

# THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

## HOW WE LIVE AND HOW WE MIGHT LIVE.<sup>1</sup>

THE word Revolution which we Socialists are so often forced to use, has a terrible sound in most people's ears, even when we have explained to them that it does not necessarily mean a change accompanied by riot and all kinds of violence, and cannot mean a change made mechanically and in the teeth of opinion by a group of men who have somehow managed to seize on the executive power for the moment. Even when we explain that we use the word revolution in its etymological sense, and mean by it a change in the basis of society, people are scared at the idea of such a vast change, and beg that you will speak of reform and not revolution. As however we Socialists do not at all mean by our word revolution what these worthy people mean by their word reform, I can't help thinking that it would be a mistake to use it, whatever projects we might conceal beneath its harmless envelope. So we will stick to our word, which means a change of the basis of society; it may frighten people, but it will at least warn them that there is something to be frightened about, which will be no less dangerous for being ignored; and also it may encourage some people, and will mean to them at least not a fear but a hope. Fear and Hope—those are the two names of the two great passions which rule the race of man, and with which revolutionists have to deal; to give hope to the many oppressed and fear to the few oppressors, that is our business; if we do the first and give hope to the many, the few must be frightened by their hope; otherwise we do not want to frighten them; it is not revenge we want for poor people, but happiness; indeed what revenge can be taken for all the thousands of years of the sufferings of the poor?

However, many of the oppressors of the poor, most of them, we will say, are not conscious of their being oppressors (we shall see why, presently); they live in an orderly quiet way themselves, as far as possible removed from the feelings of a Roman slaveowner or a Legree; they know that the poor exist, but their sufferings do not present themselves to them in a trenchant and dramatic way; they themselves have troubles to bear, and they think doubtless that to bear trouble is the lot of humanity, nor have they any means of comparing the troubles of their lives with those of people lower in the social scale; and if ever the thought of those heavier troubles obtrudes itself upon them, they console themselves with the maxim that people do get used to the troubles they have to bear, whatever they may be.

Indeed, as far as regards individuals at least, that is but too true, so that we have as supporters of the present state of things, however bad it may be, first those comfortable unconscious oppressors who think that they have everything to fear from any change which would involve more than the softest and most gradual of reforms, and secondly those poor people who living hard and anxiously as they do, can hardly conceive of any change for the better happening to them, and dare not risk one tittle of their poor possessions in taking any action towards a possible bettering of their condition; so that while we can do little with the rich save inspire them with fear, it is hard indeed to give the poor any hope. It is then, no less than reasonable that those whom we try to involve in the great struggle for a better form of life than we now lead should call on us to give them at least some idea of what that life may be like: a reasonable request, but hard to satisfy, since we are living under a system that makes even unconscious effort towards reconstruction almost impossible: it is not unreasonable on our part to answer, "There are certain definite obstacles to any real progress of man; we can tell you what these are; take them away and then you shall see."

However I propose now to offer myself as a victim for the satisfaction of those who consider that as things now go we have at least got something, and are terrified at the idea of losing their hold of that, lest they should find they are worse off than before and have nothing. Yet in the course of my endeavour to show how we might live, I must more or less deal in negatives. I mean to say I must point out where in my opinion we fall short in our present attempts at decent life. I must ask the rich and well-to-do what sort of a position it is which they are so anxious to preserve at any cost? and if after all it will be such a terrible loss to them to give it up? and I must point out to the poor that they, with capacities for living a dignified and generous life, are in a position which they cannot endure without continued degradation. How do we live then under our present system? Let us look at it a little.

And first, please to understand that our present system of Society is based on a state of perpetual war. Do any of you think that this is as it should be? I know that you have often been told that the competition, which is at present the rule of all production, is a good thing, and stimulates the progress of the race; but the people who tell you this should call competition by its shorter name of *war* if they wish to be honest, and you would then be free to consider whether or no war stimulates progress, otherwise than as a mad bull chasing you over your own garden may do. War or competition, whichever you please to call it, means at the best pursuing your own advantage at the cost of some one else's loss, and in the process of it you must not be sparing of destruction even of your own possessions, or you will certainly come by the worse in the struggle. You understand that perfectly as to the kind of war in which people go out to kill and be killed; that sort of war in which ships are commissioned, for instance, "to sink, burn, and destroy"; but it appears that you are not so conscious of this waste of goods when you are only carrying on that other war called commerce; observe, however, that the waste is there all the same.

Now let us look at this kind of war a little closer, run through some of the forms of it, that we may see how the "burn, sink, and destroy" is carried on in it. First, you have that form of it called national rivalry, which in good truth is now-a-days the cause of all gunpowder and bayonet wars which civilised nations wage. For years past we English have been rather shy of them, except on those happy occasions when we could carry them on at no sort of risk to ourselves, when the killing was all one side, or at all events when we hoped it would be. We have been shy of gunpowder war with a respectable enemy for a long while, and I will tell you why: It is because we have had the lion's share of the world-market; we didn't want to fight for it as a nation, for we had got it; but now this is changing in a most significant, and to a Socialist, a most cheering way; we are losing or have lost that lion's share; it is now a desperate "competition" between the great nations of civilisation for the world-market, and to-morrow it may be a desperate war for that end. As a result, the furthering of war (if it be not on too large a scale) is no longer confined to the honour-and-glory kind of old Tories, who if they meant anything at all by it meant that a Tory war would be a good occasion for damping down democracy; we have changed all that, and now it is quite another kind of politician that is wont to urge us on to "patriotism" as 'tis called. The leaders of the Progressive Radicals they would call themselves, long-headed persons who know well enough that social movements are going on, who are not blind to the fact that the world will move with their help or without it; these are the jingoes of to-day. I don't mean to say they know what they are doing: politicians, as you well know, take good care to shut their eyes to everything that may happen six months ahead; but what is being done is this, that the present system, which always must include national rivalry, is pushing us into a desperate scramble for the markets on more or less equal terms with other nations, because, once more, we have lost that command of them which we once had. Desperate is not too strong a word. We shall let this impulse to snatch markets carry us whither it will, whither it must. To-day it is successful burglary and disgrace, to-morrow it may be mere defeat and disgrace.

Now this is not a digression, although in saying this I am nearer to what is generally called politics than I shall be again. I only want to show you what commercial war comes to when it has to do with foreign nations, and that even the dullest can see how mere waste must go with it. That is how we live now with foreign nations, prepared to ruin them without war if possible, with it if necessary, let alone meantime the disgraceful exploiting of savage tribes and barbarous peoples, on whom we force at once our shoddy wares and our hypocrisy at the cannon's mouth.

Well, surely Socialism can offer you something in the place of all that; it can offer you peace and friendship instead of war. We might live utterly without national rivalries, acknowledging that while it is best for those who feel that they naturally form a community under one name to govern themselves, yet that no community in civilisation should feel that it had interests opposed to any other, their economical condition being at any rate similar; so that any citizen of one community could fall to work and live without disturbance of his life when he was in a foreign country, and would fit into his place quite naturally; so that all civilised nations would form one great community agreeing together as to the kind and amount of production and distribution needed; working at such and such production where it could be best produced; avoiding waste by all means. Please to think of the amount

<sup>1</sup> This paper has been delivered as a lecture on several occasions; and I have been often asked to reprint it: hence its appearance in *Commonweal*.

of waste which they would avoid, how much such a revolution would add to the wealth of the world! What creature on earth would be harmed by such a revolution? Nay, would not everybody be the better for it? And what hinders it? I will tell you presently.

Meantime let us pass from this "competition" between nations to that between "the organizers of labour," great firms, joint-stock and other capitalists in short, and see how competition "stimulates production" among them: indeed it does do that; but what kind of production? Well, production of something to sell at a profit, or say production of profits: and note how war commercial stimulates that: a certain market is demanding goods, there are say a hundred manufacturers who make that kind of goods, and every one of them would if he could keep that market to himself, and struggles desperately to get as much of it as he can, with the obvious result that presently the thing is overdone, and the market is glutted, and all that fury of manufacture has to sink into cold ashes. Doesn't that seem something like war to you? Can't you see the waste of it—waste of labour, skill, cunning, waste of life in short? Well, you may say, but it cheapens the goods. In a sense it does; and yet only apparently, as wages have a tendency to sink for the ordinary worker in proportion as prices sink; and at what a cost do we gain this appearance of cheapness! Plainly speaking, at the cost of cheating the consumer and starving the real producer for the benefit of the gambler, who uses both consumer and producer as his milch cows. I needn't go at length into the subject of adulteration, for everyone knows what kind of a part it plays in this sort of commerce; but remember that it is an absolutely necessary incident to the production of profit out of wares, which is the business of the so-called manufacturer; and this you must understand that, taking him in the lump, the consumer is perfectly helpless against the gambler; the goods are forced on him by their cheapness, and with them a certain kind of life which that energetic, that aggressive cheapness determines for him: for so far-reaching is this curse of commercial war that no country is safe from its ravages; the traditions of a thousand years fall before it in a month; it overruns a weak or semi-barbarous country, and whatever romance or pleasure or art existed there, is trodden down into a mire of sordidness and ugliness: the Indian or Javanese craftsman may no longer ply his craft leisurely, working a few hours a day, in producing a maze of strange beauty on a piece of cloth: a steam-engine is set agoing at Manchester, and that victory over nature and a thousand stubborn difficulties is used for the base work of producing a sort of plaster of china-clay and shoddy, and the Asiatic worker, if he is not starved to death outright, as plentifully happens, is driven himself into a factory to lower the wages of his Manchester brother worker, and nothing of character is left him except, most like, an accumulation of fear and hatred of that to him most unaccountable evil, his English master. The South Sea Islander must leave his canoe-carving, his sweet rest, and his graceful dances, and become the slave of a slave: trousers, shoddy, rum, missionary, and fatal disease,—he must swallow all this civilisation in the lump, and neither himself nor we can help him now till social order displaces the hideous tyranny of gambling that has ruined him.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

## CO-OPERATIVE PRACTICE IN AID OF SOCIALISM.

CO-OPERATION, the offspring and natural handmaid of Socialism, having been seduced and perverted by the sons of Capitalism, has too long been treated as a stranger by us. Signs are not wanting, however, of a permanent and mutually-beneficial *rapprochement* between these closely-related movements. Co-operators are beginning to learn that self-interest, apart from higher motives, must draw them on to Socialism. Socialists are recognising that, although true social co-operation is impossible without the previous destruction or automatic collapse (as the case may be) of the present social structure, they as a party, or in private groups, may profitably employ for the advancement of their cause the services of such co-operation as is now available. The co-operative Socialist bakeries and press in Belgium, the projected Social-Democratic bakeries in London, and the recently established grocery stores of the Socialist League, are so many indications of the way the wind blows.

Let us, then, review the field which lies before us, with a view to the intelligent and therefore successful organisation of this co-operative campaign.

In the first place, what are the objects to be gained by it? Let me commence by anticipating any charge of utopianism—I adopt the vulgar spelling along with the vulgar meaning of the word—by disclaiming any hope of creating at present the framework of the co-operative commonwealths of the future. Such co-operative or even communistic experiments as we may now inaugurate can only be regarded as means and not as ends. We shall be constructing upon healthy and enlightened principles the temporary habitations of the artificers of the new structure, but not (unless accidentally and incidentally) laying any part of its foundations. For the same reason we shall effect no monastic schism or separation of Socialists from the rest of the world; on the contrary, we shall aid each other to live and work to the best purpose in it.

The chief objects, I think, of such efforts as I refer to, are or should be the following: (1) Mutual benefit and insurance: making the pro-

fession of Socialism less dangerous to its actual disciples, less deterrent, if not entirely attractive, to its potential or would-be disciples by improving their material position—at the expense, *bien entendu*, of the trading and capitalist classes. (2) Having diverted from the pockets of private employers and taken much of the surplus returns or profits now contributed to them by Socialists, to employ them as "sinews of war" for the cause. (3) By such means also to accelerate (in a merciful spirit, of course), on the principle of "every little helps," that disintegration and decomposition of the Old Order which so few of us deplore. (4) To acquire during the same processes experimental data, by means of which a more conscious and therefore more rapid evolution of the New Order may be furthered, the aim and operations of the revolution rendered more scientific, and its immediate results more sure and abiding. To create meanwhile models and precedents for the imitation of municipalities, trades' unions, and other public bodies. (5) To provide a training in co-operative industries or services, and the administration thereof, to many Socialists now deficient in it, and a new sphere for many desirous of aiding the Socialist movement but unsuited or disinclined for agitation or other work connected with the direct propaganda. (6) Applying to *communities* only, and not to purely industrial co-operative enterprises: To provide as complete practical training<sup>1</sup> as possible for the work of the day after the revolution, while affording to contemporary workers in the cause recreative retreats and centres of social communion and mutual edification, missionary centres for country districts, and, last but not least, educational centres for the young.

Secondly, how are such objects to be attained through co-operative practice? That is to say, what forms of co-operative enterprises should be promoted, by whom should they be promoted respectively, and how should the necessary capital be obtained for starting them? I am not going to attempt in this article to answer all these points in order or in detail, although I hope hereafter to submit satisfactory answers to them. But I will conclude by indicating some of the means and forms through which I think the above objects may be attained.

I shall roughly divide all possible co-operative enterprises into two classes—(1) the Industrial Co-operative, including co-operation in production, distribution, and accessory or miscellaneous services separately and in combination, and (2) the Communistic, embracing community of use, service, and consumption, with or without socialised forms of production. This class, as Raymond Unwin has pointed out in the *Commonweal* of March 5th, is best adapted for country districts, but I think communistic constitutions might be devised of a sufficiently elastic character for application to colonies in the neighbourhood of London, Paris, Berlin, Glasgow, New York, and other large cities, where educational and missionary establishments are desirable, and where such establishments can only be well and economically conducted (as appears to me at least) in connection with a real *community*. Such colonies would have to acquire sufficient land, on suitable terms, both to render them self-supporting by communistic practice (*i.e.*, by the socialisation of production, distribution, and consumption alike) as regards the usual *necessaries* of life, and to enable them in addition to supply the outside public at competitive rates with market-garden produce or manufactured commodities in regular demand. All adult able-bodied members would be required to work their appointed time in the *communal* services, but that time would only be sufficient to supply the community directly or (in a few departments, such as tea and coffee) indirectly with the said *necessaries* of life. Members not otherwise occupied in the neighbouring city would be expected to devote part of their surplus time to the co-operative industries selected by the colony, the greater part of the net returns from which might be devoted to the promotion and formation of other co-operative enterprises in the interest of Socialism, and to the propaganda funds of the respective societies to which members of the colony belonged, *pro rata*. In other towns communities might be established not owning land, and not necessarily *producing* any of their necessities, but associated on the club principle for co-operative house-keeping (so far as usual necessities are concerned) and for mutual service and social communion. Such communities might be catered for by co-operative societies promoted and organised by their own members. Other co-operative industries and services, depending for their revenue partly upon comrades but chiefly upon the outside world, would in time grow up from the same roots and prey upon the vitals of commercialism. In all these cases practical communism in the necessities of life is treated as the starting-point, the lever of success. Independence of the competitive-labour-market is, barring trade and political organisation, the only weapon with which it is possible to defy the Ogre of Capitalism. It is the only true basis of mutual insurance.

As to purely industrial co-operative societies started without such communistic foundations, the most hopeful without doubt are those started on a large scale; and these require either a large initial outlay of capital, large credit such as could only be obtained by promoters well known for their technical experience and skill as managers, etc., of older concerns, or else the support of important public bodies. If the trades' unions were enabled to employ their funds in the promotion of co-operative enterprises within their respective trades, or still better in alternative but simple and necessary trades requiring but slight instruction, and to appoint joint committees for regulating the exchange between them, they could then provide a much more efficient and (to the capitalists) formidable relief for their members on strike than by "sotering" them away in allowances. But as the trades' unions are not yet educated up to this mark, there is no reason why the Socialist

<sup>1</sup> Physical and industrial, as well as moral and social.

party should not show them the way. I should say that, mapping this "United Kingdom" out into natural provinces of from one to five million inhabitants in each, such as London District, South England, Wales, Lancashire District, Northumbria, Scotland, Ireland, etc., the Socialist groups in each might, as soon as they feel themselves strong enough, set an example to the world by uniting for the promotion of constructive enterprises of this character. If the skill and capital of a considerable number of the smaller employers could be attracted, as I think by judicious management it could, the initial expenses to be provided by the promoting syndicates or societies would be very small. I am confident that the smaller trading and manufacturing capitalists would prefer in many cases to become managers of local branches—with, say five years' certain tenure at a fair salary and re-eligibility after expiry of this term, together with proportional shares in profits during office and fixed interest on their capital during life—rather than maintain their present very precarious struggle against their bigger neighbours. I believe also that they would place at least as much confidence in the respectable and (financially) disinterested promoters of such co-operative societies as in the amalgamation company-mongers who have formed such prominent figures in the commercial and financial drama of the last few years. A certain percentage of the annual profits of such enterprises might be made payable to trustees for the provincial Socialist committee for the time being. The rest might be equitably apportioned between labour and capital (the latter terminable with the life of the investor). Wordsworth Donisthorpe, of the Liberty and Property Defence League, has indicated a method by which this apportionment could be effected in a little book entitled 'The Capitalisation of Labour'—intended, of course, to knock the bottom out of Socialism, but which may be turned by Socialists to better account.

But if the Socialist party at large is not here or anywhere strong and united enough for such constructive efforts, is not the time ripe for the foundation of a society for this special purpose? A few determined and unanimous persons will often succeed where a larger number would fail. The only advantage I can see in the multiplicity of societies and groups, is that they should each undertake special departments of propaganda on the division of labour principle. And if a new society cannot yet be formed for studying and promoting the organisation of such enterprises, is there no existing society competent for this purpose and in want of a job?

J. BRAILSFORD BRIGHT.

## THE IRISH QUESTION.

### VI.—CONCLUSION.

In dealing with the question of Home Rule, it is often contended that the Union being an accomplished fact it ought to be held sacred and binding on the Irish people. To this it may be answered that, in the first place the Irish people never accepted the Union and have never recognised it. And in the second place, the rights of every generation being equal, it is the living, the people of to-day who have a right to determine their own destiny. Again, the rights of a people can never be alienated. They can never be abdicated. It is the living and not the dead to whom belongs the right of self-government. And by self-government I do not mean the supremacy of either kings, or princes, or priests, or peers, or of any representative assembly, or the supremacy of any majority however large. I mean the right of the people of every generation directly to determine the institutions they require, and the free selection of those deemed the best and the wisest for all the purposes of administration. As the rights of the individual are sacred, so are the rights of every people. Neither the one nor the other can ever be abdicated or alienated.

Then it is objected that the Irish have never shown any great aptitude for self-government. Have the English, or the Scotch, or the Welsh? We in England to-day are governed by Queen, Lords, and Commons. We tolerate a throne, we tolerate an aristocracy, and we tolerate a State Church. The workers recognise the supremacy of capital, although they are crushed to the earth by the very supremacy they recognise. The mass of the workers in Great Britain are not moved by the holy spirit of liberty, which ought to find a home in the bosom of every man and of every woman. In Ireland, at least the mass of the people aspire to be free, to be independent, to be a nation, to have the right to determine their own destiny. The workers of Great Britain should encourage their Irish brothers, should cherish the holy principle of liberty, and being greater in numbers if they are also greater in wisdom, let them guide, direct, and assist in the glorious work of political and social regeneration.

Then it is said that to grant Home Rule would be to place the loyal North at the mercy of the Catholic majority. But the North never has been loyal. It was the North that won the independence of the Irish Parliament in 1782. "The United Irishmen" was a military organisation of the North. Again, who has forgotten the great Orange Conspiracy of 1835-6, for the overthrow of William IV., and to prevent the accession of her present Majesty by placing the Duke of Cumberland on the throne. The North is not loyal to-day.

It is also argued that it is a question of religious supremacy. It is nothing of the sort. From 1782 to 1795 the United Irishmen struggled for the abolition of the penal laws, and for equal rights for their Catholic brothers against the English ascendancy party then supreme in the Irish Parliament. Then, in all the struggles of the Irish during

the last one hundred years, the bulk of the leaders have been Protestants. How many of the leaders to-day are Protestants?

Nor is the North exclusively Protestant. The total number of Catholics in the North is only about seventy-seven thousand less than the Protestants. But Englishmen should not do anything whatsoever to rouse the spirit of religious intolerance, from which England, as well as Ireland, has suffered so terribly in the past.

Then it is stated that the North is the richest part of Ireland. It is nothing of the kind. It is generally assumed that because a majority of the population is Protestant, it must be the most intelligent, and because the most intelligent it must be the most progressive, and therefore the most prosperous. Taking the returns to the income tax for 1879-80, and the population of 1881, the following is the state of case:—

	Population	Assessment to Income Tax.	Per head of Population.
Leinster ...	1,282,881	£13,272,202	£10 6 6
Munster ...	1,323,910	7,980,276	8 0 7
Ulster ...	1,739,542	9,952,289	5 14 5
Connaught	813,506	2,995,438	3 13 7

Here we see Ulster is lowest but one, being lower than even Munster; and although her population is nearly half a million more than that of Leinster, her assessment to the Income Tax is over three millions less. Nor does it alter the matter if we omit all the parliamentary boroughs from the calculation. Ulster still remains third on the list, as the following table will show:

	Population	Assessment.	Per head.
Leinster ...	932,853	£7,378,105	£7 18 2
Munster ...	1,093,242	5,881,789	5 7 8
Ulster ...	1,437,690	7,104,002	4 18 10
Connaught ...	794,600	2,902,054	3 13 1

Thus the whole story about the loyal rich North falls to the ground. There is nothing in it; and most of those who raise the cry do so only for party purposes, to gull the public, and still longer to divide and hold in slavery the mass of the people.

We are told that to grant Home Rule would be to make the Nationalist party supreme, and who would expropriate the landlords without compensation. But the landlords are bound to go. Nothing can prevent it. Gladstone knew it, Salisbury knows it, the people know it, and the landlords know it. As for compensation, who is to compensate the millions for the loss of their liberty, their ease, their comforts, the fruits of their industry, and who have been driven from their native shores to seek a home in distant regions? Who can compensate, who can call from their graves the hundreds of thousands who died of want in the midst of the abundance produced by their labour? Talk of compensation! Shall we compensate the thief, the criminal, the rebel, the murderer? No, never—a thousand times never!

We are also told that to grant Home Rule would be to render separation possible. A simple absurdity. But suppose separation were possible—nay, suppose it were probable. What then? Shall we make the union secure by keeping the people in bondage? Shall we preserve the union by making it still more hateful to the Irish people? But assume for the sake of argument that the people of Ireland wish for entire separation. What then? Shall we English, we who applauded the Italians, who glorified Kossuth and the Hungarians, who have ever sympathised with Poland, who have rejoiced at every success of the French, and who hope ere long to see the whole Continent ablaze with the sacred fire of revolution,—shall we deny to the people of Ireland the liberty we claim for ourselves? Have we sympathy only for the peoples of distant regions and none for our brothers on the other side of the Channel?

And England's greatness, what is it? It depends neither on princes, priests, or peers; not on the slavery of the masses, either of Ireland or of Great Britain, but on the labour, the skill, the perseverance of the toiling millions, on the development, the triumph of the holy spirit of freedom, the sacred flame of liberty and love, the supremacy of the principle of eternal right, of eternal justice.

J. SKETCHLEY.

PROHIBITING "CORNERS."—ALBANY, N. Y., May 5.—The Assembly yesterday passed a bill defining conspiracy. The bill provides substantially that if any two or more persons, companies, corporations or individuals shall agree, directly or indirectly, to withhold from the public markets or the ordinary channels of trade in the State for any period any staple article, merchandise, food, etc., and shall agree to place on the market only a limited or specific quantity within a certain time, they shall be guilty of conspiracy.

THE REAL OBJECT OF EMIGRATION.—The following is an extract from a circular quoted in the N. Y. Leader, sent out by Henry Clews, a well-known Wall Street banker and broker: "The tide of emigration this way, the arrivals yesterday being at least 10,000, which is the largest on record for any one day, should be considered as a favourable feature, especially as the newcomers are largely from the Continent and bring funds with them for their immediate support. In the present disturbed condition of labour, this large flow of emigration comes at an opportune time. What this country needs more than anything else is the same competition in the labour-market as is found in all manufacturing and product markets. Competition will out-manoeuvre in the end all the generals who are leading the Knights of Labour. Competition alone will prove the only pacifier of labour dissatisfaction and uprising. All American citizens, therefore, who want peace and prosperity should unite in encouraging the European surplus population to flock to our shores, to bring about the true remedy for our present labour evils, which is the only cloud now overhanging our at present prosperous country."



"HAVE YOU NOT HEARD HOW IT HAS GONE WITH MANY A CAUSE BEFORE NOW? FIRST, FEW MEN HEED IT; NEXT, MOST MEN CONTEMN IT; LASTLY, ALL MEN ACCEPT IT—AND THE CAUSE IS WON!"

Communications invited on Social Questions. They should be written on one side of the paper, addressed to the Editors, 13 Farringdon Rd., E.C., and accompanied by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication.

As all articles are signed, no special significance attaches to them because of their position in these pages. None to be taken as more than in a general manner expressing the views of the League as a body, except it be so explicitly declared by the Editors.

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Business communications to be addressed to Manager of the COMMONWEAL, 13 Farringdon Road, E.C. Remittances in Postal Orders or halfpenny stamps.

Periodicals received during the week ending Wednesday June 2.

<b>ENGLAND</b>	Seattle (W.T.) Voice of the People	<b>SWITZERLAND</b>
Jus	Albina (Oreg.)—Weekly Courier	Zurich—Sozial Demokrat
Norwich—Daylight	Cincinnati (O.) Unionist	Geneva—Bulletin Continental
Londner Arbeiter-Zeitung	<b>FRANCE</b>	<b>SPAIN</b>
Brotherhood	Paris—Cri du Peuple (daily)	Madrid—El Socialista
Die Autonomie	Le Socialiste	Cadiz—El Socialismo
<b>INDIA</b>	Le Revolte	<b>PORTUGAL</b>
Bankipore—Behar Herald	L'Insurge	Lisbon—O Protesto Operario
Allahabad—People's Budget	Lille—Le Travailleur	Voz do Operario
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	Guise—Le Devoir	<b>HUNGARY</b>
New York—Freiheit	<b>BELGIUM</b>	Arbeiter-Wochen-Chronik
Truthseeker	Brussels—L'Avant-Garde	<b>ROUMANIA</b>
Der Sozialist	Liege—L'Avenir	Jassy—Lupta
Leader	Antwerp—De Werker	<b>DENMARK</b>
Boston—Woman's Journal	<b>HOLLAND</b>	Social-Demokraten
Denver (Col.) Labor Inquirer	Hague—Recht voor Allen	<b>SWEDEN</b>
Chicago (Ill.)—Vorbote	<b>ITALY</b>	Stockholm—Social-Demokraten
Labor Enquirer	Milan—Il Fascio Operario	<b>NORWAY</b>
Milwaukee (Wis.)—Volksblatt	Naples—Humanitas	Kristiania—Social-Democraten
Fort Worth (Tex.)—South West	<b>AUSTRIA</b>	<b>GREECE</b>
New Haven (Conn.)—Workmen's Advocate	Vienna—Gleichheit	Athens—Ardin

NOTES.

The Colonies and India is anxious for the extension of the Empire and the spread of civilisation. It says:

"It is inevitable that the search for gold will lead to the rapid extension of settlement northwards of the Limpopo until the Zambesi is reached, and it is very probable that, just as in the case of the Tati gold fields, the fresh discoveries which are being made further inland will prove of greater value than those which have preceded them." "Steps should at once be taken to secure the 'refusal' of the control of Matabeleland and the whole of the territories which lie between the Transvaal and the Zambesi. If this is not done, it fears that, judging by the incessant activity of Germany, German influence and control will speedily prevail in Matabeleland, and shut the door to Central Africa in our faces. We have a just title to claim our natural line of extension (!) through that country, and we must not shrink from any responsibility, trouble, and expense which it may involve to secure our interests." "The matter will not wait our leisure; the apparition of German travellers in the threatened region betokens trouble, as surely as flights of petrels at sea foretell a storm."

What is the "just title" of the natives of the country? Or, have they none when they are confronted by the thievish propensities of the all-conquering race? Would it not be better to drop the hypocrisy that prosecutes and imprisons burglars, even when they go about in yachts, and at the same time organises plunder-expeditions on a large scale?

In connection with the emigration fraud and the thrift humbug the following news is interesting. The monthly report for March of the Savings Bank of South Australia shows that while the increase of depositors was 249, the present number of depositors being 56,317, the decrease in deposits £4,112, 19s. 1d. O, yes; of course! How jealous these rooks are as to which of them shall get first pluck at the pigeon!

A man who died recently leaving £161,300, was described as a "financier." Is this polite for "swindler," or what else does it mean?

Several friends are assisting the Editors very much by sending in news and comments upon labour matters from week to week. This must be much extended, however, if the paper is to continue its increase in efficiency. Every reader who is interested in the success of the paper and the cause should give all the aid he can. Branches might well become centres for the collection as well as diffusion of information. Every one willing to help but not quite knowing how to proceed should write to the Editors, who will give all requisite advice.

CHAINS AND SLAVERY.

A WEEK IN THE BLACK COUNTRY.

THE Strike Committee of the Socialist League commissioned me to pay a visit to South Staffordshire for the purpose of getting accurate information about the chain-makers on strike, and to endeavour to start branches of the League there. The first meeting was held at Darlaston, a considerable-sized town near Walsall. We were well received, and made arrangements to visit Darlaston regularly in future. In the evening a meeting was held at the Sister Dora statue, Walsall. We had made arrangements to visit Wolverhampton on Sunday morning, but the rain prevented us; instead, we went to hear a Roman Catholic clergyman preach on Socialism. His sermon was quite a surprise to us and to many of his congregation. He said the principle at the bottom of all Socialist schemes was that property and privilege should be shared by all. This, he said, was the principle recognised by the founders of Christianity; and however inconvenient it might be to the rich, that principle still was and would remain a fundamental one. This good priest's special abhorrence was the man that entered a town with a shilling in his pocket and ultimately became its richest citizen, or the sour-faced gentlewoman that marches into poor folk's houses with a tract in one hand and a flower in the other, and no end of good advice on thrift, temperance, etc. Dr. M'Carten did not disapprove of Socialism; that he regarded as the best form of human society. It was the means that Socialists use to achieve their aim that he characterised as "unholy." This objection is very vague, and very difficult to deal with. When Dr. M'Carten makes specific charges, then it will be possible to deal with them; meantime I find it difficult to believe that arguing with the people and organising them into Socialist societies is in any way objectionable.

In the afternoon we held a meeting in Willenhall. The country-side is thoroughly permeated with Methodism, and it is difficult to get the people to listen to what they consider unimportant secular concerns on a Sunday. In spite of this, our addresses were listened to with attention by several of the people, and we were invited to come back to Willenhall some week-day. In the evening a very large meeting was held in Walsall, many of Dr. M'Carten's congregation coming. A good deal of discussion took place, and many of the listeners provided themselves with pamphlets to study the matter at their leisure.

On Monday morning I went to Cradley. In walking from the town of Dudley to Cradley you pass through a fairly typical part of the Black Country. Everywhere the ground is covered with enormous heaps of refuse from the mines and the blast-furnaces, and tall chimneys send forth huge volumes of smoke that help to blacken the atmosphere and the houses. For nearly a mile along the left-hand side of the highway from Netherton to Cradley the houses have become seriously damaged, and in many cases have fallen in completely, owing to sinkages of the ground caused by undermining. Some of the houses were built by workmen by the aid of building societies. All their saving has gone for nothing, as the Earl of Dudley gives them no compensation for having undermined them, and so causing their houses to tumble.

We arrived at the place of meeting in Cradley, the Salvation Army hall, a curious wooden structure that was formerly used as a theatre. The hall was filled with strikers, very nearly as many women as men. It was a painful sight. I have never before seen such a number of anxious, careworn, and pinched faces. They were willing away the time by singing a hymn. The meeting soon opened, and the people had the report of collections made in their behalf by Mr. Juggins and Mr. Homer. I had an opportunity of addressing them, and said that while as a hand-to-mouth move their present demand was perhaps the best thing they could do, they should make up their minds immediately to organise to free themselves entirely from the power of the masters. Not a small increase of wages, but the whole that they earned should be their demand. I found that the people, if their cheering could be taken as a guide, were in entire agreement with me. After I had spoken, Mr. Malcolm Guthrie, Liverpool, addressed the meeting, and said that there was one part of my speech that he approved of—viz., where I advocated that the people should endeavour to become their own employers. He thought that "co-operative production" was the first step they should take, and intimated that he would very likely be able to help them to get the required capital to start the undertaking. The meeting over, under the guidance of Mr. Henry Price, an old convert of Herbert Burrows', I visited the people at work.

Chain-making is a home industry. There are one or two factories, but the great mass of the chains are made at home. The workshops are very ugly places, with bare brick walls, very often of a tumble-down character. The lighter chains—such as dog-chains—are made by women; but even that work is hard, and the muscles of the women's arms are strongly developed. First they have to work the big bellows to make the iron red-hot; then the end of the rod is bent on an anvil, the proper length for each link is cut, and the two ends welded. The speed at which the women work is surprising. Their faces are firmly set, and a look of intense worry everywhere prevails. Not only have they to wield the hammer, but also to stand all day long. This makes the work doubly hard. In hot weather the high temperature obliges them to work uncovered to the waist. The work is very monotonous—link after link, link after link, not a bit of change in the dull, dreary toil from one year's end to another. When girls get married they don't stop the work, but go on as usual working with their husbands, so that their homes are left entirely untended until after their day's toil, this, as can be easily imagined, leaves them very untidy. The place

they spend most of their lives in is the very ugly hell of a workshop. No wonder that handsome women are few in Cradley, and that they prematurely age there. Very often they work at the forge until four or three days before confinement, and are at work again in three or four days afterwards. It is by no means an uncommon thing to see babies rolling about in the workshops, the mothers having nowhere else to leave the children and having no one to tend them; so they are compelled to have them in the workshop; as a result, accidents from burning very often happen.

The men perform the same kind of work only the chains are heavier. It is of a very exhausting character, and those chain-makers—a very small number—who manage to live to a decent age, hardly appear to belong to the same species as the fat old aldermen one can see any day about the Mansion House.

Chains at the net cost to the chain-master of 8½d., including labour and material, rent, and all charges, male work, what is known as rudder chains, for going over the saddles of heavy cart-horses, retail in London at from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. Dog chains, for keeping dogs in kennels, with swivel and everything complete, cost the chain-masters 3½d., labour and material included, and retail in London at 1s. 6d. each.<sup>1</sup> Allow, in the first case, 3½d., a large sum, for expenses between chain-master and retail purchaser, and you have 3s. 6d. profit to be divided amongst the different thieves—chain-masters, wholesale warehousemen, and retailers—no wonder the chain-makers are poor. The masters cheat the men by obliging them to truck, to buy gleeds (*i.e.*, firing) from themselves or their Tommy-shop-keeping relatives, at double market price, and by sometimes getting steel palmed off on the men instead of iron, so getting steel chains made at the same price as iron. No lawyer, no Jew clothes peddler, could cheat worse than some of these chain-masters.

Before the strike began, forty-three weeks ago, fifty-six to sixty hours work a week enabled a woman to earn four shillings, and a man about double, or perhaps ten shillings. This is a high, not a low estimate. I carefully ascertained from several sources that this is correct, and no doubt some of my informants will say I have grossly exaggerated their earnings. Put it down at that sum, and consider how it is possible to procure food, clothes, and shelter with it. The poor toilers usually are in rags, and have to dine off bread and water. Weak people could not earn nearly so much as amounts given. Now the prices obtained from those masters who have acceded to the strikers' demands, are such that incessant toil will enable a woman to earn eight shillings a week, and a man sixteen to eighteen shillings. It is quite clear that if these chain-makers are to be true to themselves they will speedily have to strike again.

How is it that these people are so badly off? Because they were not organised. Their masters could deal with them one at a time, and so make them submit to any terms. The chain-makers have, in times gone by, not hung together, and consequently now they are reaping the results of disorganisation. Again the chain makers have not only to compete with one another, but they have outsiders such as colliers, who are engaged at their own work during the day, who have chain-makers for their wives, and when these men come home from their work, they help their wives chain-making for two or three hours, they often are willing to work for less than the proper list price. This conduct is disgraceful. How would the colliers like it, were the chain-makers, after having done a turn at their own work, to go to the pits and offer their services under the usual scale? Until the working-classes act together, and be honest to one another, the capitalists will be able to go on robbing them. The chain-makers now have an organisation, and under Mr. Homer's able management their strike has been fairly successful; but they must take care immediately to still further strengthen their society, so that they will be able to increase in the near future the starvation wage they have just won.

I held a large meeting at Cradley, numbering between two and three thousand persons, on Tuesday evening in the open air. H. Sanders, of the Walsall branch, also spoke. The people were evidently impressed by the addresses, the result was that we formed a branch of the League. A meeting was held in Dudley market which resulted in the names of some friends being given in towards a branch. Most of them were stray readers of Socialist literature and papers, who were anxious to organise, but who were unknown to one another. Staffordshire only requires systematic working to be the seat of a strong Socialist party.

A. K. DONALD.

Two miners were discussing Socialism, when the "human nature" argument cropped up. "It's no use," said one—an obdurate individualist—to a fresh convert, "you can't abolish the present system; it is the best that human nature is fit for." "Do you think," said the other cautiously, "that human nature makes my master rob me?" "Yes, of course," readily replied the other; "what more natural?" "But don't you also think that human nature should make me try to stop him?" Discomfiture of the enemy.

AN ENDLESS STORY.—We are half a mind to begin to write a story that may never end, founded on facts that are ever obvious. Hippodromus, taking his morning walk in the streets of Lucignano, comes upon Theodectes, a labourer, and says to him: "Why are you always at work?" Theodectes answers: "I am always at work to get money to buy food to give me strength to do more work that I may get more money to buy more food to get more strength to do more work to get more money to buy more food to get more strength to do more work to get more money to buy—" This is the beginning of the story without end, and the facts on which it is founded, they are without end also.—*Winsted Press.*

<sup>1</sup> Samples of these chains are exhibited at the office of this paper.

## A PRAYER.

(By G. HERWEGH. Translated by J. L. JOYNES.)

BREATHE, O God, the breath of tempests through this stillness of the grave,  
Sound a deep Dead March for Freedom, no mere idyll of the slave;  
Warm with throbbing blood the pulses of this poor old chilly world;  
Rouse to battle her avenger, though his banners now be furled.

If our foes deny us freedom on our hearth and in our home,  
Let us find, at least to die in, some green island o'er the foam,  
There at least to die rejoicing in the free and open air,  
Watering with our wounds the blood-red roses in the graveyard there.

Let us drink but once again from Freedom's sacramental cup;  
Build a shrine where we our choicest gifts may gladly offer up;  
Clear for us a place of meeting, one free space of open heath—  
Prisoned close our trusty swords have long been weary of the sheath.

Out alas! for Freedom's storm has passed us by and left us slaves;  
Lo, the golden ship of hope that like a cradle o'er the waves  
Steered with sound of song to usward, and such ample treasures bore,  
Rots a wreck black-stoled and shrouded, like a coffin on the shore.

Must the People still surround this rotten wreck with useless cries?  
Shall the force of all their fury fade away in empty sighs?  
Sounds there never through their sorrow resolution's thunder-tone?—  
Not so long do tyrants loiter ere they cross their Rubicon.

Think ye then that peace and quiet will ensure your happiness?  
War at worst can only slay ye, peace will slay ye none the less.  
What though in the wild war-struggle hearts may throb with fiercer  
heat,  
On the frozen fields of Russia Freedom's pulses cease to beat.

If your plants ye do not water, they will die in choking dust,  
If ye never draw your swords, their blades will be ruined by rust;  
Now and then a vein to open all for Freedom's sake were good,  
Lest your tyrants falsely swear that ye are weak for lack of blood.

But and if the men be cowards, earthward bending still their brows,  
Hear our voice at least, ye women; wreath a sword in myrtle boughs;  
Hide a sword in myrtle branches; since, meseemeth it, if ye  
Fail to fight with us for Freedom, never will the world be free.

## POWDERLEY AND THE LABOUR PARTY.

THE following is published by request of the Portland (Oregon) Eureka Assembly:

"Whereas, L. A. 8133 K. of L. has had its attention called to the recent public utterances of G. M. W. Powderley, in which he congratulates the workers on the defeat of the Labour Party in Chicago, thereby lending the support of his official position to the mis-statements of a venal press which has industriously represented that the labour vote in Chicago had fallen off through general disgust at the Socialistic tendencies of the party, although as a matter of fact it showed an increase of 6,269 over that of last fall, the vote of the Chicago Labour Party being then only 17,300 as against 23,579 on the 5th inst.; and

"Whereas, The G. M. W. knows well that this means a far greater victory than the mere gain of 6,269 votes, inasmuch as the 23,579 who voted on the 5th inst. voted knowingly for the overthrow of the competitive system, the issue being, for the first time in American politics, put in plain and absolutely unmistakable terms; and

"Whereas, An attempt has again been made to lead the people astray by representing that the Labour Party (though it bases all its teachings on the Declaration of Independence) is endeavouring to overthrow the American flag, because some of our members also reverence the red flag, as emblematical of the life-blood which flows alike in the veins of workers of every nationality, and knits them in the bonds of a common brotherhood; and

"Whereas, This antiquated attempt to divide our forces by playing upon old race antipathies, though regarded by all conscientious men as an unpardonable crime, has nevertheless commended itself to the pious Catholic spirit of Bro. Powderley, who has not hesitated to desecrate our country's flag by waving it in the cause of Know-Nothingism, and to plant himself squarely on the side of the capitalists who are labouring to build up what they call an 'American party,' hoping to discredit as 'foreign' those liberal ideas that the struggles of the oppressed in Europe are giving birth to, which, like all great ideas, are rapidly becoming the heritage of the whole world; and

"Whereas, This Assembly, having carefully watched the course of the G. M. W., has long since recognised that he has proved false to the noble principles of liberty, and equality of opportunity, for all of which he so assiduously professed during the years that he was a member of the Socialistic Labour Party; and

"Whereas, He has now given, in the opinion of this Assembly, final proof that he is using his official position to hinder the march of the workers on that journey, the goal of which is the final extinction of slavery by placing all the sources of production equally and unreservedly at the disposition of all workers, regardless of nationality.

"Resolved, That, in the first place, we congratulate our brother workers in Chicago on having forced the G. M. W. at last to show his hand, and thereby disillusionise those who have been hitherto blinded by admiration for a name and office; and that, in the second place, we urge them, and all other true Knights, to follow up the good work by taking such steps as shall result in the summary deposition of one who has been false to the trust reposed in him by over a million organised workers, who elected him to office believing him to be the uncompromising foe of that capitalist monopoly which is to-day finding in him one of its most powerful allies."

"E. GIRARD, M. W."  
"RICHARD HARPER, R. S."

[SEAL.]

# THE LABOUR STRUGGLE.

BRITAIN.

The nut and bolt makers are suffering from reductions, and are meditating starting a co-operative factory.

At Cradley Heath the masters that trucked the "gleads" (*i.e.*, small coke used as firing) charged 11d. for the same quantity the workers can now get for 6½d. from outsiders—thus making a profit out of the men of 4½d. a sack.

Over 1000 Staffordshire rivet-makers have given notice that they will strike unless an advance is conceded. Hard work at present prices enables a man to earn about 18s. a-week on an average.

The employés of the Great Eastern Railway at Stratford have received notice that they are to work one day and a-half (Monday and Saturday) for the benefit of the People's Palace. It is necessary to add that this is not Coercion, but those who disobey orders will be dismissed.—T. C.

In consequence of the operatives in the rivet trade, in the South Staffordshire and East Worcestershire district, having been called upon to submit to a series of reductions in wages during the last twelve months, they state that they cannot get a living at present prices, and on Saturday they gave a fortnight's notice for a substantial advance. If the employers do not concede the required advance a general strike will be declared. About 1000 have given notice.

The Cradley Heath chainmakers have been so far successful in their strike. Only 700 people now remain out. Most of the masters have conceded the advanced list, and trucking is nearly abolished, only one master named Bannister persisting. A Liverpool magistrate has promised to endeavour to provide funds to start a co-operative factory. This is a trade in which very little capital is required, and so steps might immediately be taken by the people to employ themselves.

Wm. McKeown, ship-yard artisan, was at Belfast, on Tuesday, returned for trial on a charge of entering the yard of Messrs. Macilwaine and Lewis, Queen's Island, from which he had been discharged, and destroying all the principal belting in the place, in consequence of which several hundred men were thrown idle. A mass meeting of the men on strike, after an interview with the delegates from the English Shipbuilders' Society, almost unanimously decided to continue on strike. Five thousand artisans were present.

HALF-TIME IN THE COTTON TRADE.—At a meeting of master cotton-spinners held last week, the following resolution was unanimously carried:—"That, in the opinion of this meeting, it is most desirable, in the interests of the trade, that all spinners shall at once resort to short time; that such short time shall consist of a reduction of the working hours equal to half-time, for a period of eight weeks from the 30th May, and may be carried out either by closing three days a week, by alternate weeks, or by continuous stoppage; the resolution to take effect only in the event of spinners representing two-thirds of the spindles sending in to the Cotton Spinners' Association an undertaking to carry out such resolution."

A singular scene was witnessed at Bolton on Monday night in connection with the strike in the engineering trades. Messrs. Wood, Victoria Foundry, imported eight or nine Scotchmen, who arrived on Monday. Lodgings could not be obtained for them, there appearing to be a general boycott, so the men were taken to the foundry, followed by a large demonstrative crowd. Beds and bedding were ordered from a local furnisher, but he had the utmost difficulty to land the goods, stones being thrown freely. When the gates were opened at six o'clock on Wednesday morning the imported men made their escape, and being joined by some of the Strike Committee, were furnished with funds to take them back to Scotland. They expressed themselves glad to go, and said they had been brought under a misapprehension. With the departure of the importations the excitement was at an end. The men's counter-proposals to that of the employers, forwarded through the Mayor (Ald. Fletcher), are under consideration.

STRIKE OF QUARRYMEN AT POLLOCKSHAW AND BANNOCKBURN.—For about a couple of weeks past the quarrymen in the employment of Messrs. Stevenson, at Pollockshaw, near Glasgow, have been on strike to resist a reduction of wages. The men are at present very poorly paid, while the nature of their work is toilsome, dangerous, and unhealthy in the extreme. As the quarry is tunnelled, the men have to work in very confined spaces, breathing sand dust and the fumes of naphtha lamps. The quarrymen are consequently very short lived. The Messrs. Stephenson—who are thus, for their own selfish gain, attempting to make the lives of these poor slaves still more miserable—are reputed to be very wealthy; and one of the members of the firm was elected some time ago by the workers of Glasgow to represent their interests in the Town Council! The quarrymen, who are now attempting to form a union with the quarrymen in other parts of the country, were addressed last week by William Small of the Hamilton branch of the Socialist League, and J. Bruce Glasier, of the Glasgow branch—no other political or trade society taking any interest in their struggle. Some of the men stated that they had been previously thinking about Socialism, and had come to the conclusion that it was their only hope of redress. A strike of quarrymen has also taken place at Bannockburn—for ever glorious in Scottish memory as the place where Bruce overthrew the power of Edward in Scotland. "Bruce's address to his troops at Bannockburn," better known as "Scots wha hae," is Scotland's battle song of Freedom. Whether the poor quarrymen who, having recently submitted to two reductions in wages, now desire an advance, will obtain much consolation from singing the patriotic ode, or contemplating the glorious heritage of freedom, which they can enjoy while walking over the famous battlefield with empty pockets and empty stomachs, is rather doubtful.

MANCHESTER.—Building operations at the Jubilee Exhibition here are now at an end, and large numbers of joiners, bricklayers, painters, and labourers of all grades are now to be seen wearily wandering about the streets vainly searching for a permit of the employing classes to exist a little longer. During the construction of the exhibition buildings, Manchester was overcrowded with operatives in the building trades from all parts of the country. The enterprising caterer for the refreshment department of the show is now paying the extraordinary price of 6½d. per hour to joiners, whom he employs erecting extra dining rooms, etc., and he can get men at the price, in spite of the fact that the headquarters of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners is located in this city. This society boasts of its capital of over £50,000. To this add that some of its members are grumbling at paying 1s. per week contributions, and also periodically heavy levies to keep up the funds, etc., and yet see so little done by the executive in a progressive sense

for the interests of the society. The waitresses employed at the Jubilee Exhibition are paid the "Jubilee" sum of 5s. per week with their day's food each day, their lodgings cost them in some instances 5s. per week, and in other cases a larger sum. How these young women manage to pay for their food on Sunday's, also for their clothing, is an open question, yet how many of the "mashers" and other visitors to the show give a thought to this unfortunate sisterhood I cannot discover. These young women are employed each day out of the six from about 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., and from what I have seen scarcely get an hour's rest the whole of the day. On the very practical executive Committee, there are editors of local newspapers, Radicals of great notoriety, also Liberal and Tory philanthropists and political leaders of local fame. The waitresses have no friends who will take up their cause. The "ladies" of the "women's suffrage" movement have no time it seems to help their exploited sisters. The above facts I have from the women who suffer. There is not a single trade union leader with the back-bone of a red herring in him, or we should hear these grievances of oppressed womanhood exposed.—GLENER.

AMERICA.

The Central Labour Party in Denver, Colorado, have resolved in consequence of a threatened 20 per cent. rise in rents, to organise a No-Rent Campaign. It is proposed to camp out in tents, and a committee has been appointed to make arrangements. Enthusiastic meetings have been held, and great determination shown.

BELGIUM.

BRUSSELS, May 25.—A strike commenced to-day among the engineers employed in the factories in the Brussels district, and several important workshops, including those of Deville, Chalet, Van Goethem, Reallier, Bollinck, Dejaer, Cail, and Halot, are at a standstill. The Burgomaster of Molenbeek has "taken every precaution for the maintenance of order." May 26.—An order has been issued by the Public Prosecutor to enforce the law against the sale of arms.

LIEGE, May 35.—Troops have left here for Seraing. The strike has become general at the Cockerill works. May 26.—The state of affairs in the Seraing coal basin has this morning become more serious. There are now 1759 men on strike, comprising colliers and ironworkers. A detachment of troops is stationed at Seraing, in readiness for any emergency. Considerable agitation prevails along the left bank of the Meuse.

CHARLEROI, May 25.—The strike assumed larger proportions in the Charleroi coal-district this morning, and there are now 7000 men idle. Fears are entertained that the movement will spread still further.

The strike in the Hainault and the Liege province is becoming more and more serious and widespread, although the Central Committee of the Labour Party have up to the present held aloof from declaring for a general strike, believing that unless backed by a strong labour organisation it would be virtually inefficacious. Nevertheless, in the face of present events, it is possible that the committee will feel bound to march with the rest, and in the various meeting-places of the different towns the question of a general strike is being vigorously discussed. In the meantime the strike is proceeding and gaining fresh adherents every day. A mass meeting was held on Sunday at Liege, which passed resolutions in favour of universal suffrage, amnesty for the prisoners, etc. The current number of *L'Avant* (Liege) fills its front page with an address to the "Workers of the Liege Coal-basin," headed 'The Forerunner to a Revolution,' calling upon all workers to assist the movement "by all legal means in their power," which phrase we confess to considering a very feeble one to use towards serious men engaged in a serious struggle, whether that struggle be the preface to the Revolution, or merely, as we consider, one of these thousand and one expressions of revolt against the chains of toil which we watch with so much interest and sympathy, and which end in a concession here and concession there from the industrial masters, in short, a sop to Cerberus to stay his many-voiced howling for another while. At the same time this spontaneous movement of the mining population—with or without the sanction of Central Committees and the like—is somewhat encouraging, and of the greatest interest to workers in other countries.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

SIR,—In your last number I am spoken of as the author of 'Facts for Socialists,' recently issued by the Fabian Society. Will you allow me to state that the tract twice underwent careful scrutiny, discussion, and amendment in committee of the whole society, and must not therefore be taken as the unaided and unchecked work of an individual member. But the "amiable and witty author" of the draft upon which the committee worked, and which they substantially adopted, is Mr. Sidney Webb, and not your obedient servant,  
G. BERNARD SHAW.

29, Fitzroy Square, W., May 24, 1887.

### "THE IMMORALITY OF INTEREST."

SIR,—I have just read an article in the *Commonweal* under the above title. Were it not that this article is written by a man of marked ability, I should not have troubled you with the following question. But, as the matter stands, I should like to ask him whether it is through inadvertence or design that, while enumerating sundry absurd arguments in favour of "usury," he omits to notice the most important of those upon which political economists rely? This argument is that money is itself of the nature of a "commodity," for the use of which it is both reasonable and right that usury should be required. The price of this commodity, like the price of every other commodity, is determined by the ratio between demand and supply: thus the rate of interest varies, not in an ordinary way, but in accordance with this demand and supply. Therefore, until it can be shown that in some way or another the commodity called capital differs from all other commodities—including even that of manual labour—it must be merely illogical to single it out as exceptionally deserving of abuse, or to represent that there is any peculiar injustice attaching to hire of it.—I am, yours, etc.,  
A PROFESSOR OF SCIENCE.

[It will be seen that the writer of the above is not a professor of the science of political economy. It is true that money is a commodity, and that we must pay for its use. It is also true that chairs are commodities and that

we must pay for their use. But what has either of these facts to do with that other fact that every year a sum of £250,000,000, called interest, is paid by those who earn it by labour in various departments of industry to those who do not? Our professor suggests that the 250 millions is the price or hire of the money used by the nation. But how does he know that it is not the hire or price of the chairs used by the nation? Both, he says rightly, are commodities; and he protests against money being "singled out." Why then does he single it out to account for interest? The interest-receiving class have no more a monopoly of money than they have of chairs. The production of money is a State industry, the profits of which go into the Treasury and have nothing whatever to do with the 250 millions. When money is scarce, it can be made to do more work by the fall in prices; and if it became so scarce as to hamper exchange, the result would be a national dead loss, which hardly explains the payment of 250 millions to a class not specially connected with the scarcity. Any economist will tell the professor as much; for he is mistaken in supposing his defence of interest an accepted one. Orthodoxy is more ingenious than that. Interest is held to be the reward of abstinence, that is, the consideration by which a man is induced to refrain from immediately consuming his wealth—to postpone enjoyment of it to a future date—to save it, in short, and to permit others to use it in the meantime. His interest is paid out of the "increase" due to its employment as capital. This is a more plausible explanation than the other; and I leave the professor to exercise his skill in discovering the fallacy in it.—G. B. S.]

#### A PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

THE increasing strength of the Socialist party in these islands, and the activity of our revolutionary propaganda, is bearing fruit amongst the masses of our industrial population, and, as a consequence, the hostility or indifference of a few years back is now changed for a sympathetic and attentive attitude.

Our missionaries, however, have no light task in striving to awaken in the minds of the workers a true sense of the magnitude of the evils of our present society, and the necessity of a thorough revolutionary change. As a capitalistic writer has said recently in a Labour question: "If the work was unfitted for them, they have become fitted for the work." And this "survival by fitness;" or, in other words, moral degradation, has been achieved by middle-class supremacy in production and the great industry—"the Press."

When grasping dimly the ideas preached by our advocates, the anxious enquirer puts the query, "How will you bring it about?" or, "We must have some one at top." If a stage further advanced, the querist asks, "How are we to bring it about?" and that, in short, is the question in the minds of teachers and listeners alike. We have to raise the moral tone of a class who have always looked for amelioration, or indeed emancipation, at the hands of their masters acting as legislators, and deluded by political catchwords, have joined the party strife going on between manufacturer and land thief. The non-political policy of abstention from voting inculcated by the Socialist League simply opens up to the workman the possible alternative of bloodshed, and whilst he sanctions the hideous butcheries, perpetrated to extend the Empire, and even offers up himself and kin as victims, to be slain and maimed in bondholders' wars, he shrinks with horror and dismay from the prospect of having to shed blood to free his own country from the domestic enemies who have made it a hell upon earth to the workers.

Confronted with this state of feeling, it is not surprising that some should try to reach the mass by the usual means, and talking down to their hearers, seek in Parliamentary agitation an easier way of rousing the people.

In their heart of hearts the advocates of Parliamentary action do not believe that any real good will ever come to the people from such action, and they confessedly only seek this line of action from policy and not principle. I hold it is highly immoral to tell the mass that their emancipation can be achieved by means which must fail. When one looks at the incidents of Parliamentary strife, the huxtering, the pestering lobbyists, the traps and pitfalls laid by the legal crew who have shipping and railway enterprises to promote, it may be asked, "Can an honest man preserve his integrity in such an atmosphere?" When Bradlaugh pleaded at the Bar of the House against his exclusion therefrom, he covered the House with praise as an honourable assembly with time honoured traditions. The revolutionary Socialists whom the "gentleman" styles fools or worse, judging the House both by its past tradition and present pretensions, will say that it is a monstrous anomaly, a swallower up of public liberties, an aggregation of the most sinister interests in the country, a legislative assembly, whose legislative capacity is based upon the most fraudulent pretence of representation, even majority rule, for a majority in the House, as most division lists show, represents the minority outside. An assembly moreover whose Acts have caused wholesale misery and bloodshed, the spoliation of peoples abroad, and preservation of domestic abuses and monopolies at home. An appeal to such a body is but the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick, and will lead to the bitterest disappointment.

In our local and municipal elections, however, I see an opportunity for Socialistic work without, I think, loss of principle. In nearly all our local and civil bodies the bourgeois reigns supreme, and this is mainly due to the apathy of the working-class, who allow cliques of selfish, cheating traders to monopolise what power of local government is left to the people. Ancient liberties, vast sums of money, and public estates are maladministered by these gradgrinds and market riggers. Is it not possible to arouse enthusiasm on matters that lie at our doors, without incurring the charge of being reactionary? the revolution is inevitable, and it is possible to hasten its advent, and give it shape and form, by contesting every inch of ground now occupied in local bodies by the bourgeois. The Socialist who, in every locality, would ransack the archives in search for records of ancient public rights, lapsed through ignorance and apathy, or, of robbed trusts, would unearth such a mass of middle-class rascality as would bring the class war near its culmination. The foul records of our city and its guilds has shown that enough wealth is wasted in its corrupt hands to supply the educational and material wants of the greater portion of the Metropolitan poor.

Let the Socialist enter these coteries as the champion of ancient liberties, and with a mandate from his constituents to widen their scope, until they include the control over land, and means of production, instead of now merely to determine the site of a dust-bin or lamp-post, or sell contracts. Let him also violate, on every possible occasion, the legal claim of the central authority to control local liberty of action, and strive, with his associates, to break down the monstrous pretensions of the Imperial power, and bring every municipality and local authority where the Socialist element prevails, into defiant collision with the huge overgrown monster of

Imperial centralisation, and the first attempt to coerce by imprisonment or violence will be the signal for the revolution.

Where the local circumstances exclude the mass from representation upon these bodies, let their councils be disturbed by irruptions of the unfranchised "outsiders." In making these suggestions I am guided by a desire first, to give our party something to whet its appetite with work that will hold it together, with a distinct aim wherein no loss of principle is needed. The early history of the French communes and mercantile cities of Italy and Flanders shows that of old the middle-class in their insurrections against feudalism won their civic enfranchisement from prince and knight with artisan help and blood; and our own municipal institutions have been won from a titled aristocracy by a mercantile one; the working-class have ever been the pawns in the game, the bourgeois has triumphed over the aristocrat, and is already on the downward incline, let us hasten his downfall and use the institutions he has won with the help of our class, as the thin end of a wedge that will split up modern society, and lead to the establishment of free federated communes in the place of the life suffocating criminal centralisation of to-day.

F. KITZ.

## THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

OFFICES: 13 FARRINGTON ROAD, E.C.

**The Third Annual Conference** of the League met at 13 Farringdon Road on Sunday last, May 29, 1887, when twenty-four Branches were represented. The following resolution was passed: "Whereas the primary duty of the Socialist party is to educate the people in the principles of Socialism, and to organise them to overthrow the capitalist system: this Conference endorses the policy of abstention from parliamentary action hitherto pursued by the League, and sees no sufficient reason for altering it." Minutes of proceedings will be issued to the Branches shortly. The following were elected to form the Council for the ensuing year: James Allman, W. Blundell, Burcham, Cantwell, Davis, Graham, F. Kitz, J. Lane, S. Mainwaring, W. Morris, May Morris, D. Nicoll, H. H. Sparling, Tarleton, and Ph. Webb. W. Morris and H. H. Sparling were appointed Editor and Sub-Editor of the *Commonweal*. Further particulars will be given next week.

**Executive.**—At the first meeting of the Council, Tuesday May 31, the following officers were elected for the ensuing year: H. A. Barker, (General Secretary); Philip Webb, Treasurer; T. Cantwell, Lecture Secretary; and W. Turner, Financial Secretary.

**London Members.**—The first meeting of London Members will be held on Monday the 4th of July.

#### BRANCH REPORTS.

**CLERKENWELL.**—On Wednesday, May 25, H. H. Sparling gave very interesting lecture on "English Guilds." Good audience and discussion. No lecture on Sunday, May 29th, the hall being used for the purposes of the Socialist League Conference.—W. B. and T. E. W.

**NORTH LONDON AND MARYLEBONE.**—On Sunday morning, Cantwell, Brookes, and Nicoll spoke at Regents' Park, and had good sale of literature. 2s. 2d. collected for Strike Committee.

**GLASGOW.**—On Friday evening, Glasier addressed a meeting of 200 quarrymen, now on strike at Pollockshaws. In addition to the quarrymen, a large number of other working-people were present. Glasier gave a full exposition of the labour problem, and pointed out that the only remedy for the grievances of quarrymen and all other workers was the abolition of private property in means of production and distribution. His address was received with great approval. Comrade Small, of the Hamilton Branch, gave an address to the quarrymen on the preceding Monday. On Sunday at one o'clock, comrade Curran addressed a capital meeting on Jail's Square, Glasgow, when nine names were received as members of the League. In the afternoon, comrade Arch McLaren gave a lecture on Socialism to the Legislative Independence Branch of the National League. There was a large audience, and the lecture was very well received, one member declaring that when Home Rule was obtained they would transform the Branch into a Branch of the Socialist League. In the evening, comrades Carmichael, Curran, and Glasier addressed a large meeting on George's Square. Afterwards a meeting of members was held in our rooms.

**EDINBURGH.**—On Wednesday, May 25, Smith, sen., Tuke, and Gilray addressed a meeting in Scientific Hall, Dalkeith. On Sunday, Smith, jun., Davidson, and Gilray spoke in Queen's Park. A somewhat violent wind blowing interfered with our having a very satisfactory meeting, and threatened to undertake a gratuitous distribution of our literature, and thus to waft the story of Socialism through a benighted world. In the evening in the Meadows, a good number of *Commonweal* were disposed of.—J. G.

**BOLTON (LANCS).**—On Sunday afternoon, Joseph Waddington, of Manchester, lectured at the Town Hall Square, on "The Conflicts of Capital and Labour." In the evening, an audience numbering several hundreds were addressed by same speaker, on "Our Homes, What they Are and What they Might Be." The lecturer asked those present why the worker was debarred from enjoying the comforts and luxuries of a home furnished with art furniture, beautiful pictures, and tasteful decorations? The answer was, The rich held possession of the land and the means of production, and until the workers discovered and recognised the necessity of taking their own from the exploiters, so long would they be debarred from comfortable homes, decent lives, and those arts and pleasures which make life worth living. Good collections were made at both meetings for the propaganda fund of the local branch of the S.D.F. Re the engineer's strike, there is a grand opportunity for a good Socialist propaganda and organisation.—J. W.

**DUBLIN.**—On Thursday, May 26, at the Labour League, 2, Bachelor's Walk, Fitzpatrick delivered an address on "The Housing of the Poor." Seven members were elected to serve on the committee, five of them being Socialists, Fitzpatrick, Karpel, McCarthy, Olgoman, and Swords. During the summer, meetings will be held in all the towns near Dublin, and Branches of the Labour League formed wherever practicable.

**SOCIALIST UNION (NOTTINGHAM SECTION).**—Last Sunday, Proctor lectured to an attentive audience in Nintion Market in the morning. In the evening, Proctor took the chair, and Wane addressed a good audience, Peacock following with a spirited address. Collection for propaganda, including morning meeting, 4s. 1d. *Commonweal*, which order we had again increased, all sold out. Three young men joined the Section and Club after the meeting. Several members had an enjoyable tea at the club on Monday. Our club is now getting into working order.—T. P.

**Branch Reports must be addressed to Sub-Editor, and cannot be inserted if they reach the Office later than first post on Tuesday Morning.**

#### SPECIAL NOTICES.

*The Debate on Socialism.*—E. Belfort Bax's reply to Mr. Bradlaugh will appear in next issue.

J. L. M'non will also give full report of the North of England movement.

LECTURE DIARY. LONDON.

Bloomsbury.—Communist Club, 49 Tottenham Street. Clerkenwell.—Hall of the Socialist League, 13 Farringdon Road, E.C. Sunday June 5, at 7.15 p.m., Branch Members' Business Meeting. FREE CONCERT at 8.30. Wednesday June 8, at 8.30. W. W. Bartlett, "The Meaning of the Social Revolution." Croydon.—Royal County House, West Croydon Station Yard. Hackney.—23 Audrey Street, Goldsmith Row. Club Room open every evening from 8 till 11.30. Hammersmith.—Kelmscott House, Upper Mall, W. Sunday June 5, at 8 p.m. J. L. Mahon, "The Labour Movement amongst the Miners." Hoxton (L.E.L.).—2 Crondall Street, New North Rd. Club Room open on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday evenings from 8 till 11. Singing Class every Wednesday at 8.30. Members Meeting on Friday June 3, at 8.30 p.m.: important business. Sunday June 5, at 8 p.m. J. R. Macdonald (F.S.), "The Signs of the Times." Merton.—11 Merton Terrace, High Street. Club Room open every evening. Committee every Thursday. Discussions held every Sunday morning at 11. Mitcham.—Corner of Merton Lane and Fountain Place. Club Room open every evening from 7.30 till 11. North London.—Members' Meeting at 32 Camden Road, June 5, at 8 p.m.

PROVINCES.

Bingley.—Coffee Tavern. Every Monday at 7.30 p.m. Birmingham.—Carr's Lane Coffee House. Every Monday evening, at 8. Bradford.—Morris's Dining Rooms, 114 City Road. Wednesdays, at 8. Dublin.—Irish Labour League, 2 Bachelors Walk, every Thursday at 8 p.m. Discussion on all subjects connected with the Labour Question. Dalkeith (Edinburgh).—Scientific Hall, Wednesday June 8, at 8 p.m., a Lecture. Edinburgh (Scottish Section).—4 Park Street. Meets every Thursday at 7.30 p.m. to transact business. Class for the study of 'Das Capital' at 8.30. (See "Open-air" below.) Glasgow.—Reading-room of the Branch, 84 John St., open from 10 a.m. till 10 p.m. daily. On Sunday evening at 7, in our Rooms, Discussion. See "Open-air" below. Hamilton.—Paton's Hall, Chapel St. Every Thursday at 7.30. Hull.—Address all communications to E. Teesdale, 20 Shakspeare Street. Leeds.—Sunday: Hunslet Moor, 11; Vicar's Croft, 7. Lancaster.—Addresses every Sunday morning on the Quay Jetty. Leicester.—Office of Hosiery Union, Horsefair Street. Fridays at 8 p.m. Manchester.—145 Grey Mare Lane, Bradford, Manchester. Club and Reading Room open every evening 6 to 10 p.m. Lecture and discussion every Wednesday at 8 p.m. Norwich.—Gordon Hall, 5 Duke Street. Free Lectures every Sunday and Monday at 8 p.m. Reading-room open every evening. Oxford.—Temperance Hall, 25 1/2 Pembroke Street. Thursdays, at 8.30 p.m. Paisley.—On Friday at 7.30, open-air meeting at the Causewayside. Shields (North and South).—Meetings every Sunday, Quay-side and Market Place. Branch meetings on Thursday nights at the "General Gordon," Bath Street, Maxwell Street, South Shields. Secretary, J. Hearne, 32 Clive Street, No. Shields. A Public Debate is being arranged between Mr. Leslie Johnson and J. L. Mahon. North Shields.—Irish National League. On Sunday June 5th, at 3 p.m., Gladstone Hall, J. L. Mahon will lecture on "The Irish Question."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

LONDON—Sunday 5. 1.30...Hackney—"Salmon and Ball".....J. Allman 11.30...Hammersmith—Beadon Rd. ....The Branch 11.30...Hoxton Ch. Pitfield St. ....Davis, Wade, Pope 11.30...Garrett—"Plough Inn".....The Branch 11.30...Mitcham Fair Green .....The Branch 11.30...Regent's Park .....N. London Branch 11.30...St. Pancras Arches .....The Branch 11.30...Walham Green .....Johnson 3 ...Hyde Park .....Marylebone Branch 7 ...Clerkenwell Green .....The Branch Tuesday. 3 ...Ossulton Street, King's Cross...Brookes & Nicoll Wednesday. 7.30...Broadway, London Fields .....Lane Thursday. 8 ...Hoxton, Pitfield Street .....The Branch

PROVINCES.

Edinburgh.—Sunday: Queen's Park, afternoon at 3. Loanhead (Edinburgh).—Saturday, at 7 o'clock. Glasgow.—Sunday: Jail's Square at 1 p.m.; George's Square, at 6 o'clock.

Hamilton.—Saturday: at 6 o'clock. Motherwell.—Saturday: at 6 o'clock. Paisley.—Friday: Causewayside, at 7.30.

Hawick.—Persons in Hawick desirous of forming a Branch are requested to address the Secretary of the Socialist League, 4 Park Street, Edinburgh.

BRANCH SUBSCRIPTIONS PAID.

Birmingham, to August 31. Manchester, to October 31. Leicester, South London, to December 31, 1886. Bradford, Croydon, Edinburgh, Hackney, Hammersmith, Hoxton (Labour Emancipation League), Hull, Ipswich, Lancaster, Leeds, Marylebone, Merton, Norwich, Shields, Walsall, to March 31. Bloomsbury, Glasgow, North London, Oxford, to April 30, Clerkenwell, May 31, 1887.

STRIKE COMMITTEE.

Collected in Regent's Park, Sunday May 29, per Cantwell, 2s. 2d.

THE NORWICH PRISONERS' AID FUND.

Pakenham Beatty, £2. International Club, 23 Berners Street, 4s. 9d. For Mrs. Mowbray—A few Fabians, per Annie Besant (weekly), 10s.; Glasgow Branch (five weeks), 10s.—Total, £3 4s. 9d. J. LANE, Treasurer.

Concert and Ball.—At CLEVELAND HALL, Cleveland Street, W., on Monday June 6, at 8.30, a Grand Concert and Ball will take place, organised by the Socialist League on behalf of the Norwich Prisoners' Fund. The following, and others, will take part: Fred Henderson, Mr. O'Brien, Miss Powell, H. H. Sparling, Wm. Blundell, Mrs. Wardley, H. A. Barker, J. Brooks, James Anderson, Ed. Witthoff, Mr. Steward, Mrs. Taylor. Admission by Programme, 6d.

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