

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

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MONTHLY; ONE PENNY.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR.

(Continued from No. 163.)

Those comrades in whom we noticed these ultra-moderate leanings probably believe that they must sacrifice so much of their own real convictions and cherished ideals to keep in touch with the movement of organising and federating labor. This movement is not an outcome of their propaganda, but of the opposite, more powerful and sinister propaganda of capitalism itself, whose hard blows inevitably create the desire to strike back. So French trade unionism springs up by and by, like English trade unionism did long ago, supported by men of all conceivable social and political opinions who all sink their differences to fight the common battle of better conditions for labor. Just as a battle must be fought by much the same tactics, if it is to be victorious, by the Anarchist or by the Tory, so all who enter the labor struggle must fight on the same lines which are laid down by the nature of each particular case. Thus, if a strike can be averted and some concessions obtained by bringing pressure to bear on Ministers or M. P.s, this will be done; and even the Anarchist trade unionist, if he is seriously a unionist, must agree if it is the most "practical" (in the ordinary sense) thing to do. Trade unionism absorbs Anarchism, just as it absorbs all other creeds; we never hear of Liberal or Conservative trade unions, and ought never to have heard of Anarchist trade unions, which are quite as impossible and illogical. Some comrades may do admirable work within a limited circle, and we think here e.g. of the Paris cabinetmakers and their organ *Le Pot à Colle*; but large actions must always be fought on the lines of ordinary trade union warfare, based on authority, discipline and centralisation.

In *Freedom* for November last, certain moderated tendencies were noticed in the Italian movement. Those who openly favour Parliamentarism are but few, the adherents of F. S. Merlino who has joined the Naples section of the Italian Socialist Party and been elected a member of the Municipal Council of Naples. The bulk of the comrades absolutely reject parliamentarism; but their organs maintain a rather weak attitude on the dread subject of Bresci's act—which, of course, cannot be fully discussed in Italy. The movement everywhere extends, but whether it maintained the same intensity is difficult to say.

These impressions from France and Italy are serious warnings that we should not attempt to do what we cannot do. We have the immense task before us to bring those who appreciate and love freedom, yet are not conscious of how to obtain it and how to live up to it, to as clear an understanding of it as Anarchist ideas worked out today permit. We cannot at the same time be the leaders (for they seem to want such) of the immense movement for mere material improvement, without care for freedom, of the masses of all descriptions of opinion. If the failure of the miners' general strike of November 1, should help to make clear this nearly obliterated boundary mark within which our strength lies and outside of which we are powerless and waste our efforts, it will have done a good and necessary thing.

The most sympathetic feature of the miners' strike movement is that it arose out of the desire to help the miners of Montceau, who underwent a terribly hard strike struggle last winter and were defeated. The other mining districts, in fact, are not so immediately affected and less anxious to strike; and so, after protracting the matter over so many months the strike became impossible.

In a similar spirit of sympathy with a race of men and women threatened with extermination, the dockers of Holland proposed to those of Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Sweden, etc., to boycott British shipping until the South African war was stopped. This proposal may seem quite outrageous to the British public; but they have to remember that, after the verdict in the Dreyfus case (1899), the bourgeois papers and many individuals in most countries called for the boycott of the Paris Exhibition of 1900, and that similar propositions with regard to France were made when some French caricaturists took the liberty to portray the late queen, Victoria. So international boycott is quite a familiar subject. Besides, the proposal comes several months after another proposal, first made by the *Journal de Charleroi* (Belgium), that the British trade unionists should come out on strike to end the war. This met with absolute failure, and the last Trade Union Congress did not even care to pass an ordinary resolution against the war. Under these circumstances, the best thing is for foreign workers to make good their proposal and to act upon it themselves, and this the dockers of many ports seemed about to do. It is the most generous idea that sprang up in the working class of all time, perhaps. Unfortunately, though enthusiastic support seemed to have been given to the idea of the boycott in Dutch, French and Italian ports, the movement

is now said to have collapsed. Perhaps here, as in the miners' strike, the preparation beforehand for a given date (1st of January, 1902) had much to do with the failure. If the original promoters had just come out on strike, their example have been contagious and the short notice of the actual fact would have made more impression than all the travelling and talking of delegates for months before an actual effort was to be made. Twice this system failed in one year—an object lesson in favor of initiative, spontaneity and voluntary action as opposed to organised preparation.

All this shows how much reason Anarchists have to work, before all, for Anarchy; that is, for a clearer understanding of the effect of freedom upon all ways and methods of action.

I will next speak of the persecutions of Anarchists, of our comrades in prison, of those who died, and of the few who after years of prison agonies enter life again.

Gaetano Bresci died in his prison cell, by suicide or by murder—no one may ever know. The responsibility to those who kept him there remains the same, and murder seems even more merciful than suicide to which the pangs of long and slow deliberation are added!

G. Lefrançais died at a ripe age, after over fifty years work for revolutionary Communism, arriving at the end of his life at the conclusion that the only place for him was among Anarchists. He told his life up to the Commune in his memoirs published in the *Cri du Peuple* (Paris) of 1886-7, to which his book on the Paris Commune of 1871 forms a sequel; a volume of his writings is in preparation, to be edited by L. Descaves.

Another man dead, before whom years of activity lay, is Fernand Pelloutier, the soul of the anti-parliamentary trade unionist movement, the history of which he left (*Histoire des Bourses du Travail*, to be published shortly, with a life of Pelloutier by V. Dave). Meanwhile his *Vie Ouvrière en France* (Paris, 1899) is the standard work on the actual economic condition of the working classes in France.

Jules Moineau and Wolff have left prison in Belgium, at Louvain, after being kept there since 1892 and cruelly treated until the last moment, when they were quite suddenly liberated as this appeared to the government a means of preventing anti-monarchical demonstrations. The trial at Liege in 1892 was full of scandalous incidents; the hand of a provocative agent (*agent provocateur*) was seen in everything brought against the accused. Many were sentenced, of whom Beaujean still remains in prison. Jules Moineau, the most active of the Liege comrades at the time, was the predestined victim of the police plot that led to the trial. The movement in his favor, after some years, became widespread. Moineau refused to try to win his liberty by being elected to the Chamber of Deputies; he remained firm until the end, and left prison at last to join his wife and children at Liège.

This summer an Austrian Anarchist, Franz Kumitsch, was allowed to leave the penitentiary at Wurttemberg, where he was imprisoned since the end of 1883. He was one of the few propagandists by action of that early time, most of whom were hanged or died in prison or in exile.

In Cayenne, Salson died after hardly a year's transportation there. His body was thrown into the sea by the warders in such a way as to give the sharks the fullest chance to display themselves, and for some time the head of the dead man gave them great sport; this was done to please the prison officials and some officers who watched the scene as amateur photographers. Those who serve their years of transportation under the heels of these brutes up to the last day, at Cayenne and in New Caledonia, are left penniless before the prison gates by the particularly shabby action of the French government, which tore them from their homes yet refuses to ship them back to France. This happened to Liard Courtois, Régis Meunier and others.

The prisoners of Jerez (Spain) were liberated early this year, having been sentenced in 1892 on evidence wrung out by torture and which led to the execution by garrote of four of the accused. But the Spanish workers have, unfortunately, new work at hand: to liberate the victims of La Coruña and Sevilla.

Paolo Schicchi remains in an Italian prison since 1892, a short time after he left the prison at Barcelona. He was excluded from all amnesties which, within the last seven years, liberated criminals of almost every description—those who attempted the king's life and who are left to go mad (Passanante, Acciarito) excepted. And he seems to be ranked with them for some disobliging remarks he made on the royal family of Italy in papers published in Switzerland and Spain; he was told years ago by the judge who prepared his case that these articles "implicate you more than the acts with which you stand charged," as Schicchi himself writes in a letter quoted by the *Agitazione* of Rome.

(To be continued.)

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NOTES.

In the *Daily News* of Dec. 3rd Auberon Herbert does battle with Professor Wallace on the question of Socialism v. Individualism. The following remarks relative to the position of a rebellious citizen under State Socialism have special interest for us:

"But he might act with his fellow workers, you may suggest, throw down his tools, and join in a strike. Yes, he might do so; but such an act would come perilously near an act of revolt against the State. So enormous, so complicated, so difficult, would be the task that the all-owning State had taken on its shoulders, that its discipline would necessarily be of the strictest kind. Were either you, Sir, or Professor Wallace, or I myself, members of such Government, we might make an ugly face, and, perhaps, feel 'agonised,' as the present Government does on critical occasions; but this would not prevent our ordering out the State cannon to put down insubordination of any kind that showed itself. We know that, unless obedience were complete, and authority absolute, the great system could not go on, and a most frightful crash would be imminent. So true it is that these great machines, when once constructed, are our masters as well as our slaves."

THE CHESTERFIELD SPEECH.

Who is Lord Rosebery? We have been reading of this person as making a speech at Chesterfield recently which was to have some vital and all-important bearing on the destinies of this country. Lured on by the feverish excitement that has taken hold of the political parties over the pronouncements of this man, we read the speech. We were well punished for our pains; for, after all, we gained nothing for our trouble. Everything that was said had been said before. Not a new idea came forth, not a gleam of light on the problems, political or social, that we were led to suppose would be handled with the dexterity of a master-mind. There was not even a sign of the feeblest comprehension of the great questions that really underlie all the outward manifestations visible today. And this was the man who was to enlighten Tom, Dick and Harry! How sickening, all this beslaving of one poor mortal who can only strut his little hour, and disappoint us—throw us back on ourselves so to speak. For that's what it comes to in the end—we have to work it out for ourselves. Truly, the workers have much to be thankful for to politicians. How many homes have been brightened? how much human suffering has been alleviated by the Rosebery speech?

BRUMMAGEM FREEDOM.

There is a saying that good people can be found everywhere, and perhaps there may be some in Birmingham, but they don't succeed in coming to the front. Still, even Birmingham we must take as we find it, and Birmingham is typical of all that colours our national life today. How, then, can we expect free speech to exist in such an atmosphere? It is the Babylon of commercialism. It manufactures all the infernal war material that modern science has invented; it produces all the hideous wares that have earned it the name of Brummagem; it reeks with the fumes from its factories, it is foul with the filth of its slums—and it is the home of Chamberlain. Who could expect free speech, or indeed anything that is essential to a healthy, enlightened social life, to thrive in such conditions? We admire the courage of Lloyd George and his supporters; but history teaches us that the man who will publicly speak the truth in Birmingham must be prepared to face a cruel death at the hands of the degraded slaves who earn their bread in its factories. Their hearts, and minds, as Shakespeare would tell us, have been subdued to what they work in, like the dyer's hand.

NOTICE.

The condition of our finances not permitting us to promise a regular issue of *Freedom*, we shall issue the paper as often as

circumstances will allow, and hope that all comrades will make an effort to resume and continue the monthly publication.

PARIS CONGRESS REPORTS, 1900.

TOLSTOYISM AND ANARCHISM.

The group E. S. R. I., of Paris, presents a report on this in which they say: The intense revolutionary activity in Russia of the years just before the execution of Alexander II. (May 13, 1881) was followed by a lull, and temporary feeling of discouragement, and doubt of the older revolutionary programmes. It was at this time Tolstoy first clearly formulated his theories, and although his criticism of present society, the existing church, the State militarism, the dominant classes, etc., etc., might be written by any revolutionist, yet by replacing political and social aims and the uncompromising strife that recoiled from nothing by individual improvement and non-resistance to evil by violence, he had for a time a distinctly bad influence on the Russian movement.

Tolstoy looks upon the individual life as essentially contradictory, unless brought into relations with the universal life by love; and he creates a religion of love in which the idea of God is confounded with life itself. This is what he considers the real teaching of Christ, and sums it up in five commandments: 1. Condemns contempt and anger (live in peace with everyone and never consider anger against anyone whatever as legitimate). 2. Counsels chastity, and forbids adultery and divorce. 3. Forbids swearing. 4. Forbids violence; if struck, endure it; if made to work, work. 5. Prohibits war—love even enemies, and consider no one as a stranger. The idea he insists upon more than any other is "Resist not evil." Violence is bad in principle because contrary to love. One cannot love his neighbour and do him evil. It is bad in practice, because evil produces evil; vengeance does not repair misfortune, or punishment crime. No one has the right to judge his fellow; as, even if he knew his motives, a fresh violence would not repair the original one. All revolutions are attempts to break this man (men united by error) by violence. Men imagine that if they hammer this mass it will break, and they beat a hole in it; but in endeavoring to break it they only forge it. Violence is also contrary to human nature, it only dominates today "thanks to this social and governmental machine whose work consists in dividing the responsibility for the evils it commits in such a way that no one feels to what extent these acts are contrary to nature. Some draw up laws, others apply them, a third set harden people by discipline—that is to say, by thoughtless and passive obedience,—a fourth set, these same people already hardened, make themselves the instruments of all sorts of coercion and kill their fellows without knowing why."

But there are some violences that aim at preventing others which cannot otherwise be avoided. Sometimes one has to choose between two evils, to do or endure a violence. I do not see how it is better, from the point of view of love, to endure rather than commit a violence. If some men persecute others, and before I have the time to moralize them or convert them to the religion of Love, they put the existence of other individuals in danger, I have the right to choose between the life of the persecutors and that of the persecuted. I might not be doing a profoundly moralising act, but it would be the least immoral. It is, besides, very difficult to draw the line between passive resistance and a violent action. A propagandist who spreads his ideas and endeavors to combat by his propaganda some tendency or institution that seems to him injurious, can never be sure that amongst those whom he has converted there may not be some who will not limit themselves to pacific propaganda. Where then is the limit between these two kinds of action, and should one abstain from propaganda because it might lead some one to acts of violence? All the arguments that apply to a violent action committed on behalf of any conviction apply equally well to a book or speech. Either I must abstain from blaming, even in thought, that which seems to me evil, or I have the right to make my idea enter into life even by the help of a revolution. To be consistent, Tolstoy must choose the first, and leave evil alone to develop with impunity. He considers manual work as an indispensable condition of wellbeing and prohibits exploiting the work of others, but is hostile to intellectual work—which he thinks removes us from Love, for which the childish simple state of mind is best. We think both physical and intellectual work are necessary to the complete man. He would take us backward to the life of the fields and a pastoral society; he would form men resigned, simple in spirit and suffering. We think division of work, and machinery are useful and have a great future; that they will replace isolated individual work by work in common. We would affirm individuality, and form men strong, intelligent and happy. He thinks physical pleasures altogether bad and should be suppressed as much as possible; that men should work, humble themselves, suffer and be charitable. But the animal life is not entirely egoistic, nor the higher life entirely disinterested. Many pleasures are distinctly social, and happiness awakens in us feelings of sympathy. The search for individual happiness and common wellbeing forms a bond of union amongst men.

Anarchists base their ideal on complete, not diminished, individuals; and their society, also based on mutual love, has for its *raison d'être* the securing to each individual the greatest possible amount of happiness. Many established scientific facts seem unknown to him; in what concerns social life he seems quite ignorant of the social relationships of

his time, the position of the different classes and the various social theories and movements. Each one can practice abstinence, and work; but in practising Love one meets with an exterior obstacle, the social organisation, which consecrates inequality and violence by means of property, authority, money and the State; but he thinks this will be changed, not by a violent reorganisation of society, but from the personal efforts of isolated individuals to live justly. He finds the pleasures of the animal life too fragile and narrow and unable to satisfy man's constant need for activity; but the fear of their loss does not prove they are bad or afford a reason for suppressing them, whilst the principle of sympathy might enable us to make them less futile and more stable. We, too, think the individual without love is incomplete; that the egoist lives in a much lower degree than the altruist, and if wise would sacrifice some pleasures to others. But what is the *raison d'être* of love if no value is placed on individual happiness? Why do anything to secure the happiness of others if it is not a good, or why restrain oneself from inflicting pain on others if it is not an evil?

One point continually leads him astray: his refusal to take the animal life as the basis of the higher, because he considers these as contradictory and, wishing to found life on some other principle, he constantly asks questions that logically admit of no answer—"What is the good?" and "What then?" If one has some definite aim or belief, he may ask himself what is the good of any act in relation to this aim or belief; but, for one who has not, it is illogical and absurd to ask what is the good of living, or why he desires anything. Desires belong to a different part of our nature from the reason.

Still, Tolstoy's works are very useful against those reactionists who found their belief on the Christian morality taught by the churches; he admirably brings out the contradictions of this morality. Also, against those who, having no religious convictions, defend the present society in the name of the struggle for existence and the right of the strongest. He shows that the egoist is an incomplete being who does not really live; that without love and the help of others one cannot be a real man, or happy. That it is not by egoism, isolation and disdain, but by love, solidarity and mutual esteem that a society without rivalry and strife, and consequently without authority or coercive law, can be established. Finally, against those who teach the materialist explanation of History, who only see the evolution of Capital, never that of ideas; he shows that the moral factor is as important in social progress as the economic one; that, however much Capital may evolve, we shall never have an ideal society without forming individuals for it; that each must now form convictions and, as far as possible, conform his life to them. But his propaganda also presents great dangers; having no social ideal and advocating no means of improving the present social order, he can not fail to lead some minds away from the social movement and all that constitutes Socialism.

His final aim is the moral improvement of the individual. We think, instead of concerning oneself simply with cultivating one's own morality and living an ascetic life, it is above all in taking part in this movement that one can improve himself. He is certainly a great writer and thinker, perhaps an excellent primitive Christian; but he is in no case an Anarchist Communist or Revolutionist.

THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN HOLLAND.

(Concluded from No. 163.)

The Congress decided:

1. That no money of the central treasury could be used for the elections.
2. That the sections could not participate in elections.
3. That the members of the Federation should be free to participate or not in elections.

Further, a resolution was adopted by which all the former resolutions on the tactics of the Federation were cancelled. Among these was the declaration that the Federation was anti-parliamentarian. Whether this or something else was the cause, anyhow no responsible editor for the party journal, *Recht voor Allen*, could be found.

General confusion reigned. Heterogeneous elements gathered together who formed no longer a party or unity.

The Anarchists exclaimed: "Let us separate; it is here already a parliament!"

Some of the delegates left the Congress. The separation caused confusion and sadness.

After the referendum which confirmed the resolutions of the Congress, Amsterdam still refused participation in the election of a new Central Council. So that the Right fraction chose the seven administrative members—who, however, did not represent the decisions of the Congress. This measure resulted in the secession of many sections from the Federation, forming "free unions of Socialists."

It was evident that the parliamentarian minority of the Federation did not differ in reality from the Social Democrats, and after having edited *Recht voor Allen* for some months by an editorial commission the two sides came to an understanding at a Congress on Whitsunday 1900 which had for its object the unification of the Parliamentary Socialist movement.

At the time of the Congress of 1897 a sufficient number of local Socialist journals existed. The *Klok* (clock) in Friesland; *Recht door Zee* (straight forward) in Overijssel; *Arbeider* (worker) in Groningen; *Volksblad* (the people's journal) along the Zaan; *Toekomst* (the future) in Zeeland; also a satirical review, *Paradox*, edited by Alexander Cohen.*

* Alexander Cohen, well known among the London comrades by his exile in England.

The editors of these journals took different views upon tactics. Whilst, for instance, the editor of the *Klok*, the deputy Van der Zwaag, stuck to his principle of participation in elections for propaganda's sake and has not been willing to make common cause with his comrades of the minority in the Federation, on the other hand *Toekomst* and *Arbeider* have adhered to revolutionary Communism and Anarchism. *Recht door Zee*, though calling itself anti-parliamentarian, balances between the two directions.

To give an example of how difficult it is to judge the situation, I will quote the *Volksblad* whose editors had not immediately given their opinion after the congress of 1897. Invited to do so, the *Volksblad* published the opinions of its four editors: there were four different opinions!

Besides local papers, *Vrije Socialist* (free Socialist) appears twice a week. The parliamentarians ceased the publication of *Recht voor Allen* since 1900 to concentrate their forces upon one daily paper, *Het Volk* (the people). They publish besides a local weekly paper, *Volksstryd* (people's struggle), in Groningen in competition with the *Arbeider*.

The more or less individualist Anarchists—I call them so, because I think the individualist sentiments dominate the collaborators of the paper—recommended the publication, some months ago, of the small journal *An-archie*, not to be confused with the *Anarchist* which was published for years by one of the oldest Communist Anarchists, J. Methöfer, who with C. Croll were two of the founders of the Communist Anarchist movement in Holland.

As the Social Democratic forces have successfully achieved their unification and combined for the latest elections, on the other hand the revolutionary Communists and Communist Anarchists, I think, will shortly unite in order to form one decentralised organisation—a sort of federation of autonomous groups. But this can only be brought about if in the future the Communist Anarchists accept the idea of "delegating" and even some sort of common arrangement for certain purely administrative matters.

One force remains after all to the workers' movement in Holland: the National Trades Council, which unites the principal trade unions of the country (the diamond workers are not affiliated) and which numbers about 12,000 organised workers of different trades. Like the Federation of Labor Exchanges and the General Confederation of Trade Unions in France, the National Trades Council does not occupy itself with politics and takes no part in elections, leaving liberty to the members of different trade unions to do so, however. They are engaged in the economic struggle by means of the wage movement, strikes, etc. These are the columns with which the practical struggle against capitalism has begun in Holland, after years of theory.

C. CORNELISSEN.

"BY ORDER OF THE POLICE."

AN EPISODE OF 1894.

[From the French of Octave Mirbeau.]

I was sleeping peacefully when I was awakened with a start by the sound of loud knocking at the door of my flat. Puzzled by so unusual a circumstance, I lighted a candle and ascertained that my revolver was fully loaded. The clock struck five. Whilst I hurriedly threw on some clothes the knocking redoubled at the door; one might have thought it was some battering-ram trying to break in the gate of an ancient and besieged city. I walked firmly to the door, which shook as if on the point of bursting open, and in as firm a tone (being, I trust, no poltroon) I demanded: "Who is there?"

An odd voice, which struck me instantly as being disguised or hoarse from much drinking, replied: "*Monsieur's* chiropodist."

"What!" I said, "at this hour! But you must be a fool—and why all this noise?"

"If *monsieur* will only pardon me! But tonight there is the Spuller banquet, and the day will not be long enough for me to attend to the feet of everyone." The words should have aroused my suspicions. I never employed a chiropodist; yet, strange to say, I felt suddenly impelled to accept the services of one! From what inconceivable impulse I became oblivious to all my usual habits, and why I was reassured by the stranger's explanation which was no explanation, I cannot tell. I could have been but half awake. I opened the door.

At once there rushed in, like some perambulating waterspout or cyclone, a gentleman with a big moustache, followed by six others with as large moustaches, bearing *commissionaires'* bags across their shoulders.

"Topsy idiots!" I cried, vexed to have fallen a victim to so silly a ruse.

The gentleman with the big moustache saluted me ironically, then throwing a heavy club against a curtain which draped a wall in the ante-room and which in its fall knocked over and broke a statuette, he said: "No, not tippy idiots! The Superintendent of Police, dear sir, who is here to make a search."

"A search—*here*? Surely you are mad. By what right will you dare to make it?"

The gentleman with the big moustache laughed heartily, his merriment being re-echoed by his six *aides*. "By what right? ... Ah! the right! ... Well, I like that! ... I assure you, Raynal, Lépine and I don't worry ourselves much about that side of the question." His hands clenched, his moustache bristling, he suddenly confronted me and continued: "By the right that we assume, Raynal, Lépine and myself, to visit the citizens at our own hour and convenience, and without explanations! Such at least will not assist you. Show me your library."

I saw no use in resisting; to tell the truth, an official search on my premises struck me as something extremely droll. Having nothing

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J. CREAGHE.

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