

Freedom

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NOTES.

The Mining Muddle.

The proposals presented to the Coal Commission by the mine-owners are typical of the attitude they have always taken up in the various crises which have arisen in the industry. They think only in terms of wages. If foreign competition is keen, cut down wages. If the demand has fallen off, cut down wages. If cutting down the miners' wages does not bring relief, well, cut down railwaymen's wages. Evidently they think that if they can reduce the cost of production they may get back to those palmy days when the world was clamouring for British coal. Anyone would imagine they had never heard of oil and electricity. The use of oil fuel and water-power has come to stay, and both mineowners and miners will soon be forced reluctantly to the conclusion that for many of them a living can no longer be derived from the coal industry. The nationalisation scheme put forward on behalf of the miners shows their childish faith in the State, which is to take over the mines and reorganise them in the interests of the community. Can the miners' representatives name one State Department that is not run exclusively in the interests of the exploiting class. If they cannot, why should they think the mines would be an exception? The truth is that the miners' leaders cannot see any way out of their difficulties under private ownership, and would like to shift the problem on to the State, hoping to use their political power to protect the miners' wages. Now this might be a very nice thing for the miners, and there would certainly be some good jobs for their leaders, but we doubt whether there would be much benefit for coal consumers. We know conditions are bad in most of the coalfields, but they are also bad in many other industries; and we are not at all anxious to see the miners climb into a position of privilege. The privileged class is already tremendously strong, and the workers should throw all their energy into smashing its power as being the greatest obstacle to their emancipation.

The Duke Defends Landowners.

The Duke of Northumberland scents danger in the agitation against land monopoly, and has taken up the cudgels on behalf of his class. Replying to Mr. MacLaren, M.P., he denies the assertion of his correspondent that "the title-deed to property is based on a labour effort which established it," which he says is contrary to every law, human and divine. He says the landowners' wealth is the product of "the labour, public spirit, and devotion to duty of many generations of landowners." Has anyone ever noticed the public spirit of a landowner when a public body wants a piece of land for a school or for road-widening or any other public improvement? It is notorious that municipalities in every part of the country have had to pay enormously exaggerated prices for land in these cases. When railways began landowners demanded and got fabulous sums for granting permission for them to run across their land, and in some cases absolutely refused permission. They have evicted tenants and pulled down their houses because they spoilt the view from their mansions, and cleared large areas of all inhabitants in order to preserve game for sport. As a class, landowners have always been greedy, grasping, and autocratic where the public welfare was concerned. The Duke speaks of the historical and ethical foundations of civilised society. The ethics of the "Society" which he is defending can be summed up in the phrase "Might is Right"; and when the test comes that is the banner they will fight under. He drags in the King as entitled to grant land "to those best able to look after it." The grants made by past kings to their mistresses or to courtiers who took them off their hands are surely

not evidence of the ethics of landowning. But he gives his case away when he says "the prairie value of land is nil," and that "its present value has been created mainly by the labour, the enterprise, intelligence and capital of the landowner." If all the people emigrated to-morrow, the Duke's land would immediately return to prairie value—nil—in spite of all his enterprise and intelligence. Labour applied to land is the sole source of wealth, and the Duke knows it as well as we do. His defence is evidence that knowledge of this truth is spreading faster than is pleasant for him.

Theosophical Humbug.

Theosophists solemnly inform the world that a new Messiah is coming shortly, and two thousand of them have assembled at Adyar, Madras, in expectation of this great event. A young Hindu, Jiddu Krishnamurti, is to be used by the new World Teacher to voice a "world religion" which will embrace all other religions. An official of the Theosophical Society in London says that "Mrs. Besant asserts that she is in communication with the great beings who rule the world, notably the 'King of the World,' and she tells us that the coming is to be soon." This lady recently assured a gathering of her disciples that "it is with the hope of preventing the necessity of another war that the Prince of Peace has deigned to hasten his coming—so that by some years his coming has been hastened." It is a great pity he could not make the trip in 1914. Krishnamurti has been specially trained by Mrs. Besant in anticipation of his divine mission, and the names of seven of his twelve apostles are announced. The other five have been chosen, but, "by command of 'The King,' are not yet to be revealed." All this humbug reminds us of the sect in America which waited last year for the end of the world. Of course, nothing happened. Nothing will happen at Adyar, except that Krishnamurti will probably play the part arranged for him and give forth some message, prompted by Mrs. Besant, which the credulous disciples will accept as a "divine revelation." Annie Besant has travelled a long way since she and Charles Bradlaugh lectured together on Atheism, over forty years ago. To-day, as the High-Priestess of Theosophy, she commands large audiences, and tries to persuade them that she knows all the hidden mysteries of the universe. All religious teachers claim some divine authority for their message—Buddha, Christ, Mahomet, and others—and Mrs. Besant now claims it for hers. It is an old game, and she knows how to play it.

"Brave Little Belgium!"

In August, 1914, the British Empire declared war on Germany, we were told, to safeguard the independence and integrity of Belgium, and when victory rested with the Allies in 1918 her independence was assured. At least, we all thought so. But we were mistaken. Last month, in the Belgian Parliament, Mr. Jaspar asked Vandervelde, the Foreign Minister, whether the Government was acting under pressure in cutting its Budget 150,000,000 francs, and whether "the Belgian Parliament is no longer in control of the situation." Vandervelde replied:—"The statements in the press to that effect are exactly true. The Government had its choice between two alternatives, either to obtain a loan or give up stabilisation of the franc. The Ministers were unanimous in the opinion that . . . the best thing to do was to submit to the requirements of the foreign capitalists and obtain stabilisation of the Belgian currency." So what German arms could not achieve in four years has been done silently by a stroke of the pen by men sitting in the City of London and New York. To all outward seeming the Belgians are a free and independent people, but in reality they are ruled by the kings of International Finance. Yet we hear folks speak with enthusiasm of "the spirit of Locarno." Poor little Belgium!

Push the sale of "Freedom."

Recollections of W. Tcherkesoff.

(Conclusion.)

Tcherkesoff was always active in the East End of London as a Russian speaker and lecturer on almost every important occasion for twenty-five years; whilst his English, always good enough for reading purposes, was cultivated in the Freedom Group and in many serious talks which he had with those English Socialists and Trade Unionists who seemed disposed to open their eyes on anti-Parliamentary and Syndicalist subjects. He did much quiet work in this respect. His personal life in the 90's was one of great poverty and privation, which he underwent cheerfully, but which at one time seriously undermined his health. He had to leave London to recuperate on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, and he passed a winter in the Orient, visiting Georgia at great personal risk, but returning safe and well. Passing through Geneva on this journey, he attended a lecture by Plechanoff, who indulged in boasting and fulsome praise of Marxism, and made deprecatory remarks about the earlier Russian revolutionary movements. Then Tcherkesoff, to the great surprise of Plechanoff, who remembered him well, and to the equal surprise of the youthful audience, got up and vindicated the old revolutionists from his personal experience, and exposed the fallacies of Marxism, to the wonder of all the young Russians in Geneva, who for years had heard only the misstatements of Plechanoff. It was a glorious meeting, I am told, and Plechanoff turned green. If only Tcherkesoff had been able to continue this occasional Geneva propaganda—but single-handed, poor, and suffering as he was, moreover bound for Georgia and very unsafe in Switzerland if his name were publicly mentioned, he could not think of staying; and when his back was turned Plechanoff mounted his pedestal and crowed again.

However, by and by a number of young Russians in Geneva, Paris, and London, inspired by Tcherkesoff's direct propaganda and the writings of Kropotkin, became greatly interested in Anarchism. A young Georgian student in Geneva, Goghelia—he died in Tiflis early this year, true to his ideas to the last—a man of great initiative, courage, and steadiness, printed many Anarchist pamphlets in Geneva, also the paper *Chleb i Volia* (Bread and Freedom), August, 1903, to November, 1905. These young Russians of the three cities mentioned and other places held their first private conference in London in Tcherkesoff's room; and the London Russian paper *Listki Chleb i Volia* (Leaflets of Bread and Freedom), October 30, 1906, to July 5, 1907, in which Kropotkin took a most direct part, like the Kropotkin translations and other volumes, mark the first definite efforts of present-day Russian Anarchism, so closely connected with Tcherkesoff and Kropotkin.

At times in the 90's Tcherkesoff visited Brussels, where besides Elisée Reclus he used to meet Professor Ernest Nys, a sympathiser of all advanced movements, who, being an expert in international law, gave useful hints to Tcherkesoff how to present the Georgian claims as based on the legendary old treaty of 1783. At other times he visited Domela Nieuwenhuis in Amsterdam, from where, in 1899, he returned with yet another discovery, superior in reliability and benefit to himself to Considérant's otherwise excellent Manifesto, also discovered at Domela's—namely, his excellent wife, who became his most devoted mate and comrade, and who survives him. From that date our friend, after over thirty years' exposure to a much-battered, often very precarious life, had a friendly, well-ordered home, and this prolonged his life and restored his spirits, from which, despite all his cheerfulness and rose-coloured views, melancholy was not quite absent, and revived also a deep longing for the South as he knew it in bright, wine-growing, sun-bathed Georgia. From now he sometimes made trips to Paris, where, having been expelled in 1881, he had to be very careful, but always felt so very happy and rejuvenated.

The amnesty after the Russian revolutionary events of October, 1905, made it possible for him to return; and with his wife he travelled in 1906-7 over the principal parts of Russia, settling in Tiflis, whence, as told above, he departed in 1907; and for pleading for Georgia before the Hague Conference he saw himself become an exile again.

In the years 1907 to 1914 he and his wife were once more the close friends of the Kropotkin family and devoted comrades of the Freedom Group and other forms of Anarchist activity; so he brought

out a Russian volume of Bakunin's Selected Works, with a biography (London, 1915, vi., 339 pp.).

The years 1907 to 1914 was the period when dark forces definitely prepared European mentality for war, a careful and all-conquering preparation which was as essential to the prompt realisation of war without a single moment's real notice in August, 1914, as every other detail of military preparation. These dark forces recognised that Tsarism, after the terrible warning it had received by the revolutionary events of 1905, was henceforth ready to seek salvation in a European war, being the only Power afraid of perishing without some such desperate expedient. This situation brought war into the domain of practical politics, and just as the mouths of cannon so also the minds of the people were methodically pointed against each other. Everyone outside the dark forces was a dupe of this, and Socialists, Syndicalists, and Anarchists were certainly first-rate dupes. Every theoretical and tactical difference was somehow used to create national animosity, hatred, and contempt. As for Bakunin in the years following 1870 Marx and Bismarck almost merged into one common object to him of absolute nefariousness, so in the years prior to 1914 Bebel and Bismarck, the German Social Democracy, and the German Empire merged into one in the polemics between Marxists and Anarchists, moderate and revolutionary Socialists. To carry a point against the German Social Democrats was considered a glorious thing, whilst as these nervous polemics stirred up ever-increasing national animosities it meant above all working into the hands of the warmongers.

Tcherkesoff kept a cool head during the Balkan War of 1912, which to his beloved *Daily News* was a Christian crusade, whilst he, a lifelong student of Balkan and Oriental politics, fully recognised the predatory character of the unprovoked assault on Turkey. But he had long opened his own personal war on Germany, the population of which he by and by unconsciously confounded with deep-dyed scoundrels like Marx and Engels, who also to Kropotkin in those years began more and more to take on the aspect of Tory agents, of fullblown Conservatives. I tried to stand up against this and had also with Tcherkesoff—by whose side I stood in the Balkan controversy—a public explanation of the German Social Democrats, whom I of all men—their lifelong opponent—found myself forced to defend against Tcherkesoff's attacks, just as I had defended Marx and Engels—whose actions against Bakunin and others few have denounced more fiercely than I—when Tcherkesoff wanted to see them regarded as mere literary thieves. Our printed polemics, like our personal debates, were always courteous, and when I saw him last, after all this, in November and December, 1913, we met as cordially as ever. I spent Christmas Eve in his room at one of what we called our "indoor picnics," with him and his wife, Miss D., and Alfred Marsh—Malatesta, who joined us in other years, being absent in Italy. We could not have been more friendly, more full of mutual goodwill, than we were that last evening; and I am glad that my personal contact with Tcherkesoff, always really cordial, ended thus.

I have no personal impression of the discord which in the autumn of 1914 separated Tcherkesoff and others from FREEDOM, but much as I share the standpoint taken by FREEDOM and maintained with unswerving constancy, I comprehend also that it was impossible for Tcherkesoff to feel otherwise than he did. To him the War was, so to speak, the continuation, the emphasising of his anti-Marxist polemics, which he had long since allowed to deviate into anti-racial channels, and he was not the only one to do so. Others may point out what has been done on the other side; speaking here of Tcherkesoff, I refer to the action on his side, as I see it.

The definite Russian Revolution of 1917 brought Tcherkesoff and his devoted wife back to Georgia, which then for some time apparently realised what Tcherkesoff probably had never expected to see—her independence as a Georgian national Republic. But although he is said to have passed a short spell of real happiness in his native district when Tsarism was shattered to pieces and before a new power had settled down, he must very soon have understood that the prospect for Georgia was a very unhappy one. By an irony of fate truly tragical in Tcherkesoff's case, since the 90's Marxism as interpreted by Karl Kautsky had been rampant in Georgia, and the independent Georgian Republic was under the political sway of faithful Marxists, who even invited Kautsky, the German dogmatist most abhorred by Tcherkesoff, to visit their Republic, which he did, and he was welcomed as the spiritual patron of the Georgian Social Democratic Republic. Whilst this was merely farcical, more serious was the fact that this Georgian Republic, from Menshevist hostility

to Bolshevism, had thrown itself completely into the arms of Great Britain, which could not wish better than to see the Baku oil and the Caucasian mineral wealth separated from Russia. Britain also saw in the Caucasus, like in the Baltic States, useful stepping-stones to eventual operations against Russia by the Russian "Whites" and others. But the very same facts provoked and almost invited Soviet Russia to reconquer the Caucasus, which was done in March, 1921, since when Bolshevism has reigned supreme there.

Tcherkesoff left the Caucasus some time in 1918 or 1919, probably after the formal end of the War, and lived in London, if not also in Paris; but early in 1921, I believe, he returned to Tiflis with his wife, and then witnessed a period of Bolshevik terror and economic depression and disorganisation, which made life very sad and practically intolerable for the old man—for though one seldom thought of his age, he was 75 at that time. He may not have been interfered with personally and was allowed to leave the country again, but he saw and—since he settled again in London—he heard of the misery, often the death by governmental cruelty or by privation, of most of his friends, and the hopeless fate of his native country, which since it had wished to break away from Russia is distrusted now and held in stronger chains and made as much, if not even more, subservient to general Russian purposes as in Tsarist days. These cruel facts embittered Tcherkesoff's last years and may have prevented him finding his way back to old friends. As for me, when the year 1920 saw the renewal of epistolary relations not a word was said on either side on the events since 1914, and we were friends as ever. May his memory, always dear to me, soon be permanently preserved by a real memorial, that full account of his life which he failed to give in memoirs and which now only his wife can give us in the form of recollections of his early years and of their common life. Sixty and more years of unpretending and devoted activity of a lover of freedom will thus be recorded.

September 29, 1925.

M. N.

Erratum.—In the December instalment of these "Recollections," col. 2, paragraph 2, line 14, for "1922" read "1892."

UNITY AND FREEDOM.

On reading Alfred Holdsworth's criticism of a sentence taken from my recent review of Kropotkin's "Ethics," I had the impression that he had torn it from its context and thereby misrepresented me intentionally. However, I had no copy of the review in question then to hand; and now, on comparing the two articles, I feel that the misunderstanding was entirely genuine. But Mr. Holdsworth will notice that I used the phrase "idolatry of Unity," which I chose carefully as expressing in a nutshell that abominable fetichism which teaches that Unity is sacred, and that in no circumstances must the voice of dissent be allowed to make itself heard, even though the dissenter be trying to save the idolaters from rushing to destruction. He will observe also that, two sentences previously, I had spoken of that Unity which "has always been the idol of that greatest of Imperialisms, the Roman Catholic Church."

A most difficult, but an all-important and most practical question is raised; and I was trying to express my conviction that the Kropotkin of earlier years, who was always on the attack, was a more efficient warrior than the Kropotkin of the later period, who seemed to me inclined to cry: "Let us all march together, well in step, and we shall finally arrive." That appears to me the most dangerous of delusions, and for years I have been doing my individual best to combat it.

Christianity, as M. Clemenceau has remarked, began as a revolt of the poor and has ended as a syndicate of the rich. The great architect of that deplorable transformation was the Roman Catholic Church, which taught that Unity was essential to salvation, and must be enforced by the official hierarchy with torture and the stake. In Russia and Italy we have had within the last few years similar slave-revolts, and each has been suppressed in a similar manner by hierarchies who differ from the Roman Catholic one only in name. Men by the thousands have been imprisoned, tortured, killed, simply because they did not agree with the Unity imposed by the hierarchy; and thus in every instance what began as a revolt by the poor has been transformed into a syndicate run by those who climbed into the seats of power. The point is so clear that I need not labour it.

Notice, however, that precisely the same phenomenon appears daily and under our very noses. Quite recently Mr. E. Rosslyn Mitchell, a particularly distinguished member of the Independent Labour Party, since he defeated the great Mr. Asquith at Paisley, took up a heretical attitude in the matter of the Weir houses, telling the Labour Party that it would ruin itself by opposing their construction, the fact being that the public was starving for lack of houses, and preferred cheap and inferior ones to none at all. That is a most unorthodox standpoint from the Trade Union point of view, and of course the Independent Labour Party is most anxious for Trade Union support. I was not, therefore, in the least surprised to read that the discipline of the party would have to be tightened up, so as to render the utterance of such unity-destroying views impossible. Surely we ought to look ahead, and I ask whither shall we drift if we follow tamely that sort of doctrine? It is rampant throughout the Labour movement. As it can end only in Dictatorship, we have to fight it tooth and nail.

I am essentially a propagandist. In my own opinion I am a most practical propagandist, for always have I been trying to get the movement to take concerted action on the essentials; on the things that really count. Hence my continuous insistence on the importance of the land question, and I think that I have stuck to it with not a little tenacity for almost fifty years. In fact, I tried to give it practical effect by uniting myself closely with the Magóns in that Mexican revolutionary movement which drove Porfirio Diaz into exile and brought with it a great mental revolution of which, as I believe, we have by no means heard the last. Does anyone imagine that I do not want Unity of opinion on the necessity of terminating that system of monopoly which shuts the masses from access to Mother Earth, the source of all supplies and the only mine from which wealth can be extracted?

Of course, I want Unity of opinion on that, which seems to me mere common sense. But I don't propose to knock anyone on the head because he thinks this problem can be settled by establishing, for example, peasant proprietorship, in which I personally do not believe; nor do I want to see in office any hierarchy which will be empowered to say: "We have the one and only solution of this problem, and if you venture to criticise it we will stand you up against a wall and shoot you." I call myself an Anarchist precisely because I am opposed to any such authoritarian philosophy, and I doubt if we were ever in greater danger from it than we are to-day

W. C. O.

WORK AS UNIT OF EXCHANGE.

FRIEND,—In an article in the October-November number of your paper, W. C. O. says: "Every worker wants to get the full worth of his labour, and it is easy to show that, so long as certain people get something for nothing, others must be cheated out of what justly belongs to them."

Now, it seems to me that there is no way of doing away with some people getting "something for nothing" as long as we use a medium of transfer the unit of which represents something which is not human work. For the kind of cheating referred to above is, in essence, the taking of human work without giving human work in return. And that is exactly what our present medium of transfer (called exchange) not only makes possible, but actually compels.

Our present unit of transfer, by representing something which is not wholly human work—in many countries gold—unavoidably puts a price on Nature's gifts. So that those who have nothing but work to transfer to others are compelled to give at least some of that work for mere permission to use some of the natural resources. Therefore, the remedy is to adopt a medium of transfer (which will be a true medium of exchange) the unit of which represents nothing but human work; that can be done by making it represent a certain amount of adult human work measured by its duration. Once get the workers to see that clearly, so that they apply it in their daily lives, and Nature's bounties will no longer be fenced off from them.

Phoenix, Arizona.

VAUGHN BACHMAN BROKAW.

[While a unit representing "a certain amount of adult human labour measured by its duration" might be an equitable medium of exchange, we fail to see how the workers can "apply it in their daily lives" to-day. The product of their labour belongs to their masters. When they have pulled down the fences which keep them from Nature's bounties they will then be free to consider ways and means of exchange.—ED. FREEDOM.]

FREEDOM.

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“Socialism in Our Day!”

Happily we Anarchists are not condemned to the task of bamboozling the public for the sake of catching votes. This gives us inestimable advantages. We do not have to compromise and lie. We need not become the kept mistresses of those who put up the money needed for expensive campaigns. In a word, we are free; and in the fight for freedom that is the first necessity.

At least we stay in the ring and hold our ground, and because the others perpetually give way we have lost all faith in them. In this country, for instance, we have not a particle of belief in the success of the Independent Labour Party or of similar more or less Socialist bodies. We have not a particle of belief in the tortuous antics of the Communists, because history shows conclusively that Jesuitry always fails. Still less have we any confidence in the Trade Union element that forms the jellyfish backbone of the Labour Party, for these people, however fanatical they may be in the determination to improve their own condition as a class, sit habitually on two stools, and have not the mental virility needed to make a choice. With one corner of their mouths they shout for the overthrow of the wage system, and with the other they implore Dives to magnify his feast, that they may have a chance of better pickings. This is essentially a wage-slave mentality, bred in the bone and nurtured assiduously by factory and slum. It is the most gigantic fact we have to face.

We are not slanderers. Men who under the plea that it will furnish work deliberately vote large sums of money to capitalistic syndicates, as did many a Labour Member during the last session of Parliament, are not out to destroy the capitalist system but to infuse it with new life. Men who clamour for great public improvements, knowing that they will pour millions into the pockets of that parasitic landed aristocracy they habitually denounce, have not in them an ounce of revolutionary strength. Nothing effective can come out of them, and the sooner we bend ourselves to the stern duty of making the public recognise it, the better it will be for all of us. Nothing is to be gained by shilly-shallying or amiable philandering, under the delusion that these people ultimately will come over to us. So long as their present mentality endures they will not. They will simply go on drifting, and slide down the toboggan because that seems easier than climbing hills. It is our business to make them understand that there are hills which must be climbed.

We had a great success in Russia when a great and most tyrannical Empire was crushed to powder, and a toiling peasantry took possession of the land. Certainly peasant proprietorship is not ideal, because the natural resources of this planet should be for the free and equal use of all men, and no one should be allowed to say: “This bit of land I have staked out as mine, and from it I exclude all others.” That is merely landlordism in another more widespread and possibly more injurious form; but it seemed to us a great thing that the worker drove out the parasite. Then came defeat. Russia fell into the clutches of a sect that meant to rule; that had no other idea than that of establishing a Dictatorship; of suppressing all free speech, and punishing remorselessly all who had the audacity to question its omnipotence. A terrible set-back!

Much the same thing has happened in Italy, for Mussolini, like Lenin, was an autocratic Socialist of the imperious Karl Marx school. Something similar took place also in Germany, where Ebert used the old military forces to form that strong Government which made him President. In truth, the story everywhere has been very much the same, the only difference being that in some countries the Socialists have been able to capture power and establish their Dictatorship, and in others, lacking either the pluck or opportunity, have had to content themselves with strengthening the Dictatorships that now exist.

Here the Socialists have taken the second of these two courses, and from their upholding of special privileges to capitalism to their warm endorsement of State insurance schemes, which brand for all time the workers as dependents on the State and their employers, they have stooped to a servility of which even we, who differ from them so profoundly, had not dreamed them capable. They have parted the nation into two classes, alms-givers and alms-takers. They have enthroned the exploiter as a benevolent philanthropist, and thereby they have done, in the name of the emancipation of the workers, all the most hard-shelled Tory could have asked.

Always the lady whose chastity is weak protests her virtue with the loudest clamour; and similarly we now find our Socialists shouting that they are making a “frontal attack on poverty” in their demand for what they call a Living Wage. What nauseating humbug! It is, in the first place, a humble catering to the Trade Unionists who hold the purse, for hitherto Trade Unionism has never dared to stray beyond the narrow conception of the proverbial fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work. In the second place, the securing of that Living Wage under present conditions is an impossibility, and at least Socialism’s learned intellectuals ought to know it. In reality they do know it, and their advocacy of this quack remedy is a disgusting trading on credulity. They know that while all the resources of this island continue to be owned by the few the many are doomed to poverty as surely as every one of us is doomed to die. They know also that even this very wage system, which they had pledged themselves to extirpate, is growing constantly more insecure; and yet they excuse themselves for prolonging the anguish with the plea, advanced by Mr. Brailsford in the *New Leader* of January 8, that “it makes a concrete appeal to the average man,” that “it would bring a stimulus to industry,” and that it would “direct our attack to the keys of economic power.” And this they call “Socialism in Our Day”!

The plain truth is that, from the standpoint of a man willing to work and so entitled to a livelihood, this country is rotten, and if its workers are to survive they must remake it. Here is a sufficient sample of its rottenness, taken from the most aristocratic of all papers, the *Morning Post*, of January 7:—“A crowd of 3,000 assembled outside a factory in Old Trafford Park, Manchester, in response to an advertisement for six handymen. When it became known that the vacancies had been filled overnight the crowd became unruly and threatened to storm the offices.”

Three thousand applicants for six poorly-paid jobs! How is it possible to describe a country where such things are possible by any other word than “rotten”? And how can the Labour Party expect to patch up such a condition with the so-called Living Wage?

W. C. O.

HEARD IN THE MESS.

In that cavalry mess I heard queer conversations. Those officers belonged to the old families of England, the old caste of aristocracy; but the foul outrage of the war—the outrage against all ideals of civilisation—had made them think, some of them for the first time, about the structure of social life, and of the human family. They hated Germany as the direct cause of the war, but they looked deeper than that, and saw how the leaders of all great nations in Europe had maintained the philosophy of force and had built up hatreds, and fears, and alliances, over the heads of the peoples whom they inflamed with passion or duped with lies. “The politicians are the guilty ones,” said one cavalry officer. “I am all for revolution after this bloody massacre. I would hang all politicians, diplomats, and so-called statesmen, with strict impartiality.” “I’m for the people,” said another. “The poor bloody people who are kept in ignorance and then driven into the shambles when their rulers desire to grab some new part of the earth’s surface, or to get their armies going because they are bored with peace.” “What price Christianity?” asked another, inevitably. “What have the Churches done to stop war or to preach the Gospel of Christ? The Bishop of London, the Archbishop of Canterbury, all those conventional, patriotic, cannon-blessing, banner-baptising humbugs! God! They make me tired.” Strange words to hear in a cavalry mess! Strange turmoil in the souls of men! They were the same words I had heard from London boys in Ypres, spoken just as crudely. But many young gentlemen who spoke those words have already forgotten them, or would deny them.

—SIR PHILIP GIBBS (“Realities of War”).

Here is My Opinion.

By PETER KROPOTKIN.*

(From the *Road to Freedom*, Stelton, N.J.)

A stormy talk with S. and S. Always the same eternal reproaches—why don't I come out with a definite programme—of what? Action? No "views"—a general opinion of current events. Here is my opinion.

The revolution we have gone through is the sum total not of the efforts of separate individuals, but a *natural phenomenon, independent of the human will*, a natural phenomenon similar to a typhoon such as rises suddenly on the coasts of Eastern Asia.

Thousands of causes, in which the work of separate individuals and even of parties has been only a grain of sand, one of the minute local whirlwinds, have contributed to form the great natural phenomenon, the great catastrophe which shall either renew, or destroy; or perhaps both destroy and renew.

All of us, and I in that number, prepared this great inevitable change. But it was also prepared by all the previous revolutions of 1793, 1848-1871; by all the writings of the Jacobins, Socialists, politicians; by all the achievements of science; industry, art, and so on. In a word, millions of natural causes have contributed just in the same way as millions of movements of particles of air or water cause the sudden storm which sinks hundreds of ships or destroys thousands of houses—as the trembling of the earth in an earthquake is caused by thousands of small tremors and by the preparatory movements of separate particles. In general, people do not see events concretely, solidly; they think more in words than in clearly imagined pictures, and they have absolutely no idea what a revolution is—of those many millions of causes which have gone to give it its present form, and they are therefore inclined to exaggerate the importance in the progress of the revolution of their personality and of that attitude which *they* or their friends and co-thinkers will take up in this enormous upheaval. And of course they are absolutely incapable of understanding how powerless is any individual, whatever his intelligence and experience, in this whirlpool of hundreds of thousands of forces which have been put into motion by the upheaval.

They do not understand that once such a great natural phenomenon has begun, such as an earthquake, or rather such as a typhoon, separate individuals are powerless to exercise any kind of influence on the course of events. A party can perhaps do something, far less than is usually thought, but still at least on the surface of the oncoming waves its influence may perhaps be very slightly noticeable. But separate small aggregations not forming a fairly large mass are undoubtedly powerless—their powers are certainly nil.

Imagine to yourself a wave, a sazhen (a Russian land measurement) high, which has rushed on to the shore, and imagine a man trying to oppose this wave with his stick—or even with his boat! Your strength is no greater than this—there is nothing left to do but to weather the typhoon.

It is in this position that I, an Anarchist, find myself. But even much more numerous parties in Russia at the present moment are in a very similar position.

I will even go farther: the governing party itself is in the same position. It no longer governs, it is being carried along by the current which it helped to create but which is now already a thousand times stronger than the party itself.

There was a dam, holding back a mass of water. We all worked to undermine this dam. And I did my share in this work.

Some dreamed of guiding the water into a narrow channel

* Peter Kropotkin found himself, like many other Anarchists, in a very difficult position during the Revolution. As a scientist and historian he felt and understood the immensity of the titanic struggle. He foresaw the coming reaction of the authoritarian Bolshevik party, yet he also saw the futility of individual efforts during the upheaval. Urged by comrades to state his views, he jotted down his opinion on the 23rd of November, 1920, shortly before his death. As far as I am aware the ROAD TO FREEDOM is the first publication to bring the views of our beloved teacher before the comrades. The manuscript was brought from Russia by Henry G. Alsberg, then a correspondent of the *New York Nation* in Russia. I am grateful to Mr. Alsberg for the historic fragment.—H. H.

to work their own mill. Others hoped to make a new bed with the help of the flood, from the river. Now the river is rushing forward not towards the mill, which it has already destroyed, and not towards the bed we had marked out for it, because the flood has come *not* as the result of our efforts, but as the result of a mass of far greater reasons which have enabled the river to break through the dam.

And now the question is: what is to be done? To mend the dam? Absurd.

Too late.

To dig a new channel for the flood—impossible. We prepared a channel for the river, one which we thought the best. But it turned out to be too shallow and insufficiently prepared. When the flood came, the water did not flow into it. It is rushing on, breaking everything along another way.

What is then to be done?

We are experiencing a revolution which has advanced not at all along those ways which we had prepared for it, but which we had no time to prepare sufficiently—what is to be done now?

To prevent the revolution? Absurd!

Too late. The revolution will advance in its own way, in the direction of the least resistance, without paying the least attention to our efforts.

At the present moment the Russian revolution is in the following position. It is perpetrating horrors. It is ruining the whole country. In its mad fury it is annihilating human lives, that is why it is a revolution and not peaceful progress, because it is destroying without looking what it destroys and whither it goes.

And we are powerless, for the present, to direct it into another channel, until such time as it will have played itself out. It must wear itself out.

And then?

Then—*inevitably will come a reaction*. Such is the law of history, and it is easy to understand *why this cannot be otherwise*.

People imagine that we can change the form of development of a revolution—that is a childish illusion. A revolution is such a force that its growth cannot be changed.

And a *reaction is absolutely inevitable*, just as a hollow in the water is inevitable after every wave, as weakness is inevitable in a human being after a period of feverish activity.

Therefore the only thing we can do is to use our energy to lessen the fury and force of the oncoming reaction.

But of what can our efforts consist?

To modify the passions—on one as on the other side? Who is likely to listen to us? Even if there exist such diplomats who can do anything in this role, the time for their debut has not yet come; neither the one nor the other side is as yet disposed to listen to them. I see one thing: we must gather together people *who will be capable of undertaking constructive work, in each and every party, after the revolution has worn itself out*. We Anarchists must gather together a group of honest, devoted, not-eaten-up-by-self-esteem, Anarchist workers. And if I was younger and could see hundreds of people, of course, in *such* a way as this should be done, if you want to collect people for work in common—

If such gatherers of Anarchists are to be found amongst our comrades, I am of course ready to help them. Then of course we must write, but far more is to be done by letters and personal contact than through the Press. . . .

It has been customary for people to draw arguments from the laws of Nature as to what we ought to do. Such arguments seem to me a mistake; to imitate Nature may be merely slavish. But if Nature is to be our model it seems that the Anarchists have the best of the argument. The physical universe is orderly, not because there is a central government but because every body minds its own business.—*Bertrand Russell*.

ANARCHISM VERSUS SOCIALISM.

By WM. C. OWEN.

32 pages, with Wrapper. Price, Threepence.

SCIENCE AND DOGMA.

In Charles T. Sprading's latest book, "Science versus Dogma,"* we read that Billy Sunday, a noted American revivalist, delivered himself as follows when "showing" recently in Los Angeles:—"If a minister believes and teaches Evolution, he is a stinking skunk and a liar. . . . The consensus of scholarship can go to hell for all I care. . . . Old Darwin is in hell." And this mountebank was indorsed by no less than two hundred and eighteen of the city's ministers!

American statesmen of reputation have not been ashamed to join the mob that, throwing reason to the winds, would hound to death whoever dares to voice truths that the telescope, the microscope, and camera have placed beyond dispute. Chief and most conspicuous among these was the late William Jennings Bryan. This man, known originally as the "Boy Orator of the Platte," began life as a lawyer. Gifted with an imposing presence, a magnificent voice, and an astounding flow of language, he captured, on as fraudulent an issue as was ever invented for the bamboozlement of an ignorant electorate, the Democratic nomination for President of the United States. Three times he ran as the candidate of that great party; and then, having helped Woodrow Wilson to the prize he himself had failed to secure, he became Secretary of State, a post for which he quickly showed himself incompetent. So he took to religious lecturing and speculating in real estate, and died, just after the celebrated Dayton trial, worth, it was said, half a million dollars. Can you imagine a more infamous career? The confidence man who has swindled some stupid yokel out of a few shillings is sent to gaol. The impostor who has devoted his life to humbugging a nation dies, wealthy and full of honours, in his bed.

The trouble is that the masses do not understand. They do not grasp the fundamental fact that Man, physically a weak animal, survives only by virtue of his superior knowledge; and that those who strangle knowledge are the assassins of their race. If ever the day shall arrive when the people at large have become conscious of that basic truth, they will treat as the greatest of all malefactors those who falsify the records of human experience in furtherance of their own sordid greeds. For the individual Pharisee they may, perhaps, have mercy. For the Church, which is Phariseism organised, they should have none.

Naturally Sprading has much to say of the persecutions to which the Church, Roman Catholic and Protestant alike, has always resorted for the suppression of whatever truth appeared to threaten its own interests; but on these we need not dwell, for they are now well known. It is sad that so many of the world's greatest benefactors have been tortured in the dungeon or burned at the stake; but far sadder is it that the whole race was condemned to sit in darkness for centuries in order that a priestly hierarchy might rule supreme. Consider, for example, that no scientific advance was possible so long as men believed that the earth was the centre of the universe—a flat, immovable body over which was spread a canopy that formed the floor of heaven. Only with the overthrow of that infantile conception did navigation become possible, and the astounding fact is that a Greek philosopher overthrew it five centuries and a half before Christ was born. For more than nineteen hundred years religious bigotry was able to suppress this most priceless of discoveries; and as compared with that long wallowing in ignorance, and the racial suffering that ignorance entailed, the trials undergone by science's great martyrs seem little more than dust in the balance.

Once again all the forces of reaction are gathering for another great attack, and the attack may well be more vicious and ruthless than it has ever been. It is the awakening of reason that fills every ruling Raj with wild alarm. What the priestly hierarchies dread above all else is science's impartial criticism. What every exploiter fears is that his books will be examined and his methods of extortion openly revealed. These Popes and Emperors, these aristocracies and plutocracies, these Dead Men of the Sea, who still sit squarely upon the people's backs and hold them tightly by the throat—their titles will not stand a moment's investigation, and they know it. They are uniting for the express purpose of rendering unpleasant enquiries impossible. They do not intend to allow investigation; and although they would prefer to smother it respectably and quietly, they will, if need be, use the rack and the thumbscrew, the stake

and the gallows, as remorselessly as ever did Torquemada or others of his henchmen. It is impossible for anyone who knows what is now going on in Europe to doubt it. One cannot study the history the United States is now making and question it. Sprading's book itself supplies all needed proof.

It is an excellent book, being at once comprehensive and concise, deep and yet easy to digest. Its author has for many years done yeoman's work in Freedom's cause; and from this, his latest sowing, there should come a bounteous harvest. It is only the few who have the time and means and ability to explore wide fields, but it is in the power of all of us to profit by their labours and hand on the torch their toil has lighted.

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