

Freedom

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IS COMMUNISM JUST?

THE letter from our Spanish correspondent which we print this month is especially interesting, containing as it does an explanation of the differences existing between the two schools of Anarchists who in Spain are fighting side by side against the capitalist foe. We of course are Communists. We do not believe it either possible, just or expedient to reward individuals strictly according to their performances, and we believe that any attempt to do so must inevitably prove unsatisfactory to the world at large. Science tells us that the development of all animals, including man, depends upon the environment. A man is what is termed bad or good, dull or clever, idle or industrious, just in proportion as his environment is favourable to the growth of the desirable or the undesirable qualities. A boy or girl who is dragged up in a slum cannot be expected to follow the path of virtue and industry. A man who never has a chance to hear good music, to see fine paintings, to read noble-spirited books, must necessarily be dwarfed in his intellectual character. A man who has no leisure, but toils on hour after hour, day after day, week after week and year after year with hardly any intermission, cannot be expected to have wide views and comprehensive knowledge. Therefore communists demand, not that all men shall be reduced to one dead level, but that all men shall have an equal opportunity to progress, that they shall be hampered in no way in their desire to advance, which means not only that they shall have the most complete freedom of thought, speech and action, but that they shall have food, clothing, housing and everything else they require up to the limit of production. Who knows what undeveloped talent there is stowed away at the present time in the minds of those myriads of workers who, chained so to speak to their work, have no opportunities. We workers at any rate know that there are some great capacities amongst us, lost because of the present slavery, and we believe that if we were free and untrammelled the world would progress with gigantic bounds, and all these cramped intelligences would shed light upon our pathway. Our Collectivist friends appear to think that some of the workers will try to shirk their fair share of the necessary work in a society where their wants would be supplied whether they work or not. Our position is that we do not think so. It is not natural for a man to be idle, and if the work of the community is made light and agreeable as it ought to be and can be, it will be regarded as a pleasure. Of course there may be individuals, suffering from the bad conditions under which they and their ancestors have lived who will interfere in some way with the harmonious working of a free society, and in the transitional revolutionary period communities and individuals may sometimes be obliged in self-defence to make it their rule that "He who will not work neither shall he eat." It is not always possible for us to act up to our principles, and just as to-day necessity compels us to pay rent, interest and taxes and to contribute profit to the capitalist coffers, so to-morrow expediency may force us to confine our communism to those who are willing to be our brothers and equals. But we do not think that many individuals would be willing to incur the contempt which the community would bestow upon an able-bodied shirker.

SPANISH ANARCHISM.

(From our Collectivist Anarchist Correspondent in Barcelona.)

A HAPPY thought was that of exchanging correspondence between *Freedom* and *El Productor*, for by it we have caused an exchange of ideas and of impressions amongst the workers for the Social Revolution in two countries which are separated both by distance and language. It will be to our mutual advantage and will bring about the abandonment of prejudices on the part of both peoples and the adoption of a common ideal both in its general features and as regards details.

To-day in addressing ourselves to London so as to communicate with the workers who speak the English language, we feel a deep satisfaction, for our present relations are born of liberty, they are Anarchist; they are very different from those which at the commencement of our revolutionary life we had with the General Council of the International, for they were a superior body and they were authoritarians.

We discuss then freely without needing a dogmatic go-between, and consequently we have for our audience all the English and Spanish workers who are interested in the solution of the social problem.

In order to satisfy your doubts as to the meanings we give to the words Collectivism and Communism, I think it will be useful to trans-

late a few lines of the article which, in No. 148 of *El Productor*, we gave as a reply to your letter inserted in No. 147. It is as follows:

COLLECTIVISM AND COMMUNISM.

Our comrades at London it appears do not thoroughly understand the difference which exists between the two forms which Anarchism takes in Spain—Collectivist and Communist. We have stated it several times, but we repeat it as we desire to be understood by our English friends.

Collectivists and Communists wish for Anarchy—the total absence of Government; collective or common property in the earth and the instruments of work; that is to say the human being free in a free society; the material for work and the tools by which it may be worked at the disposal of all; or what comes to the same thing complete liberty to satisfy all our wants, material, moral and intellectual. The only difference existing between the one and the other economical school is that the Collectivists believe that the producer ought to receive the whole product of his work, whilst the Communists think that the formula "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," is the best rule for an Anarchist society.

The Communists in opposition to the Collectivist theory say that it is not possible to determine scientifically the value of work and add that if by a convention we succeeded in establishing this value, there would be through the variety of ability and habits amongst men an absence of social equilibrium which would give more happiness to those who are protected by nature and would restrict the less fortunate, thus creating rich and poor as in the present society.

The Collectivists reply that if the human being ought to be ruled by his wants this theory is neither scientific nor just, because an individual is able impudently to abuse the good will of the majority; that is to say the wants of those who make the least sacrifices will be satisfied to excess and the smallest amount of enjoyment will fall to the ablest and the most active, and thus also will be produced an absence of equilibrium.

As to the fundamental bases of an Anarchist society, Spanish Collectivists and Communists are of one mind. The only difference between the two consists in the economic details we have referred to. I will not now speak any further on this matter, but if another occasion should call for it, I will again deal with it.

Place no reliance upon the sensational news in the capitalist press. The affair of Sueca concerning which you question us was nothing at all. The political situation as regards the monarchy is rather disturbed, but the workers are indifferent on this matter.

The Anarchist group Benevento started the idea of celebrating the anniversary of the first Anarchist insurrection in Italy, with the result that a great number of Anarchists from Barcelona and the neighbourhood have had a fraternal meeting at a country resort, at which speeches were made for the revolutionary propaganda and received with great enthusiasm.

At the present moment the idea is being circulated at the suggestion of the group "The Eleventh of November," of commemorating at Barcelona the anniversary of the sacrifice of the Chicago martyrs by holding an Anarchist literary conference.

The revolutionary enthusiasm is ever growing, although there are no sensational events, and the Spanish workers are always anxious to commence the work of social emancipation. They will not be behind-hand when the time comes to co-operate with the revolutionary workers of the rest of the world.

THE ITALIAN REVOLTS.

(From our Italian Correspondent.)

THE strikes which have broken out during the last month amongst the Milanese peasants are by far the most ominous sign of the approaching Revolution. Considering on the one hand the destitution and the subjection in which the men have been plunged for centuries, and on the other the formidable array of military and other forces dispatched against them, the victory they have just snatched is to be reckoned amongst the greatest achievements of the kind, an achievement which in other times the popular imagination would have wrapped in poetical garb and attributed to the intervention of a supernatural power representing to their minds the fatality of justice.

These poor men were so thoroughly full of enthusiasm for their cause, which they rightly considered to be the cause of all their suffer-

ing brothers, that every one of them was something of a poet. They uttered their complaints in rude but expressive verses; they formulated their demands in the same fashion. Their songs, different according to locality, but all embodying the same aspirations, all announcing the end of the reign of the master, and the resumption of the land and wealth by those who toil, emboldened them to attack the houses of the hated proprietors, to make an inroad on the municipality; those songs celebrated the triumph and the destruction, in the public squares, of the signs and emblems of the tyranny of the classes; those songs encouraged them to resist the assaults of the police, to face the guns of the soldiers, and to support, without wavering, the loss of many amongst them murdered by the troops, and the imprisonment of many more. Those songs, of which one verse is worth many volumes of the poetry of our "great" poets, sprang from the heart of each one of them, combined them together in the hour of action, and remain now to them as a remembrance and at the same time a promise. When before the tribunal of Milan, where many strikers were dragged and convicted, a most beautiful poem was read which had been heard during the revolt. It was thought necessary by the vigilant consuls to find out the author of such a dangerous weapon of disorder, and it turned out to be a girl 13 years old, who used to pour forth in beautiful verses the sorrow with which her own miseries and those of her fellow slaves filled her heart.

Enough has been said to show the moral character of the revolt. Let us now deal with its economical side. It was less the 40 or 45 centimes (4d. or 4½d.) for a day's work, which aroused the spirits of the men, than the practical abuse, and the unbargained-for usury of the proprietors, who would not pay them one farthing, if they could help it. This is how they succeeded in their end with regard to the silk-worm industry. The men gave work and capital, the proprietors had only to gather half the produce for themselves. But they had also retained the right of selling it; and thus, not only did they name the price they liked in their accounts with the peasants, but they actually did put the entire price in their pocket. Evidently only two hypotheses were possible: either the workman was indebted to his proprietor, as it only too often happened, or not. In the first case, the proprietor pocketed the portion due to the peasant to pay himself; and in the second case he pocketed it likewise to guarantee himself for debts to come. The result of this ingenious proceeding was to keep the peasants working always, without giving them even a penny!

This may seem extraordinary; yet it is more usual than is believed. The apparent terms of the labour contract are constantly set aside by parasites, who take off any advantage which the so-called free competition of the labour-market may have given to the workmen. There is a law more powerful than the said economical laws; and that is the will of the master. It is not a question, between him and his victim, of contract, more or less free, but of custom and of sheer force. This force, now entirely on one side, is gradually accumulating on the other, as is shown by the Italian revolts. No one may consider the succession, frequency and radical bearing of these revolts, without thinking that there is something rotting and breaking up in the present society, and that a tremendous revolution is near at hand.

EVENTS IN FRANCE.

(From our Paris correspondent.)

THE Socialist movement at Paris is not at the present moment very apparent. The Exhibition coming after eight years of severe crisis has caused everything to be forgotten, and the fact is that its success is very great; everybody agrees that it greatly surpasses that of 1878. The fall will only be the greater. Nevertheless, those who have forgotten their misery for the moment—in this Athenian town of Paris people are so variable—recognise that it is only a short respite. The general idea is that the end of the year will not pass away without a great shock of some kind.

Jules Ferry, who has become the most unpopular man in France, made his reappearance the other day in the tribune of the Palais Bourbon. It is the first time he has been able to get a hearing there since the defeat of Lang-son (Tonquin) which brought about the fall of his ministry. In his speech he enumerated rather cleverly the expenses which the republican government had gone to on behalf of the public instruction, and he finished by addressing to the reactionaries of the Right an appeal for conciliation and for religious peace. This part of his speech was received with the most icy disdain; the Right has now in General Boulanger a future ally whom it greatly prefers to Jules Ferry and Jules Simon. Two days afterwards, Clemenceau, the ex-leader of the Extreme Left, made a speech in reply, saying that between the civil society and the religious community no conciliation was possible. How the times have changed! His speech which three years ago would have been much commented upon in the press and enthusiastically received by the public, has been scarcely noticed. It is too well understood that the harangues of Ferry and Clemenceau are only the declamations of charlatans intended to have an influence for the general elections, and that as soon as the sitting was terminated, the two mountebanks who pretend to be rivals would shake hands behind the scenes.

At Havre a meeting organised by the Boulangists terminated in a very disorderly way. The Anarchists who could not get a hearing took possession of the platform, although they were only a handful and the Boulangists had filled the hall with their paid and drilled men. In the scuffle the organisers of the meeting, including the Bonapartist Millevoye, received some nasty knocks. Another Boulangist meeting was an-

nounced to be held at Angoulême. When they arrived at this town in the midst of a noisy manifestation, Laguerre, Laisant and Déroulède were arrested and only released at the end of several days. These scenes are only the prelude of others far more grave, which will take place in October at the general elections. Such are the beauties of universal suffrage!

The strike of the weavers of Lyons and the neighbourhood, which had terminated, appears to have recommenced with renewed strength. This renewal is, as is always the case, solely due to the employers who have not fulfilled the promises they had made. At Thizy and in the neighbourhood some thousands of workers are also on strike: they are armed with clubs and are animated by very energetic intentions. Some scuffles have already taken place, and the authorities sent in haste for the military, but only with great difficulty has order been maintained. The employers have made fresh promises which evidently they will not keep any better than their previous ones.

All this time the parliamentary socialists prepare congress after congress. All the chiefs and underlings of the various staffs, all the would-be deputies and municipal councillors fill up the papers with their communications which are like prospectuses. Possibilists, Marxists, Blanquists, Radicals, are all delighted at the thought of the fine oratorical jousts which are about to commence. As to the unknown crowd who have no Congress, as to the workers whose average salary is 2s. 6d. a day, as to the work girls who get about 1s. 2d. a day, they must do as best they can; the essential matter is that the names and the persons of our future rulers are brought prominently forward. "Our future rulers," have I said? No, these incapables, full of ambition, will never become that! The middle-class republic is falling to pieces day by day and certainly these puppets will not be able to renew its life. The struggle will be between liberty and tyranny, without any half-way measures. If the Anarchists do not show themselves able to cope with the coming events, firm, clear-sighted, indefatigable, resolved to conquer at all hazards, we shall have—and who knows for how many years?—a revival of Cesarism.

THE WORKERS OF SOUTH AFRICA.

(From a Correspondent at Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony.)

THE condition of the working class in this country is peculiar and by no means favourable to its conversion to Socialism. The coloured portion of the proletariat is semi-barbarous and quite innocent of radical, to say nothing of socialist ideas. The white portion, relatively small in number compared with the employing and profit-mongering class, scattered among their coloured competitors, and afflicted with race and colour prejudices and jealousies, are hardly more accessible to enlightened and progressive ideas. Nothing arouses them to more than a temporary and languid interest; the monotonous round of work and sensual gratification seems to absorb all their energies. Nowhere has Mother Grundy more dutiful disciples: "Gentility" and "Respectability" are fetishes which none dare affront, and consequently churches and chapels are well attended by those who are neither serious enough for faith nor earnest enough for practice.

Nevertheless the recent increase of immigration owing to the opening of new gold fields and the consequent displacement of population will probably do much to introduce more modernised European notions as well as a more robust spirit. A number of Scotch fishermen have lately been brought out to this port to work the cargo boats used in landing and shipping; they are a fine body of men, and intelligent enough to perceive that they have been duped. They had been informed that there were no boatmen in these parts, but find that—although many of the more experienced ones had left for the gold fields disgusted with the terms forced upon them at the close of the strike which took place some time ago—there are still enough of all colours left to form a reserve labour army awaiting the call of their exploiters.

The most hopeful sign which I can see in connection with the public mind is the growing disgust and aversion with which politics are regarded; the electoral farce is more and more looked upon as a clumsy trick to delude people into the hope that *their* interests will be consulted and safeguarded, and thus it is that abstention is widely practised, not in consequence of any organised action, but simply through an overwhelming sense of the futility of voting.

We have two parliamentary "representatives" for this town, the one a supporter, the other an opponent of the present ministry; consequently their votes neutralise one another and the place is practically disfranchised. Yet these two men are simultaneously returned, *without opposition*, election after election; though at the same time you might interrogate twenty working men, or, for that matter, men of any other class, before you would find one who had a good word to say for either. Can the absurdity of the representative system be more strikingly displayed! Representative government is no longer on its trial with us; it is already condemned and awaiting execution. When the fires of the approaching Social Revolution shall have warmed our blood, this system will perish together with all other frauds, tyrannies, and monopolies, both governmental and social.

THE USE OF A VOTE.

THE following is the translation of a letter written by the well-known geographer, Elisée Reclus, to a French Socialist Society. Parliamentary Socialists who think to change the condition of the world by dropping

a small piece of paper into an opening in a box, will be wise if they read it carefully and then think over it. Prejudice and error can only be removed from the minds of men by the earnest consideration of the arguments and ideas of opponents. Therefore we invite all honest men, well-wishers of humanity, to give these few lines their attention.

"Comrades,—You ask a man of good will, who is neither a voter nor a candidate, to lay before you his ideas upon the exercise of the electoral right. The time which you allow me for so doing is very short, but having very decided ideas with respect to the suffrage, what I have to say can be stated in few words. To vote is to abdicate. To nominate one or several masters, for a short or for a long period, is to renounce one's own sovereignty. Whether he becomes absolute monarch, constitutional prince, or simply delegate furnished with a small share of sovereign power, the candidate whom you raise to the throne or to the parliamentary seat will be your superior. You nominate men who will be above the laws because they claim to make them, and because their work is to make you obey. To vote is to be a dupe. It is to believe that men like yourselves can acquire suddenly, as at the sounding of a bell, the faculty of knowing and understanding everything. Your representatives having to legislate on all manner of subjects, from the removing of maggots from trees to the extermination of black or red races of men, it appears to you that their intelligence must expand in proportion to the immensity of their task. History teaches that the opposite will take place. Power has always maddened, prating has always befooled. In sovereign assemblies mediocrity prevails fatally. To vote is to invite treachery. No doubt the voters believe in the honesty of those to whom they give their votes, and perhaps they are right for the first day, while the candidates are still in the fervour of their first love. When the surroundings change, the man changes with them. To-day the candidate bows to you, perhaps too low; to-morrow he will draw himself up probably too high. He begged your vote, now he will give you orders. When the working man becomes foreman, can he continue to be what he was before he gained the favour of his employer? Does not the fiery democrat learn to bow down when the banker deigns to invite him to his office, or when royal flunkies do him the honour of entertaining him in antichambers? The atmosphere of legislative bodies is unhealthy; if you send your delegates into an infected place, do not be astonished if they come out corrupted. Then do not abdicate: do not confide your destinies to men who are necessarily incapable of protecting your interests and who will betray them in the future. Do not vote! In place of confiding your interests to others, defend them yourselves; in place of getting lawyers to propose a mode of future action, act! Opportunities are not wanting to men of good will. To cast upon others the responsibility of one's conduct is to be wanting in courage."

LETTERS BETWEEN WORKMEN.

From JOHN B. to WILLIAM C.

AN EXPLANATION OF COMMUNISM.

DEAR WILLIAM,—I am glad to know that you are getting interested in the social question and want me to go into details, and it will give me very great pleasure to lay before you in as clear a manner as I can the reasons why I am a Communist and an Anarchist. All genuine Socialists you must know are Communists whether they call themselves Anarchists or Social Democrats, but the Social Democrats are authoritarians and the Anarchists free Communists. Before, however, I go into the distinctions between these two classes of Socialists, permit me to explain the meaning of Communism.

We Communists believe in Equality and Solidarity. We do not desire as has been suggested by some of our opponents to make every man the same height and fix his mind at the same degree of intelligence, but we do desire that everyone should have equal opportunities to develop his body and mind in the most satisfactory manner. Superiorities none, capacities different, is the Communist conception of equality. The ability of men does not vary to the startling degree some would have us believe. One man may be an abler writer than another who may excel him as a speaker. An authority on agriculture may know absolutely nothing of astronomy. One man may make an excellent bootmaker, but a very bad accountant. But all men if you really examine into their ability are pretty much on a level, provided they have had anything like an opportunity to develop their particular calling. If you take two composers at haphazard you will rarely find one who can outstrip the other to any very considerable extent. If a man can do twice as much in an hour as another man he is considered a marvel, and then his superiority is really due to the fact that circumstances have peculiarly fitted him for the occupation. And, as the ability of man is generally equal, the actual needs of man are also pretty much the same. One man's requirements are little less than those of another. An average man of the rich class cannot eat a greater quantity of food than an average man of the poor class requires. He can only wear one suit of clothes at a time. He can only inhabit one house at a time. And the culture, the leisure, and the pleasures which the rich man enjoys and which are denied to the poor man are quite as necessary for him and for the development of his intelligence.

The workman first begins to quarrel with the existing state of things when he commences to respect himself and to realise that the rich idler is only possessed of faculties such as he himself possesses. As this dawns upon him he asks why it is there is so great a difference in their condition—why he is poor and the idler is rich. He must be mistaken, he thinks, there must be some good reason for this state of things which,

as it seems to him, has existed so long; the capitalists, the landlords, the lawyers, the clergymen, etc., must have displayed greater ability than he is capable of and no doubt are justly rewarded. Probably your mind is in this state, and you wish to ask me some such question as this, "Does the capitalist, the landlord, the lawyer, the clergyman, the cabinet minister, or even the inventor, author or artist, contribute so large a share to the wellbeing of the community as to justify his monopolising so much of the produce?" I will try to answer it to your satisfaction.

Look around you as you walk through the streets of this great city of London, and you will see thousands of houses of all descriptions, from the jerrybuilder's slum tenement, built expressly for the workers, to the grand mansion constructed for the wealthy aristocrat. If you want to live in one of these houses, you will find that if you do so you will have to pay a sum of money to the owner, and accordingly as you have a long purse or a nearly empty one you can select a mansion or a slum abode. If you have no money at all you can have no shelter, although you require it quite as much in any case. Now these houses were built not by the man who asks you for rent but by your fellow-workmen who are living in dirty narrow little streets, and will obtain no advantage whatever from the rent which you are about to pay. But you say the landlord has paid them for their labour, he has purchased the material and paid for the land. Yes he has paid the men for their labour the lowest wages they would accept when they were in want of food, clothing and shelter, or rather the money to procure these things. He has bought his labour in the cheapest market. Material, too, he has bought in the cheapest market from some capitalist who pays his workmen also at the lowest rate he can. And as to the land: he pays for that to an individual who has absolutely done nothing to increase its value, who has simply sat down and waited for its value to increase. This land should be free to any one to build a house if he chose upon it, but our landlord pays his ground landlord and we pay him. Now the apparent value given to this piece of land is created by the whole community, the entire population of London, not by any single individual. If the London people were all to emigrate the value of this land would fall to zero, the houses in which we live would scarcely be worth the price of old bricks and timber. Therefore it is we who live here who make this land and these houses valuable. In proportion as a town or a neighbourhood grows rent rises. Thus in London rent is higher than almost anywhere else in the country. A house for which you have to pay 15s. a week in London can be got in Birmingham for about 7s., and in a West of England village for less than half that sum. Just as good a house mind you, just as good material in it, just as much work; but not so good an opportunity for the house-owner and ground-landlord to rob. The landlord then is evidently not entitled to the rent he receives.

Now let us take the inventor, because the inventor is to a great extent the forerunner of the capitalist. Has the inventor a right to monopolise the use of his invention, to secure it by letters patent and to let only those use it who pay him heavily for it? Surely not. History tells us that in the Middle Ages here in England, before the inventor made his appearance, the mass of the workers were much better off than they are to-day. Starvation was unknown and eight hours was considered a fair day's work. The cultivation of the soil, the making of clothing, the erection of houses and other buildings was done by manual labour, the few tools in use being of the simplest kind. Of course the workers had their grievances in those days. Many of them were what are called serfs, the barons and the king often treated them cruelly; but they were not overworked and underfed; they were healthy strong men and women, and not the weaklings Londoners are to-day. It was a pleasure to live in those days, to breathe the fresh air, to live amongst the fields and the woods, or if a townsman only a few minutes walk from them. The inventor has helped to change all that. Instead of a short life and a merry one, which was often the case in the middle ages, a short life and a miserable one is the rule now. The most important inventions and discoveries have been made by men who cared very little indeed for any reward, or at any rate made their invention or discovery for its own sake, often in the face of tremendous difficulties and opposition from the bigots. A great many inventions and improvements in machinery, too, have been made by workmen engaged in working the machines which they improve, and their improvements have been taken up and patented by their employers, who have reaped a large reward, whilst the inventor has perhaps had a £5 note. Moreover all this machinery that we see around us and use every day is really the invention not of this individual or that individual, but of the whole community. No man can truly say that the ideas which he has patented and secured to himself are entirely his own. They are based on all the progress of past and present generations, and to tie these ideas up with the red tape of the patent office, to say no man shall use this machine or that improvement without paying for it to an individual is little less than robbery. And then the same idea often occurs to two or more people, but the first man to patent it is recognised by the law as the owner. Anarchists believe that the whole of the patent laws should be abolished and every person or group of persons allowed to use any improvement or invention they may desire, that property in ideas is absurd and unjust, and that the recognition of such property is an incalculable hindrance to progress.

The capitalist is the exploiter of the inventor as well as of the workman. It is indeed comparatively rare that the inventor secures any very considerable advantage from his invention. He is the genie who places the magic lamp in the hands of the magician. He supplies the capitalist with the means to rob. Without inventors capitalism would not exist. Machines when monopolised by a few, as is the case to-day, concentrate power in the hands of that few. Without machinery many men who work from 10 to 16 hours a-day for a miserable subsistence

wage would work no longer than their ancestors did in the middle ages, and would be at least as well off as regards the necessities of life. Machinery has increased and not lessened toil, because its advantages have been monopolised by a class. If it was common property, if every one had access to it, and there was no restriction to its improvement, wealth could be produced in the greatest abundance and the hours of labour could be reduced to a now scarcely credible extent. Invention would be a great blessing instead of as now a curse to the mass of mankind. The capitalist having possessed himself of the machines, the use of steam and electricity, etc., divides the dwellers on the planet into two classes, producers and consumers. Taking advantage of the ignorance and helplessness of the producers he purchases their labour as he does his other raw material as cheaply as possible—and by pitting one section of them against the other, the employed against the unemployed, he manages to get his labour very cheap indeed. But although he is cunning he is not wise this capitalist, for he quite overlooks the fact that his workmen—the producers—are also consumers, and that by lowering their wages until they can buy very little except bread for themselves, he is ruining his trade and bringing on a social upheaval. To his customers—the consumers—he sells his goods at as high a rate as possible. To buy cheaply and to sell dearly—that is the whole philosophy of capitalism. But he is an organiser of labour, it is claimed, and should be paid highly for his particular ability in this direction. Those who see the necessity of this organisation may perhaps recognise the validity of this claim, but to the Anarchists it seems utterly ridiculous. Men and women can organise themselves with the greatest of ease for a common object without any external assistance. They do so every day. Cricket clubs, temperance lodges, building societies, trade unions, co-operative societies abound, and show plainly enough that spontaneous organisation is not only possible, but is the best.

“But the author, the artist, the actor—surely these deserve all they get? You would not put them on an equality with the agricultural labourer or the baker?” perhaps you will say. Certainly we would: the author owes as much to the past and the present generations as the inventor. His impressions are derived from books or from his surroundings. He is enabled to create by making use of all he has received from the creations of other men, past and present, by the social conditions they have made for him. Those passions which the novelist portrays are copied from the people in whose midst he dwells. Those lands and cities which the traveller describes are made such as they are not by him but by the world at large. The artist who painted that splendid picture spent a great deal of time in studying nature and the work of other painters. The actor is but a copyist of the individualities which he sees around him. If a preference ought to be shown then we hold that the agricultural labourer and the baker are superior to the author, the artist and the actor because they are more necessary. Without the compositor, the machine-minder and the paper-maker our present literature could not be in existence. Without the inventors of movable types and printing machinery books would have to be written, and if the characters had not been invented they could not be written at all. Without colours and canvass the painter's art would be useless. Without an educated people the work of author, artist and actor would be unappreciated and therefore impossible.

I hope I have made the Communist position quite clear to you. You will not however fully understand what I have said without much reflection, because the prejudices and influences of the existing society are so great upon all of us that it is not easy to comprehend at once a society in which men are brothers and equals. Let me know if you have any difficulty in following what I have said, so that I may further explain if needful. Another time I will tell you why we are Anarchists—that is to say why we don't believe in coercion.—Yours fraternally,

JACK.

THE REVOLT OF THE ENGLISH WORKERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

II. THE ROBBERY OF CAPITAL.

England in the last century was undergoing not only an agrarian but an industrial revolution.

Before about 1760 when one spoke of a manufacturer, one meant literally a man who made articles with his own hands. A man who had his raw material, and the simple tools or machine tools he used, in his own cottage and was completely his own master in his work. He fetched his material as he wanted it from market or other workers' houses in a bag on his shoulder or on a pack-horse.

Suppose he were a weaver, most probably he would get his wool from the farms in the neighbourhood, where it had been carded by the women folk of the farm, and the members of his own family would be the spinners, who made it into yarn for him, or perhaps he would get yarn from the spinners in cottages near. He had his own loom in his own house, and there he wove just as he felt inclined, doing as much as was enough to supply his needs, together with his other occupations and means of support. If he were in a large way, perhaps he might have journeymen and apprentices to help him; all men in the same rank of life as himself, preparing to be master weavers themselves one day. Then when his piece of cloth was finished, he would take it straight to his customers or to market, or perhaps send it thither by packman or pedlar. If the market he supplied were very distant he might even send it by water. But as a rule he went himself. In the market hall at Leeds *e.g.*, each clothier had his own stall. The market was held twice a week. At 6 a.m. a bell rung, the pedlars and mer-

chants came in and made their bargains and two hours after the clothiers were off to their homes and work again.

Under these circumstances each clothier, spinner, lace-maker or whatnot, knew the demand he had to supply as well as the average village butcher or baker does to-day. There were no sudden and mysterious fluctuations in his trade as a rule; no long seasons of slackness, followed by the strain of overtime and then perhaps by the loss of employment altogether. None of that terrible helpless uncertainty and dread which make the hell of the modern wage-worker.

Such workmen were not rich. They lived very simply indeed. Meat twice a week; tea and plenty of good ale to drink, with abundance of bread, and vegetables, formed the staple fare. They were not much educated, many could not read and write. But they led a healthy, varied life with its interests centred in their work and its perfection. Most of them had their little houses on the common rent free, for in those days,* out of a population of 6,500,000, 5,000,000 lived in the country, and as commoners, had their common rights of fuel and pasturage.

Of course production was a slow affair when a man often combined many branches of trade, and was farmer as well as manufacturer. And such methods had many drawbacks as regards economy of effort. For instance, the collection of material was a difficulty when roads were so very bad. Arthur Young talks in his travels of “that infernal road between Preston and Wigan where the ruts were four feet deep and he saw three carts broken down in the course of a mile.” Sometimes a weaver might have to walk three or four miles over such roads in one morning before he could get enough yarn for his day's work. When the extension of English trade with her colonies increased the demand for her goods, and every minute of a worker's time became increasingly valuable to him, these inconveniences grew to be much felt.

To meet the difficulty many larger traders began to make it their business to give out materials; such things as linen warp, raw cotton, yarn, etc., and by degrees these “putters out,” as they were called, began to collect round them a little group of workers, who became in a sort dependent on them. This was the earliest form of the factory system.

But the great revolution in industry did not occur until the era of mechanical invention and steam power set in, during the last half of the 18th century.

The result of these inventions was a change in the way of producing manufactured articles which had just the same sort of effect on the lives of the producers of such goods as the change in the farming system on the agricultural population. It became necessary that the workers should be massed together in big mills and factories to use elaborate machinery driven by water power or steam. This machinery, these large factories, like the large farms cultivated on scientific principles, could only be started and kept going by men who had some capital, and like those farms, they turned out an enormously increased amount of produce at a reduced expenditure of labour; produce not intended to supply the needs of the workers, but to be sold at a profit to the capitalist. This competition ruined the small manufacturers, just as the large farms had ruined the small farmers. Thus the industrial workers, like the agricultural, gradually sank from being their own employers, their own masters, into a helpless proletariat with no property but their labour-force; and gradually they, too drifted away from the country into the towns, which sprung up like mushrooms round the mills and mines and factories. They exchanged, perforce, their pleasant cottages on the common for dismal dens, where they were crowded together in squalid misery, their existence one dreary round of hopeless, endless toil,† white slaves of masters whose one aim was to wring the largest profit for themselves from the labour of their human machines, the supplements of those of wood and iron.

Some of these masters had been “putters out” in the old state of things, some merchants or factors, usurers or the sons of such, some manufacturers or small landowners who had been lucky or thrifty. But whatever they had been, the temptations put in their way by the new inventions and by the distress caused amongst the people by the agricultural revolution, were too great for their social feeling. The close of the last century saw an outburst of selfish brutality amongst those who had succeeded in scraping together by fair means or foul a little capital, which capped that of the landgrabbers, and equalled in the horrors it produced the great war then devastating Europe.

And this war itself became its ally. It stopped for the time being the progress of industry upon the Continent and made England the *workshop of the world*. A great workshop, in which the despoiled propertyless masses of the people, bound hand and foot in the chain of their necessities, were handed over to the wealthy minority, to struggle with one another for the employment that means bread, whilst their masters struggle with one another for the profit that means luxury and power.

(To be continued).

* 1750.

† According to the report of the first factory commission women worked 18 hours a day, and little children were beaten with straps if they flagged during a working day of from 12 to 16 hours.

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