

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

VOL. XIII.—No. 137.

APRIL, 1899.

MONTHLY; ONE PENNY.

HONESTY AND COMMERCIALISM.

The blows that help most to destroy the fabric and the foundation of the capitalist system are not always dealt by revolutionists. It happens not infrequently that by the irony of events its own supporters may be compelled to attack some specific evil arising as a logical consequence from capitalistic methods, and in so doing lay bare to the public gaze the corruption which is slowly but surely eating away the "pillars" of the present system.

The Report of the London Chamber of Commerce on Bribes and Commissions, which has recently been published, must have destroyed the last hopes of those short-sighted, though perhaps sincere people (if any still exist) who have trusted by resorting to palliatives to bolster up the present system for a few more generations—perhaps even for a century or two. They will never succeed; the capitalist system is past praying for, as even the Committee themselves are half inclined to admit when they say they "are afraid that people may be alarmed at the mass of corruption so great and complex" which they have brought together, and think it may render "it hopeless to struggle towards purity."

But the majority of people who have not grasped Anarchist ideas will demand legislative interference (such as the Bill proposed by Lord Russell) for the protection of commercial morality (?).

"We recognise the difficulty of dealing with the evil by legislation," which is a credit to their common sense. For a glance at the report demonstrates that not a single trade, not a single "profession" even escapes the polluting breath of this all-pervading evil. From the coal merchant to the confectioner, from the nurseryman to the brewer in the list of trades; from the architect and engineer to the doctor and the lawyer (we were sure he would be there) in the list of professions—all are in the Maelstrom of commercial corruption, and there they will remain till they go down with the wrecks of the system which their own greed and hypocrisy are speeding to destruction, in spite of acts of Parliament or any "saviour of society" the middle class may fly to.

The economic system under which we exist being based on a lie—that is to say on the assumed right of the exploiter to the product of the exploited—it would be vain indeed to expect honesty to flourish in any of our social relations, knowing as we do how men's natures are influenced by the conditions under which they gain their livelihood. Nothing less than a complete, a fundamental change in industrial organisation will clear away the noxious growths of a decaying society.

Happily we have in England a distributive and, to a certain extent, a productive organisation which has done something to point the way out. We refer to the Co-operative Societies, which with all their faults have succeeded on practical lines, so dear to the heart of an Englishman, in establishing their system on a basis which tends largely to the elimination of agents and middlemen and of the bribery and trickery they encourage.

We do not deny that evils have arisen even in co-operative societies, that they have clung to the system of profit-mongering and competition which have brought the inevitable curse of sweated and underpaid labor and adulterated goods; that there are narrow-minded people in their ranks who have no other idea than to make wage-slavery decent. Yet one may frankly ask whether co-operation has not been a great moral gain to the community, struggling as it has had to do in the vitiated atmosphere of a capitalist society. It has shown how it can organise for the consumer; its next step will be, *must* be, justice to the producer. And seeing how co-operative societies have by handsome donations given practical expression to their solidarity with the workers in the strikes and lockouts of the past few years; seeing, too, how in trade unions co-operative methods of production are being discussed, this new departure cannot long be delayed.

Only along these lines can we look for any improvement until the Augean stables of capitalism are cleaned once for all by the Revolution, and the London Chamber of Commerce may take what comfort it can from the knowledge of this fact. It is certain that many people besides Socialists are beginning to grow weary of a state of things which is making life unendurable for the many. The prayer of Walt Whitman, "Give me again, O Nature, your primal sanities!" will find an echo in the hearts of many who have not even thought out the possibilities of a better system of society. Everyone sees and feels the evils that surround us, but it is not everyone who troubles to trace them to their source; if that were so the end would have come. But each time that "reports" such as the one we have been considering are made plain to the world many people are set thinking in spite of themselves, and that is what we want.

"Be honest," said Tchernychevsky, "and all will go well. A single rule of great simplicity, but containing all the pre-descriptions of science, the whole code of a happy life." But to be honest necessitates a change in our social system, not because thereby we should hope to make all men good, but because then honesty like many other advantageous things would have a chance to grow.

CÆSARISM.

By Peter Kropotkin. Translated from *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

I.

Day begins to dawn at last on that great trial called the Dreyfus affair, which has really been a trial of the commanding officers and the General Staff.

We now know of what metal were the men who professed to defend France against invaders and to frustrate their conspiracies. We have seen them at work.

The Kaulla affair made us surmise that all the secrets of "national defence," so much spoken of, had been sold to Germany. To-day we know that a whole gang trafficked in these secrets. Some for ready-money, others for the purpose of obtaining secrets in exchange; the latter being duped by their adversaries. We know that all were more or less implicated in this traffic, and that if we went to the bottom of the Dreyfus affair, half the generals and the whole of the Intelligence Department would be arrested. We also know that the practice of forgery had become prevalent among the General Staff, and that it would have been as difficult to unravel the truth about information concerning the military secrets of neighbouring powers, as it would have been to see clear through the secret police reports, so full of lies, mentioned by Andrieux in his book on police regulations.

It is just like in the days of Napoleon III, when the French believed themselves to be possessors of the "mitrailleuse" (machine-gun) secret, while Russia was ordering mitrailleuses of the same pattern in the United States—and no offence to partisans of the alliance—these mitrailleuses arrived in Copenhagen from America just when the war broke out, and were given to Germany by Alexander II. The gross ignorance prevailing in Paris about German and European affairs is absolutely as bad as during the "terrible year." We know at last what these men are.

Members of an exclusive caste, who profess a supreme contempt for all—civilians or soldiers—not belonging to their caste, and who, in spite of many differences arising from selfishness and vanity, march like one man against civilian or soldier who dares to meddle with them. A caste that sticks at nothing, not even at forgery or "suicide," to suppress those who thwart it. A caste like the convent, the monastery, like the Rome of the Jesuits; formed in the same mould as the cloister and the Vatican.

Would that it were no worse! But besides this evil, the caste consists of men of the most stupendous ignorance. All these brothers in ignorance, Henrys, Esterhazys, Paty de Clams, are going to lead the French army in time of war!!!

They are going to fight Germany, but how many of them are there who know Germany at all? How many of them who know what Germany is? Are there even two or three among them who know anything of Europe except the war offices, who have the faintest notion what part the different European nations will play as intellectual powers, in time of war?

It is easily understood that they are capable of everything like the Jesuits—it was to be expected from such an institution—but their ignorance has startled the world! And these men posed as “the brain of the army.” They boasted of being a match for the General Staffs of other countries that, as a rule, consist of well-informed men. We can understand the contempt for those ignorant monks, those Patys, Henrys, and Esterhazys, rather openly expressed by the officers of the Russian General Staff in spite of the propriety imposed on them by the alliance. “Should war break out the French soldier will fight like a lion, but the General Staff will lead him straight to butchery!” That is what is said in Russian military circles. That is what the partisans of alliance have gained among other things by their campaign on behalf of the General Staff!

This affair is drawing to a close at last. One way or another it will soon be over. But can it end for good and all?—It will only end to begin again.

For we must not make any mistake. The campaign carried on by Boulanger and the present campaign are one. When Boulanger was dead and buried the same forces, the same men came together again to carry on the campaign on behalf of the General Staff. The same alliance among the monarchists of all colors—Bonapartists, Legitimists, and Orleanists—among Republicans desiring a military dictatorship and Cæsarian Republicans represented by the *Intransigeant*, formed itself anew to shield the Esterhazys and the Paty de Clams.

Same men, same public!

Bad horse, General Boulanger? Take another, there are the generals and the staff to choose from. If the one chosen is found wanting, try again; there is a Marchand, there is a Bonaparte if he will only aim at dictatorship, and as long as he has the stuff of a Cæsar in him.

Some see in a Cæsar the return of monarchy, others “revenge”—and they act in concert. They have been told in Petersburg, “Find a King, an Emperor, a dictator—then we shall help you.” And so they go forth in quest of a Cæsar.

To have a Cæsar they must have an army that walks in the dark under the orders of a general and his staff. That is, at any rate, their idea, the idea of Cæsarians, of Bonapartists, who do not know the A B C of war, and who believe that a Cæsar and discipline are the only requisites to achieve victory.

And they, therefore, go in quest of a “general.” If they were to find a Bonaparte to-morrow—and there is a Bonapartist pretender qualifying at the Russian court to-day—Monarchists, Republicans in favor of military dictatorship and Republicans haunted by “revenge” would be ready to offer him the same platitudes as they have already offered the Imperial Russian Government.

Cæsarianism—that is the truth underlying all agitations that have occurred since many years in France. The truth underlying Boulangerism and the Dreyfus affair. We said so at the time of the Boulangerist campaign, we say so now, and we shall have to repeat it.

(To be continued.)

AMERICAN NOTES.

“Some Cranks and their Crotchets,” is the title Mr. Fiske, Librarian of the Cambridge Library, gives to a most interesting and amusing article in the March number of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Mr. Fiske has been librarian to that famous library for many years, and of course has met many people, and he describes his experiences with people he calls *cranks* in an amusing and instructive manner. The article takes a wide range, and the writer is not always logical, as he places in the same category men who believe they can square the circle and a religious sect of people who were convinced that they were immortal with the advocates of the Baconian theory, and all but includes Mr. Harvey, the author of “Coin’s Financial School,” a book which, more than any other piece of literature, is responsible for the “free silver” movement in America. Mr. Fiske might have made his article more interesting had he chosen, but as that would have meant that he must talk about himself, he very wisely left the article as it is. He is by birth a Russian, was once a revolutionist, and at one time was a member of a religious communist colony in the United States; so we may very safely say he was a *crank* once himself, and he lived in a “cranky” community. But whether Mr. Fiske is a crank or not is immaterial; his article is timely and instructive. This is a “cranky” age, and America is the home of the “cranks” (and, by the way, where there are cranks there is progress), and as America is, as the *London Daily News* puts it, the country of the social problem, so is it the home of a vast number of people who are trying to solve that problem, just as there is a peculiar fascination about squaring the circle, because *part* of the circle can be squared, so is there a peculiar fascination about solving that problem, that when solved will make everybody happy and cheerful. Every social reformer has a scheme which he thinks is new, that when applied is sure to regenerate humanity, and this thing preys upon men’s minds to such an extent that we often hear an intelligent man like Dr. Miller, a well known Single Taxer of New York, who, after delivering a lecture before the Social Science Club of that city, and when twitted about having advanced, replied, with some warmth, that he had *not* advanced, that he stood in the same place as he stood ten years previously, that he was at the end; he had solved the social problem. Seeing that such is the case, it would be strange indeed if our movement were not affected by it. English readers of *Free Society* are aware that a few months ago a *call* was made in that paper by three

Anarchists in Chicago. They said the time had come for the formation of a secret society for the furtherance of the revolutionary movement, that it would inspire hope in the tired and jaded worker who was beating against the bars of his cage vainly seeking an outlook for his grievances. The discussion which followed was rather heated and rather acrimonious.

At the same time, there was a scheme put forth for the inauguration of underground post-offices, and one man suggested that Anarchists form themselves into political clubs, and when election day came round sell out to boodle politicians and use the money for propaganda purposes.

The last two propositions may be dismissed without discussion, as they stand self-condemned, but the first I believe is important, and should be discussed.

In looking back over the history of the Anarchist movement for the past two decades, and weighing in the balance the different factors in social evolution, we come to the conclusion that no factor has been more potent in making Anarchists than the speeches of the Chicago martyrs; and yet, in reading those speeches over at the present time, we make a discovery that is both surprising and painful. *They read old*; far be it from me to say a single word against these speeches, they were brilliant, they *are* brilliant, but—they are nearly twelve years old. There has been many changes since the Chicago martyrs bid a last farewell to their friends on that bleak November day, and as Anarchism is the philosophy of life, it has also changed.

It is now nearly sixteen years since a convention of the International Working Men’s Association was held in Pittsburg, and their famous declaration of principles was sent forth to the workers, not only of America, but the whole world. As we read that declaration now, we find that the authors of that document were not entirely emancipated from the idea of money, for they were discussing the idea of a *medium of exchange* for the exchange of products between the different communes of the future. And although the idea of a medium of exchange has long since been abandoned by the great majority of Anarchists, we still find, after all these years, scores of men in America, and especially in Chicago, who may be safely termed 1883 Anarchists, for they still cling to the principles set forth by the Pittsburg convention. And just as they still cling to the past on the question of exchange, so do they cling to the old ideas of organisation. They cannot see that the Anarchist movement has long since outgrown the *principle* of secret organisation. I won’t say the *necessity* for that may not arise to-morrow, but the principle itself is wrong. When I speak of secret societies, I mean those of a national or international character, with groups or branches all controlled by a central power. Why is it that the Latin countries, the birthplace of secret societies, have long since discarded them? The answer is at once simple, yet to the point. A secret society subverts the liberty of its members, and robs them of that spirit of initiative which we, as Anarchists, are trying so hard to cultivate. There is, of course, grave danger of spies, but that is as nothing compared to the fact that the action of a leader or a committee throws upon the members the responsibility for an act which they may not agree with. If a society is to be really secret, the directing power must be in a very small number of hands—say two or three—and the rest must blindly obey. There are men in our movement whose very names are symbols of honesty, courage, intelligence, and discretion; but while we respect and honor them, we do not care to *obey* them, and what is worse still *blindly* obey them.

About three years ago an attempt was made to organise a secret society in this country, the plan of organisation was after the Blanquistida. Groups of ten were to be formed with state organisers, the whole to be controlled by a national committee; a supreme committee of three were above the national committee, and at the very top was the commander-in-chief, whose name was Nimo (reminds one of Cagliostro). The idea was that no man should know more than ten men, so that the organisation could not be betrayed, but the very system of organisation adopted for the sake of protection, assuming, for the sake of argument, that it would protect, made each one of those men responsible for the action of a leader whom they did not even know. This is one side. The other is, assuming the leaders to be honest men, would not the terrible responsibility make them conservative? knowing that so many lives depended upon their tact and discretion. It seems so to me.

The three men who issued this call seem to have forgotten the convention of the American Railway Union two years ago in Chicago, when the Social Democracy of America was launched, how they went into secret session, and the next morning the entire proceedings appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*; and again on the second day after every delegate was scrutinised, and they again went into secret session, and again, on the following morning, the proceedings appeared in the same paper, and in despair, on the third day, the meeting was thrown open. They also forgot how some of the “Anarchist” delegates to that convention declined to participate in the protest meeting against the tortures of the Spanish Anarchists, on the plea that they had an executive meeting of the A. R. U., and were too busy, etc., etc., when it was known very well that they did not care to publicly participate in an Anarchist meeting on the eve of the convention for fear of jeopardising the organisation. It seems to me that instead of trying to organise secret societies that it would be far better to start a red van or two in the West and North-West, preaching to the farmer the principles of the Irish Land League, only instead of pay no rent, let the cry be pay no more interest on mortgages, the question is easily understood. The farmer knows that by the depreciation of silver and the cornering of gold, their debts have doubled without their having borrowed any more money. Organise

the farmers into Land Leagues, using the cry, "pay no more interest, you have more than paid your debts as it is," and I feel sure it would be taken up with a vengeance. I don't put this forth as Anarchism, but as a revolutionary proposition; and the speakers can lecture on Anarchism and sell our literature, making their expenses by the sale. Every Anarchist in America knows that the farmer will fight for what he understands and believes in, and a cry of "down with the politicians and the bondholder" would soon be understood and appreciated. As for eviction, there are not enough troops in the United States to subdue half a State once the farmers rose, and as the militia is recruited from their own ranks, they would be like the national guard in Paris in 1871. To others who have secret societies on the brain, and can think of nothing else, a study of Anarchist principles would not be a waste of time, for if they do this they will find that secret societies and executive committees are inconsistent with Anarchist principles, ah!—but then I hear the voice of that Individualistic, Communistic, Egoistic Anarchist (late of Chicago, now of Nottingham), whispering his Ragnar Redbeard philosophy, "to be consistent is to be conservative," so what are we to do?

The question of Imperialism still absorbs the attention of the population of this country, and McKinley, to use a newspaper phrase, is still holding his ear to the ground to learn how public opinion is on the matter; in the meantime he is praying for a decisive military victory, so that the people will be drunk with militarism, and then crafty McKinley will launch his opinion. Up to the present he has not announced his policy, as the papers tell us, in regard to those islands; very kind of him, isn't it; probably he thinks he had better wait till the "rebels" are subdued. Aguinaldo is commanding more respect than he did a short time ago, and some papers, which formerly called him an ignorant half-breed, are now not so sure but that, with a little restraint, he couldn't govern himself and all because he has put up a good fight. A strange contradiction this "civilisation" of ours, the man who is best qualified to govern himself in the eyes of most people is the one who is most successful in organising campaigns to kill other men.

A most "touching" scene occurred in the House of Representatives at the closing of the session, March 5th. Speaker Reed (commonly called Tzar Reed for his autocratic rulings) made the closing speech, at the conclusion of which some of the members near the rostrum began singing the well-known words, "My country, 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty," all the Congressmen took it up, and the galleries joined in. The papers tell us "many people were affected to tears in the intensity of enthusiasm." Then "Auld Lang Syne" was sung with equal ardor, and when that was finished a member waved a flag, and the whole assemblage broke out into the "Red, white, and blue." Somebody in the gallery shouted "Three cheers for Dewey," which were given with explosive vigor. Wild cheers for the army and navy and for General Wheeler followed. This wonderful demonstration closed with the singing of the Doxology. This account is really very touching, but it doesn't finish properly, for if we knew anything about those heroic and liberty-loving representatives of ours, and we think we do, it closed with saying to one another like that famous Governor of Kentucky to that equally famous Governor from Tennessee: "Judge, it's a long time between drinks."

"Notwithstanding the authority granted by the Naval Bill to construct three battleships, three armoured cruisers, and six protected cruisers, only these last can be built, owing to the fixing of the price of armor plates at £60 per ton. When Congress reassembles, an effort will be made to secure an increase in the limit of the price to be paid for armor plates. This is delicious; two years ago it was discovered that that great and noble patriot, Andrew Carnegie, author of "Triumphant Democracy," was selling the same armor plate that he charged the American Government £80 per ton to the Russian Government for £65 per ton. A cry was raised, and then appeared a representative of the Illinois Steel Company, who said if the Government would give them the contract that they would furnish the same armor plate for £45 per ton, but, as it would take two years to build a plant, the Government refused the offer. One-eyed Senator Tillman, of South Carolina, made an attack on Carnegie in the Senate, and moved a resolution that the price for armor plate be fixed at £60, and after a long struggle it was carried. Then Carnegie combined with the one other firm in America who make armor plate, and they refused to make it at that price. The Government threatened to build their own plant. This was opposed as involving too much delay. The war scare came on, and Carnegie got his £80 per ton, and he'll get it again. Carnegie is one of the cleverest rogues in this country, and that's saying a good deal.

We are informed that Abner McKinley, the President's brother, who has become so celebrated through the army scandals and so rich that he was a guest at the Windsor Hotel, but, fortunately for him, he was out when the fire took place. Let us hope another sort of roasting is still in store for him.

Emma Goldman is making another tour and will go as far as San Francisco, and does not expect to be back in New York before September, when, after a short rest, she expects to "invade" England. She hopes to arrive in October, so I should suggest that the comrades prepare a tour for her. She will send her lecture list soon.

PROGRESS AND LAW.

Have you ever watched a small stream dammed by some obstacle? How it rises, slowly, still. And then, as though it has suddenly become aware of the barrier, how it swirls wildly with impotent rage, boils

over, and surges here and there and everywhere, until at last it again finds its level and flows peacefully toward its goal!

How similar is the position of the reform movement in society. Of a sudden they realise a barrier, and they rush madly here and there; anything for action! They feel intensely the evil, but instead of considering, of thinking, move anywhere and anyhow. Hysterical alarm seizes them; most likely a few moments earnest thought would clear the way, but upon the principle of "action first, thought after," they shriek aloud, "We must have more legislation."

It is especially in the world of labor that one observes the pernicious effects of this habit. The problems of Labor and Capital press men hardly, they know that owing to some kind of anomaly they do not enjoy life as they should do; they appeal at once to law. The worker gets injured, and owing to the superior craftiness of the employer, he is cast upon the tender mercies of a world, without compensation, strait-away he exclaims, "We must have a law compelling the employer to give us a just consideration for injuries received whilst in his service."

A recent case in point is that of the "Workmen's Compensation Act" which was clamoured for by the workers, as an improvement upon the "Employers Liability Bill," which in its turn was hoped for as an improvement upon the common law. The facts of the case, roughly worked out, are as follows: The common law made it possible for a man with a clear case, to get compensation for a lifetime, the "Employers Liability Bill" for a term of six years, and the "Workmen's Compensation Act"—an ostensible improvement upon the two preceding Acts—for the period of only three years! Moreover, this great advance has brought in its train the raising of the price of many commodities. In Yorkshire—in the midst of the coal mining industry—the price of coal has gone up three pence per load, avowedly as the result of the passing of the recent measure. Not that this goes into the pockets of the worker, it merely goes to pay the insurance premiums, or to swell the profits of the employing class!

Not only does this action result in little, or nothing, for the worker, but, by it he completely destroys the efficacy of his Trade Union—the one thing that in England he has fought so hard for—and places into the hands of the governing classes, the settling of matters, that by their very nature, form the *raison d'être* of his organisation.

If the energy employed in passing a futile law, had been spent in strengthening, and in extending the scope of the Trade Union, the result must have been of considerable advantage to the worker. For after all, were the law to effect the purpose hoped for, the worker would be paying more, and in a roundabout fashion, for benefits that could have been got by his Union, in a cheaper and much more effective manner. As it is, instead of making the path of the Union smoother, such actions merely furnish a further pretext for the increasing of that great bane of all organisation—officialism.

Let one consider the issue raised, or for the matter of that, any issue of a similar character that could be raised, and one is bound to admit that the feeling that a law based upon averages can do things better than one can do oneself, is equivalent to saying that all men are alike, and that a course of conduct calculated to meet one case is calculated to meet all cases. The idea is rendered all the more absurd when we remember that in other phases of life we should laugh the notion to scorn. One of the greatest factors in killing progress, in producing mental deterioration, is this feeling that we must allow others to think for us, to decide upon courses of action for us, to do all but live for us!

Surely, if one man sits down to legislate for others, he must read into the needs of the moment, the particular views of matters that he himself possesses, and the nature of which are decided by the peculiar combination of physical and mental characteristics, that go to make up his entity as apart from others.

The thing most desirable to-day—the truly human factor in all progress—is the cultivation of individuality, that quality that teaches one that it is best to do all that is possible oneself, to think independently, though on occasion one may have to stand alone.

On all sides law fails, all progress is made outside of it. Therefore the obvious lesson should be the rejecting of all laws, and the strengthening of that spontaneous organisation, the birth of which is contemporaneous with the need of society.

W. MACQUEEN.

BALANCE SHEET OF THE COMMUNE MEETING.

RECEIPTS.			EXPENSES.		
	£	s d		£	s d
Per Libertarian Lecture Society	1	0 0	To hire of Hall	4	4 0
" A. Bonoff	19	6	" Printing posters	17	6
" H. Guérineau	9	0	" " Songs	20	0
" W. Tchaykovsky	8	0	" " Handbills	10	0
" Toursky	5	0	" Posting bills	16	0
" J. Muller	3	6	" Advertisements	10	0
" W. Wess	5	6	" Hire of piano	10	6
" H. K.	5	0	" Sundries	5	6
" D.	5	0			
" Mme. Defendi	2	6	Total		£8 3 6
" W. Tcherkosov	1	6	Receipts	£8 4 6	
" Lassassie	1	0	Expenses	£8 3 6	
" Donation	1	0			
Collection at Meeting	3	18 0	Balance	£0 1 0	
Total		£8 4 6			

"Free Society." An Exponent of Anarchist-Communism, 43 Sheridan St., San Francisco, Cal. U.S.A.

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A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

Monthly, One Penny; post free, 1½d.; U.S.A., 3 Cents; France, 15 Centimes.

Annual Subscription, post free, 1s. 6d.; U.S.A., 36 Cents; France, 1fr. 80c.
Foreign subscriptions should be sent by International Money Order,
payable to C. M. Wilson.

Wholesale Price, 1s. 4d. per quire of 27, carriage free to all parts.

All communications, exchanges, &c., for "FREEDOM" to be addressed to

THE MANAGER, 127 Ossulston Street, N.W.

The Editors are not necessarily in agreement with signed articles.

NOTES.

THE "FREE COMMUNE."

The *Free Commune* for April is out, and shows a great improvement both in printing and in the matter it contains. An article on "What shall we do?" by MacQueen and one on "Equality," by Barton, a poem "To a Retired Justice," by W. F. Barnard, somewhat in the style of Shelley's "To the Lord Chancellor"; and "By the Thames," which considering it is a dream (and "dreams" being a little overdone in the present day) must be praised for having enough originality to make it fresh and interesting. All these make a good number, which can be obtained of W. MacQueen, 79 Markham Avenue, Harehills, Leeds; price 1d.

MICROBES AND PARASITES.

Dr. Hamer's official report on the condition and quality of the food consumed by the poorer population of London reveals no greater evils, perhaps, than might be expected by anyone who has observed what is exposed for sale in neighbourhoods where the very poor are crowded together. We need not stop to commiserate with the idlers of the West end, whom, we are told, consume microbes at the rate of seven millions per cubic centimetre with their ice-cream, and without injury to their health! Microbes must have a great affinity for parasites it seems, and if they agree so well, why they may as well keep on agreeing. But let us leave such trivialities as ice-cream and go to the primary necessities of a population on the verge of starvation, and we shall see clearly indicated the hideous conditions which compel human beings to purchase refuse and offal as food for their hungry stomachs. Here is an extract from the report: "In the Strand district . . . in one shop we found a large piece of horse-flesh on sale together with butchers meat and offal, and on inquiry we were informed that it was intended to be sold as 'cat's-meat.' The shopkeeper explained, however, that some of his customers bought five-pennyworth (two pounds) at a time, and that he was sure they could not afford to expend that sum upon cats; moreover, he added, 'they complain if it is underdone.'" The *Chronicle* calls this an "eloquent instance of the pathetic poverty that haunts the very centre of our wealth," which is very poetically expressed no doubt, but which, unfortunately, does not point the moral of the case, namely, that in a system founded upon profit-mongering, such evils and even worse will always arise.

BOURGEOIS ARISTOCRATS.

That fine old institution, the English aristocracy, however conservative it may be in other respects, keeps pretty level with the times in the matter of money-making. The joint-stock peerage company which has been started to take over the Warwick estates is not a joke but a real businesslike way of securing to the Earl and Countess the means to pass their useless existences in the most expensive fashion. Well, it is the beginning of the end. When any "common person" can for a few pounds have a share in a live lord or lady, class distinctions must be in a perilous position. The *Financial Times*, after pointing out the depreciation in the value of the "noble" director after the Hooley revelations, says we shall have to amend Burns' famous line into "The rank is but the transfer stamp," and goes on to lament the "pathetic spectacle" of the decline of the "great families." The decline may be very sad for the "families," but it will eventually be very good for mankind; and so far as the "British Peerage, Limited," is concerned we trust the day is not far distant when it will be so "limited" as to be extinct.

MUNICIPAL CORRUPTION.

The United States are an interesting study in political and municipal administration. The world regards as a huge joke both the American legislature and legislator. And to do the latter credit he doesn't trouble very much to hide his methods. No doubt he thinks to himself that "business is business," and although playing the game of one of the god-ordained rulers of men he knows perfectly well that he and his kind are after the

dollars. His latest scheme is to take a leaf out of the book of the Romish Church. The selling of indulgences was a bright idea that served the Church in more ways than one. Why not apply it to secular affairs? The idea has caught on with Tammany in New York, and the very latest scandal is the charge of corrupt administration made against the city departments.

"The general indictment is that Tammany is levying money in every direction as the price for permitting infractions of the law"; and further we are told that the bulk of the money so raised reaches the unofficial heads of Tammany Hall. No one will be very much surprised at all this, because no one expects anything else. But will our Social Democratic friends or any others please explain to us how anything less than an Anarchist form of society will ever keep us free from the corruption which always arises where one set of men—possibly stupid, certainly fallible—assumes the responsibility of governing others. It is not only an ethical question, it is a question of pounds, shilling and pence. Now let us have a practical answer.

We have received a copy of President Gompers' Report to the Seventeenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, and a note asking us to compare it with the statements contained in the *American Notes* in the February *Freedom*. As no specific inaccuracies are notified, we have forwarded it to our correspondent to deal with as may seem best. And for ourselves we can only say, speaking in a general sense, that labor organisations run on political lines do indeed need to be told plainly of the corruption to which they are exposed and of the disappointment which will surely result to the toilers if they expect good fruit from such a tree. At the same time Mr. Gompers will quite well understand that our dislike of Presidents as Presidents is not confined to those at the head of republican states, but as a matter of fact to anyone who, by consenting to be raised officially above his fellows, becomes at once a danger to himself and to them.

THE INTERNATIONAL, ITS PRECURSORS, AND ANARCHISM.

V.

Industrial Slavery and the Working-class Movement.

Modern industry originated in England, and the English worker was the first to lead the life of a slave. He was crushed by sixteen or eighteen hours' work a day, and had to exist on a salary barely sufficient to give him bread and porridge. Women and children were the greatest victims of the new method of production and exploitation of human work. The steam-factory, which came into existence at the end of the last century, was a convict prison in the true sense of the word, only the prisoners were often innocent children of five and six years old.

Already, in 1795, Dr. Aikin, of Manchester, remarked that "children of a very tender age are employed, many of them collected from the workhouses in London and Westminster, and transported in crowds as apprentices to masters resident many hundred of miles distant, where they serve unknown, unprotected, and forgotten by those to whose care nature or the law had confided them. These children are usually too long confined to work, in close rooms, often during the whole night."

Mr. H. Gibbins, in his work, *English Social Reformers* (1892), gives us a heartrending description of this slavery, testified to by Parliamentary commissions of inquiry and by hundreds of witnesses: "The traffic was regular and systematic. The northern mill-owners communicated with the overseers of the poor, and a sufficient supply of children having been provided for the latter, a day was fixed for their examination and selection by the mill-owner or his deputy. Those selected were then taken in waggons or canal boats to their destination, if it was already fixed. But it often happened that the contracting party was a mere trafficker, a middleman, and not the principal; and so, if he had not already a market in some mill for his white slaves, these were kept in dark cellars or other abodes in Manchester or elsewhere, till some mill-owner was pleased to come and examine their limbs and stature, and strike a bargain for their conveyance to his factory.* Once in the mill the round of slavery was unceasing. The mills were run night and day in those brisk times, when Lancashire cotton-spinners declared 'it was not profits of hundreds of but of thousands per cent. that made their fortunes.' One relay of children rose wearily from their beds as another relay came to throw themselves down in their places, in beds where vice, disease, and death grew rank as in a teeming ground.† They were fed on the coarsest and cheapest food, or rather were starved upon it, so that they often fought with their master's pigs for the refuse of the swine-trough.‡ They worked sixteen, eighteen, or even a larger number of hours at a stretch, 'till many weary victims, young in years but old in suffering, nightly prayed that death would come to their relief.' Sometimes they tried to run away, but it was an almost hopeless attempt; and when brought back, their sufferings were generally worse

* Cf. the well-authenticated *Memoirs of Robert Blincoe*.

† Discrimination of sexes was often not regarded at all. Cf. evidence before the Sadler Committee, 1832 (evidence of J. Paterson, overseer, Dundee).

‡ Cf. Blincoe's *Memoirs*.

than before, for now their bondage was made even more literal, and chains were riveted upon their limbs. 'Even young women, if only suspected of intending to run away, had irons riveted to their ankles, reaching by long links and rings up to the hips; and in these they were compelled to walk to and from the mill, and to sleep.' Cruel punishment was their lot if their merciless tasks were not fulfilled—punishment that not unfrequently ended in death. The lash was almost constantly in requisition, and many kinds of tortures were used to compel the sinking frames of the apprentices to pursue their unceasing toil. At length, wearied out and worked to death, their forms stunted and misshapen by accidents and overwork, often scarred and bruised by the whip of the overseer, these poor wretches found a merciful relief in death. Many a silent plantation and lonely moorland is a silent repository of dark secrets over which an outcast's grave has for ever closed."

In all branches of industry we come upon the same horrible conditions. "In the cutleries of Sheffield, in the potteries of Staffordshire, in the mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire, slavery, cruelty, vice, and ignorance held their sway unchecked. Even in the agricultural districts, the system of employing at certain seasons gangs of workers—men, women, and children—got up and superintended by a contractor, had produced lamentable results, and here again sexual immorality and cruelty to children were of usual and common occurrence. Truly, in the earlier half of this century, the Industrial Revolution, whether in the factory or in the field, had brought the English labourer, and still more his children, little cause for gratitude."

"In 1842 the country was horrified by reports as to the conditions of working in mines and collieries. A Commission of inquiry was instituted, and irrefutable proofs of these reports were disclosed by it. It was shown that a very large proportion of the workers underground were less than thirteen years old, and most of them began work at about eight years, and some even as low as four or five. Men and women, girls and boys, were all alike employed underground; and very often they were below during the whole week, and never saw the light except on Sunday. The men did the hewing of the coal, but the work of transporting the coal from the men's workings to the shaft was performed by women, girls, and boys. 'Hurrying,' that is loading small waggons with coals, and pulling or pushing them along the underground passages, was an especially barbarous labor. Those who did it had to crawl on hands and feet, with an enormous weight of coals in a truck either before or behind them, along passages as narrow and wet as common sewers. Boys and girls performed this duty as beasts of burden, either by being regularly harnessed to the waggons by straps, or wearing a girdle round their waists, to which was attached a chain passing between the legs. Thus, panting and straining at their loads, these unfortunate creatures stumbled or crawled through the darkness of passages too low and narrow for a pony to work in, and with blistered sides, chafed limbs, and aching backs, toiled throughout eighteen or even thirty-six hours continually. In addition to this cruel labor these boys and girls suffered terribly from the cruelty of the overlookers, or of the miners whom they helped, being beaten and punished in the most brutal manner. 'Education was totally neglected and the morals of the mining population were in the lowest possible state. Nor can this be wondered at, when it is remembered that in the pits men habitually worked in a state of perfect nakedness, and in this state were assisted in their labors by females of all ages, from girls of six years old to women of twenty-one, these women themselves being quite naked down to the waist, their only garment being trousers.'"

This atrocious slavery lasted half-a-century. It needed the agitation and work of a generation of brave men, devoted to the people's cause, to stay its menacing development.

Fortunately honest men of different social stations lifted up their indignant voice against the national danger. Worker, trader, priest, and freethinker, scientist and ignoramus, united to fight this social pest. In 1796 a committee of inquiry on the economic and hygienic conditions of the workers was organised in Manchester; other like committees and inquiries arose in other industrial centres; several bills were proposed in Parliament, and in 1802 Robert Peel passed the first law regulating women and children's work. The law was barbarous, for it fixed a working day of twelve hours. But it was a beginning. Other measures followed in 1808, 1816, 1819, 1832, 1847, etc. As usual, and like everywhere else, the governing classes gave way to public opinion, because the masses moved everywhere and riot followed upon riot.

The first movement, known by the name of *Luddist* (1816), not only took place in England, but in Scotland and Ireland as well. The rioters destroyed factories, and especially machinery, symbol of their slavery. In the same year riots in London (Spa Fields), in Manchester (Blanketeers), in Nottingham took place. In 1819 the workers of industrial provinces demanded the shortening of hours and a rise in wages. During popular meetings in Manchester the people (60,000 men and women) were attacked by the military, and the ground was strewn by several hundred killed and wounded. A unanimous cry of indignation echoed from all sides. The great poet Shelley sang the victims, Byron, in his best poem, *The Judgment*, put the old crowned idiot in the pillory.

Richard Carlile,* an editor, was sentenced the same year for his courageous agitation to three years' imprisonment; his wife took up his work, and was sentenced to two years. No sooner liberated than Carlile

was arrested anew; his sister then replaced him, and in her turn was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Not less courageous was the agitation carried on by W. Cobbet, and by Socialists like R. Owen, A. Combe, W. Thompson, and many others.

Such was the pressure of over-excited public opinion, that the bill known as Strudger's law was passed by the House of Commons (1819) at its second reading and rejected only by the House of Lords. By this bill poor children were to receive technical and industrial education at the cost of the State. The State was also to provide for their entire maintenance. During the debates on this bill, as in 1817,* we see what an immense influence was exercised on society and on the masses by Socialist ideas, and, above all, by R. Owen's sympathetic personality. To make himself heard, Ricardo, the "scientific" advocate of capitalism while opposing all Owen's projects of reform, declared he was the first to admire Robert Owen and his noble and humanitarian ideas. . . . Nevertheless, he fought him for being a Utopian. The scientific men of to-day follow the example of their precursor, and fight all Socialist ideas as Utopian.

In spite of Governmental persecution, in spite of Lords' and capitalists opposition, the movement developed more and more, trades organised, reformers and agitators became more tenacious. A priest called Oastler consecrated all his life to the amelioration of the lot of women and children employed in factories. Neither persecution nor imprisonment arrested the crusade. For many a year Francis Place, a rich tailor in Charing Cross, gathered reformers and popular orators, philosophers and members of Parliament in his back shop, and from this back shop was conducted the popular and Parliamentary campaign. Men of courage were not wanting to defend the cause in Parliament, among others Sadler, who obtained a Parliamentary commission of inquiry on the conditions of work (the Sadler commission), and who, in 1832, in his speech for the defence of his ten hours' bill, hurled these passionate words at privilege: "Our ancestors could not have supposed it possible—posterity will not believe it true—that a generation of Englishmen could exist, or had existed, that would work lispian infancy of a few summers old, regardless alike of its smiles or tears and unmoved by its unresisting weakness, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, sixteen hours a day, and through the weary night also, till, in the dewy morn of existence, the bud of youth was faded, and fell ere it was unfolded."

"Then, in order to keep them awake, to stimulate their exertions, means are made use of to which I shall now advert as a last instance of the degradation to which this system has reduced the manufacturing operatives of this country. Children are beaten with thongs, prepared for the purpose. Yes, the females of this country, no matter whether children or grown up—and I hardly know which is the more disgusting outrage—are beaten, beaten in your free market of labor, as you term it, like slaves. The poor wretch is flogged before its companions—flogged, I say, like a dog, by the tyrant overlooker. We speak with execration of the cart-whip of the West Indies, but let us see this night an equal feeling rise against the factory thong of England."

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

Anything more dignified or pathetic than the touching appeal with which Finland sought to arrest the death-blow aimed at its liberties by a tyrant's hand on February 17th last has been rarely met with in the annals of nations. Unmarked by passion or defiance, without a touch of florid effervescence of a Southern type, which flaring up with hot intensity falls as quickly into dead ash, the brave, simple, manly words of Finland's petition to the Tsar recalling his forefathers' and his own pledges to the imperial memory, breathe a spirit of such noble fortitude and forbearance under flagrant injustice, that they not only command the pity and admiration of all who read them, but will live to all time to remind the world of a liberty-loving people and the perfidy of an Emperor. It is easy for some to say: "But the Russian Tsar does not reign any more than the Chinese Emperor; each is a cipher, a sickly sentimentalist and tool in the hands of a strong reactionary palace party." At least Nicholas II., if we are to believe his Ministers and admirers of the Stead order, has his wits about him, and is sane enough, did he so will, to act in the spirit that dictated his peace policy; therefore the responsibility and all that it may entail in the future of the Russification of Finland, a country that since its cession by Sweden in 1809 has never been other than loyal and peaceful under the Russian yoke, rests with him, and no glossing will whitewash the crime. Never a friendly warning of the fate in store for them was vouchsafed the trustful people. On February 17th simply an imperial ukase dealing death to their cherished privileges and institutions appeared in the Russian official papers, and Finland as Finland was wiped out of the map. The Finns are a calm people. When they awoke from their stupor there was no call to arms, no shouting at street corners, no public display of patriotism: the old men wept as they read the astounding edict, and the women put on mourning—there was stillness and silence; and yet it is that very stillness and silence on which one leans and hopes. The weak always cry out, but the strong and brave close their lips and brace their hearts in readiness for the struggle. The Finns are of the hardy, temperate strain from which the Normans and Vikings sprang; not talkers, but men to dare and do. There may be no rebellious acts, no

* He must not be mistaken for the great historian Thomas Carlyle, who also defended the rights of the oppressed and exploited in his works so strangely beautiful. See *Chartism, Past and Present*, and others.

* New law on the maintenance of the poor. Engels was born in 1819, and yet his pupils affirm he was the first to recommend working-class legislation.

open revolt, but if in time a spirit of passive resistance is not born that shall never be quelled, the Finns are not the people we take them for. Think what they have lost. From 1809 every Tsar at his accession, as a Grand Duke of Finland, guaranteed the religious freedom and fundamental laws of the merged Duchy. In 1869 Alexander II. did more—he passed a law giving the Finns increased Parliamentary freedom, with further power to the Finnish Landtag. Nicholas II. at his coronation confirmed this and all of his grandfather's and father's pledges; now at the stroke of a pen guided by the hand of Pobiedonostzev—the little Old Man of Russia, who, like his brother bigot, Philip II. of Spain, sits quietly at his desk weaving the misery and ruin of his fellow-creatures—Nicholas throws honor, justice and mercy, the three prerogatives of a monarch, to the winds and tramples on a people's rights more ruthlessly than as a sentimentalist he would trample on a worm. Not only is all parliamentary liberty lost and the Constitution deliberately torn into shreds, but Russian is to become the official language of the country, the Lutheran religion in all probability denounced, and Finland's army is at once to be absorbed into that of Russia, the period of service raised from three to five years, its strength to be increased at double the cost to the Duchy and a despotic military system to reign supreme.

To the noble protest of the Finnish Senate and people the Tsar refused audience. "Had not *three of the lawyers* on the Committee who drew up his proclamation assured him that the Finnish Constitution had not been infringed?" he is reported to have exclaimed with angry tears; whilst, "An emperor can change his mind!" was the truculent retort alone vouchsafed by his uncle, the Grand Duke Michael, to one of the protesting petitioners. Various reasons are given for this change of mind. Finland was a progressive country as regards education and democratic in sentiment; the Finns have an intense love for their literature, language and national institutions; such alien inclinations breed a love for fuller liberties—Nihilism might revive if parliamentary institutions continue in Finland, etc., etc.

Meanwhile, the real position of affairs in the unhappy little Duchy is hard to learn. Telegraphic censure is strict; Governor-General Bobrikov's spies are everywhere; the editor of the Finnish official paper who refused to publish the Tsar's manifesto is suspended, and the current issues of the press contain warnings against speaking loudly in the streets or restaurants. The whole population is stricken with sorrow, a newspaper correspondent, and for ourselves we wonder whether they yet see the irony of that touching clause in their late petition to the Tsar: "It is impossible for us to give room in our hearts for any doubt as to the steadfastness of the Imperial word." O Finns! O peoples! when will you learn that it is easier for the leopard to change his spots than for a ruler to keep his faith with his brother men? "The right of a small people is as sacred as that of the greatest nation," continues the petition whose bearers Nicholas refused to receive; and once again the "death-sob of a small people" rises on the air of Time and dies away amid the apathetic silence of the greater nations round. Yet there are some who think, and some who remember, and these know that it is on facts and acts of this nature that Democracy waxes strong, waiting for the fight.

With regard to the present student movement in Russia:

"For more than forty years," writes a Russian friend, "our students have revolted against the existing despotic rule without the slightest chance of producing any visible alteration in the system. Prompted solely by a noble aspiration for freedom, with the sublime devotion of youth they cast themselves, a willing sacrifice, before the Moloch of Autocracy, careless that imprisonment, banishment and ruin await them after each upheaval. With regard to the present disturbances, it appears that they were caused by deliberate provocation on the part of the police. There has been a question of late at the Court of raising the state of minor siege which has reigned in all the university towns since the death of Alexander II.; this meant curtailing the number and salaries of the police and gendarmes. To prevent this the Minister of the Interior decided to prove that the large police force maintained in the university towns was indispensable. On the day of the anniversary of the University of St. Petersburg, which is kept as a fête, the Rector refused permission to the students to hold the usual reunion at the close of the official ceremony. The placards announcing this fact were at once torn down by the indignant students and the Rector hissed; but there was no further ebullition of feeling and the young men dispersed peaceably—only to find every yard and square adjacent to the University filled with mounted police, who had moreover been supplied contrary to regulations with *knouts*. The students finding their road across the Palace Bridge barred turned towards the Nicolaevsky Bridge, and then the crowd was at once charged by the police, who, lashing out savagely with their whips, shouted: 'Flog this mob—we shant be hung for them!' As their victims broke up into groups they were surrounded and persistently lashed, while two persons, a lady student and a harmless peasant caught in the crowd, were trampled to death under the horses' feet. But for once the biters were bit. The whipping intended solely for the backs of rebellious and impecunious students did not suit those of the sons of senators and aristocracy who happened to be in the crowd. De Witte, the Minister of Finance, knowing this and having a grudge of long standing against the Minister of the Interior, now poses as the defender and protector of the students and lays the blame of the disturbances on the tactless action of the police. Few believe in his sincerity, but at least he has the ear

of our sentimental Nicholas II. They say now that when things began to turn badly against the police they tried to set the University on fire in order to bring up the fire brigade and create a scandal; but the students put the fire out themselves.

In all about 25,000 students all over Russia and belonging to the higher institutions have joined St. Petersburg University in demanding guarantees of personal safety from the police, being supported in their demand by a majority of the professors and the intelligent portion of the public as well as by many of the Ministry, save and except the Minister of the Interior and Pobiedonostzev (chief instigator of reaction and police rule in universities) and also the Minister of Education, a nonentity and champion of clergy as a class in civil as well as ecclesiastical appointments. Wholesale arrests of students have been made in all the chief towns, many hundreds have been banished from Moscow and St. Petersburg, while in other towns the Governors have ordered the dismissal of all students and the closing of all the schools in order to make them apply individually for readmission. In this way all roads in Russia lead to a struggle against autocracy, however small and insignificant may be the pretext—hissing the Rector of an university in this case! Although the students' demands are trifles: 1. To call the police before the law for their gross brutality towards them; 2. to guarantee personal safety to all students (*i.e.* the police have no right to interfere in anything happening within the walls of the university, etc.); 3. students to have the right to enter any lawful corporation (now forbidden),—although these are all domestic trifles, they lead inevitably to general conflagration and political strife in the prevailing, never-ending thirst for Freedom. Such is our atmosphere?"

REPORT OF THE COMMUNE COMMEMORATION.

(Held at Shoreditch Town Hall, Friday March 17.)

The 28th anniversary of the Commune of Paris will not soon be forgotten by those who were at Shoreditch Town Hall on March 17. In point of numbers and enthusiasm, as well as financially, it was the most successful Commune Meeting ever held by the London Anarchists. Long before 7.30, the time for opening the doors, a crowd had congregated in the street, anxiously waiting for admission. Within half an hour of the opening of the doors the body of the Hall was full; and by the time the meeting was called to order at 8.30 every seat was taken and upwards of two hundred were standing. The Hall seats 1,400, so we may safely put down the number present at 1,600.

Kropotkin was down with influenza and was unable to appear, but a letter was read from him which we give in full below. That old veteran revolutionist of 1848–1871, J. Marechal, was also too ill to attend. Nellie Shaw sent a letter from a sick bed; and Marmol was so ill that but for a letter to him from Roche, the well-known Blanquist leader in France, which inspired him to make a great effort, he certainly would not have been with us. Macpherson, who was to interpret and translate for us, was also a victim to influenza and unable to give his invaluable help. Owing to this we are unable to give all the speeches. The meeting was opened by comrade Kelly, who read Kropotkin's letter and a letter from Nellie Shaw and then called on Lothrop Withington to address the meeting, which he did in his best style: showing up the rottenness of our present social system and the hideous nightmare we are living in, which is called civilisation; that property to-day was organised theft, and that peace would not prevail until the workers reclaimed the land and the means of life that have for so long a period been stolen from them.

Louise Michel followed next and received such an ovation that it must have cheered her heart. She expressed the opinion that wars are dying, and that the peoples of the earth, in spite of their governments, are on the point of joining in a new International, a federation of humanity. In this country, she said, it is possible to speak freely, and she declared that it needed no great effort to disestablish the existing state of things in France, where, she added, "people die of hunger, and we despair as we see them fall by the way."

John Turner, in a speech that evoked great enthusiasm, pointed out that if ever the Commune was declared in England he felt sure the workers in their respective trade unions would take hold of industry and run things on their own, without the aid of the exploiting class and in the interest of the whole people. Jennie Atkinson followed with a song, rendering "Annie Laurie" in her best style to the satisfaction of all.

Kitz then delivered a short but forcible and epigrammatic speech, reviewing the history of Commune meetings in London in the days of the old Socialist League when speakers could not be secured, and of their early struggles, and compared them to this meeting when we had fifteen speakers on the bill and people sending up their names offering to speak if necessary.

Jennie Atkinson now sang "No Master" and "The Wearing of the Green," the audience joining in the chorus with splendid effect.

Lottie Rockley, in a brief but eloquent speech, after eulogising the nobility of purpose that animated the Communists of 1871, reminded her hearers that they in England were still slaves and unfaithful to the Cause for which the heroes and heroines of 1871, so long as they acquiesced by proletarian apathy and indifference in the brutal monopolistic chaos that gave the workers the wretched existence they saw around. Our comrade was loudly applauded at the conclusion of her clear and beautiful appeal.

Tcherkesov followed in Russian, Rocker in German, Marmol in Spanish, Fanny Imle in German. Turner then closed the meeting with three cheers for Anarchy.

Letter from Kropotkin:

DEAR COMRADES,—It is with the sincerest regret that I find myself unable to be with you this evening. Illness has made it absolutely impossible, and all I can do is to send you a few words that I would so much rather have spoken, and wish you every success in the meeting which celebrates the proclamation of the Commune.

In 1870 the breakdown of Napoleon's empire was complete. Scandalous thefts were discovered in the administration. The rottenness of the administration in all its branches was apparent to everyone.

There remained no choice for the Imperialist party but to divert the attention of the country towards a war, or to be overthrown by the people.

The conditions are now exactly the same; after twenty-eight years of a bourgeois republic the breakdown of the bourgeois parliamentary rule is also complete. There is not one branch of public administration in which the incapacity of the bourgeois republicans to solve the problems of the day would not have been proved. Education is again falling back into the clutches of the clergy. The Jesuits are again supreme, and it is their schools which supply now most military commanders to the general staff. Every day new thefts are discovered in the administration of the supplies for the army. Who knows if the Toulon explosion was not the means of destroying the material evidence of those thefts in the administration of the navy which Lockroy had discovered the other day during his visit of inspection at Toulon.

The prison administration, the charity organisations, the railways and canals administration, and so on, have all shown the same high level of bourgeois morality.

Scandals follow scandals. The Panama scandal, the Algerian railway scandal, the Eastern railway scandal, the Ambassador's scandal, and finally that colossal network of forgeries, thefts, assassinations, called suicides, in which every man of eminence, beginning with the President of the Republic down to the last turncoat in journalism are involved, keep the French nation in such a state that no cry would be more popular at the present moment than the war-cry of "down with all rulers!"

They know it, and they have tried to bring forward a dictator who, like Napoleon I, might divert public attention from inner affairs to victories abroad. But they had no luck with their "saviours." Their music hall General Boulanger, their Bonaparte and Dukes of Orleans have proved such miserable shams that all hope in them had to be given up.

War, or the overthrow of the bourgeois rule, and the proclamation of free Communes—THERE IS NO OTHER CHOICE.

The Commune, which would break down the "centralised State," would begin a new era of more or less communist organisation for producing and consuming, and at last proclaim the liberty of the group and of the individual after three centuries of failures under the rule of the centralised State.

Is it France alone that is in such a condition? Are there no signs of something similar in this country as well? Ten years ago a great labor movement had reached its climax in England, so much so that enthusiasts like William Morris wrote, "The revolution is not going to begin, it has begun." The middle classes were appalled at the sudden growth of the Socialist idea amidst the workers of England; and, while some reactionists advocated that an insurrection should be provoked that it might be drowned in blood and the workers terrorized, others more cunning found an escape for the time in jingoism.

For ten years they have worked in that direction with great ability, and a full knowledge of the lowest instincts of man, and we must recognise that their work has been crowned with a certain amount of success. And here, as in France, we must ask ourselves whether these cunning schemes will not, one of these days, involve the English nation in some terrible war in Europe or elsewhere.

The answer to this momentous question must be given by the workers of this country. But it must be well understood that the wars provoked by the ruling classes will solve none of the problems that are of vital interest to the workers; and even if we have twenty wars, social and economic problems will always return, and the world will still have to face the social revolution.

The following telegrams were received and read to the meeting:

May your meeting be a great success and tend mightily to unite the workers throughout the world.—Edinburgh Anarchist Group.

Greeting to London Comrades celebrating Paris Commune. Hurrah for Anarchy!—Leeds Anarchist Group.

A word of acknowledgment is due to the comrades of the *Workers' Friend* Group, who worked hard in every possible way for the success of the meeting.
H. K.

WEST HAM NOTES.

The political situation here in the southern division of the borough is beginning to assume a lively aspect. The West Ham Trades Council are open for nominations for Parliamentary honours. Up to now, I believe, they have Bell, A.S.R.S., Thorne, G.W.U., J. Terrett

alias J. Wolfe. Hyndman is mentioned; Keir Hardie is still in the field, with Major Banes, the present member. During the last ten years, to my knowledge, we have had beside the above-named the following "representatives" with M.P. attached to their names:—Mr. Joe Leicester, Hume Webster, who committed suicide (a pity the rest didn't go and do likewise), Messrs. Pound, Rawlings, Spencer Curwen, Parrett, Morgan, Barker, and Alderman Hay. The present Member, Major Banes, a Conservative who believes in the maxim "Silence is golden," for the only time he has made a speech was to the attendant at one of his meetings, asking him to close the window as he was afraid he would catch cold in the head. This is what State Socialists call "representation." Some of them voted for Hardie; he doesn't suit them now, so they are after some one else. To my knowledge as a member of the old Radical Association (now defunct) which introduced Keir Hardie in this constituency, I must honestly say that Hardie has not deviated one inch from his programme; so their action only shows us that we are right when we tell them it's figure-heads they worship, not principles. I for one have learned long ago that the battle for the emancipation of labour must be fought in the workshop and not in the House of Commons, and by the individual himself co-operating with his fellows, educating each other as to the advantage of the abolition of monopoly, and in its place co-operation on productive lines; that the funds of the trade societies, instead of being used up on strike and out-of-work pay, should be utilised in getting control of shops belonging to the different organisations, each trade managing its own affairs, so as to be able to shake off the idlers and the drones.

During March we had the question of the *Freethinker* paper before the Town Council—whether it was fit to be in the public libraries or not—and the Labour Members, to their shame, be it said, compromised themselves by voting that it should be kept behind the screen until called for. These are the men who are for equality, liberty, free press, etc. And now we have the Board of Guardians elections on, and Social Democrats, amongst other things, we find, are against compulsory vaccination, which means, to put it plainly, now the people have made the vaccination laws a dead letter, they are willing to make it optional, or, in other words, treating the people over this question as Anarchists would do—that is, leave them to please themselves. We are often laughed at when we say, Why not extend that principle? But oh, no, that would never do, for in that case there would be no place for these would-be saviours of society.

R. PEDDIE.

Libertarian Literature.

We have received the following papers and pamphlets:

The Co-operator (successor to *Social Democrat*), published weekly by the Co-operative Brotherhood at its colony, Olalla, Wash. 50 cents per year.

Le Monde Ouvrier, monthly review, Librairie Ouvrière, 5 Rue de l'Entrepot, Paris. 15 centimes.

El Nuevo Ideal, Nos. 1-6. New Cuban weekly published "in defence of the workers," at Amistad No. 156, Altos, Habana, Cuba. 5 cents. *Salud!*

Ciencia Social, No. 6. Monthly review. Calle Corrientes No. 2,041, Buenos Aires.

Anarchia e Comunismo, speech of Carlo Cafiero, published by the Libreria Sociologica, Corrientes No. 2,041, Buenos Aires.

Almanaque de la Question Sociale for 1899. Illustrated with portraits of many leading Anarchist and Revolutionary thinkers and victims of bourgeois reaction. Published by the Libreria Sociologica, Corrientes No. 2,041, Buenos Aires. 40 cents.

De Anarchist, No. 3. Monthly Dutch Anarchist Communist paper. J. Methofer, Naaldwijkstraat 35, The Hague, Holland. 3 cents.

THE PROPAGANDA.

Canning Town Group meets every second Thursday in the month.

Paris comrades have issued a manifesto calling an International Revolutionary Labor Congress next year in that city. Communications to L. Remy, 71 rue de Buffon. More about it in next issue.

LIBERTARIAN LECTURE SOCIETY.

The lecturers for February were respectively comrades Kelly, Turner, Mainwaring, and Shepherd. On the 5th the first, under the title of *American Politics and Politicians*, gave us a graphic and interesting description of the complicated political machinery of the United States, interspersed with amusing sketches of the wirepullers and politicians who run the machine. Tracing the constitution from the days of Washington, who was made to totter on his pinnacle, Jefferson and Abe Lincoln came in for an eloquent eulogy on the part of the speaker, who also drew attention to the strange fact that while Bryce, the acknowledged historian of the present political system of the States, wrote as a would-be dispassionate Scotchman and Liberal member of the British House of Commons, a glance at his list of authorities showed that he had solely studied the works of Conservative American writers, of men avowedly non-republican in politics and principles. The parliamentary spirit of the House of Commons pervaded every page and colored every

fact. Comrade Turner on the 12th, in his lecture on *Broken Pillars of Social Democracy*, like a skilful architect laid bare the rotten fabric of which some of the Social Democratic ideals are composed, notably the Marxian theory of the iron law of wages, which, whatever it did in Marx's day, in these no longer operates. He pointed out also the significant fact that capital, instead of being concentrated in fewer hands as the years roll on, is, owing to the enormous and rapid production of wealth, actually passing into the power of an ever increasing number of exploiters, without any corresponding ease or comfort accruing to the exploited; the danger being that if capital continues to increase at the present rate, the capitalist will one day outnumber the actual producer interested in the overthrow of the system. S. Mainwaring, whose interesting papers on the future of Trade Unionism have been appearing of late in *Freedom*, showed true fraternal spirit when at short notice he took J. T. Grein's place on the 19th, and in spite of a severe sorethroat, gave us a vivid sketch of the rise and spread of Trade Unions. It sounded like a romance to hear how, at the beginning of the century, when combination among workmen was a crime, they met in secret, hiding their books and minutes in holes and lonely places. Never was Trade Unionism such a living force as it is to-day, although our comrade admitted that, like every power, it had its weak points. What was needed was a federation of all trades and labor. On the 26th comrade E. Shepherd, who, with a like fraternal spirit, took an absent speaker's place at still shorter notice, opened a discussion on the same subject, but from an opposing standpoint. He has a keen eye for the weak points of present-day Trade Unionism, and proved that unionists have to face two factors, not only the capitalist, but the working-class itself—they have to fight not only the first but also the monopoly of their own trade; men also had to relinquish their own individuality, and often became mere parts of the machine of the union to which they were affiliated. Again, how strongly the political element entered into Trade Unionism; abroad a union was solely formed when politically organised; labor organisation came after political organisation.

March 5th saw that well-known citizen of the world Lothrop Withington on our platform, who, speaking on the *Spoils of Empire*, in no measured terms denounced the spirit of Imperialism that has taken the universe in its baleful grip and not with the motive of benefitting the weaker race, but for the sole purpose of the commercial aggrandisement of for the moment the conquering nation. The man who breathed the very essence of this new born imperialistic instinct, and whose pen was graving it with more or less force on the heart of each dominant race, was Rudyard Kipling, verse-monger. Like Cecil Rhodes, he is clasped to the bosom of every ruler and cherished, while the people with their vanity tickled and labor-soddened minds befogged, applaud. The dangers of Imperialism were strongly portrayed, the speaker showing how slavery stalked in its wake, and that the more men bowed to this ideal the greater flunkies they became.

On March 19th Mrs. Chas. Charrington (Janet Achurch) gave a sympathetic and beautiful address on the *Life and Work of the Brontë Sisters*, and with her artistic portraiture of these brave-spirited and brilliant writers, our second series of lectures closed. To most people *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë's justly famed work, and her sister Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, are known at least by name, but the pathetic life of these gifted women, with its quiet intensity of purpose and depth of passion, their love of all that is comprised in the word Liberty, their hatred of oppression in every form, especially where evinced towards children and animals, is known only to those who have opened Mrs. Gaskell's somewhat gloomy pages of Brontë biography and the short monographs of later writers. As Mrs. Charrington said, Charlotte Brontë (and here quoted Henry George's words from our programme) was one of the few rare spirits who followed truth wherever it led, fearlessly, begging no question, shirking no conclusion.

LIVERPOOL.

The outlook here is still as favorable as it was in my report of the month before last. I mentioned then that we had no club room; we are now in sight of having one, and expect in a few weeks to be settled down. You sleepy heads in London and elsewhere will then have to look out; for we are going to make the feathers fly. We have passed the stage of restless and aimless enthusiasm, and are about to enter the stage of cool practical work and organisation. We are at present sitting upon a number of eggs from which we expect to hatch a few good suggestions—of course, time will tell. The Social Democrats have once more begun their open-air meetings, which is better than wasting good time as they had been doing. We and the S.D.F. have buried the hatchet; we now agree to differ and have no more of the ridiculous and intolerant dirty-linen-washing which used to take place in the past, when one side or the other thought they had possession of what an S.D.F. member once termed "the absolute truth."

Rumour says that in some places Anarchism is dead and that *Freedom* has a hard struggle and needs the support of all the groups. Now, comrades, pull yourselves together and let people see that Rumour—like an M. P.'s promise—is not to be relied upon.

PAPADOX.

[Will comrades in the London and provincial Groups make a point of furnishing us with reports of their meetings and progress by not later than the 20th of each month.—ED.]

MONTHLY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

FREEDOM Guarantee Fund.—N. 5s., A.M. 5s., Kampffmeyer 5s., D. 5s., H.K. 5s., N. W. T. 5s., Free Commune Group 15/6, A. C. 1s., Canning Town 6s.

Donations Publication Fund.—Philadelphia comrades £1-0-6, Per D. £2.

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Sales of FREEDOM.—Newsagents 4/8, Warwick 2/8, Leeds 5/4, Canning Town 6s., Sheffield 4s., Newark 4/8, C. Norman 4/3, Liverpool 6s.

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DICKENS ON DOCTOR WATTS.

(From *David Copperfield*.)

"What does Doctor Watts say," added Doctor Strong, looking at me and moving his head to the time of his quotation, "'Satan finds some mischief still, for idle hands to do.'"

"Egad, Doctor," returned Mr. Wickfield, "if Doctor Watts knew mankind, he might have written; with as much truth, 'Satan finds some mischief still, for busy hands to do.' The busy people achieve their full share of mischief in the world, you may rely upon it. What have the people been about, who have been the busiest in getting money and in getting power, this century or two?—No mischief?"

FREEDOM PAMPHLETS.

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SPECIAL NOTICE.

In future we must request that all orders for pamphlets be accompanied with cash. We are compelled to adhere to this as we need funds for reprinting.

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- BIBLIOGRAPHIE DE L'ANARCHIE par M. NETTLAU. Preface d'ELISEE RECLUS; Brussels, 51 rue des Eperonniers, 1897; 294 pp. 5 francs; post free for 4 shillings prepaid.
- DIRECT ACTION VERSUS LEGISLATION, a new pamphlet by J. Blair Smith. Price one penny.

THE TRUTHSEEKER, A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF EGOISTIC SECULARISM. Price one penny. Publisher, J. W. GOTT, the great clothier, 2 Union Street, Bradford. Malfew Wilkes, 87 St. Ann's Well Road, Nottingham, will forward both these journals, post free, for 2½d.

THE FREE COMMUNE, A Quarterly Magazine of libertarian thought, post free 1½d. Publisher, W. MacQueen, 79 Markham Avenue, Harehills, Leeds.

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Printed and Published by J. TURNER, 127 Ossulston Street, London, N. W.