

FREEDOM

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COMMUNISM AND THE WAGE SYSTEM.

(Continued.)

II.—THE NEW WAGE-SYSTEM ; OR, PAYMENT BY RESULTS.

UNDER the Social Democratic Commonwealth, "productive workers will each receive for every day's common labour a check entitling him to one day's common labour in return less his share of the impost (tax for rent) . . . Those engaged in unproductive vocations will receive similar salaries out of the rent or impost fund. . . . A day's work will mean the simplest work of average efficiency of a normal working day. . . . Both professional and skilled labour is multiplied common labour." Both are common labour plus the years of apprenticeship required to learn them, and will be remunerated at a proportionately higher rate. "The members of each branch of industry will be entitled as a body to the proceeds of all the labour they have embodied in the product they create, and that they distribute amongst themselves just as they please, subject to appeal to the commonwealth (or state) as arbitrator."

Such is the outline of the Social Democratic wage system as sketched out by Grönlund in his 'Co-operative Commonwealth.' It is a renewed attempt to secure to every man the fruits of his own labour, of substantially the same character as Owen's labour notes and Proudhon's mutual banking. A system that at first sight appears charmingly simple, but on a nearer view bristles with difficulties.

In the first place its seeming equality exists only on paper. The distinction between skilled and unskilled labour is treacherous and misleading. It would tend only to create a workmen's and scientists' aristocracy over the heads of the toiling masses. Already in the industrial countries of Western Europe we see class distinctions amongst the workers growing sharper and more accentuated. The distinction acknowledged by the Social Democratic state between skilled and unskilled labour would but serve to increase an existing evil.

This is so self-evident that many collectivists have been compelled to deny the distinction between skilled and unskilled labour and accept "equality of wages" as a watchword. Every one's hour of labour, they now say, is to be considered equal to every other person's hour of labour, regardless of length of apprenticeship.

Quite right. But if you maintain the wage-system, do you know who will be the greatest adversaries of such a system of equality of wages? The skilled workmen, and all that immense class of workers who stand between the middle class and the labourer. Shall we deny that fact? Shall we imitate the ostrich who conceals its head in the sand in order not to see danger? And can we expect other results? Because, as soon as you try to introduce any exact valuation of the services rendered by everybody, you proclaim that services rendered to society can be precisely valued and ought to be paid according to their importance.

You introduce the distinction of *quantity* by saying that two hours of labour are worth more than one hour. How can you expect that men will not also measure the *quality* of the work and take account of its productivity? Once you say that two hours of labour are worth twice as much as one hour, you must be prepared to see men discriminating the amount of nervous energy spent during the two hours, of skill, of brain energy, as well as the length of the apprenticeship required by each kind of work.

We are told that the average work of the average man is to be the criterion. But the average man does not exist, and real men of flesh and bone differ from one another by the amount of their needs. There is the young unmarried woman and the mother of a family of five or six children. For the employer of our days there is no consideration whatever of the needs of the *materfamilias* as compared with those of the girl of 19. If the girl can produce more than the mother of a family, she will be paid more by the capitalist employer. And the labour cheque of the economist acts in the same way; he does not care about the needs of the family, and pays twice as much to the girl who has worked twice as many hours as the mother, in total disregard of the fact that for society as a whole the mother is giving twice as much labour as the young girl. But we know where that system lands us. The family reduced to misery is precisely what the capitalist wants. A well-to-do workman does not suit his book, because it is the misery of the masses which makes the riches of the rich. Mr. Booth reckons that there are no less than one million poor in London, ready to work at any price, and therefore there are in London so many Bryant and Mays and so many Maples, who accumulate their hundreds of thousands.

You may say, of course, that all kinds of provisions may be made to enable the mother to bring up her children. You may quote the French municipal councils which already supply gratuitous food to all school children. But that is Communistic; and so, without perceiving it yourselves you advocate Communism. Communism as a corrective to the false system which you advocate. Were it not a hundred times better openly to say that there can be no equitable organisation of society without Communism?

In fact, each useful work performed, be it in the field, or in the factory, or on a railway engine, is a service rendered to the community. And any attempt at measuring and valuing these services necessarily will be a failure.

Let us take a mine. Here you have miners extracting the coal from the seam; men and boys conducting the waggons to the bottom of the shaft; and the engineer who manages the engine for lifting the cages with coal and men. He has in his hand the handle of the engine, and for hours keeps his eye on an apparatus on the wall which shows him at what height or depth is the cage which runs at railway speed from the bottom of the shaft to its mouth and back. A second of negligence and the cage runs to the top of the wheel and destroys the whole machinery. Or let this man lose two or three seconds on each movement of the handle which he uses to stop the cage or to reverse its movement, and the daily output is reduced by from 50 to 100 tons. Well it seems as if he is the man who in the whole mine renders the greatest service. But will you value and remunerate his service ten times more highly than the service of the miner who is down in the mine and at every moment risks his life? Or, will you consider the man who gives the bell-signal for the movements of the cage as rendering the most useful service? Or may be the mining engineer who by making a slight error in his computations will lose the seam and make you extract stone instead of coal?

Whose services are greater? Those of the doctor at a typhoid patient's bed, or those of the nurse? Those of Eddison, or of the man in his laboratory who has discovered the best material for making the cylinder of the phonograph? Those of the engine-driver or of the signal-man?

Look round you. Analyse each work performed in society, however small, and compare it with thousands of other kinds of work done, and try to find out the measure, the true value of each respective work. I defy you to find it out.

Of course there are some sorts of work which at a given moment are more necessary than others. We may say, for instance, that so much of bread, meat, butter, tea, sugar, salt, and so on, must be reckoned as absolutely necessary; so much clothing and so many cubic feet of house room. And we may say that musical instruments and performances, books of fiction and science, newspapers, works of art and telescopes and microscopes, are so many necessities, but less urgent than the preceding. And we may therefore agree, all of us, to work five hours a day on primary necessities first, leaving the studies in art, science, and literature to the good will of each person, after having performed the most necessary work. Each community of peasants coming to cultivate a virgin soil would do this by free agreement. We see it constantly in Siberian colonies. The colonists say: Now we must first till and sow so many acres of land, and build our houses; and, as the time presses, we must work, say, 12 hours a day until it is done. Later on, they say: Now let us agree to work 5 hours a day for our common needs; and in the rest of his time everybody is free to do what he likes: to embroider towels, or to decorate his house; to read the Bible, or to play the violin.

I understand that a community might thus agree to work so many hours for necessities, and to specify what must be considered as necessary at a given moment. When the crop is going to be spoiled from want of harvesting, the most necessary work is to get the crop in. And when there is an epidemic of scarlet fever, the most necessary work may be nursing and the cleaning of the sewers. One year, gardening will be the great work of the season, and another year the manufacture of rails may be considered as the most necessary work. That can be agreed upon. But I cannot understand how it is possible to measure and to value in any kind of money the services rendered to society by those who take part in these various kinds of work. The only equitable means of sharing the produce of common work is according to everybody's needs. And that method of distribution is so inherent in human nature that we see it applied everywhere where individual appropriation does not prevent it.

Our friend Cafiero has once pointed out that in the family which

shares in common the produce of the work of all its members, the sharing according to needs is the rule. When bread and meat are in plenty, then everybody consumes just as much as he likes. But when there is scarcity, then the best piece is given not to him who has earned most, but on the contrary, to the feeblest; to the child who earns nothing yet, or to the old who earn nothing more.

And this principle is so natural that, as soon as men are brought by stress of circumstances to do something in common, forgetting *mine* and *thine*, they immediately resort to *needs* as the measure of each one's share. Nay, one of the most striking features of even the present society is that it so much feels the impossibility of living under purely individualist principles, that it constantly resorts to communist principles in order to correct the vices of the individualist organisation.

Take, for instance, the friendly societies which assure to every member a certain income in case of inability to work. The instalments paid to the society are alike for all members. But the payments they receive in case of disease or old age, are distributed according to needs.

Take public hospitals where for a uniform payment, or without any payment at all, each patient is again treated according to his needs.

During the earlier part of the mediæval times each commune practised communist principles to a very great extent. The produce of the labour of every gild was sold by the Commune or, later on, by the gild as a whole, and the gild took measures to secure the existence of each of its members. The agricultural commune also undertook to repair to a certain amount the evil done by the individualist system of payment by coming to the aid of each member according to his needs. The system has degenerated into the Poor Law of our times, which also is nothing but a corrective to the abominable conditions created by individualism.

In fact, millions and millions of people are now living under practically communistic conditions. When the Russian *mir* work in common on some public piece of land, they share the produce of the common labour according to needs, admitting as a foregone conclusion that in common work each worker has done his best.

And even the individualistic society of Western Europe admits that principle, as soon as work is done in common. We see it in besieged cities during war, or amongst the Swiss peasants when they go wood-cutting. If to-morrow some such circumstances occurred as would require an appeal to all the capacities of the Londoners for some public work, be persuaded that they would respond to the necessity, and immediately they would admit that the produce of their common toil must be shared according to every one's *needs*, not according to every one's share of *work*.

Work in common, with common tools, in a common building, and for the Commonwealth's sake, is a new form of work—an old one, I rather ought to say, from which humanity has been diverted by capitalism,—a new departure, at any rate, for the communities of our time.

This new organisation of work requires unavoidably a new form of political organisation which cannot be the Representative Government of the capitalist period.

And it requires also a new organisation of consumption, not a mere modification of the wage-system. The wage-system came into existence with Capitalism; it was its corollary or rather the very means of maintaining it. The wage-system means private ownership and private possession of the instruments of labour.

We are therefore of the opinion that those Socialists who refuse to recognise private ownership, but maintain the State, Representative Government, and the Wage-system, either commit a capital error in not perceiving that the wage-system (and representative government too) cannot be reconciled with the abolition of private property; or else, they do not foresee the abolition of private property to the extent we do, and, I must say, to the extent to which the workers mean to abolish it.

Permit me to conclude by a remark. As far as my own experience goes, I have always observed that workers with difficulty understand the possibility of a wage-system of labour-cheques and like artificial inventions of Socialists. But I have been struck on the contrary by the easiness with which they always accept Communist principles. If they do not always fully express and advocate these principles it is chiefly because they are always told by leaders whom they trust, that Communist principles are not applicable, that intermediate stages must be gone through, and the like. That has been my personal impression, and the other day while looking through the new edition of the Manifesto of the Communist party published in 1848, I found a confirmation of that impression.

Indeed Engels writes in the preface to the Manifesto that before '48 the Socialists were all kind of middle-class dreamers who proposed all kinds of palliative measures; while the mass of the workers were Communists. It seems to me that the same holds good for the workers at the present moment. They were and have remained Communists, and Communism is precisely the society for which, with more or less complete consciousness they look in the future.

In doing so they are quite right. Those who have let themselves be persuaded by bourgeois economists that articles are exchanged according to the amount of labour necessary for their production, may fancy that a system of labour-cheques would afford an outlet from the present difficulties. But the mass of the people will never be induced to agree with that system. Such a system could not act for even a few days after the houses, the soil, the factories, the mines, and the means of communication have been recognised as common property.

The very necessities of supplying food, clothes and shelter to *all* members of the community as soon as a revolutionary movement shall stop trade and commerce, will reduce the workers to resort at once to some

sort of partial Communism—as far as the necessities of existence are concerned. And this first step towards Communism will compel them to go further in the same direction.

They will be compelled to abandon the wage-system under whatever new forms it may be reintroduced. They will be compelled to proclaim that the needs of each member of the community must be the real measure of his share of the common produce.

ALL IN ALL.

When all the night is horrible with clamour
Of voiceless curses darker than the night,
When light of sun there is not, neither star-shine,
Nor any beacon on the hill of right,
Shine, O thou light of life, upon our pathway,
Freedom, be thou our light!

Since all life's ways are difficult and dreary,
And false steps echo through eternity,
And there is nought to lean on as we journey
By paths not smooth as downward ways would be,
We have no other help, we need no other,
Freedom, we lean on thee.

The slaves' base murmur and the threats of tyrants,
The voice of cowards who cringe and cry "Retreat!"
The whisper of the world, "Come where power calls thee!"
The whisper of the flesh, "Let life be sweet!"
Silence all these with thy divine commanding;
Guide thou thy children's feet.

For thee, for thee, we bear the cross, the banner,
For thee are all our battles fought and won,
For thee was every prayer we ever uttered,
For thee has every deed of ours been done;
To thee we press—to thee, triumphant splendour!
Oh, Freedom, lead us on!

Where thou shalt lead we do not fear to follow;
Thou hast our hearts, we follow them in thee;
Spirit of Light, whatever thou shalt show us,
Strong in the faith we shall not fear to see.
We reach to thee through all the waves of darkness
Of all the days to be.

E. N.

NOTES.

Daily open-air meetings of the unemployed in the middle of summer are an ominous comment on the recommendations just issued by the Committee of the House of Lords appointed to enquire into exceptional distress. With the heartless insolence of men in whom power and luxury have dried up all human sympathy, the Most Noble follow in the steps of Rehoboam's youthful counsellors and warn the administrators of that miserable travesty of social justice and brotherly love, the Poor Law, that they have erred on the side of sentimental leniency. Chastise the crime of poverty not with whips but with scorpions. Restrict out-door relief. Do away with labour yards. Do not meddle with relief works. Give no support to schemes for the succour of the unemployed. Make your casual wards still more like prisons. Such are the principal suggestions to local authorities offered by the men who have never known what it is to do a stroke of necessary work, or to want a meal, or to sicken with anxiety as they tramp day after day from one insolent employer to another in the vain search for a job; or to return weary and despairing to a fireless hearth and starving children.

* * *

From the bottom of our hearts we thank you, my lords, that so plainly you show the workers that they have no justice, no mercy to expect from you and your fellow property holders. Deliverance must come to every class, as to every individual, from within. It is you and such as you who are accentuating this universal teaching of experience for the working class throughout the world. Perhaps the anniversary of 1789 may do something to show you how far they have learnt the lesson.

* * *

The courtly brutality of the Lords Temporal is worthily supplemented by the hypocritical cynicism of the Lords Spiritual. "The Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion, held at Lambeth Palace," have just favoured the world with their views upon Socialism and the social crisis. "Excessive inequality in the distribution of this world's goods; vast accumulation and desperate poverty side by side, these suggest many anxious considerations to any thoughtful person," so deign to pronounce the Right Reverend Fathers in God in their "encyclical letter." But apparently their lordships' anxiety is for the propertied, rather than the poverty-stricken class. For the workers they have but the well-worn gospel of "thrift and self-restraint." For the wealthy they speak many comfortable words of suggestive and conscience-easing compromise. Co-operation, peasant proprietorship, state saving banks, boards of arbitration, sanitary acts, and such mild palliatives may safely be supported by a Christian man without endangering his soul. "The state may even encourage a wider distribution of property by the aboli-

tion of entail," or slightly vary the incidence of taxation. Whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil.

Meanwhile let the Socialists look to it. Though "Christianity sets forth no theory of the distribution of the instruments or products of labour," and the Church has the "deepest sympathy" with "the improvement of the material and moral condition of the poor," and though the right Reverend Prelates fully admit that "serving the poor and weak without special fee or reward, is the ideal set before us by our Divine Master," yet they, our spiritual guides, would most earnestly dissuade social reformers from any rash attempts to inconvenience them that are rich in this world; for "spoliation and injustice in any form is abhorrent alike to the sentiment and belief" of the Church. But what of the spoliation and injustice committed day by day when the workers are denied the right to work or robbed of the produce of their labour by the monopolists of land and capital? The Bishops say not. Of one thing only they are confident; the Church can never ally herself with Anarchists, or any Socialists who "consider private property a usurpation and wrong to the community," or, in fact, entertain any objection to the civil and religious order as now established. With the remainder "the clergy may enter into friendly relations, trying to understand their aims and methods"!

For us Communist-Anarchists the Anglican prelates have one word of bitterest reproach before they dismiss us for ever into the outer darkness where are "Atheists," and persons who "advocate loose doctrines as to family ties." "Anarchists seek to realise their aims, as far as they have any, by undisguised murder and robbery"; but this is not the worst. Later in the report it appears that we, undisguised robbers and murderers, have not only, like the Christians, an ideal, but also the unpardonable folly to believe that it means something attainable, and the audacity to strive towards it. Whereas the bishops "hold that there is no surer cause of failure in practical affairs, than the effort to act on an ideal which has not yet been realised" (*sic*). One wonders in what condition of pre-historic barbarism humanity would have been plunged to-day had every man shared the sceptical materialism of these churchmen.

THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY.

SINCE the publication of this book* Englishmen have for the first time the opportunity of learning the life and ideas, the sufferings and wrongs of the people of Russia. The voiceless, unknown masses of cultivators of the soil, 83 per cent of the whole population, have hitherto been vaguely pictured in English minds as a herd of coarse and brutalised semi-barbarians. In Stepniak's book they start into vivid reality as a nation of loveable and social human beings. Nay more, they appear before us as men whose social and personal development is in some directions wider than our own, men who bear a message of enlargement to the Teutons and Kelts of Western Europe.

In his previous works Stepniak has shown the English public how the Russian government persecutes and crushes out every attempt amongst the educated classes to gain freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of action; how it is the ruthless foe of all enlightenment, all reform; how this vast stronghold of darkness and tyranny is a threat and a danger to liberty and progress all over the world. We owe it to him more than to any one other writer that all this is engrained in the practical beliefs of the English people, so that "Russian Nihilist" is an equivalent for hero and saint amongst our workmen, and the dullest speaker at a meeting can evoke a murmur of applause by an allusion to the executioners of the late Alexander as easily as by a reference to Land Nationalisation. We Anarchists owe our Democratic Russian comrade a debt for the contempt he has poured on government.

But until Stepniak gave to the world his personal experience of his peasant countrymen and the fruits of his long and studious research into the conditions of their life, most Englishmen were ignorant of the motive force which has inspired the ardent faith and daring deeds of Russian revolutionists. They seemed to have devoted themselves for a principle, for an ideal freedom, for the deliverance of a comparatively small educated class. We had heard of their love for the People, but the description of that enthusiasm left us unmoved save by admiration for the men and women who entertained it.

Now we understand the enthusiasm itself. Stepniak has taught us to love the Russian People, and to shrink with indignant horror from the sacrifice of this mass of human beings to the selfish greed for wealth and power of a privileged class of rulers and officials. With an artist's skill he has painted for us the rugged life of the peasant, as beneath the heavy hand of imperial despotism, he is driven from the oppressive degradation of serfdom to the heartless demoralisation of wage-slavery. A life rough, bare, simple, uncultured as that of an English thrawl of the Middle Ages. A life of strenuous unbroken toil and continual hardship, surpassing in its exertion and its poverty that of the most luckless proletarian of modern times. And yet a life grand with patient endurance and deep-seated self-respect, dignified by willing, self-directed industry, and the love of work for work's sake. A life enlarged by public cares and public responsibilities and socialised by common possessions and common interests.

For four centuries the Russian peasant was a serf. To-day he is often compelled to be a wage-slave. Yet, in a sense, he is in a position of far greater independence and dignity than the most fortunate English

workman. He still lives in the traditions of a free past where public affairs were the direct personal affairs of all and were settled by the unanimous consent of all concerned. He has his equal voice with his fellows in the village *mir* which manages all local business. He is still partially his own master, his own employer. He is in personal possession of the means of production. For the majority (73 per cent.) of peasants still live under the ancient communal land system, and as members of a village community are joint owners of the land they till, Thus it comes about that they retain so much of a free man's self-respect, his intense interest in his labour, his love for the soil.

"We are yours but the land is ours," said the peasants to their lords when serfdom was established, and they retain this conception of their relation to the land down to the present time. "Russian peasants," writes Stepniak, "hold that land, being an article of universal need, made by nobody, ought not to become property in the usual sense of the word. It naturally belongs to, or, more exactly, it should remain in the undisturbed possession of those by whom, for the time being it is cultivated." In 1863, when the Emancipation Act was passed, the peasants believed that the land stolen from them by the nobles, would be restored.

Needless to say that the Russian government had no such idea. The masters were allowed to remain in legal possession of the greater part of their estates. Small slices, saddled with a heavy redemption tax, were doled out to the village communes, and the peasants have been engaged from that day to this in a desperate struggle to make both ends meet. A losing fight, in which village after village has fallen into the hands of usurers and been compelled to lease out its common lands to capitalists and work on its own soil as the wage-slaves of the new masters. Under the old lords, the serfs were at least allowed enough land to feed and clothe themselves; the "free" peasantry are being slowly starved to death. The exactions of the tax-gatherer force them to sell or mortgage their tools, their crops, their cattle, until many a communal land-owner and member of the village council is driven to wander through the country in winter with a sack on his shoulders, asking from peasants only less destitute than himself "morsels" wherewith to feed his children.

Each village is collectively responsible for its impossibly heavy redemption fees, and where these are not forthcoming, the government officials apply a process graphically described as "the flogging out of arrears," until the necessary sum is exacted, and frequently the peasants are left without even seed for their spring sowing, obliged to pledge their next summer labour in advance to some large proprietor, or village usurer, that they may obtain wherewithal to subsist through the winter.

Under the patronage and protection of government (in Russia as elsewhere the agent of the exploiting classes) economic individualism is running the old Socialism hard. Bank credit and the manipulation of the paper currency put a tremendous power into the hands of speculators wherewith to take advantage of the needs of the village cultivators and obtain their corn and cattle at almost nominal prices when they are hard pressed by the tax-gatherer and local usurer. And this happens every year, for the peasants pay 83 per cent. of the imperial taxes and the burden on their land is often considerably above the value of its yearly produce. In Kazan the taxes amount to 300 per cent. To pay these monstrous taxes, for which they are held collectively responsible, the village commune is forced in bad years to borrow from some *koulak* (local usurer). Stepniak gives a telling example of this ruinous mode of proceeding.

"In the Novousen district the peasants of the village of Spendorf, being in great distress during the winter of 1880 borrowed from a clergyman named K., £700, undertaking to pay him in eight months £1,050 (50 per cent.) on condition that in case of default they should give Mr. K. pending repayment, 3,500 dessiatines of their arable land at an annual rent of ten copecks per dessiatine. As the peasants were unable to fulfil their engagement, Mr. K. received the 3,500 dessiatines for 350 roubles and forthwith relet the land to the peasants themselves at the normal rent, which in this province is about 10s. per dessiatine. Thus he obtained £1,715 on a capital of £700, or interest at the rate of about 250 per cent. a year!"

Individual peasants scrape through their difficulties by giving themselves into *kabala* (bondage) *i.e.*, pledging their summer labour at starvation rates to some large proprietor or capitalist, sometimes for years in advance. Almost all work, during the winter, for hours as long as those of the victim of the London sweater, at some petty trade, mat making for instance, or (but these are a small minority, less than half a million) enter factories for part of the year. The usual length of the working day, according to the latest report, is 12 hours in Russian factories, but in some of them men and women are forced to labour 20 hours out of the 24.

No wonder that under such conditions as these a class of profit and interest mongering usurers and capitalists and a class of landless proletarians is growing up in Russia. No wonder that the death rate in Central Russia reached in 1882 sixty-two per thousand per annum, the birth rate being only forty-five. No wonder that we hear continually of peasant outbreaks and "Jewish outrages," which are frequently desperate revolts against the tyranny of village usurers, or a refusal to pay impossible taxes. No wonder that the government punishes with the cruelty of guilty terror all who attempt to draw public attention to these wrongs and miseries. No wonder that the revolutionary party are animated by a fierce and implacable hatred of the system which is ruining the mass of the Russian people in body and mind.

We propose next month to give our readers some few of Stepniak's graphic details of the social life and religious ideas of the Russian peasants.

* "The Russian Peasantry, their agrarian condition, social life and religion." By Stepniak. Swan, Sonnenschein & Co.

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM.

ENGLAND.

Already the unemployed are driven into an open manifestation of their misery. During the last fortnight in August they have been meeting in small knots in Hyde Park, and latterly the little groups have begun to swell into considerable meetings, energetically addressed by various Socialist comrades and calling for the fraternal attention of the "moral miracles." No doubt we shall presently hear that "I, Charles Warren," forbid public meetings in the parks as well as the Square and the streets. Meanwhile the metropolitan poor law returns show a higher rate of pauperism than ever, and the trades unions report between 3 and 4 per cent of skilled and organised workers unemployed even in the middle of summer. A continually increasing number of the citizens of London are sinking into a state of permanent distress, and the governing classes, Tory and Liberal, do not know what to do to prevent it. Yet the conviction is growing amongst "the dregs of the metropolis" that their wretchedness can be prevented, and that the Socialists know how. Wherever two or three unemployed workmen gather together nowadays, there is one amongst them who is something of a Socialist, and even the vaguest sort of Socialism is a gleam of hope that can give courage to despair. If the Tories carry out their last winter's policy of suppressing public meetings it is possible that Warren may yet succeed in provoking the revolutionary outbreak from which he believes it his mission to save this country.

The Yarmouth police are setting a spirited example. They are driving the Socialists off the Church Plain, an open space which is used unmolested by teetotallers and the Salvation Army. Comrade Poynts of the Socialist League, has been thrown into prison for speaking at a recent meeting there. The League have for some time been carrying on a most successful propaganda in the eastern counties. Hence the police activity probably.

IRELAND

Before leaving London to enjoy his unearned repose, Salisbury delivered an address, in the usual self-gratulatory style peculiar to Prime Ministers, at a Mansion House banquet to an audience of over-fed city fathers, wherein he made the following surprising assertion: "In respect to Ireland I may confidently claim that we have made great progress and achieved great results. I claim that the present Government has been successful in this, that it has diminished the tyranny which illegal associations exercised over their neighbours, that it has increased the sanctity which contracts possessed in their country. . . . From 1st July last year to 1st July of the present year, the number of those who were subjected to that atrocious system, which has been named boycotting, was diminished from 4,800 to 1,300." We shall say nothing of Government statistics, that like a dickey can always be clapped at the shortest notice over the dirtiest shirt, but go on to the Irish eviction and prison record for the month of August and let them speak for themselves.

Evictions have been carried on with the greatest vigour in Clare and Wexford. In the former country they are distinguished for the extreme brutality on the part of the evictors, in the latter they are notable for the determined resistance of the evicted. Not that the Vandeleur tenants have not shown vigour in the defence of their homes, for with such simple means as copious discharges of boiling water the fixing of the ram was made in many cases the work of hours. We note with pleasure that Colonel Turner and Cecil Roche got some of the hot water whilst urging on their miserable tools to the work of desolation. These gentlemen have instructed the police under their command to baton freely on effecting an entrance wherever the slightest resistance is shown, and the manner in which such instructions have been carried out evokes comment from even the Government newspapers in Dublin. The *Daily Express* describes the eviction of an old man named Simon Connell, thus: when the police got in they used their batons to such effect that "the resisting party was soon laid prostrate. When brought out old Connell presented an awful appearance; he was unconscious, his head covered with blood, and his young son was in a condition almost as bad. Both lay on the ground prostrate for half an hour." Finally the father was conveyed to Kilrush hospital, where he lies in a very dangerous state. The son, after rallying, was conveyed to prison under a strong escort of military.

Cecil Roche during such scenes as this sits on an adjacent wall waiting for the wounded struggling peasant to be dragged handcuffed before him that he may give the order for his committal to jail, whilst Colonel Turner in his capacity of generalissimo of the Clare evictors, gives orders for the workers of the battering-ram to stand at ease for amateur photographers to take impressions of the cabin walls as they crumble into picturesqueness.

In this district a piteous story unfolded itself at an inquest held on the body of an old woman, who literally died of grief after the eviction of her family. They had defended themselves as best they could and one son was carried off to jail afterwards. The poor mother distracted with excitement and sorrow took it into her head that her boy had been killed during the attack on their home, and so fretted herself out of this hard world. At the inquest a legal personage was sent down from the Castle to cross-examine the witnesses. However the coroner promptly refused to permit any such impertinence.

All rascaldom, it seems, cannot crush the spirit of these Clare men. Here is Matt Kelly, who has been spending some days in Limerick Jail for daring to help some of the Vandeleur tenants barricade their homes, no sooner out of prison than the folk of Kilduane assemble to do him honour by drawing home a good store of turf and building a fine stone outhouse for him.

The Wexford men have in the matter of scientific defence set an example to all their countrymen. At Coolroe a man named Somers having vainly tried to come to terms with his landlord, a curmudgeon of eighty, prepared to receive bailiffs, etc., in this wise. He and eleven neighbours dug trenches four feet deep about the house and threw up high earthworks. When the attacking-party arrived and tried to set up the ram it was caught from within by strong grappling-irons which rendered it perfectly useless. Emergency-men advanced with scaling ladders, which were no sooner reared than they were shoved down by stout poles and stouter arms. An American gentleman at this crisis came forward and offered to pay down half the rent, but was curtly told by the landlord that he did not permit strangers to interfere with his business. Magistrate Considine then ordered fifty police to charge, with their batons, up the earthworks. This they did repeatedly only to be driven back, most of them wounded. Twenty were then ordered to fix bayonets and charge, and these succeeded in getting upon the roof, through which they plunged their bayonets in order to reach the inmates; but vigorous thrusts from within sent them toppling to the ground one by one. A similar charge by twenty more was also routed. The landlord again asked to come to terms, again declined, saying he wanted his land. At last about 6 p.m. a corner of the house was seen to be on fire and the Redmonds, M.P.s, and Canon Doyle fearing for the safety of Somers and his friends, entreated the inmates to yield, which they did, marching out honourably with loud cheers for the Plan of Campaign. Of course they were speedily handcuffed and despatched to jail, bail being refused. But, as William O'Brien points out, "every hour's delay at an eviction is an hour gained for a hundred neighbours"; for it must be remembered there are scores of landlords only waiting for the loan of the Government forces to turn out of house and home honest men than themselves.

And not only in fighting, but also in fraternity are the Wexford men well to the fore. On Sunday, Aug. 19th a large meeting assembled at Arklow, in spite of the balfourian weather, to protest against the Carysfort and other evictions going on in their county, and to inaugurate a fund, headed by a cheque for £100, for the evicted.

Whether it is that the jails are at present full, or the Government is trying

some new mean dodge, cannot be clearly made out, but the number imprisoned was very small last month. Eleven cases were dismissed, 18 adjourned, 17 admitted to bail, and 2 sent for appeal. Those more honoured in being sentenced were: 4 for intimidation (3 of them boys); retaining possession, 2; obstructing bailiffs, 7; unlawful assembly, 12; assaulting bailiffs and police in home-defence, 2; "moral obstruction" of blood tax, 6; trying to prevent collision between police and people at a seizure for blood-tax, 1 (6 months); taking and keeping forcible possession, 1. Thirty-four in all.

Twelve men of Meelin on offering to surrender to their bail found that no one was prepared or seemed in any way desirous of taking them into custody.

The trial of the Loughrea prisoners has been postponed for another month owing to the quashing of the jury panel, reluctantly done by Judge O'Brien, but the packing was so shameful that even he had to admit the objection of the prisoners' counsel.

"Constabulary duty" includes the offering of bribes to witnesses, so said Removable Beckett on the hearing of the oft-deferred Castlereagh conspiracy case. This Removable remands Coercion prisoners for a month because he happens not to be in the vein to hear cases after 12 o'clock mid-day.

Balfour has actually addressed an open-air meeting in Ireland. It took place within the walls of the Constabulary Depot, Phoenix Park, Dublin, his auditors being 400 policemen, mostly recruits, the theme for his eloquence being vague hints of rewards for brutalities past and to come, but no cheering is reported as having followed his remarks. Poor Balfour! he complains bitterly of the criticisms of the press on every little fiddle-faddle of his administration, whilst his predecessors in office did quite as bad if not worse and were unnoticed.

The Lord Chief Baron has been "at it again." This time he actually gave judgment against the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and in favour of one of his tenants. Londonderry claimed £93 rent and the Chief Baron made an order for the payment of £51 odd, which he thought, "fully met the justice of the case."

FRANCE.

During the last month Paris was agitated by a strike which at one time threatened to spread into the provinces and to become general. It has failed through sheer lack of funds, but the amount of revolutionary feeling manifested, especially in Paris, promises the outbreak of serious economic disturbances in France before long.

The Municipal Council of Paris pay navvies at the rate of 6d. an hour, the other employers, including those engaged in preparing for next year's exhibition to commemorate the Revolution of 1789, pay only 5d. The navvies struck for a uniform rate of 6d. an hour; the employers refused to yield. The matter was taken up by the Labour Bureau lately established by the Municipal Council, acting under the influence of the Socialistic Workmen's Party. The Socialists warmly took up the cause of the strikers, the Labour Bureau became the head-quarters of the strike committee. There was talk of a general strike. The waiters in the coffee houses, who are quite a brotherhood in Paris, took the opportunity to strike against the miserable exploitation to which they are subjected. The hair-dressers assistants demanded the abolition of the registry offices which fleece every man seeking a place by extortionate charges and bribes. Many of the workers engaged in petty trades joined in the agitation. There were street manifestations, quickly turned by the police into street rows all over Paris. The navvies paraded about inciting their comrades to join the strike and overturning the loaded carts of those who refused. The agitation grew and grew and was only checked for want of funds. The Socialists called upon the Municipal Council to vote £800 to support the strike; they refused and the Blanquist party, who had energetically espoused the cause of the strikers, called a public meeting to protest. At that meeting General Eudes, the Blanquist leader, fell down dead in the midst of his speech.

Eudes was a popular man in Paris. He had taken part with Blanqui in his attempt to overthrow the Empire in 1870 (L'affaire Villette) and was condemned to death for it, but the people liberated him on the 4th of September. He left his prison to take a prominent part in the Commune the next spring. His funeral accordingly was attended by the workmen of Paris *en masse*, including the strikers whose cause he had been advocating when he died.

The ultra red republican government of Floquet prepared for this popular demonstration by sending for the country gens d'armes (sort of unmounted constabulary carrying rifles and bayonets, and as insolent as their Irish compeers) and ordering the police to make free use of their swords and revolvers. Of course a disturbance ensued; the police charged the people with drawn swords, some fired; upwards of 60 persons men, women and children, were wounded, amongst them a mother with a baby in her arms, and some boys. The police of the XI Arrondissement, who had evidently celebrated the occasion by over copious draughts of wine and absinthe, distinguished themselves by charging a woman with a perambulator! In fact, the moral miracles of Paris contrived to outdo their brethren of Trafalgar Square celebrity, and even the middle class press agree in calling their exploits a butchery. Many harmless and innocent persons were of course arrested and some of them made scape-goats of law and order in the manner to which London police-magistrates have so well accustomed us.

During the "riots" one noteworthy circumstance occurred. A tin of something unpleasant, supposed to be a dynamite bomb which did not explode, was thrown amongst the police, by an unknown hand.

La Révolte remarks, "If it were a bomb or not, and if the bomb was thrown by the hands of a police agent, an anarchist, or some other revolutionist, we do not know and we do not care. Only if it is the Prefecture of Police which has taken into its head to have a sham bomb thrown into a crowd of policemen to sanction its own brutalities, it seems to us to be employing means very dangerous to itself, and undertaking the task of teaching its adversaries what tactics to employ against itself. Every one could, like ourselves, read in the evening papers the dramatic story of the bomb thrown into a narrow space where a hundred constables were crowded together, and think as we thought, What damage would it have done had it exploded? Then further reflections, according to the degree of one's sympathy with the defenders of capital. More than one must have asked himself if, supposing a dozen of such toys were to explode during a police charge, it would not be enough to cause those not left on the pavement to turn tail and to take from them the desire to be saddled with any more such dirty jobs as that they had been engaged in."

Since the above was written two bombs have exploded in Paris, about which the police profess to be utterly in the dark. One did some damage to the basement of one of the obnoxious registry offices.

Considerable strikes have taken place in the provinces, especially at Lyons, Amiens and Calais. At the last place the workmen, amongst whom were our comrades Masson and Sauvage, showed fight when the police attempted to interfere with their street manifestations. Masson struck down the officer who tried to arrest him and succeeded in making good his escape from "justice."

The next Freedom Discussion Meeting will take place at 13 Farringdon Road, E.C., on Friday, September 14, at 8.30 p.m. The discussion on "Work and the Distribution of Wealth," will be reopened by Alfred Marsh, in a paper on "Work and Social Utility."

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.

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