

Autobiography of Michael Schwab

Dear reader, please follow me on the always ready wing of imagination to Central Germany to halt on a Franconian hill, planted with vines. Near us, on the ridge of the hill, thunders the railroad train, down in the valley flows in many curves, idly, the yellow waters of the Main. On its left bank we behold a large plain consisting of green meadows with silver-shining brooks, dark-green forests of pure oak and beech; numerous gardens with vegetables of all kinds, and wheat, oats, barley and corn fields held in an undulating motion by a soft, zephyr-like breeze. Our view is only checked by the mountains of the Steiger-wald, the highest of which is the Schnam-burg, about 800 feet above the level of the sea. On the right side of the river, where we have taken up our standpoint, there is hill after hill covered with vine branches. Most of the forests belong to Bavaria, of which Franconia is a part, some to the villages or towns that lie outstretched before us.

These woods are common property; they are taken care of by the officials called foresters. Every year a certain number of trees and bush are hewn down and sorted into piles, after which the citizens repair to the woods and cast lots for the numbered piles. A

certain part is kept back to defray expenses necessary for the cultivation of the forest, taxes, etc. On such an occasion—I was about 10—the lots were drawn from my hat. It would appear from this incident that I was a communistic criminal long before I ever heard the word communism. The custom dates from time immemorial. I am at a loss to understand why, for instance, cereals could not be raised in the same way. I know a village, near my birthplace, where every citizen gets a patch of garden land, that belongs to the community, upon which he can raise vegetables for himself and family. There is more communism in Europe than usually is supposed. “The relics of barbarism,” cry the hired men of the capitalistic press. Nevertheless, is it not singular that just those towns, and villages, who hold a great percentage of land in common, are well to do, while in proportion as the common property of all is transformed into private property, *few* gain and the *majority* lose? I will state here that in Franconia there are some towns whose citizens are not only free from taxes, but they get—after all state taxes have been paid and the costs of the municipal government defrayed every year—a small sum paid out of the town treasury. For illustration: In Lower Franconia is a certain town of 2,000 inhabitants, which owns extensive sandstone quarries. They are worked for the common interest and as a consequence 400 families are happy. *This* according to the green babblers of the press, is *barbarism*, whose speedy suppression is a highly civilizing mission. Near Chicago are extensive quarries; they are private property. Certainly we find a few very rich in dividends there. But the citizens of these quarry towns? Aye, they are *so* happy, so happy indeed, that it sometimes becomes necessary to tone down their extensive happiness by a little dose of lead. *This is civilization!*

After this digression we will go back to our landscape.

Down on the river in a southern direction the hills recede into fertile plains. Here in a beautiful valley Kitzingen is situated, the place where I was born on August 9, 1853. My mother came from a well-to-do peasant family and had, if I remember right, 9 brothers and sisters. All I recall of her is that she had a very good heart, and

abhorred rough and vile language to such a degree as is seldom found among people of her class. She died when I was eight years old. My father was a small tradesman and kind and loving to me and my sister, the only children he had. He died in the year 1865. I went to the public school, as all German children are compelled to do. My early childhood was a happy one. I spent all spare time in summer roaming through fields, forests and meadows. The inhabitants of the town were partly of Catholic and partly of Protestant faith; there were also some outspoken unbelievers, who were always gazed at by the children with awe, mingled with curiosity. We believed, as we were taught in school, that there was somewhere a place full of fire and brimstone, called hell, where all sinners, that is protestants, and such people as claimed to know more than our fine priests, of whom four were very fat and one very haggard—but he was young and had but just commenced—were after death sent to everlasting roasting. Hell we feared, but I am grieved to admit that we did not very much care for heaven. But this may have been due to the unfortunate description of the place—it was likened to our church.

Certain it is that we were always glad when the service closed and that we considered it a great boon, if for some reason or other, we were allowed to stay away from church. Yet I held that to admit this was a sin, a victory of Satan. Very often I locked myself into a room, fell on my knees and prayed for hours, without mentioning my pious exercises to anybody else. I was a young saint, but for all that I had no visions, and never did any miracles, although my mind was full of superstitious nonsense of holy men and women, who did strange things to save their souls. Some of them, like St. Franciscus, caught lice and put them in their clothes, being evidently much given to sport; others performed the wondrous feat of standing all their life long on columns, others demonstrated their idea of humanitarianism by detesting men or women, as the case might be; and still others illustrated the evil habit of cleanliness by never washing themselves. These are no sneers at the Roman-Catholic faith. Anyone, who will take the trouble, can find these things

and much more carefully recorded in the life stories of the saints, written by the clergy for the edification of the faithful. Perhaps it is needless to say, that our priests did not resemble these saints at all. They were of clean habits, lived in neatly furnished residences and loved their Christian sisters—alas! loved them only too well.

But, of course, when a boy, I looked reverently to the priests. Although, they did not resemble my model Christians I respected them very much and believed everything they had the kindness to teach, or preach, implicitly.

The first serious misfortune which befell me was when my mother died. Four years later (1865) my father followed her. Our home was broken up, the house and other property was sold, and after all debts were paid, there remained some hundred dollars for each of the two children. A guardian, an uncle of mine, was appointed, and we had to make our home with him. He was a Christian in the better sense of the word. There was nothing sentimental about him, I never heard him utter a kind word, but I do not think that I ever again met with a man as scrupulously honest as he was. He considered it his duty to go to church every day, and accordingly he went, but he was no hypocrite. He was a man of duty, not of sentiment. The new order of things seemed to me terrible, but I soon got over it. I was now merely 13. It was 1866. In this year I was made a communicant.

Strange, too, in the same month in which this event happened, my tender faith was shaken so rudely that it never recovered. On the Sunday after Easter we were made church members. Next day the new communicants, their parents—in most cases only the female part—and our good shepherd, made an excursion to Dettelbach, where a wooden image of the holy mother of God, which was said to have done miscellaneous miracles, resided in a cloister-church. We set out on foot and walked the distance which was an hour and a half. The way led through pine woods. The time was passed delightfully. For say what you may, the Catholic priests are always men who understand the people; only such are selected for the profession. They had their holy and pious fun with the women

and there was much merrymaking. The first thing we did when we arrived in D. was to visit the celebrated image, where we were made to swear with great solemnity that we would cast away reason forever, wherever said Satan did antagonize the articles of faith of the church. We did not know what we did; at any rate we acted under compulsion. Therefore our vow was null and void. The thirsty shepherds shortened the visit of honor to St. Mary as much as possible, and led their congregation to a saloon where the old heathen St. Bacchus, was arduously and deservedly venerated. We quit Mary's parlor half an hour after we had entered it, but Bacchus, more enchanting than the holy virgin, kept us for some hours. One of the holy men forgot that these heathen gods are treacherous tricksters after all, and was not careful enough as to the number of libations he offered to Lemele's and Jove's son and the hellish fire of Franconian wine made his walk less dignified than the occasion justified. He seemed to be all aglow; his eyes were sparkling and rolling; his hands described all sorts of geometrical figures in the air; his very hair stood up, a circumstance in which, no doubt, it was due that the clerical stovepipe involuntarily receded in a semi-circular way, leaving the impression of the "old-timer" during a spree.

The other shepherds were very sorry as they beheld his doleful condition. They caught him under his arms, and took him down to the river, where a large barge was waiting to bring the whole congregation back to Kitringen. The women—good souls—pitied the worthy reverend, but as they were themselves in a hilarious mood, they forgave him his woeful sins, as christian women always do. It was a fine evening. The barge was well filled with boys and girls, with women and men. Of the latter were few, among them the shepherds. "*In vine veritas*" says the Latin proverb (wine is truth), and the truth came out pretty strong from the consecrated lips of our unfortunate shepherd.

His unruly tongue meant mischief. One of his colleagues said: "Let us sing a hymn," whereupon one of the boys with a conspicuously long frock-coat stood up and howled the verses of the hymn—

"Great God, we praise thee!" The musical feat was followed by the boys and girls, who repeated each line in a chorus. But the jolly priest was displeased with our incantation and interrupted the proceedings with disapproving remarks, such as: "Shut up your nonsense." "You, with your long frock-coat, keep your tongue," "I am sick of your singing." "I'll give you a sechser (5 cents) if you keep quiet," and so on. Then he began jesting with the women on board of the ship. I do not know whether this occurrence made any impression on my schoolmates, but I know that I could not help thinking that the reverend father did not believe in his own teachings. And from that day I began to doubt in earnest the truth of christianity. This sinner was a very talented man, and somewhat later published a book, in which he defended the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope. At present he is a Catholic bishop in Speier, Germany.

I was about 13 years of age at that time. I think it was four or five months later when Schiller's works fell into my hands. That was forbidden literature! Nevertheless, we pupils read and enjoyed them very much. Schiller, like all really great German classics, was a disbeliever in Christianity. A new world sprang into existence before my eyes. He simply carried me along. Till then I only had known of him by "selected" poems, that I saw in the school books. All our teachers told us about him and the other classics was, that they were great men, but their works were no proper reading matter for boys. They were well enough for grown up persons. After Schiller, I took to Goethe, the "Great Heathen," as well he was called by the priests, who undertook to enlighten us in the doctrines of the Catholic faith. Truth compels me to say that most of the pupils admired more the "Great Heathen" writings than his teachings of the "alone saving church." In school we had to learn Latin, Greek, German, geography, history, etc. We heard a good deal of the old slayers of tyrants—Aristogelton, Harmodios, the two Brutus⁵⁸ and others, and they were praised very much for their patriotic deeds in our school books; somewhat remarkable in a monarchical country!

Of course, our king was, according to our teacher, a model king

and not at all like Peisistratos, Tarinwins Luperbus or Caesar.⁵⁹ An exemplary king indeed he was, our Ludwig, for he was at that time, already out of his senses. Whether it was intended or not, (of course not) but the fact remains that we all believed that it was the proper thing to kill tyrants at first sight. We did not know that some of our well beloved "fathers of our country" were even worse than the oppressors of ancient times. Greeks and Romans were our ideals. We heard so much of the eternal gods, that many of us had a longing for the time where they reigned instead of their grim descendent, the cold God of Christianity, who drove his merry predecessors from Olympus. Often enough the thought would arise in my mind, however hard I tried to banish it—"Will there in future time be still another God, one who will depose the God of the Christians just the same as he had deposed the Gods of the heathen?" Yet these thoughts I considered sinful and conscientious as I was, I mentioned them to my confessor. But lo! he was a poor warrior of the Ecclesia militants. All he told me was, that scholars of high reputation, kings and emperors had believed, and therefore a boy like me had no right to *think* about such matters. They had believed; could there be a more convincing argument why I should believe? He himself was not of an inquiring disposition, and what he said was probably his honest conviction. As I have stated before, I was a religious fanatic at the age of ten to twelve. The priests I viewed at that epoch as demigods, but, when I saw what they really were, men of the world in every sense of the word, the nimbus faded away, and their teachings lost their influence. The business, like many in which they went through their religious duties was shocking to me, when I commenced serving them as an acolyte. But after a time I fell in with them and lost my fanaticism. Then came the study of German, Greek and Roman classics. My faith dwindled and dwindled and when I was sixteen, instead of being a Roman Catholic, I was an atheist, that is, my faith was simply the belief in a personal God, and some years later I did not even believe that.

Circumstances, first of all, lack of means, compelled me to quit school and learn a trade. I selected the book-binding business, and

was apprenticed to a book-binder in Wuerrburg, on the 5th of August, 1869. The change was rather hard for me. The master was one of those poor devils who struggle with all their might to eke out an existence, and who are destined to be crushed by capital. We worked thirteen hours a day in summer time and, in winter time fifteen to seventeen hours. Nearly every Sunday forenoon we worked also. He was a good workman, but at that time the fate of manufacturers without capital was already sealed. The good man said often enough, that he would earn more money as a journeyman and would work as such, but he was more independent as a "manufacturer." He died about four years later, killed, as I believe by over work. He was smaller than his new apprentice and square shouldered. One of his many troubles was that his wife was a little taller than he, and I never saw him side by side with her on the street. Many were the jokes his acquaintances had with him on that account. He was an enthusiast and was of the opinion that the priestcraft was the root of all evil. No wonder! Bavaria was, when he was young and later, ruled by clericals. He was 23 when he engaged himself to his wife, and 30 when he was allowed to marry her. Thirteen long years he had petitioned, till at last there was an opening for him in Wuerrburg.

At those times only a certain number of manufacturers were allowed for each city and only by marrying a widow or daughter, or buying out another master, it was possible to start up in business. Sometimes favoritism was shown by the officers. My good master had to wait thirteen years till he got a chance. No wonder he hated these institutions! Now all this is changed. The change came soon after the little man's bold enterprise.

As an apprentice I lived a very solitary life, books, books, and nothing but books! I bound them and I read them. How often did I sit till 1 o'clock in the morning with my beloved classics! They were everything to me, and a great deal of my time I thus mentally spent in Italy and Greece. Religious books and pamphlets I studied, too, but they only tended to strengthen my disbelief in religious teachings.

In 1870 the German-Franco war broke out. Little did I then know of politics, but as I abhorred wholesale slaughter, my patriotism did not loom up to the highest pitch. After the battle of Sedan, Germany was overflowed with captured Frenchmen.⁶⁰ Wuerrburg got her share, 6,000 men. The whole population of the city being then only 40,000, every second grown man was certainly French. Our newspapers had depicted them as a sort of cannibals, but they behaved themselves as well as German soldiers. They were very polite and very fond of children. Some of them worked in the city as mechanics, others roamed about till evening came, when they had to repair to their barracks. And they too found out that the Germans were not barbarians.

The hate of nationalities is indeed an artificial device. It is a fact that the socialistic workingmen of France and Germany protested against the murderous war, before it had its terrible sway.⁶¹

Time passed on very rapidly, and I was no longer an apprentice. It was in March, 1892, I was working, when a law student who lodged with my employer went to the shop, picking up a newspaper and addressing me, he said: "I suppose you will become a socialist too?" I looked at him and said, "I don't know. What is a socialist anyhow?" He couldn't tell exactly, thought socialists were dissatisfied workingmen. He would not say they were wrong, but they made a good deal of trouble. Three of their leaders, Bebel, Liebknecht, and Hepner were just then in Leipzig on trial for "preparation for high treason," but there could be no conviction, everybody said, the accusation being simply ridiculous.⁶²

That was the first time I ever heard anything of socialism. I read now the report of the trial and found to my astonishment that Bebel and Liebknecht were convicted by a jury of their political antagonists and sentenced to two years' confinement in jail. This occurrence called me back from the ancient Greeks and Romans to modern peoples, and I looked out for socialistic literature. My employer had a friend who was a socialist with heart and soul, and he furnished me with socialistic papers. In the same year the journeymen of the bookbinding trade formed a union and I became one of its

members, and then for the first time I came in real contact with workingmen. It did not take long to make a socialist of me; the leaders of the union were socialists and worked for their principles. We gained by our union a reduction of the hours of labor from twelve to eleven hours a day, and a slight increase in wages. At that time there were two factions of socialists in Germany, the "General German Workmen's Association," and the "Social-Democratic Labor Party."

"The General German Workmen's Association" was founded by Ferdinand Lassalle. Lassalle was born 1825 and died August 31, 1864. His agitation among the German workmen was of short duration, one year and five months, but most remarkable. I doubt that there ever was an agitator who accomplished so much as he did in so short a time. A most phenomenal man. He was a scholar of great learning, which is conceded by his most bitter enemies, an orator of great power and a fascinating writer. He wrote two great works and besides a great many pamphlets.⁶³ The most difficult scientific problems were rendered comprehensible by him to the ordinary workman, and herein consisted his force.

In the year 1862 some labor leaders contemplated calling a labor convention. Some of them were of the opinion that politics were better let entirely alone by the workingman, others held the German workmen were destined to be the tail of the "Progressive party" composed chiefly of great and small manufacturers, merchants and professors. A committee went to the leaders of the "Progressive party" and asked for the privilege for the workmen to become members of the party organization. They were snubbed. Lassalle was known in Berlin as a scientific man, and a friend of men like Humboldt⁶⁴ and Bolkh. He lectured now and then, and his views were rather radical. The snubbed committee went to Lassalle and he gave his opinions in writing. This document was called "An open letter to the central committee for calling a general German workmen's convention in Leipzig." He counseled the workingmen to ask the right to vote for every person whether rich or poor, to inaugurate independent political action and free individual asso-

ciation for production with the help of the state. The convention which was held 1863 adopted these views.*

And from that time hence he led a life of almost incredible activity. The "General German Workmen's Association" was founded and gained members, especially in western Germany. The Berlin workmen reserved a cool attitude against the new movement. They never had 100 members of the organization during his lifetime. Once he was arrested in a meeting; workmen spat on him and cheered the police! Well, all this has changed. Today the socialists are the strongest party in Berlin.⁶⁵

Lassalle turned his guns against his own class, the bourgeoisie, and they made it pretty hot for him. All the newspapers slandered him and ran him down in a way which would do credit even to such experts as their Chicago colleagues. But he stood his ground well and gained his point. Of course they dragged him to the courts. As a learned scholar of the law he defended himself, and his speeches served as a most powerful means of propaganda. (But I nearly forgot that I am expected to write my own biography and not that of Lassalle.) The organization founded by Lassalle was centralistic, and he being president thereof. The presidents after him were no Lassalles; nevertheless the organization grew, although centralization was found wanting.

In the year 1869 former members of the "General German Workmen's Association," and others who held more progressive ideas, called a convention in Elswach in Thuringia. There the Social Democratic Labor party was born. Its principles were: abolition of class rule, abolition of the wage-system, and introduction of co-operative system to gain for the workman the full fruit of his labor; to strive for political liberty as a means to gain economic freedom, and farther, "the liberation of labor is neither local nor national but a social mission and therefore international." The new party had its stronghold in southern, the old one in northern Germany. There

* The "open letter" is translated into English and was printed in New York. [Note in original]

were now two socialistic parties, who fought each other, not only theoretically, but often enough, in the physical sense of the word. After some years these parties became convinced of the folly of their antagonism towards each other, and they united—(1876, convention, in Gotha).⁶⁶ The persecutions of the government against both parties had, moreover, made this coalition necessary. The new party was called “Socialistic Labor Party of Germany,” and is still in existence, having at the present time 25 members in the Reichstag. The principles of this party do not differ from that of the former “Social Democratic Labor Party.”

It was the “Social Democratic Labor Party” which I entered in 1872. Nothing of importance happened to me till the spring of 1874, when I left Wuerrburg to go abroad. Since the middle ages until quite recently it was customary for a young merchant to visit different cities for the purpose of acquiring useful knowledge in his trade. In former times it was compulsory with Journeymen-mechanics to travel. The law was abolished, however, some thirty or forty years ago, still the custom remained. Instead of law, dire necessity compels the workmen now-a-days to migrate from town to town, and it is not always the young mechanic who tramps along the dusty road, but, in many cases, it is the head of family or the gray-haired man, whom nobody wants to employ and who often perishes on a biting cold winter day on the road. These traveling mechanics are called “trades-fellows” (Journeymen).

In former times when the factory system and the railroads were little known in Germany, these “trades-fellows” were a different sort of people from what they are now. Many of them were sons of well-to-do people and had money enough to defray the expenses of their keep in the world; others made their way by “fighting,” which strong-sounding term was used euphemistically for—begging. The peasants were always willing to help the poor journeyman along. This begging was by no means considered disgraceful—many an old manufacturer even to-day relates with delight and pride his former “fighting” exploits. All this is altered now. Industrial progress made itself first known to the peasant by the from day to day increasing

number of beggars, regular tramps, who were not weeks but months on the road. The number of "trades-fellows," tramps, vagabonds, etc., on great country roads is simply incredibly large. I remember myself once having sat down to rest near the city of Stuttgart, three or four others did the same thing. Just for fun we called halt to all traveling in the same direction, traveling journeyman and unemployed factory hands, and in less than an hour we had collected a force of thirty or forty men, most of them without a cent in their pocket, and they all had to make their living by begging. This was nothing extraordinary. Of course, this was near a great city, but it may serve to give an idea to what extent the German peasant has to suffer from the "reserve army" of the capitalists. Our industrial system needs this army first to enable the exploiter to "regulate" wages, second to have always workmen on hand for any emergency. With these people I now came in contact.

When I left Wuerrburg I went to Munich, from there, after two months stay, to Innsbruck. I was then in the spring of life and quite an enthusiast. You may imagine what impression the eternal snow-covered mountains of the grand Alps made upon me. In Tyrol I traveled on foot inasmuch as at that time no railroad led from there to Switzerland. After a perilous walk over the Arlberg Pass, which was covered with deep snow, I reached the valley in which the city of Bludenz is situated. There I took the train and went over to St. Gallen, and to Zurich, where I found work and stayed for some time.

Switzerland is the holy land for every liberty loving German. Zurich the Mecca of every German Republican, and indeed if there is an ideal republic, Switzerland is that one. What is the highly-praised constitution of the United States compared with the constitution of this little republic! To begin with, the president of Switzerland is in fact only president of the meetings of a board of counsellors; he has no veto power, no monarchical authority. The people have the right reserved to themselves to cancel any law made by their lawmaking bodies, and no law is law until approved by the people at large. The people have the right of the initiative, i.e., pro-

pose laws to the representatives. Justly it is claimed that Switzerland has the best laws for the benefit of the toiler. Every able-bodied citizen is a member of the militia and bound to keep the necessary small fire arms at home. All that a democratic republic can give, Switzerland gives, yet in spite of all this, even in that model land of political freedom, there is want, misery and starvation. The freeholders, who were the creators of these free institutions are getting into bankruptcy, their sons and daughters are forced to sell their working capacity to the factory owner, and the once independent son of the Alps is forced to come down from the mountain, leave the farm where his forefathers lived and died, and descend from an independent mountaineer to a dependent factory slave.

Instead of the melodious tinkling of the bells of his cows, he now hears the task bell of the factory, that calls him to work. Instead of the splashing or roaring of the creeks and cataracts, the whispering of the air in the dark-green forests, he is treated to the clattering of noisy busy machines. Stout, big-chested, strong-limbed and with rosy cheeks he fell into the power of enslaving capital. Alas! it lasts not long till the cheeks lose their color, the limbs their strength and the freeman his independence. His offspring, growing up in unhealthy surroundings, are a different race—the race of exploited, wretched wage-slavers. “Work, work, work! to enrich some money-making spinner king,” is the watchword for his daughters, whose youth and beauty is only a farther curse to make their life miserable and wretched. For the industrial ruler makes it a condition for granting the privilege of a job—for them to surrender their virtue or starve. This is a dark picture, but it is a feeble one and nothing but the truth. Switzerland taught me for the first time that political liberty without economic freedom is a mocking lie, a corpse without life.

After working for several months in Zurich I went, partly on boat and partly on foot, to the most beautifully situated city, Luzern on the “Vierwaldstaetter lake.” Some months later I left for Bern, where I worked for the first time near one of those unfortunate girls, whose small pay compels them to make up the requisite bal-

ance by street walking. Rosa—this was her name—was already doomed when I first saw her. The expression of her face was sad, the eyes were sunken deep into their sockets, the cheeks were deadly pale and already had those fatal blue spots, which appear in the latter stages of consumption, and this woman had to work 11 to 12 hours a day and then solicit customers for lust, to banish starvation from herself and mother! And such cases as this are very numerous in all industrial centers of Europe, *and the United States!* What a terrible accusation against our Christian civilization! Later in my life I saw even more horrible crimes of this kind. At that time I commenced to hate the capitalistic system.

I left Switzerland in the year 1875. It was spring. I was young, and not inclined to sour and rust by staying too long in a city. This time I went on foot to see the fertile country, to observe the customs of the people, to admire the old cities of the Rhine with their magnificent cathedrals, and to taste the much lauded Rhine wine. I had money enough in my pocket to satisfy my modest desires. This time I had many socialistic pamphlets with me, and my heart was full of socialism. Every traveler, if he was intelligent enough to be talked to, was very soon made to discuss socialism. It made no difference whether he was a “trades fellow” or a peasant; I dare say I made many converts. Other socialists employed the same means of propaganda; often enough other traveling workmen assisted me in the good work. The evening brought rest to the brotherhood of “trade fellows,” and when I arrived at the inn I opened my bundle and gave them something to read. It consisted of all kinds of literature; what I had there were poems, novels, economic treatises, speeches—but all were socialistic.

In the cities we, agitators, went to the socialistic newspaper offices, got some old copies, which were distributed in the villages through which we passed. This kind of agitation is still going on in Germany. My next halting place was Glessen, in Upper Hessa. From there I went over to Hanover, Brunswick, and to Saxony, the most industrial province in Germany. In Meerane, one of the weaver towns, I stayed for a longer period, working at my trade. This was

the place particularly suited for social studies, as there the capitalistic system reigns supreme. Inquiries revealed the fact to me, that in this town—as in all other German weaving towns—heads of families average from 6 to 8 marks (\$1.25 to \$1.75) a week! Of course the wife and children have to work, too, “to make ends meet.”

Wage slavery is more horrible than chattel slavery! This capitalistic system is beautifully harmonious. It forces the wife to slave in the factory-hell, takes her away from her household work, the kitchen and the children. And lo! the rooms are so bare of furniture, that in some instances even beds are considered a luxury. The wages are so small that the people can well dispense with the cooking art; nor have they any time to transform eatables into meals. And last but not least, the children are brought up under the kind supervision of some foreman who works them for the glory of our civilization. Thank God, we have left the dark ages of barbarism behind us. It may be interesting for some readers to know how these people live. In the morning, very thin coffee with a slice of brown bread and fat (butter is too dear); at ten, a slice of bread and fat; at noon potatoes or vegetables, with or without a little soup-meat (in most cases without) or dumplings made of potatoes or flour; at four, brown bread and fat, and in the evening, coffee very thin and bread and fat. This is considered a good bill of fare, and they do not always get such luxurious meals. It is very painful for a stranger to note that “father” or “brother” “who has to work so hard” gets more and better morsels than the hungry children. Mother is always satisfied with very little.

The homes are simply crowded; kitchen, parlor and bedroom is one, every other room is stuffed with lodgers. Men and women sleep, often enough, in one room. I myself, have seen that. I have seen that girls 13, 14, or 15 years old would strip their clothes down to the waist and wash themselves in the presence of strangers. It was done without hesitation, without a sign of bashfulness, for there was no other room for them. The factory lord considers his working girls his mistresses. No, no, not that. He would not dare to ask from a mistress what he compels these unfortunates to do. When I was in

Meerane, one of the lords had for his own and his friend's amusement, a ball where his most beautiful working girls had—but I can't coin words to relate the occurrence in decent phrases. After the ball was over, every girl received as wages of sin 25 cents. Dear Christian ladies, this is shocking, is it not? But it is the system that develops these things. How do the poor people bear them? Let me answer in the language of Heine, the German poet:⁶⁷

With tearless eyes in despair and gloom,
Gnashing their teeth, they sit at the loom;
"Thy shroud we weave, Germany of old.
We weave into the curse three-fold.
We are weaving, weaving, weaving."

"A curse to the false God we prayed to in vain,
In our winter's cold in hunger and pain;
Our hope, our waiting all were for naught,
He fooled us, he mocked us, a terrible thought.
We are weaving, weaving, weaving."

"A curse to the king, the king of the rich,
For none of our misery his heart did reach;
He takes our money the very last cent,
To shoot us like dogs, his soldiers he sent.
We are weaving, weaving, weaving."

"A curse to the state, O false fatherland,
Shame and disgrace are cursed by thy hand;
Where blossoms are early broken by storm,
And in rot and in mould delights the worm.
We are weaving, weaving, weaving."

"The rattling loom, the shuttle's flight,
We are busy weaving day and night;
Thy shroud we weave, Germany of old,

We weave into it the curse three-fold.
We are weaving, weaving, weaving."

These are the sentiments of the people. Maybe that in reading these lines some American scribe or hypocrite, knocks his breast and squints his eyes, saying: "God, I thank thee, thank thee, that we Americans are not as other men are, extortioners, adulterers, or even as these German factory lords." To him I say: "My friend look around in this glorious republic and you will discover the same horrible state of affairs. Is it not true that only last month (November) a number of Brooklyn girls struck for their honor. They asked for protection against rape! And when the German weavers weave shroud for old Germany then the starving coal miners of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and other states dig the grave of Old America." *De te fabula narratur!*⁶⁸

This story of German wrongs is the story of American wrongs. The government is only too willing to lend a helping hand to capitalistic oppressors. There are more striking workmen killed by American authorities per annum than in all despotic countries in Europe. Even in Chicago are whole quarters where people are starving and perishing by the score. Thousands of children are worked to death or perdition. Look about you and see it.

Of course not in every province of Germany is misery prevailing to such an extent, but they are coming to it. And the same is true of these United States.

Meerane is a socialistic stronghold, and I belonged there to a socialistic society, and founded a society myself called the "Red Club." This club's object was to educate speakers. As the summer drew near its end I made a long journey through Thuringia and northern Germany. That time I visited Berlin for a short time, after that I went to Hamburg and took work in one of the suburbs of the city.

The suburb is named Wandsbeck and is overwhelmingly socialistic. When I was there the election of a member for the German parliament took place. This was 1876. There was a split in the so-

cialistic ranks. The most popular leader of the town seceded and put a candidate of his own in the field. The capitalists were jubilant. But discipline was so excellent there, that the secession candidate got only eight votes while the regular socialistic nominee got 800. In districts where the socialists are strong, election times are very exciting. Men, women and children are electioneering and attend the meetings. Much shouting and singing is done. On Sundays, groups of thirty or forty workmen or shopkeepers—a good many of the latter are socialists—walk to the villages and stir the farmers and their hired men up.

After such and other preparations the day arrived, when the paper-battle commenced. I went with thirty other socialists to a village, and then the trouble of the good villagers commenced. Some of us repaired to the voting place—for in Germany also in America, those so well-known tricks are practiced. Others went from house to house and ran the candidates of the other party down, but the rich farmers held their hired men out of the way and marched them to the voting place, where they did not dare to vote for our candidate. In this village we got more than one-third of the votes, on a former occasion we had a majority. In the meantime it was pretty lively in the cities, Altona (100,000 inhabitants) and Wandsbeck. The police and the hussars were called out, but there was no riot. The capitalistic party hired coaches for voters, the socialists did the same thing. The coachmen of the former party had blue, those of the latter party had red badges. If it is true that a voter is a sovereign, then the voters of these places were certainly such, for not only free rides were furnished, but meals, and wine, and beer also, lodgings they did not provide, for the sovereign was deposed at 6 o'clock, p.m., when the polls closed. During the day men ran through the streets with poles on which there were mottoes like this, "Vote for the friend of the people, H.H." All the candidates styled themselves thus, and it was therefore pretty sure that a friend of the people would be elected. The women, especially our lady comrades developed an energy in dragging tardy voters to the polling places that was simply appalling. In the cities we had a clear majority, but

weighed down by the country vote we had only a plurality, the main candidates had about 13,000 each, our candidate was in the lead. A third candidate had polled 100 votes and a new election was ordered, for in Germany an absolute majority is necessary for election. The socialists, as a rule, only took part in the elections for the parliament, for the election laws for other bodies gave the workman no show. I found the registration lists, in which every vote was marked, and saw the tickets that were thrown out. I saw from the lists that all the stayaways were workmen, all the voters of the middle or upper classes had voted. One of the castaway tickets read thus: "I do not vote for Hartmann, nor for Herstein, I have elected one, and his name is Jesus Christ." It seems that Jesus Christ is in Germany ineligible.

When summer came, I commenced traveling again. I wanted to see Vienna. It took me four months to get there, for I was not in a hurry, and took a roundabout way on foot, on boat, and on railroad. In some towns, in Cologne and in Botzen (in Tyrol) I worked a short time, only to rest a little. This time I visited Westphalia, Rhenisch, Prussia and enjoyed the beautiful landscapes on the Rhine. From there I went to Bavaria and then to Tyrol. After wearisome marches I arrived in Botzen. The man for whom I worked was a Catholic, and had a clerical brother. Therefore he considered it his duty to make converts. Another journeyman was a Protestant and already member of the "Catholic Journeymen Society." Now as I was a former Catholic, he set at once to work to save my poor troubled soul, even of whose existence I wasn't quite sure. He commenced first by extolling his wife and himself, how their religion gave them peace and rest, and what holy and contented men and women their ancestors had been. A certain former official, his father-in-law was pictured as a model man of faith and goodness. But it was rather unlucky that the hired girl was in love with the half-converted I protested, and so it happened that we knew the sins of our employer, his wife and those of the dear relations better than our own. The highly respected official was an embezzler who had spent some years in the penitentiary, the good housewife could

not cook a meal, and had married because she was told, that is as it must be, only having known her husband six weeks before they entered their holy partnership for life. Her mother did not dare to visit a certain place because she did, when a barmaid there, certain swinish things. The so much lauded peace and rest were all humbug, for he and his wife did not even like each other. Thanks to the hired girl we know all these facts. Armed with this useful knowledge all the bold assertions of the holy agitator seemed to us ridiculous.

I cared little for the man's religious notions, for in that respect very few men are sound—if they are—but when he told me that it was the custom in Botzen to work in winter time 14 instead of 12 hours, that, however, the custom did not allow to increase pay, I shook the dust from my feet and left.

The reader thinks it probably a horrible thing to work 14 hours a day, and it is; but it must be taken into consideration, that in such out-of-the-way towns, which are still deep in the mire of the middle ages, everything goes along in a slow way, and there is not much "deadworking" as in progressive, hurrying cities with shorter hours of labor. It is simply impossible to work as many hours with machines as without them. Without machines the workman stops here a minute, there a minute; goes slower now and then, and is careful not to overwork himself. The machine alters this. It does not stop for a minute, or run a little slower; it takes no considerations whatever. On it rattles, never tiring, never resting, and the workman is dragged along. Therefore the reduction of the hours of labor was a necessity.

From Botzen I went to Munich. It was summer. I was young, and as a great admirer of the grand Alps, I walked most of the way, in order to enjoy the always changing scenes. In my company was my fellow-workman of Botzen. As soon as we had left the mountains behind us, we took the train for the metropolitan city of Bavaria. We came there early in the morning. Near the depot we found a great many loungers, who slept in the corners and niches of the building. It was still night, but the pale moon was shining bright.

We stood still, lost in contemplation. It was a part of the world we wanted to see. These poverty-stricken people before us had not even the little money to pay for one night's lodging, and so they put us up as best they could. We were not very long standing there, when two night constables appeared. Some of the poor wretches got up and left suddenly, others still slept on; they were rudely shaken up by the men of law and order, and carefully examined. After telling these proletarians, who like Jesus, "had not where to lay their heads," to move on, the constables stopped there, and we went, under the eyes of the law, towards the city. One was of a sentimental turn of mind. He said: "It's a rather painful duty to chase these unfortunates away, but we have to do it, or else risk our positions. You have no idea how many people in these hard times are unsheltered."

In Munich I stayed only one day. I had Vienna in my mind. I went over Salzburg to Linz, where I took the boat. It was later in the evening when we landed in the empire city of Vienna. There I worked for two manufacturers; one of them belonged to the slowly perishing manufacturers, killed by steam and machinery; the other to the prosperous manufacturers, growing by the same agencies.

Mr. Young was an old man, 70 years old, his wife 35. Once, years ago, he was doing well, but he did not understand the times. When machines made their appearance in the trade he did not appreciate their significance, lost customers, lost money, lost confidence in himself, and his first wife, who died rather in time. Then he tried to better his fortune by marrying again a peasant maiden of about 30, who had no attractions whatever, but a little money. This woman was attracted to this unhappy marriage by the glowing prospect of city life that existed in her fertile imagination. She had cause later on to repent her foolishness. Mr. Young was unable to call fortune back, although he worked as much as an old man can. The marriage gift went for a paper-cutter and other improvements of the small shop, but the needs of life compelled him to raise money and the cutter had to be sold for cheap cash.

Without capital, without the necessary machinery of a modern book bindery he could not take in work like his capitalistic com-

petitors, and nevertheless, he was bound to struggle on or die with his wife and his three boys age one, five and twelve years. And a terrible struggle it was. He only had customers who could get no work done elsewhere, either on account of their scanty pay or because they were generally no good. One of his best customers was an author, one of those men who get on by contracting debts and swindling on a small scale. He published an almanac. It was a rather difficult job to get money out of him. After many visits, much begging, cajoling, threatening, and God knows what else, he designed to give up some dollars. If money run short Mr. Young and his family had nothing to eat, for the grocer had long ceased to give them victuals on credit. I have seen that they had no dinner at all, or some hours after on account of the scarcity of money. It was a terrible sight to behold the pinched faces and the hungry looking eyes of the poor boys of whom the oldest was an invalid. The old man was an optimist nevertheless, for there hardly passed a day, that did not smash some hope of his to pieces. The yellow peasant woman, his wife, was all despair and had lost all energy. She was always either crying or bewailing her fate. Shop, parlor, kitchen and partially bed room was all the same room. The shop etc., had two windows facing a yard, hardly a sunbeam found its way into this chamber of human misery.

The only thing to smile at there was a baptised Hebrew who came on a visit now and then, and held a mortgage on the scanty furniture, but the beds, the table and chairs, etc., were not worth the money he had loaned on them. As far as I could judge he was a kind hearted man, although ludicrous in the extreme. His chief pleasure was to talk about the rascality of the Jews and the high virtue of us Christians. This spoken in Jewish pronunciation from the lips of a typical Hebrew sounded oddly enough. After some weeks I left. I do not know what became of Mr. Young and his family afterwards. Such unhappy beings may be found by the thousand in every large city of Europe, yes even in our proud Chicago, not ten minutes walk from our crumbling court house. In Europe such families end either by slow or quick starvation, or they perish by murder or sui-

cide, or the sheriff takes for some debtor everything from them. The glorious law as lawyers put it, allows that, and puts them on the street. Oh yes, we live in a very civilized Christian age!

After some weeks passing in compulsory idleness I got work in the magnificent shop of Mr. Gockel. He was a Tyrolere and good Catholic as far as business did not interfere with his holy faith. But I fear business left him little time to look out for his immortal soul. He was one of the model citizens of our capitalistic journalists, having started with nothing and having become a very prosperous business man. He was always working, mostly bookkeeping. His friends said that he was an amiable companion. If he talked to a workingman he always said something like Mr. H, please be so kind, etc. But his main object in life was to work, make others work, and to make money thereby. In the words of Judge Gary, Gockel "loved his home, his country and his property."

In his shop were about 25 men, 20 women and one apprentice. This apprentice was treated in a fearful manner. Not enough that his master cowhided him for every mistake he made, he asked it as a favor of the workmen to abuse the boy in the same way. The workmen, be it said to their credit, refused to do it; although, the *law* gives them expressly the right to act as dastardly brutes. Nominally the working hours were ten, but there was always some extra hours put in, yes, I know that in one week 120 hours were worked, Sunday included. Three times in this memorable week, 36 consecutive hours. The model money maker stopped this only on account of its impracticability. Some of his hands fell down and were brought to the hospital, the others were so tired the next week that it was impossible for them to work as used to. His arrangement *did not pay in the long run* and so he abandoned it for another. The other scheme was the following: Ten hours a day and two to six hours over work every day, over work on Sunday eight hours. Nearly all the work was piecework, which was arranged in a way that the workman became exploiter himself. The model sublet certain quantities of work to a workman who was given two or three girls or men, who worked for him. The sub-contractor made usually fair wages

by exploiting the other workers in a shameful manner. Of course he hurried them up to a terrible rate of speed. A girl would make by that kind of work from four to five guildens a week (1 gulden—50 cents), a workman 8 to 12, and the sub-contractor 15 to 20. It must be taken into consideration that meals and clothing are in Vienna to be had for a little over one-half the price they cost in Chicago.

To get the above wages the average overtime was necessary. If women were put on work by the hour they got only two-thirds of the wages men got for the same kind of work. Somebody stole here openly one-third of somebody's wages, besides the hidden theft called profit. As far as I am concerned, I was mostly let alone to work either by piece or by the hour. And Mr. Moneymaker seemed to like me in his sort of way. Only once a young girl was given me to do some work with me. Well, I had these impractical socialistic notions in my head, and held it to be a crime to coin money out of a fellow-creature, even if it was only a working girl "and paid her" over one half the money I had earned. Of course wages fell below average. It was certainly to my advantage that I was put to other work. The model was particularly great in showing his contempt for "his hands." But there were great differences. A poor man who had worked himself to an invalid—he was only 30—in his shop, and could certainly get no work elsewhere, was especially abused by him. As a rule he let those workmen alone who were liable to use violence in a given case. But it was another thing with girls, who never dared to reply to his insolent vicious remarks. The age of the girls ranged from 13 to 20; one woman was 40. She had a number of children from different men. When he became furious—at least once every day—he used epithets as "wenches," "jades," "whores," and the like. Some workmen and some girls, the old woman foremost, used to gloat very often over sexual brutalities and certain sicknesses, and some of the hearers were girls 13, 14, and 15 years old. Of course the learning in the moral atmosphere of such hell was not lost. Some years later the pupils were teachers, and who is going to cast the first stone at them? If decency would not forbid I might have made the picture even more graphic by using darker

colors. A good many things I did not state on that account.

In the summer time I left Vienna for a last journey, and then I thought I would settle down somewhere. I went through southern Germany and Switzerland, and conceived at last the idea to emigrate to Australia. What I had seen of the world had made my heart ache, and I think that the main object of that plan was to flee from such horrible surroundings.

I was again in Saxony. It was the year 1879. In Plauen I got work in a blank book factory. The owner of the factory was a polite man, who never said a harsh word to anybody; but he had his prey, to be sure, and it was unnecessary for him to be insolent and rough. He knew well enough that he could get girls and men by the hundreds if he wanted them. There was no indecent language—no, nothing of that kind, oh, no! There was not even piece work. Two men worked always together, and it was the easiest thing in the world to find out who worked the quickest. Now to the list of wages. The foreman got \$4.50, the average workman \$2.50 to \$3.00, the porter \$1.75 a week for 12 hours daily labor. It was just enough for an average workman to live as an average \$6.00 or \$8.00 clerk lives. Of course the clerk has most of his money to expend for clothes. The porter was forced to marry to get along. This seems to be a joke, so it is but a grim one. To state it in a matter-of-fact way, he had to go into partnership with another person, who could cut his expenses down by washing, cooking, earning money for him and would raise children with him who, as soon as they could firmly stand upon their feet, would earn some pfennige. As to girls who earned from 75 cents to \$1.50 a week and the majority of whom stood on their own hook, if they made it up somehow, who is going to blame them?

The plan to emigrate, which I entertained, was changed by me in so far as I contemplated now to go first to the United States, and I began to study the English Language. I boarded with a man who belonged to the so-called middle classes, who was even the owner of a house and garden—mortgaged, of course—and employed a weaver journeyman for the high sum of \$1.75 a week. He was, of course, a capitalist. As they said in Plauen, Mr. S. gave very good

board and so it was, considering the magnificent sum of \$1.75 for board and lodging which I paid per week. Breakfast and supper, bread and lard and "blossom coffee," (the coffee is called that way because you can see through it the blossoms painted on the bottoms of the cup) then for lunch at 10 and 4 o'clock bread and lard, which was taken to the shop by the boarders, dinner, potato dumpling, a little piece of soup meat and some sort of vegetables, every other Saturday excepted, where dinner consisted of herring and potatoes. The latter dish was highly commented upon by outsiders, because in other boarding houses the herring dinner was in order every Saturday. The house was a two-storied new brick building, with a garret where four persons slept, two boarders and two sons of the landlord, but as once a girl came to visit her uncle, she and her cousin, the daughter of the house slept in the same room with the males, because all beds were filled except two in this room. The house and garden owner, the capitalist, an excellent man in his way, was a little ashamed, but he saw no other way and so he communicated the arrangement to us, asking us to behave ourselves, which we did. This is an illustration of crowding people in factory towns, and by no means are such arrangements seldom. In this house, as in many others there was no kitchen; one room is used for all purposes. In this room we all sat on the table in the evening. In one corner was a maid of about 28, busy embroidering with a tambour. This girl was at work when I came and when I left, Sunday as well as ordinary work day; what a refreshing sight for a hired man of the press; work, work, work! She never was idle and little complaining, the noise of the machine would not have allowed that. I remember her even singing. But on a certain evening, while I was grappling with English orthography, all of a sudden the machine stopped, and the girl cried aloud, "My God, My God! not one hour's rest in all these long years, nothing but work and nothing but work; late to bed and early up again to rattle on the machine, and only earn just enough to prolong this misery; why did I not die long ago, my God, my God!" and then she dropped her head and sobbed and wept. The good-hearted wife of the house owner and capitalist, who her-

self had little sunshine in her life, tried to console her. The capitalist himself was not at home; he was in the country peddling goods. After a while the embroideress dried her tears, sighed and went back to work again. Soon after that dramatic scene, I emigrated to America.

It was a beautiful morning when the *Weser*, on which I had taken passage, landed in New York. As everybody knows, the harbor of New York affords a grand sight and as it is a well known fact that this city is as dirty as can be, anyhow in the neighborhood of the Castle Garden. I need not dwell further on my first impression of this country. I did not stay very long in New York, but after three days delay, I went to Chicago. In Germany, I had always been a member of my Union and of the socialistic party. Arrived in Chicago, I kept aloof from all organizations and led a solitary life. With all my energy, I commenced to study the English language. When I was so far advanced that I could understand books written in that language, I studied the history of the United States. Bancroft's was the best work among those I read⁶⁹ and then I turned to geography and labor statistics. Of course, these studies were continued during my seven years stay.

After passing the first year this way and having acquainted myself with the modes of bookbinding in this country in some shops, I went to Milwaukee, where I, after some months life in seclusion, became a member of the Socialistic Labor Party. Its principles differ in no essential point from those of the German social democrats, which I have stated. And now I changed my mode of life to the great astonishment of the lady with whom I boarded. Instead of keeping silent and non-committal, I began to talk to all the twelve boarders of socialism and went out a good deal in the evening. Some of the suddenly attacked workingmen resented, others said they knew everything about it, but their enthusiasm had cooled down forever. But I knew that there is no man on earth who can resist truth successfully, and commenced arguing again and again, till out of the twelve, six became members, and the others sympathized with the movement, always ready to help it along. From Milwaukee

I went west and came so far as Durango in Colorado.

The first place I stopped was Kansas City. This city lies on the Kaw river, which at that time over flooded the lower part of the town. My comrade and I strolled down the river. The most exposed quarter was fast getting inundated, there the bulk of the Negro population lived. The huts were built from old lumber and logs. I must confess that in my native town the pigsties were of a better and more substantial build than these palaces of "American sovereigns," as American citizens are proud to call themselves, and these shanties were the homes of men in "the country of the brave and the free," in the sweet land of liberty! There were only Negroes mingled with some white trash—what did it matter anyhow! Farther up in the hills where the "aristocracy" lived there were fine residences. There lived some of the real sovereigns of America.

The people of the inundated districts carried their scanty furniture up hill and placed these in empty lots—how poor they were! From Kansas City I travelled by Denver and Leadville to Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory. There I worked for some time at my trade and led a very quiet life in the little town. There I made the acquaintance of a Mormon elder, who seemed to me rather confused in his ideas. In the evening I usually strolled to the cemetery, where I noticed for the first time in my life that even in death the poor were separated from the rich. In my half communistic native town in barbarism to such an extent conceived, that Catholics, Protestants, well-to-do people and poor men enjoying when dead, at least the earth in common, and they never get quarrelling about it. From Cheyenne I went to Denver, but as I could not get steady work there at my trade, I went farther west to Durango, which took me about two months, because I worked on the way as a farm hand to earn some money. As I could get in Denver no suitable work, I worked for some weeks as hod-carrier, and fell sick. I went back to Chicago where I worked nine months at my trade. On account of scarcity of work I had to stop. At a time when my ready cash was nearly exhausted, a friend of mine brought it about, that the editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* employed me as a translator of the romance

"Wanda Kryloff." Soon after that I was employed as a regular reporter, and later on as assistant editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, which position I occupied when arrested.

I cannot say truthfully that the book-binders of this city are in any way better paid than their German brethren. Their wages range from \$5 to \$25, most of them earn from \$8 to \$12 a week. Those who get higher wages are few, and might be termed the aristocracy of the trade. To get more than the average wage a man must display unusual skill or strength.

The kind reader who followed me so far, will perhaps think this Germany is real slave country, but that in this glorious republic things are different. Are they? Let us see. In Saxony a coal miner works eight hours a day and makes about \$21 a month, the infamous truck system does not exist,⁷⁰ in fact is forbidden by law. In America the truck system is in vogue, and even if a legislature passes a law to suppress this form of robbery, the higher courts declare "it is the privilege of every American workingman to be swindled out of his wages by his employer; to take this privilege away from the toiler would rob him of his freedom, and by the eternal gods we shall not allow that." The superb structure of our liberal institutions must not be assailed. Yes, you may assail it in a windy political harangue. But when you set to work to change one of the many arrangements that have become obnoxious, a peremptory halt is called, and we are forceably reminded of Charles Dickens, "You touch the commons, and down comes the country."

According to the "first annual report of the Commissioner of Labor," American miners work 10 to 11 hours a day, and get from \$25 to \$50 a month. Of course the lower figures prevail. Out of 300 working days they work about 200. Now, as I know myself from the letters of miners from all over the country, even these figures are too high, although, even they show that the Saxonian miner is better off than the American. But this is not all. The workingmen of this country are "protected" by a high tariff and it is a matter of fact that the commodities of life in this country *are one-third dearer than in Germany*. There is no first-class industrial country on earth

whose factory laws give so little protection to the workingman, as the factory laws of this country, with its "highest civilization." What the conditions of these miners is, is well-known. I merely call attention to the fact.

But not only the miners suffer, there are large classes of people who are in exactly the same or even in a condition far worse. It was in the winter of 1882-3 when the citizens' association or league, I don't remember exactly which, sent out a committee under the leadership of Joe Gruenhut and Architect Banman, to investigate the dwelling places of the working people of this city. The committee was accompanied by a swarm of reporters among them Paul Grott-kau.⁷¹ He was the first who went out with the committee. By his friends, G. is considered a cynic. When he came back he was deadly pale, greatly excited, he was not feeling too well. He said that he never would go out to see such terrible things again. He knew a good deal of Berlin and her misery, but such a condition of affairs did not exist there, not even in the poorest quarters.

The editor-in-chief sent me out, and I was horrified too, but went with them every time. The health officer said that he would make no selections but we would go into homes promiscuously, as the same condition of things prevailed in nearly every house. We found single rooms where three or four families lived, we found dwelling places in such a condition, that the officer only took some of us to the second story for fear the ceiling would break through; we saw rooms where only light came in through rents of wall, where human beings slept on rotten straw or rags, where broken chairs and tables were luxuries, where fire was not in the stove although it was bitter cold, and three or four members of the family were sick, we observed water-closets full with excrement. The atmosphere in these "residences of sovereigns" was stifling and sickening. The parents looked hungry and starving, the children, if there were any, were on the road to eternity. Some of these people get their vegetables from the waste-barrel, others beg or buy offal of meat and make sausages out of that. Such is the condition of thousands in Chicago. No newspaper dare deny that, because they printed column after column at

that time describing the misery of the unfortunates of Chicago. And all this can be found within four blocks of Wabash avenue. Nothing was done.

What is the difference between the Roman heathens and the American or European christians? The Romans held wild beasts to tear and devour fellow-beings, and applauded lustily. This was done in open daylight. Christian humanity, of course, is different. They train their fellow-beings by the existing order of things till they submit to perish secretly in poverty, hunger and dirt. Their tender feelings do not allow them to gaze upon their victims, and so the highly civilized and respectable citizen prefers to read about these cruelties in his paper, enjoying thereby his comfort all the better.

If the exploiting classes would take warning they might profit by the following story: Once there was a ruler over a certain city in Grecia major. He acted very arbitrarily and took all liberty away from the people. First he took all their arms, then they petitioned, but he did forbid that, and as they were of a very meek and timid character they submitted. But the tyrant was not satisfied even then. He commanded them to hold no meetings in the future. They obeyed. But the poor wretches talked in private about their grievances and lost grievances and lost liberties. As the tyrant heard that, he threatened death to everybody who would henceforth utter a single word. And as the citizens heard this, they went to the market place and wept, but did not say a word. And he, the tyrant, made his appearance and forbade their weeping also. And the citizens took up stones and stoned the oppressor till he was dead, and then they tore down his palace and killed his body guard. And after that, founded a free state and lived happy.

In your midst, ye well-to-do Americans, there is already a class who has lost all hope, who is submissive to everything; don't make the last fatal step! But you neither see nor hear; you will even forbid weeping and then the rats will come out of their holes and sound the chorus: "*Dies ira, dies illa sovet sadum in favillo.*"⁷²

The prophet of misfortune is never welcome, and instead of doing away with the causes which hasten the day of judgment, they

kill the prophet, adding a new cause to that already existing—accelerating their own ruin!

It was autumn of the year 1881, when I came back to Chicago. Inner dissensions had at that time nearly destroyed all socialistic organizations, although there were thousands of socialists in the city, and the organ of the German socialists, the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, was flourishing. There were radical socialists, their organization was the so-called German section; although called section, it was independent of the Socialistic Labor Party, to which it had belonged in former years; there was the so-called "English Section," which belonged to the Socialistic Labor Party, and there was an independent club called "Socialists of the Northside," composed of members of the two factions. All three organizations were not strong in members. I became a member of the "German Section" and also of the "Socialists of the Northside." I saw at once that the organization of the so-called German section was utterly impracticable, there were more officers during the latter days of its existence present at the meetings than other members. To reform this fossil was out of the question, and so the only way to get rid of it was to let it get weaker and weaker and then throttle it. In the Northside club things were different. There was weakness also, but that was weakness of early youth. In the German section it was that of old age.

The following spring we commenced a lively agitation on the Northside putting candidates in the field. In the 16th ward our candidate, Mr. Eisner, got about 400 votes. After the campaign was over the members of the club who belonged to the Socialistic Labor Party wanted the club to join the party. But the majority resolved to remain independent. Two former meetings of all the representative socialists of Chicago for the purpose of coalition had failed in their object. From the Northside club now a movement started whose aim it was to build up an entirely new organization. The central committee which sprung into existence when the unification of the factions had met with no success, was reorganized and a meeting of socialists resolved, on my motion, to form clubs like the Northside Club all over the city. It was hard work to do that, but it was done. I

was one of the organizers and I attended many and many a meeting where only six to twelve persons were present, and always the same old faces!

There were meetings called and nobody except myself and the speaker were present. But we knew we were right and gave to five or six persons perhaps more carefully elaborate speeches than later to audiences of thousands. Slowly we gained a foothold and then we adopted constitutions. The original draught of the constitution was written by me. It was very simple. The object was propaganda of socialism, as laid down in the "Communist Manifesto" by Marx and Engels. Every club was independent, as far as its own affairs went. Every twenty members were entitled to a delegate to the central committee. Every club had the right to adopt for its own business different rules, but in every instance the officers of the club were: A secretary, a financial secretary, librarian and three revisers. For special business, special committees were elected. It was a feature of our organization that no officer or speaker was allowed pay of any kind. Resolutions of the central committee were only binding for those clubs who approved of them. Every officer or delegate could be withdrawn as soon as his electors saw fit, it was not necessary to give reason for such a proceeding.

In the fall of 1883 we had established about twenty clubs in the city of Chicago, most of them prospering. At that time the radical wing of the socialists called a convention at Pittsburgh. Chicago was represented there. There the "International Working Peoples' Association" was founded. The only change that was made for Chicago was that clubs were called from that time "groups" and the central committee "general committee." There the "Pittsburgh Manifesto" was adopted. Later on most of the "groups" did away with minutes and lists of membership. The financial secretary recorded the members by numbers. This was done, besides other reasons, because some of our members were black-listed and persecuted. The minutes were abandoned, because our societies were debating societies, and it was deemed unnecessary to give an account of discussions in the next meetings.

Each member had to pay 10 cents a month to defray expenses for hall rent, advertisements, hand-bills, etc. There was no secrecy about the meetings. Several times I noticed policemen among the listeners. When I wrote down this "life" I strolled a good deal out of the way, picturing conditions from the life of the people, which I had opportunity to observe. There is nothing new in these observations, thousands make them and—maybe—are not influenced by them at all. They think, either, that these conditions are natural, self-evident, or they don't trouble themselves with any reflections at all. But it was different with me. My surroundings made me a nonbeliever and an anarchist, and therefore they are important as a part of the story of my life. If I had never seen life as it is, I never would have taken to foretelling the coming downfall of this murderous system, and might now cry out like the learned and the ignorant mobsters: "Hang the anarchists!" instead of sitting in the shadow of the gallows. Seeing the terrible abuses with my own eyes, seeing how girls become prostitutes, before they knew it, observing the slaughter of little ones, the killing of workingmen by slow degrees, corruption, misery, crime, hypocrisy, poverty, dirt, ignorance, brutality and hunger everywhere, and conceiving that all these things are the legitimate children of the capitalistic system, which, by establishing the right for single persons to possess the means of production and the land, makes the mass of the people wretched, I become a "kicker." For an honest and honorable man only one course was left, and I became an opponent to the order of things, and was soon called an anarchist.

What are my views? If we socialists, communists and anarchists held the views malicious or ignorant hirelings impute to us in their writings, we would simply be madmen who should be confined in an insane asylum forever. But if it were true that modern socialism, communism and anarchism were methodical madness, how could it be that these doctrines spread all over the world in so short a time? No doctrine whatever made so quick its mark around the world; no doctrine ever made so many converts in so few years! Our martyrs alone count hundreds of thousands in a score of

years—men, women, yes even children. They perished in dungeons, in the wilderness, in the snow, and the mines of Siberia, under the tropical sun, they were driven from town to town, from country to country, outcast by their families, and some ended in madness brought about by persecutions such as only modern civilization could invent. Girls brought up in palatial mansions, with a life of ease and luxury before them; youths of rich and aristocratic parents worked as common factory hands, leading a life of misery, with no hope of ever gaining a reward, often enough despised and betrayed even by the class for whom they endured all this—only to preach the gospel of the saving of mankind—socialism, communism, anarchism. Of some of these heroes not even the names are known. Even one of your famous American poets—Joaquin Miller—could not help to say, in a poem written to the praise of that noble anarchist girl, Sophia Perowekaja, who was hung, that he would rather die with her at the gallows, than live as the Russian Czar.⁷³ There is certainly truth in an idea, which has such martyrs. If our doctrine was wrong, our enemies would state the facts and it would then be comparatively easy to show the absurdity of the same. I have been a socialist for 13 years, but never, never did I see our views correctly stated by a capitalistic newspaper. They fabricate windmills, call them socialism, communism and anarchism and begin fighting them.

The modern communist holds that labor is the fountain of all wealth and of all culture and that, because useful labor only is possible by association of all mankind, the fruits of labor belong to all mankind. Even land has no value except where it can be put into use by labor. No empty lot in a city would have the least value, if labor had not built around it houses and streets, if business was not going on near that lot. We know farther, that labor is not paid its full value; if this were the case, it would be unprofitable to employ labor and would not be done. Let one man work alone for himself, he never could grow rich, although even in such a case his knowledge would be the fruit of the work of others, the labor of generations. And because the latter is the case, the communist wants edu-

cation, culture and knowledge for all. The land was common property thousands and thousands of years, and the private property system is—to speak historically—but of yesterday. And how was it introduced? Queen Elizabeth, that highly praised monster of murderous lust and brutality, for instance, had during her reign two millions of Irishmen killed in the usual way—battles, gallows, etc.—took their land and gave it to favorites. It is not for me now to give a history how the common lands in England were stolen and robbed, but it is a historical fact that it was acquired by the forefathers of the present owners by murder, arson, theft and lesser crimes.

Let the hired men of the press fill their columns with history of the crimes of land-robbing, if they dare. The sentence: "Property is robbery," is literally true—if you call robbery what the laws call so—of the property of the British landholders. The socialists and communists know farther that the capitalistic system requires always expansion. The so-called profits—that is, the fruit of the labor withheld by the employer—are transformed into capital, to gain for him new profits. New factories are built, more machines set to work, new markets are sought for, if necessary by war. More and more nations are drawn into competition. It begins to become difficult to find buyers for the goods, each nation, each corporation, each capitalist wages war against the other for supremacy. He who sells cheapest holds the market. But not only this is required; he who is first in the market, he who can supply the demand in any emergency quick and cheap, will win the battle.

This brings in speculation. The demand of the market is but limited, but the capitalists of all industrial countries are busy to glut it, to overflow it with the products of their factories. To come out all right from this insane race for money, it is necessary to supply cheap and quick, so as to leave other competitors behind. The greater the plant, the better the machines, the cheaper the workmen, the more probable is victory. The smaller manufacturer is soon driven from the contest and forced to close his establishment; new inventions of labor-saving machines throw workmen out of employment and compel these forces to look out for new work, as machines tend to

transform skilled labor into common labor. The competition for work among workingmen grows to fearful dimensions and brings wages down to a minimum. But this in turn has its effect on production, and the battle wages more fearful than ever. But now reaction sets in. Millions of workmen are starving and leading the lives of vagabonds. Even the most ignorant wage slave commences to think. The common misery makes it clear to them that they must combine, and they do it. The great levellers, the machines, destroyed the guild pride of olden times. The carpenter feels that he has a common interest with the farm hand and the printer with the hod-carrier, the German learns that his interest is that of the Negro, of the Frenchman, of the American, and passing I would like to state, that in my opinion it is the greatest merit of the order of the Knights of Labor to have carried out that principle in America in such an immense way.⁷⁴ The workingmen learn that the capitalistic system, although necessary for some time, must make room for universal co-operation, that the land and means of production must pass from the hands of speculators, private individuals into the hands of the producing masses; this is communism.

Any thinking man must concede that strikes, boycotts, co-operation on a small scale and other means will not and can not better the condition of the working-classes, even not so-called factory laws can bring the sought-for result about. It is true the workingman cannot help to use these insufficient means, often enough they are forced upon him. They must be looked on as means of education. Man learns by failures. A little baby who commences to stand on his feet, tumbles down many and many a time, before his limbs gain sufficient strength to walk. Many and many a time it tries to raise itself, till at last the great feat is accomplished. In all these fights, in striking, boycotting, going into politics, yes, even in street riots the young hercules collects strength to throttle the serpent—the capitalistic system. The workingman may be sometimes wrong, why not, the baby sometimes tries to raise itself by the means of the table-cloth, thus bringing down the dishes, but his impulse to raise is all right, and therefore the workman should continue to try rais-

ing his condition, even if he sometimes brings down the dishes.

Now as to anarchism. Anarchism is order without government. We anarchists say that anarchism will be the natural outgrowth of universal co-operation (communism). We say that, when poverty has vanished and education is common property of the people, that then reason will reign supreme. We say that crime will belong to the past and that erring brethren can be righted by other means than those of to-day. Most of the crimes of our days are engendered directly by the system of to-day, the system which creates ignorance and misery.

We anarchists do believe that the time is near at hand when the working people will demand their rights of their exploiters, and we further believe, that the slaveholders of today will rebel against the majority of the people, aided by the slums of the cities and duped people of the country. This struggle, in our opinion, is inevitable, and therefore we call to every honest man who lives not by the labor of his fellow-men to arm themselves. Should we be wrong in this respect, nobody would be more glad than ourselves, but history of the last year gives us right.

And now some words about the Haymarket affair: I was told in the morning of May 4, that in the evening a meeting would be held to protest against the outrages of the police, and called, in two notices in civil language, attention to the fact. In the evening the men of Deering reaper works, in Lake View, struck and called by telephone to the *Arbeiter Zeitung's* office of Mr. Spies, because he is well versed in both languages. I went over to the Haymarket meeting, which I was going to attend, and looked for Mr. Spies. Nobody had seen him, time was pressing, the men were waiting already an hour and a half, and so I concluded to go myself, which I did. Next day I saw from the paper what had occurred, and went down to the office. There I was told that Spies, I and others would be arrested. Mr. Spies and I waited nearly two hours for the detectives, and were then brought over to the Central Station, where Chief Ebersold saluted us with choice words from the dictionary of police politeness, dogs, curs, scoundrels, etc.

I am now done with this work and the only thing that is left, is to say that I am married since June 7, 1884, and father of two children. Our union is a happy one.

Michael Schwab.