of a few of the bigger farmers and rode rough shod over the rest. Between 1710 and 1843 seven millions and three hundred thousand acres of communal land were stolen from the people.

When a land-grabber had stolen a common, he next proceeded to improve and clear his estate. That meant not only that he turned all the peasants' cattle, pigs, sheep, geese, etc., off their grazing ground and forbid the cutting of turf or firewood, but that he set to work to pull down cottages and plough up gardens. He did not want his newly-enclosed fields encumbered by "nests of beggars' brats," and so left only as many cottages standing as were required to house the wage-labourers of the capitalist tenant farmers.

In fact, the English land thieves of a hundred years ago acted as we see Irish and Scotch landowners acting to-day. Wielding the law as a weapon against the poor and defenceless, they excused themselves behind lawyers' tricks from all considerations of justice or compassion, and unscrupulously drove hundreds and thousands of men and women from the houses that they or their forefathers had built and the soil that they and their forefathers had made fruitful.

By such means were large estates and large farms created throughout the country, with the result that the total amount of agricultural produce was increased, and the rich profited largely thereby; whilst the free peasantry, who had been the backbone of England, were finally and utterly destroyed.

(To be continued).

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