

FREEDOM

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST SOCIALISM.

VOL. 1.—No. 12.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

MONTHLY ; ONE PENNY.

JUSTICE IN ENGLAND.

THE Home Secretary, whose private judgment, or the lack of it, is arbiter of life or death for accused Englishmen, has triumphantly vindicated the majesty of the law by causing a Jewish lad to be publicly murdered.

The unhappy youth had fled from the horrors of Russian conscription to the worse misery of an exile's life of semi-starvation in London. His brain reeled amidst the wretchedness of his lot; he meditated suicide; in reckless despair he is said to have killed a poor woman who balked his desperate search for a few shillings.

Victims both of the horrible injustice of society, of the inhuman despotism of the Tzar, and the equally inhuman greed of English monopolists of wealth; of the man who sacrifices the lives of others to maintain his power, and the men who by excluding their fellows from the means of production, prevent them from working that they may live.

Yet our enlightened English Society can find no other remedy than the ancient barbarism of "the wrong that amendeth wrong." Miriam Angel has been murdered, Lipski must be murdered also, just that our present social system may be preserved, that the Tzar may continue secure in his tyranny, and the English landlord and capitalist continue to grind a profit from starving wage-slaves. A law of fiends, framed to safe-guard hell.

No week passes but we hear of some deed of violence, the direct outcome of private property in the hands of a few, and the isolation of the masses from the control of the wealth their labour produces.

Henry Hobson, a discharged soldier with three good conduct stripes for 14 years of service, worked for 11 years as engine-tenter with one Stothard, a Sheffield horn manufacturer. Nearly a year ago his master summarily discharged Hobson for "neglect of duty." Thus a man who had laboured during all the best years of his life found himself, as his strength declined, forced to set out on that dreary, sickening, hopeless wandering in vain search of a job, which the English workers know so well. What wonder that after many months his cruel position took fatal hold of his mind, and that finally, in a morbid fit of despairing revenge, he killed the wife of the man who was the immediate cause of his suffering? Such a deplorable deed was every bit as much the result of the detestable system which makes men dependent for their right to work and live on the arbitrary will of landlord and capitalist, as was the act of poor Ling, the Derbyshire engine-driver. After loyally fighting the men's losing battle to the last with the Midland Railway Company, he found himself without hope of employment, and losing all heart drowned himself with his three children.

What sort of justice is it that hands over such victims of society to a violent and shameful death? And yet Hobson was hanged, as Lipski was hanged, and as Ling would have been hanged, if the police could have fished him out of the canal in time.

The administration of the criminal law has long been surrounded by an imaginary halo. For ages we have been taught by the ruling classes to regard the judge, with his servitors and assistants, as "the minister of god, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." It is only quite lately that the general ability to read and the spread of newspapers and other means of information amongst the masses of the people, have begun to bring the mysterious sanctities of legal justice into the light of public opinion. A good work, considerably assisted, when the Tories are in authority, by the zeal of Liberal journals in bringing to light the evil doings of the rival Jack-in-office. Hence a few rays lately turned upon the dark places of lawyerdom, with the result that its mysteries and sanctities begin to look very shabby after all; a mere worm-eaten covering for a festering heap of human cowardice, cruelty, meanness, and stupidity.

The revelation has not been wholly fruitless. It is one of the encouraging aspects of a year stained by so much national folly and crime that there is a growing tendency to deprive the men of law, and their agents the police, of their official monopoly. There is a perceptible inclination for the healthy, rough and ready justice of the streets to step between the accused and the refined cruelty of legal quips and cranks, or the privileged brutality of the policeman. We have not yet, it is true, found so much manhood as the independent people of Woodstock, U.S.A., who lately marched with quiet determination to the gaol and set free an esteemed fellow-townsmen, imprisoned for contempt of court. But during the last few months the conduct of judges, magistrates, lawyers, and police has repeatedly been called over the

coals before the tribunal of public meetings and the public press. The energetic action of a few individuals, backed by such democratic opinion as exists in class-ridden London, has considerably humiliated and nonplussed the legal functionaries, from Matthews to Endacott.

When will some humane citizen, not content with merely protesting against injustice, publicly offer to receive a criminal into his family, that he may do his best to aid him in regaining an honest position in society?

The plan of boarding out criminals with the farmers of the district is now being discussed by a special committee of the Capetown Legislative Assembly. It was the universal practice in Iceland before Denmark intervened with her centralising authority; but when the Danish administrators wanted a man hanged, no Icelander would degrade himself to that vile task, and they were forced to carry the criminal away to Denmark, where were poor wage-slaves ready to sell themselves body and soul for a morsel of bread, as men do in England to-day. In Siberia, where many Russian convicts remain after escaping or having served their term, even murderers (men are not hanged in Russia for any crime but political disaffection) are constantly received into the settlers' families; with the general result that the wrong-doer is won back to social life, and the family who received him reap the benefits of their exercise of good feeling and the reclaimed man's or woman's gratitude.

As a matter of fact, the English people do not yet realise the horrible cruelty of our criminal law. They do not realise that not only may judges sentence men to be flogged, as five men were after the last assizes at Liverpool, but that any ill-tempered country justice may have any person beaten whom he chooses to consider as a vagrant twice convicted. They do not realise that children are continually flogged by brutal policemen, who pride themselves on "fetching blood out of the young devils." They do not realise the frightful moral and physical degradation of imprisonment. They do not realise the mental torture, not only to those who have actually done some evil, but to thousands of innocent people connected with them or falsely accused. They do not realise the degrading, hardening influence of all this system of brutality upon every one concerned in it. They do not realise its uselessness to society. Yet the fact that, according to the latest returns, no increase of crime has followed the Jubilee release of 23,000 prisoners in India may well lead the most respectable of pharisees to reflection. What, a number of criminals amounting to the population of a moderate-sized town let loose upon society, and society none the worse! Where, then, is the absolute and proven necessity for all those big sums, millions of pounds sterling, for judges and policemen and prisons just voted in Parliament, paid by taxes extorted from the people's labour? Suppose we devoted the energy wasted in providing our rulers with funds for their crimes against humanity to the scientific investigation of crime, its causes and its treatment?

We dare not. We dare not even attempt to realise the horrors of the administration—misnamed of justice; for to face them means to face the question of the redistribution of wealth. There can be no justice in dealing with the erring whilst the social relations of the virtuous are rooted in injustice.

THE NECESSITY OF COMMUNISM.

If all Socialists should agree together on the point which we have developed in our last issue, namely, that *the wants of all* must be the first guiding consideration of any revolutionary movement which has a Socialist character—and we really cannot understand how this can be denied, or even underrated—then they would perceive that the next revolution, if it is guided by Socialist principle, must necessarily drive them to Communism, and Communism drive them to Anarchy.

Of course, if we admit that the next revolution will have accomplished its mission as soon as it succeeds in overthrowing the present rulers and proclaims some great industrial undertakings, like railways and mines, the property of a State democraticised a bit—everything beyond that remaining as it is—then, of course, there is no use in speaking about social revolution at all. It is no use to describe with so pompous a word the visions of Herr Bismarck, who also dreams of taking all great branches of industry under the management of the State democraticised by Imperialism. We only remark that such a result would be utterly shabby in comparison with the great movement of ideas stirred up by Socialism; and that it stands in very strange

contradiction with the hopes that Socialists are awakening precisely among the most miserable classes of labourers.

But, if those who describe themselves as revolutionists—and really are revolutionists, at least with regard to their proceedings, if not always in ideas which inspire them—if they really mean a thorough modification of the present state of property, they cannot avoid perceiving that the day they begin any serious economical change in the present conditions of property, they immediately will have to face the problem of providing food for those who so long have suffered from want of it, of giving shelter to those who have none worthy the name of a dwelling, and of providing clothes for those who are now ragged and barefoot.

Not in the shape of charities, whosoever might distribute them; as charities distributed by a municipal or local board brought to power by the revolution, would remain as much an insult to those to whom they were distributed as the charities of the millionaire at the present day; but as something which is *due* by society to everybody; and, first of all, precisely to those who have patiently waited for the "justice to all" regularly promised by revolutionists and reformers, and always forgotten as soon as the said revolutionists and reformers are on the top of the political ladder. We do not care about "Coronation gifts," be they distributed by a King, or by a shopkeeper acclaimed President of a Republic, or by a brother-workman nominated municipal councillor. We merely ask for what is due to everybody, everybody having contributed to the extent of his capacities to the creation of the riches which surround us.

To leave nobody without food, shelter and clothing, is the first and imperative duty of each popular movement inspired by Socialist ideas; and we wonder why our Socialist friends, so out-spoken in their political programmes, are so discreet exactly on this subject—the object, the first aim, in our opinion, of any movement worthy to be called Socialist. Is it a simple omission, or something so obvious that it is needless to waste words upon it?

But, if it is really so, then, how is it possible to avoid Communism entering into our life in the very first days of the revolution?

We have already said in our 8th number why the revolution in our present conditions of property can only issue from widely-developed, independent local action. The miners of a more advanced mining district, the inhabitants of a more advanced city, cannot wait until all Great Britain is converted to their ideas by pamphlets, manifestoes, and speeches; they will go ahead, saying to themselves that the best means to convert everybody is example.

And now, imagine a revolted city where the majority follows the Socialists. What must the Socialists propose if they really wish to be with the masses, and march together with them for the conquest of the future? What must they propose if they mean to be in accordance with justice and with their own principles? The words Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity are surely grand and glorious words. We may inscribe them on each banner, and let them float over each house. We may even inscribe them, as our Paris neighbours do after each revolution, on each public building, even on prisons. But, what besides the words? Another word? The nationalization of land, of mines, of capital, which may be full of meaning, but may remain as meaningless as the great words of Fraternity, of Equality, of Liberty, when they are painted on prison walls?

As to us, Communist-Anarchists, the question we shall put to ourselves will not be, What shall we inscribe on our banners? It will be What shall the workman eat during the next twenty-four hours? Is he able, and *must* he continue to pay the rent to the landlord and house-owner? Where will those who live in dens, or even have not a den to live in, spend the next night?

These plain, brutal questions will be asked in each workman's household; they will be asked in each of the slums so particularly described a few years ago by the newspapers for the amusement of the occupiers of ducal and princely palaces; they will be asked, however limited the knowledge of the workman and the slum-inhabitant of Marx's or Proudhon's Political Economy. And they must be asked—and answered—by each earnest Socialist, unless his presumptuous learnedness considers a question too mean which has not been treated in Marx's 'Capital,' or in Proudhon's 'Economical Contradictions.'

Once asked, there is, however, no other answer to the question than this: There are so many houses in the city. Some of them are overcrowded, some others nearly empty; some of them being dens which even a beast would find too dirty, too wet, and too disgusting to stay in unless compelled to do so; and some others embellished with all the refinements of modern luxury.

It might remain so as long as we lived under the monopoly of private property. It could remain so as long as humanity was considered as consisting of two classes: the one created for the dens, and the other for the palaces. It could remain so as long as there was a State ruled by land, house, and capital owners, who exacted rack rents for their own benefit, and called in police and emergency men to evict the rebels who refused to enrich them. But it cannot remain so any longer.

Apart from a few cottages purchased by workmen families, at the price of all possible privations, none of these houses can be honestly considered as honestly acquired by their present owners. Humanity has built them; they belong to humanity, or at least to that part of humanity which is gathered on the spot. As soon as we proclaim that property—whatever its shape—is an accumulation of wealth due to the spoliation of the masses by the few—and who amongst Socialists does not affirm and re-affirm that principle?—we can no longer consider property in houses as a sacred right. They belong to all, and the very

first thing we have to do is to consider what use can be made of them in order to provide everybody with a decent home.

The only rule to guide us must be the *wants* of each family, each of them being equally entitled to enjoy the produce of the labour of generations past and present. We cannot ask what each family will be able to pay for a house; it is not their fault if thousands and thousands, brought to misery by our former conditions, can afford to pay nothing, and even those who can produce will be reduced to idleness by the economical changes rendered necessary by the faults of our forefathers. It is not his fault if the man there who has half-a-dozen children has none of the accomplishments which characterise the owner of the palace and his daughters. He and his wife *have* worked all their life long; can the owner of the palace say as much of himself and his wife? And his rights to a decent dwelling are as good as those of the palace-owner.

And the Socialist who is not a mere quack *must* accept this standpoint; he *must* recognize that to take possession of the houses in the name of the revolted city, and provide every inhabitant with a decent dwelling, is the very first duty of the Socialist who is in earnest, whose criticisms of the capitalist system have not been empty declamation.

Communism as to the dwelling must thus necessarily impose itself from the very first days of any serious Socialist movement.

But, who can come to an allotment of this very first necessity of life if the inhabitants themselves cannot do it? Can it be a local board? Can it be any other elected body which will order: Mr. A. goes to house No. 10, and Mr. B. to house No. 15? Obviously not! The settlement, any settlement which would last for some time, can only result from the initiative of all interested in the settlement, from the good-will of all in conjunction. And a first step towards Anarchy—towards the settlement of a grave social question without the intervention of Government will be taken.

It will take some time to come to a satisfactory settlement of the question of dwellings. The Russian *mir* spends sometimes three or four days before a hundred householders come to a *unanimous* agreement as to the repartition of the allotments of soil in accordance with the working powers of each family (there is no government to enforce a solution which is not unanimous), but they come nevertheless.

The settlement must be arrived at, for the very simple reason that the present inhabitants of the dens and slums will *not* recognise that they must for ever remain in their slums and dens, and leave the palaces to the rulers of the day. And an approach to Communism will thus be enforced—even on the most individualistic collectivist.

AN ENEMY OF FREEDOM.

THE death of Michael Katkoff has deprived Russian despotism of its ablest supporter; the one man who by his strong logic and marvellous facility in self-deception had skill and audacity to make meanness seem great and a lie truth.

Time was when young Katkoff was a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Moscow, so enlightened in his opinions that the suspicions of Tzar Nicholas obliged him to resign his post. And when, amidst the national outburst of liberal thought and zeal for reform which marked the earliest years of the reign of Alexander II., Katkoff turned his attention to journalism, he founded the *Russian Messenger*, a magazine favouring English forms of self-government.

In 1861 when he became editor of the celebrated *Moscow Gazette*, personal jealousies were already beginning to separate him from the liberal leaders. Times were changing, and Katkoff was changing with them. Liberalism ceased to be fashionable at Court, and Katkoff played into the hands of the Court party by advocating the conditions least favourable to the peasants during the discussions upon the Emancipation Act. After the Polish insurrection of 1863, the *Moscow Gazette* won the Emperor's approbation by the ability and zeal with which it advocated a policy of universal confiscation, which should place the land of Poland in the hands of Russian officials and secure the enforced loyalty of the peasants.

Henceforward the aim of the editor of the *Moscow Gazette* seems to have been to employ all his mental resources in the justification of that reactionary and repressive policy whose growth kept pace with the growing fears of Alexander II. The latter half of Katkoff's life, says the *Times*, was strangely devoted to writing down, condemning, and by personal influence counteracting all that he had advocated and striven for as a young man. Indeed during the twenty-four years of the birth-throes of Russian freedom, he deliberately set himself to blacken and destroy every man or woman, every action, every movement, whether literary, scientific, educational, social or political, that was displeasing to the Autocrat of All the Russias. He was the bitter foe of liberal thought and liberal education. Above all he was the fierce and unscrupulous adversary, not only of the Revolutionary movement, but of every attempt at honest reform. Nay more, he was the friend and advocate of every form of vicious abuse and vested interest, boldly flinging the shield of his eloquence over all that is vilest in the institutions of his country.

One instance may suffice as a sample of the quality of Katkoff's patriotism. A certain Zograff, a superintendent of police in S. Russia, courts a publican's wife. Her husband is in the way. Acting somewhat after the example of David King of Israel in like case, he causes a false charge of political disaffection to be trumped up against the unlucky Pomaroff, who is innocent of all political ideas, good or bad. The poor man is clapped into prison on the way to administrative exile; but there he finds means to appeal to the Visiting Justice (Juge de Paix) an official elected by the district assembly and not in league with the police. This magistrate looks into the matter and orders Pomaroff's immediate release. There is even some talk of a public trial for the policeman.

Instantly the *Moscow Gazette* flies to the rescue. "What officer," writes Katkoff, "can boast of not having made a mistake, or done too little or too much! His superiors ought to warn, reprimand, even perhaps punish him or expel him from the service. But now between the subordinate and his superior an alien power has intruded, judging his acts, subjecting him to moral torture, whilst his awe-struck superiors reverently assist at the ceremony. To do this is to play into the hands of the Anarchists." (*Moscow Gazette* for 1883, No. 100).

Small wonder if the *Moscow Gazette* defied the censorship, and if its editor was the favourite counsellor of the Tzar.

Katkoff, however, was more than an adroit courtier. He was the agent and representative of a ring of exploiters whose interest it is to preserve despotism and bureaucracy in Russia. The great traders and speculators whose centre is Moscow, are rich enough to obtain all the freedom they require by wholesale bribery; their smaller competitors are not. Thus the corruption of the official class favours the big sharks of trade.

Again, the extension of the Russian Empire in Asia provides these merchants and manufacturers with new markets; its extension towards Constantinople would provide them with fresh sea-ports. Hence they are in favour of a jingo policy. If it leads to war they may expect big contracts to supply the soldiers with shoddy, as they did in the Turkish war.

Meanwhile foreign competition interferes inconveniently with their profits; Russia must be protected from too many imports by high tariffs, whilst the scientific enterprise of German traders must be hindered from opening out the internal resources of the country. Russia, not for the Russians, but for the Moscow "corner" and the bureaucracy.

Such is the "Moscow opinion," which, as Sir Charles Dilke remarks in his 'Present Position of European Politics,' effected and controlled the policy of Alexander II, but is actively shared by his successor. Katkoff was alike its mouthpiece and its soul. He supplied it with an idea. He doted the ignorant clique of traders, who formed the core of his public, with lofty talk of the patriotism that is hatred of the foreigner. He caught up for their benefit the dying flame of Slavophil enthusiasm and ranted about the sacred duty of bestowing freedom upon the Slavonic population; the sort of freedom has lately been illustrated by the Tzar's dealings with Bulgaria. As in the case of the Imperial authority, he extended his partisanship to the defence of the most flagrant abuses. In 1884 he was publicly applauded as a patron by the rascally Rykov, manager of the Skopine bank, who in company with a crowd of officials and traders whom he had bribed to be his accomplices, was convicted of fifteen years swindling and the theft of one million roubles for himself and five million more as hush money.

And now the man who under the name of patriotism devoted his brilliant ability and splendid energies to the destruction of his country's freedom is dead. We can only say of him in the words of his German foe, "One great adversary the less in troubled times."

THE CHICAGO PRISONERS.

AN American correspondent writes: "I have but recently returned from Chicago, where I left our comrades in good health; though confinement is telling somewhat upon them, they none exhibit any signs of weakness. The outlook for them is somewhat gloomy, I am afraid. We confidently expected a decision from the State Supreme Court ere this, and the delay is ominous. The September term will, however, settle the question, and whichever way it goes, Anarchy will reap the benefit."

Another remarks: "What a giant mushroom-growth is the class privilege of this republic, when it costs the subjects of malicious aspersion 20,000 dollars to get a chance of a trial between them and the gallows, while a present of 100,000 dollars to a packed jury for their verdict against them is published with effrontery!"

Our American friends are asking for help in meeting the heavy expense of the appeal to the Supreme Court of Illinois against the infamous death sentence passed upon our comrades for their opinions. We shall be very happy to forward any subscriptions which may be sent us for this purpose.

NOTES ON THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT.

At the Annual Conference of the Social Democratic Federation last month the secretary reported the formation of over forty branches. There is some solid Socialistic propaganda doing by members of the S. D. F. all over the country. The actions, as well as the opinions, of many of our comrades the Social Democrats are far more revolutionary than their official programme. Their street demonstrations are capital. The last in Trafalgar Square, against police tyranny, called together a big crowd, who energetically tore the effigy of policeman Endacott to rags and applauded all denunciations of authority. But why so many exhortations to "go home peaceably," and why co-operation "to secure order" with the very police the people were called together to denounce? We shall never put an end to any tyranny by talking and going home. And why delude people by prating of democratic control of the police making them "the servants" of the nation? Surely Social Democrats know that the Swiss have democracy, referendum and all, and yet the police in Berne and Geneva hesitate no more than the police in London to hustle about the poorer citizens, and to beat them black and blue if they resist. Officials in authority are always tyrants, wherever the authority comes from.

* * *

It is a thousand pities that our comrades of the Socialist League, with their thoroughly Socialistic and revolutionary economic programme, content themselves with a merely negative position with regard to politics. The simple non-parliamentarianism upon which they decided at their last Conference paralyses their activity in propaganda. For it is no principle. It is a mere attempt to shirk the question of authority—one of the root-questions of our day. How can we, revolutionary Socialists, who have all the established forces of society set in array against us, expect to overthrow the "powers that be" from a platform half of principles half of expediencies?

* * *

There is a genuine Socialist movement amongst the workers, especially the miners, of the North of England. That "new stick to beat capitalists," the Labour Federation, counts many avowed Socialists amongst its members. But what is more important, some energetic propagandists from the League and Federation have found warm sympathy amongst the people, and numerous local groups of Socialists have sprung up during the last few months.

* * *

As for the Fabians, the members of their Parliamentary League, finding the gates of the paradise at Westminster closed against them for the present, are disporting themselves in the mock parliament at Charing Cross, where they can reorganise society—on paper—to their hearts' content. The really useful work of the Fabian Society, its public debates and lectures on social questions, will be resumed this month.

SPONTANEITY AGAIN.

WE spoke last month of the overwhelming importance of spontaneity as an element in human existence, and of the necessity for meeting it with full recognition. Perhaps it seemed to some of our readers that such enquiries were of interest but to students and dreamers; too curious for the needs of common life.

Well, the Belgian Workman's Party left all such merely philosophical considerations out of their reckoning when their Executive Council decided that a general strike must be started "to order," at a time when the leaders should have made up their mind that all was ready. And so, when the spontaneous impulse came to the miners and metal-workers to free themselves this summer from their intolerable slavery, the leaders and wire-pullers of the Workman's Party, the politicians and co-operators, found nothing better to do than to preach peace and submission, and to throw cold water over the strike in the name of universal suffrage and co-operation, until for the time being they had effectually managed to swamp the revolutionary movement.

Here is what a special communication from some members of the party to the *Sozial Demokrat* has to say about it: "First we saw partial strikes. . . . They spread rapidly and seemed to gain cohesion. In the centre the Anarchists took possession of the active part of the movement for several days, until certain of their orators were arrested. Still the movement continued. It spread over the Liège basin. . . . Numerous indications of strikes were to be seen elsewhere, especially at Brussels. The Council of the Workman's Party continued to strive with all their might against the movement. They seemed resolved to nip it in the bud, especially at Brussels and Ghent. . . . The chiefs of the party left the different trades to themselves, they gave them no word of encouragement."

In fact the organisers stifled the rising enthusiasm of what might have become an important revolutionary outbreak on the plea—our machinery is not ready; and so the healthy impulse of revolt was wasted and lost, and the forces of reaction in Belgium have gained the confidence which is strength.

A little more than fifteen years ago the citizens of Paris were passing through a sharper crisis than our Belgian comrades. It was the first week after the Commune had been proclaimed by the spontaneous action of the people. The bourgeois world had lost its head. It was paralysed by that helpless confusion amongst the authorities which always follows a sudden outbreak of energetic revolutionary action. The impulse of the people was to march at once upon the disorganised army and terrified government at Versailles. "But wait," insisted certain well-meaning leaders, "we must first elect a popular government in due democratic form."

And "Paris sent her devoted sons to the Hotel de Ville. There disbanded from active service, up to the eyes in musty parchments forced to govern when their instincts impelled them to be and act with the people; forced to discuss when it was time to do, and losing the inspiration that comes from continual contact with the masses, they saw themselves reduced to impotence. Paralysed by their distance from the well-spring of revolution, the people, they themselves paralysed the popular initiative" ('Les Paroles d'un Révolté'). And so the general enthusiasm died down, and the Commune was lost.

But it is not in grave social crises only that the spontaneous outleap of energy is the all-important factor of effectual action. It is the same in everyday conduct and everyday relations. Ask a man who has laboured to keep together a political club worthy the name in a district where people have learned from bitter experience that parliamentary talk is no benefit to the workers, and where as yet they are not ardently inspired by the idea of Socialism. Such a man will tell you that, for all his pains, he has been whipping a dead donkey along the road. And yet whilst the hope was fresh in men's hearts that the ballot-box could bring them deliverance from their misery, there was no lack of cohesion and energy in the political clubs with which England was honeycombed. Any shed or garret was attractive enough then for a meeting-place wherein to exchange eager thoughts and plan common action; whereas now, in localities where the old idea is dead, men can only be drawn into sham fellowship by an endless round of amusements.

We might multiply instances in social and individual life by the thousand to illustrate a fact which, once recognised, seems self-evident, yet a fact more persistently ignored than any other of equal importance. But perhaps enough has been said to show why we—and especially those of us who are awakening to the inevitable necessity of great social changes—must, on reflection, come to consciously realise the enormous influence of spontaneity in human life, whether it be for good or ill. Next month we will return to the subject.

PRACTICAL SOCIALISM.

A COMMON mode of raising objections against Socialism is the following. An exponent of revolutionary principles is asked how such and such a particular detail of social life is to be arranged after the advent of the Social Revolution, and on his deciding either according to his own individual judgment or in accordance with the views of this or that school of Socialists, the critic supposes a case attended with circumstances which render the decision evidently absurd or unjust, and turns from the debate in triumph, leaving the propagandist puzzled and the bystanders amused at his confusion, and, perhaps, impressed with the idea that Socialism is, after all, impracticable.

The Anarchist, however, possessing a clear notion of the scope and aim of the coming Social Revolution, is not liable to be non-plussed in any such fashion: he knows and never ceases to assert that the first work of the Revolution must be one of destruction, not of construction, and that its immediate purpose is not to build up some wonderful fabric in accordance with a pre-arranged programme, but simply to uproot, remove, and utterly annihilate everything that can in any way interfere with the absolute freedom of men in the arrangement of their affairs by and for themselves. When asked by opponents what is to be done in this or that case, he will reply without hesitation that it is not for him nor for anybody else to decide upon a course of action for others, and that every matter must be left to the free judgment of the parties concerned; and he will furthermore declare—what is obvious to common-sense—that it is impossible to decide upon any question of detail until each and every point bearing upon it is fully known and weighed. As the change produced by the Revolution will be a complete one, radically modifying every relation and condition of social life, it is clearly impossible for anyone to form such a sufficient idea of what will be required as can enable him to lay down any absolute rule for individual cases.

As social beings, men must necessarily associate one with another; it is as much a part of their nature to do so as it is to seek for food and other necessities of life. The purpose of the Revolution is to render them perfectly free in following the guidance of this social nature which they possess, and it will do so by destroying all those artificial contrivances whereby, in all ages of man's history, combined knavery and ignorance have sought to guide and improve his nature with the solitary result of crippling and distorting it to the utmost. Among these contrivances must be numbered all laws, because law is the negation of liberty, and all institutions which are forcibly imposed upon anybody, and which are not voluntarily accepted or cannot be set aside at will.

So long as Socialists persist in advocating utopian projects, however admirably planned those projects may be, valuable time and attention will be wasted in those fruitless debates which divide the revolutionary party and afford its opponents unlimited opportunities for picking out weak points and raising specious objections. An attacking party has always a balance of advantage on its side, let us therefore be always assailants and press on to victory without giving our enemy any opportunity for returning our blows at his leisure. During the time of preparation for the Revolution whatever weakens authority or its possessors must be used by us against them, and at the moment of actual Revolution we must be careful to destroy pitilessly whatever they can possibly use against us. In the very instant of victory unhesitatingly snatch away from your masters and superiors the property and position which authorise them to look down upon you as their dependants or to employ you as their tools! Work such havoc with the documents which convey and the precedents which consecrate the usurpations of your tyrants that the devil himself may not be able to show them their own again! When, after the great French Revolution, the peasants had seized upon the land of the nobility and clergy and had made it their own by cultivating it and reaping the produce for themselves, not even the reinstated monarchy could restore the original proprietorship. Nothing could put Humpty Dumpty together again. It will be still less possible for our present monopolists to recover their complicated sources of wealth when once these latter shall have been appropriated by the people. As possession is nine points in law, let us make it the whole ten for Justice!

THE NEW LABOUR EXCHANGE.

A LETTER FROM PARIS.

A NEW illusion to the fore. When, oh when, we may well ask, shall we see the last? Trades' unionism, co-operation, Socialistic legislation, universal suffrage, labour representation, all have had their day in this or other countries, and have failed to bring about social equality and justice. Now to the great joy of all reactionaries, another failure is about to be added to the list—I mean the Labour Exchange.

A few days ago, wandering in the Paris streets, I happened to stop in front of a building which is being adapted for a Labour Exchange. A workman, perceiving the interest with which I watched the work began to talk to me.

"Here at last," said he, "is an institution for the benefit of the working-classes! Now-a-days the workman out of employment has to go from door to door as if he were begging, which is simply shameful in a world that pretends to be civilised. In future we shall be spared at least this worst humiliation. We shall be able to go to our Labour Exchange and choose our places, and even dictate terms to the masters. But see," he continued, after a short pause, sadly shaking his head, "just because this is an institution for the benefit of the working-classes there is no hurry about it. Look how slowly the works go on. One perceives at once that the place is not intended for a club of card sharps or debauchees. You ask if we shall have finished by the anniversary of 1789; who knows! Well, the times are stormy, and he is a wise man who can foresee what will happen in twenty-four hours."

The man's passionate tone impressed me vividly, and rivetted my attention to the institution I saw growing up under my eyes. A few days after I noticed this Labour Exchange as an item on the programme at the Congress of the Parti Ouvrier (Workmen's Party) in Paris.

The next evening a public meeting was called to discuss the project. What was my surprise on arriving there to find that the assembly almost to a man were opposed both to the scheme and to its originators. I briefly summarise what I heard.

The Labour Exchange will be the Misery Exchange. The workman for whom the capitalist has no work will appeal in vain at the Exchange. No ear will be there either, to listen to the poor fellows whose wages are forced below subsistence level by the competition of the labour-market. The Exchange will in no wise alter the fundamental conditions of society for the workers.

But if useless to them, it will serve the turn of the wire-pullers and politicians. It cannot create employment or raise wages in an overstocked labour-

market, and it will afford a splendid opportunity for ambitious leaders and politicians to get a hold of the various workmen's associations; for every man, dreading the days when he may be out of a job, will fear to offend the managers of the Exchange. It will pave the way for the reign of the Fourth Estate. Already the members of the Municipal Council who belong to the Parti Ouvrier have packed the general committee with their own creatures, and chosen as members of the institution such trade societies as are in their hands or truckle to them. When the Exchange is on a firm footing, the toadies of the leaders of the Parti Ouvrier will be the men to get what good jobs are to be had.

I confess all this sadly shook my first favourable impressions about the Labour Exchange, especially when I glanced round and noted the worn faces, and shiny, shabby blouses of the audience. I have seldom seen a more genuine workmen's meeting, or heard more earnest and revolutionary speeches. For days after I followed the train of thought thus aroused.

It seems to me, I said to myself, that these Socialists of the Parti Ouvrier know very little about Socialism, or they are preparing to betray the people. The very essence of Socialism is the substitution of agreement between man and man for the despotic domination of man by man, which we have at present, with its struggle of classes and of interests. And the basis of this agreement between the members of the future Society is the common ownership of, at least, the means of production, instead of the individual property in them of to-day. The form of this agreement must be the free association of a certain number of workmen for a common purpose, and then free federation amongst such associations. The Labour Exchange might have been organised on these principles. Each trade might have organised its own section, and the place might have become a common meeting ground from which the workers might take common action when the chance arrives. The present centralised scheme may be politic, it is not Socialistic. Reactionaries like De Molinari have propounded like schemes for the very purpose of supplying the missing wheel in the machine of free competition. Englishmen, compare the recently invented Labour Bureau of the Board of Trade! But Socialists of every shade of opinion profess to desire to put an end to the present competition in the labour market, not to perpetuate it. They profess to look with loathing on a system which makes of human beings wares to be quoted on the Exchange according to the market rate.

The method of Opportunist Socialists in every country seems to be to catch up one by one the rotten shams of the present Society, and puff them as "a means of agitation," until the people, deceived again and again, lose all faith in the very idea of a Socialism dragged through so much mud.

LAW AND ORDER IN IRELAND.

X.—THE PARLIAMENTARY IMPOSTURE.

To ease the tender conscience of James I., and to stop the mouths of those whom his plantation had despoiled either directly or indirectly, it was resolved that a Parliament should be assembled which would set a seal of legality upon the high-handed proceedings in Ulster.

Of course, before issuing the writs to summon the representatives of the people robbed of their birthright, means were taken to ensure to the Government a good working majority.

Sir George Carew and Sir John Davis undertook to pack both the Upper and the Lower House.

Satisfactory results were expected from the new counties and boroughs which had been created through the plantation, but, furthermore, writs were issued to the forty garrisons throughout the country, as well as to the twenty-five block-house forts in Ulster, which were to send two representatives each.

A rumour became current that the main business of this new Parliament would be to pass some stringent laws against the Catholics, so that the native nobility and gentry strained every nerve and sinew to defeat the Government candidates. But despite their efforts to resist the first wave of "Protestant ascendancy," which to this day swamps the island, the Government managed to secure a majority of twenty-four.

The first sitting was a stormy one, and ended in a suspension of business and an appeal to the king in person; the subjects of dispute being the election of a speaker and the validity of certain elections for boroughs which had been created after the writs had been issued.

James, to his chagrin, was forced to cancel thirteen of the elections in question, but he rated the appellants soundly, and consoled himself by confirming Sir John Davies in the speakership.

When Parliament re-assembled it began business by passing acts of attainder on all the Ulster landowners whose acres James had appropriated. The native Irish were then formally recognised as the king's subjects (hitherto they had been in the eye of English law no better than outlaws). An act was passed repealing the old statutes which prohibited commerce, intermarriage, and fosterage between the two races; and then this Parliament, which the king designated "stubborn," voted his Majesty a substantial subsidy.

Henceforth, until the Union, the English Government maintained a working majority in the Irish House of Commons, and, to quote a modern writer, "as the country came gradually within the influence of the executive and statute laws, it enabled the Government to acquire for all its acts, even the most unpopular, an apparent legislative sanction. Thus, under the Stuarts, the absolute authority of the Crown and the forms of the Constitution were developed together, and the mass of the people proscribed and persecuted by what was in theory the same nation represented in Parliament."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NOTICES.

Very great inconvenience is caused us by outstanding accounts. We are therefore obliged to tell those Socialist groups and other wholesale subscribers who have not hitherto paid us in advance or else regularly every month, that these are the only terms upon which we can undertake to supply *Freedom* in future.

Annual subscribers are reminded that 1s. 6d. subscriptions dating from last October expire with the present number.

Annual Subscription one shilling. Post free in England and within the Postal Union one and sixpence.

All communications to be addressed to The Editor, FREEDOM Office, 34 Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, E.C.

FREEDOM can be obtained in London from W. Reeves, 185 Fleet Street; the Freethought Publishing Company, 63 Fleet Street; the Socialist League Office, 13 Farringdon Road, E.C.; or ordered through a newsagent.

"FREEDOM" PUBLICATION FUND.

N. P., £1. J. S., 3d.