

FREEDOM

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST SOCIALISM.

VOL. 2.—No. 22.

JULY, 1888.

MONTHLY; ONE PENNY.

A DYING SUPERSTITION.

From the earliest days of the agitation for parliamentary reform, it has been a cardinal doctrine of Liberalism that representative institutions are a safe-guard against corrupt dealing in the management of public affairs. A doctrine demanding in these times of universal publicity, the faith that can remove mountains of solid fact!

The other day Mr. Hanbury in his general attack upon the administration, told a significant little story to the House of Commons. "Go where we will," he said, "in the manufacturing and purchasing department of the Government, we shall find the same grave scandals and the same officials always ready with the same old stale excuses. . . . Contractors have actually their own men in the Government establishments for the purpose of passing their own goods." And then he went on to describe how the first light had been thrown on the Woolwich scandals.

Amongst the swarms of officials and the crowds of submissive wage-slaves under their command, two men alone dared to protest against the wholesale jobbery and fraud which characterised the business of the great military dépôt. They were workmen named Dunn and Moody, employed in the accoutrement department. They ventured to draw attention to certain special abuses which came under their own notice. Their complaints were treated by the higher authorities as frivolous and vexatious, and the contractors whose method of doing business they had exposed were granted the services of two government police spies to watch Dunn and Moody in the hope of catching them in some fault for which they might be punished or at least dismissed! Dunn accordingly was charged with drunkenness and Moody with embezzlement, before the Judge Advocate General. But this official, being outside the interests of the conspiracy, not only declared the charge unfounded, but recommended the two men for promotion as exceptionally honest and intelligent. The promotion has never been conferred, but before the Sweating Commission an attempt was made to discredit the evidence of one of them on the ground that he had once been charged with telling a lie, a charge that was dismissed as unproved.

Meanwhile the exposures of two different Commissions of Inquiry and several sessions of parliamentary criticism, have only issued in the tardy and reluctant dismissal of the most scandalous of the contractors; the same firm who employ girls to stitch hard leather at starvation wages. According to Ministers, "the criminal law is utterly powerless" to deal with fraud on so gigantic a scale, its terrors are for the petty scoundrels. The officials whose incompetence and greedy dishonesty permitted and encouraged the jobbery are promoted or whitewashed all round! As to the ugly stories of police spies and false charges, the Tory Minister of War exonerates his party; the thing happened under Mr. Gladstone's administration!

Could an incident more disgraceful be reported of the rotten bureaucracy of Russia or the agents of Bismarckian tyranny? It reveals more than pages of reports and statistics of the tricks and subterfuges by which under the present political system the wealth wrung by government from the toil of the people is appropriated to the selfish ends of greedy administrators.

No wonder that our costly men of war break down on their trial trips and prove unworkable in sham fights, that our army is supplied with bursting guns and bending bayonets, and that our military resources are declared unequal to severer tasks than coercing Welsh farmers to pay tithe, or slaughtering savages.

As for prospects of improvement, the *Saturday Review* truly remarks that by debates in the Lords and committees in the Commons, "one old piece of knowledge has been proved for the twentieth time. It is that all the experts are at sixes and sevens."

Corrupt officials and wrangling experts and ignorant popular representatives ready to legislate right and left about anything and everything just as suits their private and party interests; a hopeful prospect truly, and one that darkens as we gaze. From every corner of our administration come revelations, whispers, hints of jobbery, want of public spirit, greed and inefficiency. Whilst black-mail is being levied in London by the Metropolitan Board of Works, the Anglo-Indian government are patronising and protecting the band of English swindlers who have been busy stealing £850,000 from a Deccan prince. Whilst Mr. Jenkinson brings forward awkward figures suggesting that certain recent and much vaunted departmental reforms are simply an excuse for bestowing pensions instead of salaries, the *Law Times* sees "too much reason to suspect" that our local administration of civil law is reduced to a farce by the universal bribery of bailiffs, so that a successful suitor is quite uncertain if he shall ever obtain his costs and damages.

And in administrations like those of France and America, where the representative system is yet more fully developed than in England, the abuses and scandals are more fully developed too. The evidence produced last year against certain New York aldermen dwarfed the exploits of Messrs. Goddard and Robertson into insignificance, and the back wash of the Grevy-Wilson-Limousin scandals still taints the moral atmosphere of France.

During the whole of this century representative government has been on its trial and it is surely not too soon to judge of the tree by its fruits. Authority exercised by elected representatives under the Argus eyes of King Demos turns out to be as depraved and depraving, as self-interested and inefficient as when it was self-constituted and irresponsible. One might hope to improve the machinery, but who is to reform the men, if under this system of government as under every other, power brings moral degradation in its train?

A bitter experience is slowly revealing to us that there is only one social change that can be a radical remedy for the misery inflicted on countless millions of human beings by the abuse of authority. It is the abolition of authority altogether. It is a change of moral attitude, of the mental relation of citizen to citizen. The inward refusal of heart and mind to outrage our common human nature by enforcing one's will on others or allowing them to force their will on one's self; and the outward recognition of this moral attitude by the abolition of every kind and species of government.

As long as all must rule or be ruled, it is inevitable that each should struggle to snatch the whip or at least secure himself from its lash behind the power given by wealth. But in such unnatural strife where is there room for public spirit or a sense of fellowship? The social instinct and self-respect that prompt disinterested administration of the common concerns are weakened, perverted, well nigh destroyed. Mutual distrust, selfish greed must necessarily be the order of the day.

Gladly therefore we welcome the shameful exposures which are dragging the political superstition of our century into the irreverent light of public curiosity. Gladly we see men forced to resign faith in the ballot-box that they may find it in themselves. For that is the end set before us. We have tried the virtue of every system for the administration of human affairs by authority only to find failure and confusion inherent in each. It begins now to dawn upon our consciousness that peace and security wait not upon the most skilful method of organising coercion, but simply on association by free consent.

WORK.

"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" is an ancient curse, dating from the days of slavery. And truly for the slave work is a weariness to the flesh.

What enjoyment is there in his labour for the modern wage-slave, for instance, as he toils hour after hour and day after day at some exhausting routine work, in which he sees no special utility, and for which he has no special taste; toils wearily on and on, with no prospect but the same dull round, until he breaks down and is sent to the work-house, like some worn-out cart-horse to the knackers? How can work be anything but a hateful burden in such circumstances? How can such workers have any inclination but to exert themselves as little as possible? Any interest but the amount of the miserable pittance they gain by this prostitution of their manhood? No wonder that to the majority of the workmen of to-day wages are the one inducement to work, and the idea of working except for wages seems an absurdity. No wonder that when they can avoid working, they loaf, or that they seek physical or mental relief for their deadened and jaded nerves in spirits or beer or gambling.

The nature of the modern machine industry and factory system is in itself enough to account for the so-called idleness of the working classes; but there are many other causes which all unite to render the very idea of work distasteful to the masses at this moment.

Manual work is looked on as a brand of inferiority to the worker. Whatever his skill, he is regarded as belonging to the lower rank in society. Cap in hand he stands meekly before the brain-worker, the organiser, the mere monopolist of property, awaiting their permission to employ himself and their direction of his efforts. He is their hireling, their thing, a part of their wealth-producing machinery. How can he joy in the toil which degrades him in the eyes of his fellows and is associated with the loss of his personal dignity?

And then he is never secure even in this inferior position, which at least allows him to live. Any week, any day he may be thrown upon the streets to beg from door to door for the permission to work that he may earn a subsistence. This insecurity nips in the bud such growing interest as he may be inclined to feel in his special occupation. He may be interested in finishing some job, in thinking out some improvement, but all the while the knowledge lurks in the background that he has neither part nor lot in the final utility of his work, that to-morrow he may be a homeless wanderer, his connection with his present employment broken off for ever.

So much for the character of the work; let us turn to the physical conditions of the lives of the workers. Insufficient food from earliest childhood; if not insufficient in quantity, insufficient in nourishing elements, unwholesome and adulterated, as are all the wretched provisions sold in the cheap shops of our large towns. Insufficient clothing; shoddy cotton and cloth, and paper soled boots, and not enough even of these. Bad air; dirty, badly ventilated factories and workshops all day, damp or dusty ill-smelling streets to go home by, hot, close rooms to sit and eat and sleep in. Such conditions alone are enough to depress the nervous energy of the strongest and healthiest amongst us, and men and women who have lived for generations in such misery are not strong and healthy. A moment's reflection astonishes us not at the idleness but the industry of the working classes.

But the property monopolists? There is a strong tendency amongst them also to believe that the only end of useful effort is to fill one's own pocket, and a pronounced distaste for work in itself; and yet their lives are not fettered like those of their wage-slaves.

Not in the same way, but still fettered, and by the same hateful social system. The majority of men and women of whatever class have capacity for hand work. Those whose organisation fits them exclusively for brain work are few and far between. Yet the iron tyranny of custom ordains that for a man or woman of the upper classes brain work alone is "respectable"; they must exercise their muscles only in games. If such a person is caught by his neighbours in the act of digging potatoes, or scrubbing the floor, or making any useful article, he or she apologises with a blush and explains that it is only a hobby, or he has been obliged to do it "just for once" by some accident. As to bringing up his children as shoemakers or cooks, he would as soon educate them for the hulks. And yet not every bourgeois child has a taste for figures, or the organisation of industry, or scientific research, or the higher walks of art.

Again, the weight and pressure of needless clothing, and curtained rooms, and padded seats, and a hot-house atmosphere, and luxurious living, and artificial isolation from the first elementary needs and cares of humanity, are not healthy, are not in the truest sense natural. Such conditions depress nervous energy and discourage exertion, and make the real interests and larger purposes of life dull and meaningless. And such conditions as these have grown up round the rich, punishing them for their unjust monopoly by enervating their nerves and stupefying their brain, shutting them away from the keen, fresh pleasure of living, and turning work and repose alike to weariness.

And if the enervating and isolating "comfort" of the rich and the cramping and depressing misery of the poor, the difficulty for either class of choosing the occupation which best suits them, and the dreary and monotonous character of most modern labour, were causes not sufficient to account for such disinclination to useful and continued exertion of energy as we see around us, we have only to add the social influence of an idle aristocracy. The example of an upper class whose pride is that for many hundred years they have been absolutely useless, cannot but corrupt the whole community. They set before every man an ideal of idleness as the goal to which all his labour should tend; so that for the hand workers and commercial class being a gentleman means that, being rich, one has nothing to do, and to many of them the object of working is to attain such gentility as fate will allow.

For the taskmaster as for the slave there is but little joy in labour, and our social conditions make most men and women one or the other. Little cause have we for surprise that idleness is no uncommon vice amongst all classes and that but too many men are ready to cast their burden of toil upon the shoulders of others.

But now let us contrast this distaste for work, this tendency to shirk it which is the direct outcome of present social conditions, with the mighty volume of active energy, which, in spite of these adverse conditions, actually animates society from day to day.

This display of spontaneous energy in useful work is such a common factor of ordinary life that it passes unnoticed, until something rouses us to reflect that our whole social progress depends on it and that if it ceased for one single day society would come to a stand-still, even though all slavish labour went on as before. I do not dwell here upon the endless voluntary associations for every imaginable object, public or private, from the reform of society or the protection of vested interests to the exercise of the muscles or the amusement of leisure moments. Of course these involve a very large amount of unpaid and avoidable exertion; but the energy summed up in them is but as a drop in the bucket compared with the free, spontaneous effort ceaselessly expended in the common daily work of life; effort which can never be measured, never be paid for, and for which we can find no definite, determining necessity, unless we look for it in the inmost nature of man himself.

One begins to realise this if one tries to imagine the results to any sort of work if the spontaneous human element were entirely excluded. The capitalist machine industry has done its best in this direction, and in proportion as it has succeeded, the produce has grown not only mean and base but useless and hurtful. In proportion as the human worker has become a mere steam-engine with wages for coal, the fruit of his labour has degenerated into shoddy, losing not only the higher utility,

the beauty that satisfies the mind, but the most elementary fitness to supply primary needs. Our tin teapots for instance, not only degrade our imagination and deform our sense of proportion by their hideousness, but they melt on the hob, they leak when boiling water is poured into them, and they poison us with the leaden "tea tasters" in the spout; our cheap cottons are not only frightful in their stiffness and mean in their flimsiness, but they neither wash nor wear; and so on.

It is only amongst the weakest and most stunted victims of industrialism that we see what sort of thing human labour is when the spontaneous element is utterly crushed out of it. Even amidst the most degraded and hopeless routine work, spontaneous energy is often only diverted from ingenuity to speed, and concentrated upon producing the greatest quantity possible, regardless of quality. In many a hard-driven workman the impulse to produce is so strong, that if he can do nothing else, he will find satisfaction in putting, *e.g.*, as many poisonous lumps of lead as possible into the spouts of teapots and joy in beating the record, even though the increased pay be infinitesimally small and he knows that he is merely raising the intensity of labour that will eventually be exacted from him by the capitalists. It is this impulse to put one's best self into what one is doing quite as much as the desire to earn, which is so vilely exploited by employers in all piece work.

The same spontaneous impulse manifests itself in the perpetual improvements and inventions made by workmen. These ceaseless minor inventions are one of the great main springs of economic progress. The workers personally gain nothing by their ingenuity but loss or uncertainty of employment, yet they are always improving and inventing.

In every condition of life people are constantly exerting themselves more than they are compelled to by any external necessity; from the artist like Watts, who pours his whole soul into pictures the public will neither buy nor appreciate, to the dustman who carefully fills the corners of his cart and pats down the edges of his load, though the Vestry will never pay him one penny the more for it. In fact are we not all ourselves conscious, when we come to think of it, that we continually do things for the mere pleasure of doing them or of attaining some end that cannot be measured in hard cash; and also that in work which is paid we perpetually exert ourselves far more than we are absolutely obliged to do to earn our money.

In healthy children the impulse to make something is one of their earliest and most vigorous developments. If they cannot do anything else, they will make mud pies. But most children are far the most eager to do something "real," by which they mean socially useful. They eagerly aspire to the dignity of taking active part in the occupations of grown up people; but till the idea is put into their heads, even the children of this commercial age are not so corrupted by heredity as to think of payment. They obey their own spontaneous impulse to exert themselves to some purpose, just for the pleasure of it.

Physiologists explain to us how this comes about. How exertion of brain and nerves and muscles in work is an exercise of functions and faculties which nature has formed to be exercised, so that there is just as much animal pleasure in working when one is well and strong, as in eating when one is hungry. Starvation of the impulse to work is a physical misery, just like starvation of the impulse to eat. We say impulse to work, rather than merely to exert one's self, because useless or purposeless exertion does not satisfy the mind, and the same may be said of work which is not, at least indirectly, social in character.

If this seems somewhat doubtful to any overworked reader, let him remember the misery of prisoners in solitary confinement. When the nervous exhaustion following the excitement of the trial has passed away, the prisoner's strongest desire is to be allowed some occupation; any work however disagreeable, so that he may escape from the maddening irritation of enforced idleness. And if the deprivation is long continued, the strongest man will sink into a semi-idiotic condition of bodily and mental apathy, just as one of our arms will first be cramped and then become feeble and nerveless if it be tied up and not exercised.

Another consideration suggests the existence of a spontaneous impulse amongst men to produce, to create. It is the enormous wealth which the human race has acquired beyond what is necessary for bare subsistence. Think, for example, of the means of communication, from language to railways and steam-boats, and try to realise the volume of creative energy they imply, not in a few individuals, but in the millions whose labours of mind and body have formed them during long ages. If men had contented themselves with merely providing for their bare necessities, none of the arts of life would have grown and developed, and we should still be existing like our ancestors, the cave men. But no, the cave men have left behind them evidences of their human creative genius. We find their stone and bone knives and hatchets, not only sharpened, but shaped and ornamented, and since their day we have gone on shaping and ornamenting, and thinking and creating, until we have accumulated the vast stores of knowledge and of material wealth amidst which we live to-day. Where was the compulsion to do all this, but in our own nature?

There is little room to doubt, when one thinks seriously about the matter, that the expenditure of energy in creation, in productive work, is a natural human impulse, common to all normally developed individuals, and idleness a disease developed and fostered by unhealthy conditions. Therefore the question of supreme importance in social organisation is—not how can men be induced to work, but how can their spontaneous desire to work be allowed the freest scope and guided into the most useful directions.

FREEDOM can be obtained in London from W. Reeves, 185 Fleet Street; the Freethought Publishing Company, 63 Fleet Street; the Socialist League Office, 13 Farringdon Road, E.C.; or ordered through a newsagent.

A WORD FROM THE PEOPLE.

What do we care for the Liberal or Tory,
The stale old twaddle and outworn cant,
The trumpery tinsel of warlike glory,
The "Peace, Reform and Retrenchment" rant?
Whether we listen from this our place,
To Liberal treble or Tory bass,
It only tells us the old, hard story:
That wealth is for them, and for us is want.

With wooden swords they attack each other,
With volleying voice and with vicious pen,
Lest the man who labours should say to his brother,
"They are all alike, save in name!"—and then
The workers themselves should lead their cause,
Against this army of unjust laws,
And middle-class platitudes no more smother
The rising clamour of starving men.

For we die while they quarrel. Whichever may win,
Our children still fade like gathered flowers;
Our women must choose between starving and sin,
And men slave on through the endless hours.
Can "party politics" touch the core
Of the vast and leprous social sore
Which, to make their world worth living in,
They have made, and make, of this world of ours?

Will Tories feed us, or Liberals cure
This pain in our hearts that always ache?
Whichever wins power, of this we are sure:
They will live at ease on the wealth we make,
While we toil on, and make more and more,
And get less share than we did before;
And still shall our stupid submission endure,
And still shall their tyranny tax and take,
Till Demos shall waken, and when he shall rise
Like a giant breaking a spider's thread
Spun lightly over his sleeping eyes,
Then over all parties shall tower his head,
He will send his voice down life's devious ways,
And "parties" will vanish like morning haze;
And the fight shall be between Truth and Lies,
And Truth shall triumph, and Lies be dead!

THE GROWTH OF MONOPOLY.

THE following communication from an American correspondent is continued from last month.

Uncle Sam, who inherited from John Bull all the land between the four oceans (counting the lakes as one) graciously allowed his daughter Alabama the use of certain tracts under her skirts for internal improvements in 1856. Fair Ala, in '58, transferred 204 square miles of this handsome present to Hugh Carlisle and Co., under specific condition, conformable with the General Act of Congress, that a railroad between Guntersville and Gadsden should be completed before July, 1866. Miss Alabama loaned the company money at the same time, which has never been repaid. The distance is 36 miles. 1866 found five miles of road constructed. Since then, up to the present date, five more have been added. Meanwhile the tract of the original grant has been settled up, but the U.S. Land Office has refused to make any entry titles, or to sell to the settlers. Its local agent has been in the pay of the railway company. He has registered claims on their books at 1 dol. fee per 40 acres; impressing on the loyal clodhopper his fealty under God to the railway company.

Last year some ill-advised farmers brought suit in the local court of equity, but being unable to fee their lawyers, the suit went by default in favour of the company, and Carlisle got an injunction against renewing it under heavy costs. Other settlers petitioned Congress. Their petition lay over a year, and when taken up was met by a counter petition from Carlisle's friends, among whom are the lawyers who pretended to sue him. Meanwhile Secretary Laman, of the Interior, has given him what is called a patent for the land, a document which in the teeth of law, and in the absence of Congressional Acts, enables him to collect rents and make sales, just as if he had fulfilled the conditions of the original grant. He has the sheriff at his back, and behind the sheriff governmental superstition. He levies about thirteen times the government rate on land as purchase money, and rents it at 1 dol. per acre, five or six times more than the entry cost for fee-simple. He began life as a stone-cutter; he is a "self-made man," with only a little help from Uncle Sam, by the way.

The circumstance by which this railway swindle came to my knowledge, is significant of the quality of mind and morality in this region, and shows how insolently legal quibbles defy common sense among a people that flatters itself with an intellectual property in the legislation of its so-called representatives.

The agent of the railway company, in collecting rents, called on me just in a friendly way. I am not a subject of the company. He was in high spirits, and *in vino veritas*. He boasted, among other cutenesses, of a legal discovery by the local editor, who, besides being a lawyer, is State Superintendent of the Public Schools, and showed me his published argument to this effect: Congress enacted that sales might be made of 20 by 640 acres, i.e., of ten sections on each side of the road track, before commencing work on it. Ergo, argues Palmer in his *Democrat*, no land having as yet been sold, the forfeiture of the grant, otherwise declarable in '66 by reason of the non-completion of the road, is invalidated, and the company's title remains good, in awaiting the specified sale of 20 sections. Moreover, he states this absurd opinion as having been sanctioned by the Attorney-General, and other high legal authorities! This was before the authorisation of sales by the Secretary of the Interior. Another quibble was the pretended authority derived from the decision rendered, favourable to similar swindlers, by the Supreme Court of New Jersey. These facts, coupled with the

President's frequent vetoes of the forfeiture of land grants, evince a deep and wide laid conspiracy for railroad landlordry in the United States.

The rent collector who called on me, fortified in the land grant ghost by his Palmercrat commentary, had been dunning a poor widow for 5 dols. on a five-acre lot, which she was ploughing with a yearling steer, her only property, in hope to keep the wolf from the door and feed her children. Yet this man is not a bad representative of our class of ruined gentlemen, the wreck of the civil war. He is not reproached with meanness, and is quick on trigger.

A more regular old-fashioned type of the exploiter by government than Carlisle is our merchant prince of these diggings, Albert G. Henry, still in the prime of life, which he began commercially as a huckster, with a capital of 10 dols. in candy and cigars. Some one was condoling with him on his loss of a hundred and odd slaves at the close of the Inter-State War. "Why now," replied Henry, "I own nearly every man, white or black, in Marshall County." This was, in fact, only too modest a claim, too limited an area. Henry passes for an honest man; he seldom collects the same debt more than twice, even though this moderation subjects him, by foreclosure of mortgages, to the inconvenience of cultivating by proxy.

By means of these mortgages he enjoys the credit which rises like a fertilising vapour off several thousand farms. If their farmers have not sense enough to use their own credit, as they might by Proudhon's combination, economising interest of 17 or 18 out of 20 per cent., that is not Henry's fault, and they are grateful to him for corn at double prices which has saved them from starvation.

EDGORTH.

FREEDOM DISCUSSION MEETINGS.

WITH the June meeting we began a more detailed consideration of the points at issue between Social Democrats and ourselves as indicated by Comrade Blackwell in his May speech. The first question raised was the relation between work and the distribution of wealth in a Socialistic society.

There seem to be three points of view current in the English Socialist party with regard to this question.* First: Each worker and incapable person being secured a subsistence, the remaining available wealth would be shared between the workers with hand and brain according to the competitive value of their capacities, i.e., in the favourite jargon of some of our economist comrades, Socialism will leave each man free to monopolise the rent of his ability.

Second: The available wealth of the community would be distributed equally, in money and the free use of public institutions, amongst all workers and persons unable to work, regardless of specialities of capacity, only the wilfully idle being excluded. This is the opinion of the more advanced Social Democrats.

Third: The use of the wealth of the community would be common to all its members, need, not capacity or industry, being the criterion of distribution, and work would be left to the free initiative of the individual. This is our conviction as Communist-Anarchists.

We do not admit the right of men to judge and punish their fellows for the crime of idleness any more than for any other unsocial and dangerous conduct. Though we know that a man cannot be idle, any more than he can commit murder or tell lies, without seriously injuring himself and others, we believe that idleness, like other vices, is the outcome of a diseased and unnatural physical and social state, and that the idler like other criminals, should be treated by his fellows as an afflicted brother, whom in a spirit of equality and true human sympathy they desire to invigorate and restore. By such means is the evil most likely to be cured and innocent people to suffer least during its existence.

Amidst the idleness, as amidst the vice of existing society, this position seems at first sight utopian. It appears to imply a radical change in human nature. We contend that, on the contrary, the conditions at present forced upon us by the social system in which we are involved, are outraging and distorting man's nature, and if by the destruction of that system we can conquer fuller scope for self-development, work will appear in its true light as a spontaneous impulse of every healthy individual, and free Communism be the most natural, as it now appears the most desirable and rational, economic organisation of society. The next few meetings will be devoted to the discussion of the grounds of this conviction. The subject was opened last month by C. M. Wilson, who dwelt upon work as a spontaneous and voluntary expression of human energy. The substance of her paper will be found in another column.

An interesting discussion followed, in which Annie Besant, G. B. Shaw, and Sidney Webb (Fabians); Herbert Burrows, T. Binning, and White (Social Democrats); T. Pearson, W. Wess, and P. Kropotkin (Communist-Anarchists) and others took part. Some comrades amongst "our friends the enemy," not having been present at previous meetings, carried the discussion somewhat off the lines to general questions of organisation, administration, and even propaganda. We beg comrades who propose to attend future meetings, to read the reports of the past ones, so that our time may not be wasted in generalities or going over and over old ground.

The two main objections bearing immediate reference to the subject in hand were, How is free work to be organised? and How shall we gain freedom to work as we will? The first was raised by Mrs. Besant, who agrees with us in believing the impulse to work—and to work for society—is natural to the healthy human being, but thinks authoritative social control will be required to direct this impulse. This point will be dealt with fully later on. The second objection is another form of the "What shall we do to be saved?" that very naturally is reiterated at every discussion. But our idea is that it is best to consider one thing at a time. First let us come to some agreement as to precisely what we want to get and then let us consider how best we can get it. In other words, principles of action first and modes of action after.

At the next meeting we shall resume the subject of "Work and the

* We exclude here considerations relating to the necessity of directing a certain portion of the labour of the community towards the creation of "capital," i.e., the maintenance and increase of means of production and distribution—machinery, railways, and such like. This will be discussed later on.

distribution of Wealth." The discussion will be opened by P. Kropotkin, on Friday July 13th, at 8.30 p.m. at 13 Farringdon Road, E.C.

A comrade sends us the following remarks suggested by our June discussion:

Shall we cease to work when we get freedom, land and instruments?

The position of the Social Democrats *vis à vis* to the above question seems to be this.

They fear that the whip of the task-master and *exploiteur* ceasing to act after the Social Revolution, the workman will stop working, and they are eager to provide him with a new whip, the State's.

Why should, however, the workman stop work when he no longer works for a master, but for himself? Will he cease to be a man, to have wants, to feel the necessity of working in order to satisfy his wants? Be regular work a pleasure or not for a healthy organism, the comfort which it produces certainly is a pleasure. Therefore, the more people work for themselves and not for anybody else, the more they will feel interested to exert themselves for their own good.

This holds even for that part of the population contemptuously called "brutes," but who are more "brutalised" than "brutes," and perhaps will prove more amenable to social life than the upper ten of the working classes, not to speak of aristocrats and bourgeois.

And the same remark answers even the common objection about unpleasant labour. It *will* be done when it appears necessary or advantageous that it should be done. Even admitting that some people will shrink from it, others will come forward, as already happens even at the present day, whenever a true public necessity arises, even if it implies the sacrifice of some men.

Again, will people agree, or will they not, as to the organisation of labour and in the management of their common interests? We maintain that they will agree: Uist's farmers *do* agree now, and there is no reason why the workmen of the future should not agree in the same way.

The common interest will bring and keep them together; the interest acting as a social *nexus*—the true, real interest of free, unexploited workmen—this is a fundamental principle of Anarchism.

Democrats should criticise that, and not be satisfied with saying that Anarchism is an ideal not to be reached at once. Anarchism is not an Ideal, or not only an ideal, but a Principle: and on it are bound to act all who admit it, let come what come may.

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM.

AUSTRALIA.

Our energetic comrades of the Melbourne Anarchist Club, held their second annual meeting on May 1st. For two years this group of young workmen have carried on a steady and successful Anarchist propaganda, and the increase of their influence may be gauged by the wrath of the local upholders of authority. The latest reports tell of the attempts of the reactionary members of the Melbourne Secular Society to expel their Anarchist colleagues. It seems that Anarchism is a growing political creed in that body, and the chairman—one Joseph Symes, an ex-parson, now Editor of the *Liberator*—is seriously alarmed. During the past year he has lost no opportunity of attacking our comrades in his journal, but excluded all replies. In April a public meeting was summoned, at which the chairman bewailed "the vigour the Anarchists display just now," and stated his opinion that Anarchism "is much worse than Christianity." Our comrades bravely defended their convictions, and whether they are expelled from the Secular Society or not, the public discussion cannot but advance Anarchist ideas.

Besides their weekly Sunday evening debates, the Melbourne Anarchists have a monthly journal, a bright and earnest little paper fitly named *Honesty*, started in April 1887.

Its principles are Mutualist-Anarchist of the same type as those of the Boston *Liberty*. It is honourably distinguished by an absence of spiteful personalities, and a spirit of tolerance towards Socialism, which contrasts favourably with the narrow bitterness of too many of its contemporaries. "I think," writes the Editor, "the labour journals would do well to run in harmony, and the Anarchist journals should be the first to set the example, instead of opening up a mutual warfare, which does none of us any good, and only helps to keep alive the disaffection in the labour ranks, to the sole advantage of the plutocrats." Words of wisdom in which we heartily concur.

Honesty, accordingly, is on excellent terms with the organ of the Sydney Socialist League, the Australian *Radical*, an interesting and useful labour paper, which we are glad to see has recently doubled its size.

The Australian (Sydney) Socialist League was started in May 1887 by seven comrades and after some energetic anti-royalist agitation during the Jubilee mania, gained enough attention to enable it to start public Sunday evening debates and open-air meetings, which have been successfully continued down to the present time. We hope soon to hear that our Sydney comrades have advanced from a vague and general Socialism to Communist-Anarchism.

There is as much need of revolutionary propaganda on the other side of the world as here, if, as *Honesty* says, the land of Australasia is monopolised by six per cent. of the population, leaving ninety-four per cent. of landless men; less than 200,000 landlords and squatters, and over 2,500,000 dispossessed proletarians.

IRELAND.

The efforts of Balfour to sting the peasantry of Ireland into open revolt and their leaders into unconstitutional measures, so that he might slaughter them in hundreds, having failed, his Patent Convictors have taken upon themselves to define the thing called "rebellion." According to one the next thing to it is "resistance to the payment of a tax," while another has declared that "people engaged in holding a proclaimed meeting in spite of the police are actually engaged in rebellion." As the Irish are for the most part continually attending proclaimed meetings and resisting taxes (*e.g.*, in loyal Derry, where the Corporation has refused to pay the increased police-tax for the past four years, so that it has accumulated to £5,239, and in Limerick, where the Corporation has successfully resisted a similar impost, not to mention other instances more individual) we may conclude that Ireland is actually in a state of open rebellion, at least in the eyes of the present Government. Otherwise the Secret Inquiries, the most striking features of the Balfour administration during the month of June, would be perfectly incomprehensible. Our Irish contemporaries have likened these itinerant courts to the Inquisition and the Star Chamber. They are generally

held in the houses of landlords, whose tenants have proved themselves able to take care of their own. The witnesses are alternately bullied and bribed, and if these means fail to induce them to betray their neighbours, they are sent to jail for seven days' hard labour. The evidence thus extracted is mutilated or amended before being produced in a more open court. A mode of proceeding to make us fancy ourselves transported back to the days of Strafford.

But what smacks still more of the olden times are the descents before dawn made upon sleeping towns and villages by troops of police, who bear from their beds honourable men, whose only crime is nationalism. On the night of June 21st such a descent was made upon Curras, where six men were arrested on charge of having attended an illegal meeting on the 23rd March last, when they did incite certain persons not to pay rent to landlord Leader. At Loughrea, 22nd June, another raid was made, and eleven arrested on a bogus charge of conspiracy to save a poor widow's hay from the bailiff's clutches. The treatment of these men after arrest is set forth in a statement drawn up by their solicitor, which he attempted to read in court but was prevented by Removable Townsend. In it the men declare that they were taken from their beds at 3 o'clock in the morning; kept in the police barrack until two p.m., when inquiry commenced; forced to sit listening to the reading of depositions until six o'clock that evening; and then, application for bail being refused, committed all eleven to Loughrea Bridewell, where there was only accommodation for three, the three beds being in a wet and filthy condition; and this on a charge which will most probably be dismissed. A similar raid was made on Castlereagh, where eight men were seized, by order of a Star Chamber Court to which numbers of witnesses were summoned.

In this fashion the Patent Convictors are making the round of the island. First a secret inquiry is held, then a batch of men arrested, who, if lucky enough to escape conviction afterwards, have at least endured the discomfort of a few days' imprisonment.

Amongst the hundreds of witnesses summoned before these secret courts, it is surprising to find how few fail to hold by the unwritten code of honour; even children of twelve refusing to be sworn or to bear witness against their neighbours. The number of convictions for the past month has in consequence decreased wonderfully, although the actual number of arrests fully equals, if it does not exceed, that of preceding months. Only 63 prisoners for Ireland's sake have been lodged in jail since the last week in May, and of these 26 were imprisoned for refusing evidence, seven of them having been re-committed four and five times, thus undergoing a month's hard labour, although seven days is supposed to be the utmost rigour of the law for this crime. Besides these recalcitrant witnesses, for conspiring against emergency men, 3 were imprisoned; for rioting, 1; for re-taking possession of their homes, 3 (one of these, sentenced to a month's hard labour, was a woman with a seven month old infant at her breast); refusing supplies to police or emergency-men, 4; boycotting, 1; refusing to answer Star Chamber summons, 4; intimidation, 3; obstructing bailiffs, 3; cutting branches of trees for decorating purposes, 2 (three and two months' hard labour); lighting bonfires to celebrate release of Mr. Cox, M.P., 7; contempt of court, 2; assaulting Inspector, 1 (three months); leaving chapel on entrance of obnoxious neighbour with police escort, 2 (six months' hard labour); resisting police baton with hurley, 1 (four months' hard labour); lastly John Dillon, six months for speech-making.

The proclaiming of Dublin city and county fell flat through the city magistrates refusing to degrade themselves to the level of Removables by holding a Secret Inquiry Court at the Castle, which was to have been a preliminary step to a raid on the office of *United Ireland*, a scheme long cherished by Balfour.

The Chief Secretary has, however, scored two during the past month. The opportune death of his shield-bearer King-Harman, who had become something of an incumbrance, counts one, and his refutation of the charge of sending to prison for a month an old man of eighty for having taken shelter in the outhouse of the house from which he had been evicted (the old man it seems was only turned seventy-five) is the other.

His indignant denial that he had prosecuted any but the W. H. Smiths of the Irish news-vendors was not such a success, being rebutted by Mr. Flynn, M.P., who put in evidence the number of ragged newsboys arrested and dragged through the streets of Cork for exhibiting copies of *United Ireland* for sale.

Nor can he congratulate himself over his manner of shuffling out of a straightforward reply to the question put to him concerning the eviction at Clogher, where a family of six was flung out, one a blind boy in a dying condition, another an old man of four score, who died on removal to the house of his son-in-law.

To evictions a new terror has been added. The Master of the Rolls has decided that sheltering evicted tenants is "equitable waste," and all huts which charitable hands have erected for these outcasts are to be swept away on the ground of their being displeasing to intending land-grabbers. The costs of Mr. Brooke's suit is to be paid by the good Samaritan of Coolgreany, who set the obnoxious example to her neighbours of opening her door to the homeless. If she cannot pay, the aged woman must go to jail. This she is most likely to do, being but a tenant of a poor acre and a half.

The fight between Government and Nation has perhaps been hottest between their respective representatives, Local Government Board and Boards of Guardians. At Athy the Guardians have decided to pay the fine of £138 imposed upon one of their number, Mr. Whelan, for granting out-door relief to some of Lansdowne's evicted tenants. This Board of Guardians was for this solemnly declared dissolved by the Heads of the Custom House, but it declined to melt away and met the following Tuesday, June 21, for transaction of general business.

The Clonakilty Guardians still hold by their dispensary doctor, who was dismissed illegally some time back by the L. G. B. on account of his connection with a branch of the League. He was offered reinstatement if he would promise to refrain from all future connection with illegal associations; this Dr. Magnee promptly refused to do. Meanwhile the poor of that neighbourhood are without medical advice.

"No blood tax," is the cry in Co. Clare and at Mitchelstown. In Clare the police and bailiffs are making raids to raise the sum levied on that county for the family of Whelehan, the policeman who was shot in the moonlighting affray got up by himself with the aid of the informer Cullinane.

At Mitchelstown a sturdy resistance is offered to the raising of 1000 sovereigns to be presented to Constable Leahy, the police reporter, who was deservedly cudgelled in the attempt to force a way through the memorable meeting in Mitchelstown Square. There is something natural in the reluctance to contribute towards a testimonial to a man who helped in the massacre of one's brother, son, or friend! So far they have not raised the bailiff's expenses, although shops are entered and plundered and the stock driven off farms to be sold by auction. One farmer taxed at £16, was robbed of five fine heifers. It is likely that we may see fulfilled the prophecy that "Every penny collected will cost the Government a pound."

The riots got up by the police have been unusually numerous. That at Dungloe on the occasion of the home-coming of four men who had been in jail for exhibiting contempt of the Star Chamber court, and the one in Dundalk after the committal of John Dillon to jail being most remarkable for ferocity and wanton brutality on the part of their uniformed promoters.

All communications to be addressed to The Editor of FREEDOM, Leaflet Press 19 Cursitor Street, E.C. Office hours, Mondays, 3 to 5 p.m. During these hours a member of the Freedom Group will always be at the office.

Printed and published for the proprietors by Thomas Binning, at the Labour Union Printery, 158 Pentonville Road, London, N.