

Freedom

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ANOTHER TURN OF THE SCREW.

THE grip of capital upon the workers is like the grip of the thumb-screw upon some wretched victim in the torture chamber of past ages. Deeper and deeper it squeezes into their lives, crushing out endurance. One of the later turns of this pitiless screw is the concentration of industrial control. Socialists have long noted a growing tendency towards this latest form of tyranny, but lately it appears to have started forward with new vigour. Remarkable changes are daily taking place in industry, changes which are rapidly preparing the way for that tremendous social change that the workers call the Coming Revolution.

Few realise how fast the small capitalist employer is now being swept away by the competition of large concerns, mostly in the form of limited companies. In a return presented to the House of Commons in 1887 it is stated that on December 31, 1886, no fewer than 23,700 limited companies had been registered in this country since the Act requiring the registration of limited companies was put into operation in 1862. The nominal capital of these concerns was £2,748,000,000. A later return which has just been made to the order of the House of Lords by Mr. J. E. Purcell, the registrar of joint-stock companies, brings the total number registered up to 30,372, with a nominal capital of £3,442,804,000. A very large proportion of these are, of course, either never floated or turn out to be failures. The actual capital of companies in existence in April, 1888, is however stated to be no less than £503,000,000. In the first complete year after the Act was passed (1863) 724 companies were registered; in 1886, 1736 were registered. Thus the rate of increase had nearly trebled. According to the still later return it has risen to more than three times what it was in 1863. Pick up a daily or weekly capitalist paper at any time and you will find at least one, two, or three advertisements of new companies, and almost every week you will read of some well known large concern being turned into what the French call a *société anonyme*. A week or two ago, for instance, Galloways, the celebrated boiler making firm, was converted into a limited company.

The next step in the process of concentration is when a body of capitalists, calling themselves a syndicate, form unions and trusts, which are very often complete monopolies, or make attempts at being so. Quite recently we have had two noticeable unions started here in England. One is the Hansard Publishing Union which is an amalgamation of six great firms of newspaper and general printers, advertising agents and engravers, two of which were previously limited companies. The other is an apparently successful attempt to monopolise the manufacture of the common class of paper on which the daily and weekly journals of the country are printed. Almost all the paper mills in Lancashire and elsewhere, making that particular kind of paper will be under one executive, and competition will be practically destroyed. And now we hear of a coming ring in the glass bottle trade, in which it is said that no less than forty-seven large makers of bottles will join.

The immediate effect of this concentration of industry upon the workers in any particular trade is of course to make their condition much worse. Fewer "hands" are necessary because of the greater economy in working. Consequently the army of the unemployed is increased. As a necessary accompaniment the wages of those in work are reduced or they are forced to work at a higher rate of speed. They become more and more parts of a huge mechanism, treated with no individual consideration as beings of flesh and blood but goaded on by fines to toil continuously with the spiritless precision of wood and iron, and cast aside like a rusty crank when the desired profit can no longer be wrung out of them. The Salt Union, an affair of yesterday, has already provoked a strike by its exactions.

Moreover the sufferings of the whole class of wage-workers are terribly increased by the growth of these companies and unions. It is delivering them up as helpless victims into the hands of speculators, whose reckless gambling results in perpetual insecurity of employment. These cliques of company-promoters and directors, of financiers, jobbers and brokers, play with the productive industries of the world as smaller gamblers play roulette, staking credit on this venture and that, shifting capital from one enterprise to another, increasing or curtailing the output here or there merely as they see a chance of big pickings for themselves from the fluctuations and fresh departures they initiate. They consider the real needs of the community only in so far as a certain distant regard for them is necessary to the success of their manipulations; as for the result to the working men and women whose lives they are playing with, they never even remember their existence except as a sort of motive force that can always be had in abundance. And yet every fluctuation throws men out of employment not only in the industry

directly concerned but in many of those indirectly dependent upon it, or assembles crowds in one place (as has recently occurred in the building trade at Rome) only that they may find in a few months they are not wanted there and must set forth in hunger and uncertainty to seek employment elsewhere. The degradation and wretchedness of this life of insecurity is cutting down to the roots of the human dignity and self-respect of the people. Soon there will be scarcely a man amongst us who can look forward a week without a sensation of terror.

Then, on the other hand, there is the creation of a new aristocracy, without titles but more despotic, more injurious to the general welfare than the old; reckless and lavish in its expenditure as it is reckless and unscrupulous in obtaining its wealth. Only a few days ago we saw in a London paper a paragraph stating that Flagher, the magnate of the notorious monopoly known as the Standard Oil Company had presented securities to the value of £17,400 to a doctor who had attended on his recently deceased daughter. What an amount of suffering and privation on the part of the workers of America does not this sum represent and yet it was only a trifle to the king of the oil monopoly. The capitalist-employer of the old type at least did something for the money he exacted from the workers. There was some slight reason for his excuse that he was an organiser of industry. But the new type of shareholder-capitalist is merely a drawer of dividends, a perpetual pensioner of the worst kind. He is absolutely useless, a mere parasite on industry.

Another result is that the proletariat is largely increased in numbers by those small capitalists who are beaten in the struggle. The small shopkeeper who is reduced to the position of a wage-slave, the little master who is crushed by the large factory and the monopoly, and others who share a similar fate, feel their position very keenly and make good recruits for the revolutionary army. Either they become sweaters and exist on pickings from the earnings of the workers, rousing in their victims the bitter hatred and contempt for authority that comes from feeling its sting in daily life from the endless petty tyrannies of the slave-driver who is himself a slave; or they become wage-slaves and writhe in spirit beneath the unaccustomed degradation of their lot, as a bird fresh caught beats the bars of its cage.

All this is tending one way; our bitterest enemies are in a sense our best friends. They are preparing the way for the Social Revolution in one direction whilst we in pointing out the causes of the existing state of things to the workers are preparing it in another. Whilst these big centralised administrations of industry are driving the workers to desperation they are creating an economic system far more easy to overthrow than the older system of a large number of comparatively small capitalist-employers. Each individual capitalist would have formed a centre of active resistance to any social disturbance likely to deprive him of his power and wealth, but if any serious agitation upsets the complex system of credit by means of which the handful of big speculators are now governing the economic world, both they and their bands of shareholders will be absolutely helpless; entangled in its own complications the whole machinery of production and exchange will be thrown into such confusion as will render its reconstruction on the former lines well nigh impossible.

The piteous suffering caused by the concentration of industry is perhaps to be seen more clearly than here on the other side of the Atlantic in what is called the "great" American Republic. There it has reached a very much more advanced stage than in England or indeed in any other country. A few weeks ago at the meeting of a body of representative Protectionist merchants and manufacturers it was stated that there are no less than three million men out of work in that country at the present time. The United States, let us not forget, is a protectionist country and this was a protectionist meeting so that they had no interest in exaggeration; yet this gathering of capitalists passed a resolution that the unemployed question was becoming a menace to the safety of the state. They were quite right; it is. What will happen in America in the near future it is of course impossible to foresee. But as far as the present writer can judge from personal experience of the great republic, from the experience of several Socialists in his acquaintance quite recently, and from extensive reading of Socialist and capitalist papers published over there, it is evident that a far more desperate struggle is impending between master and man than took place over the slavery question between North and South. The determined way in which our Chicago comrades were murdered is a proof that the capitalists will stick at nothing. Yet people are leaving England in these early days of summer in thousands to swell the ranks of the unhappy proletariat beyond the seas. As many as five thousand emigrants to America have left the port of Liverpool in a single day within the past few weeks,

flying from the landlord and capitalist here to the capitalist and landlord yonder; jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

It is not necessary for any one to be sanguine in order to believe that we are nearing the end of the capitalist system. Turning from America to Europe we see that Italy, a country in which the concentration of industry has lately been proceeding at an enormous pace, is bordering on general insurrection. In Germany strikes are continually taking place although they are very rarely noticed in our capitalist press, and there are rumours of a general strike which could only end in revolt. This symptom of revolution taken in connection with the introduction of still more despotic measures on the part of the government and the daily arrests and trials by wholesale make it impossible to believe that Germany is far from a great upheaval. In France it is manifest that the revolution is near at hand: the Exhibition may pass over before the crash comes but, as our Paris correspondent has pointed out, the end of the great show will certainly vastly increase the numbers of the unemployed and the discontent of the working class. The Vienna tramcar workers' strike and the ensuing collisions with police and soldiery and the popular demonstrations in Budapest show clearly enough that great events are being prepared in the empire of Austria-Hungary. As for the smaller and less populous European countries they are none of them likely to be far behind. France, Germany, Austria and Italy will certainly be joined in their revolt against capitalism by Belgium, Holland, Spain, Denmark and the rest. Of that there cannot be a doubt. And here in England, although we are bound to admit that the revolutionary feeling is less apparent, the increasing discontent and increasing pressure caused by the industrial concentration must inevitably compel us to follow the lead of the European countries. Even in South America and Australia there are ominous signs to be noted. Revolutions are more the result of the blind pressure of events than the conscious work of individual men, and the revolution which is now close upon us is no exception to the general rule. But certainly as far as men can influence the destruction of a system the men who are by means of rings and combinations concentrating industry, destroying the class of small, independent capitalists and establishing the shareholding aristocracy, are doing their level best. We sincerely hope that the day is near at hand when the workers will be able to take advantage of what these giants of finance have done and are doing, and will strike the final blow which shall bring to an end the system of fraud and violence under which the world now groans.

EVENTS IN FRANCE.

(From our Paris correspondent.)

THERE is little change to record in the general situation. The opening of the Exhibition has been brilliant, it is true, but it is only the last glimmer of a lamp soon about to be extinguished altogether, for everything goes to show that the end of the year will be tumultuous. In spite of the appeals of the government and of the middle-class press, the people have shown little real warmth. Certainly the streets of Paris have displayed plenty of flags and illuminations—the shopkeepers especially, those eternal friends of order and property, have distinguished themselves by their zeal—but at heart it is felt to be only an artificial gaiety, an intoxication succeeding drunkenness. The laughter has a false ring.

A certain Perrin, formerly a warehouse keeper in the colonies, a victim of injustice—he having, although a civil employé, been sentenced to a military punishment of 75 days' imprisonment—fired a blank shot at the President of the Republic on the occasion of the fêtes in order to attract attention to his grievances. Thus it appears that under a Republic which commemorates the centenary of the Great Revolution, it is necessary to pretend to assassinate in order to get justice! Perrin was immediately arrested. He wrote to Laguerre asking him to defend his case, but the friend of Boulanger declined.

There is little doing amongst the politicians. All the parties seem to have entered into a truce. They are keeping their strength for the great battle which will take place at the time of the general elections. Unfortunate will the parliamentary Socialists be whose ignorance of the danger or ambition to secure a legislative mandate urges them into the electoral arena! Crushed between the two powerful currents of Boulangism and anti-Boulangism, their efforts are certainly doomed to utter failure, and the politicians will be able to say to the mass who measure the value of an idea by the number of its adherents, "You see Socialism does not count."

In fact what happened at the time of the election of the 27th of January, when a number of Blanquists voted for Boulanger and the mass of the Possibilists for Jacques, will happen again over a greater area at the general elections. For fear of Cesarism the more moderate Socialists will support the government which they formerly opposed; through hatred of opportunism others will rally to the Boulangist candidate. Under such conditions the defeat of the parliamentary Socialists will be pitiful.

The Anarchists alone will remain irreproachable. Faithful to their line of conduct, untarnished by any shameful compromise, they will never cease to cry to the people: "Refuse to ratify the present slavery and to sanction all the iniquities committed in your name, by your vote. Universal suffrage is a bait, all these politicians who seek your votes, willing to do anything to get into power, ready to do anything to keep in power, are your enemies, under whatever name they disguise their pretensions. In this cruel society which oppresses and starves you, in this political organisation which proclaims you sovereign and loads you with chains, you have only one duty, one imprescriptible right and one resource—Revolution!"

THE STRIKE MOVEMENT IN GERMANY.

RECENT events in the country of the Kaiser have been most encouraging for all those who really wish a happier time for the workers, and for Anarchists especially. In all parts of Germany we have had strikes and rumours of strikes, and although the demands made have not been very important, the general effect of the movement has been excellent and the attitude taken up by the German Emperor and the Prussian capitalists very instructive.

The idea of a general strike continues to grow in popularity on the Continent and faith in political agitation and methods is giving way. The workers are getting tired of waiting for the parliamentarians to do something for them; they are making up their minds to do something for themselves. Hence the spread of the idea of a general strike. At the lowest estimate the strike is a means of improving the present condition of society much more efficacious than the visionary palliatives the Social Democrats propose to obtain in the dim and distant future by legislative means. Our comrades of the S. D. F. here in England admitted that in a practical way when they supported with such comparatively good results the strike of the match girls employed by Bryant and May. The strike is in fact a method of resisting the encroachments of the capitalists which experience has proved to be effective. The trade unionists of this country have won their position of superior well-being amongst the workers chiefly by strikes, and the nine-hour day and the Saturday half holiday are due to strikes. In America, too, it has been admitted by the official labour statistician that strikes on the whole have resulted in a gain to the strikers. Moreover the strike is an independent, self-respecting method of enforcing demands, a straightforward, direct attack upon the capitalist position. Consequently the exploiters fear it far more than any amount of talk about Bills for reducing the hours of labour. But the general strike to which the workers of the Continent begin to look forward would be the commencement of the Social Revolution, as the capitalists very well recognise. The day of small things and small demands is not yet over, but it is nearing its end. Now the workers on strike only ask for a reduction of hours, a slight increase of pay. But the example of a body of workers in one spot is followed by other bodies of workers in other places, and the demands grow as the strikes become more numerous and the solidarity between the workers is more apparent. The workers begin to rely upon one another. They begin to say, Why should we be content with only a slight increase in our wages? why pay tribute to the robbers at all?

In Germany at present the demands made are small and the Emperor recommends the employers to grant them while at the same time he threatens the workers with assassination at the hands of his hirelings. He feels timid, but thinks it wise to keep up the swagger of the bully.

The miners in Westphalia have demanded an increase of 15 per cent. in their wages, which will increase them to 2s. 6d. for the lowest paid, and 3s. 4d. for the highest, a day. They also want to reduce their working day to 8 hours. Over one hundred thousand men have been concerned in this affair, and the government has not hesitated to murder several persons. According to a Berlin telegram, on May 9th at Bochum the strikers assembled in the interior streets of the town and the troops were called out. The miners retreated slowly before the military as far as the railway station, and there halted and faced the troops, but made no attack. Just at this critical moment a train arrived in the station, and the passengers, not knowing what was going on, walked as usual into the street towards the troops. The officer in command, believing, it is said, that these inoffensive persons were strikers about to attack his men, ordered the troops to fire. The volley killed a platelayer and a gentleman who had just arrived by the train. Two other men, one woman, and a boy were seriously wounded. Blood has also been shed at Brackel, where the troops fired on a meeting, killing three, and wounding several others. A Dortmund telegram of May 12, stated that the whole of this district was in a terrible ferment. A telegraphic message reached the commander at Dusseldorf at midnight, upon receipt of which the whole garrison was alarmed, and called to arms. Another of those conflicts with the troops which have already resulted in several deaths occurred in the neighbourhood of the Schleswig pit. The miners attacked the foremen of the works. There were then no troops in the immediate neighbourhood, and by the time a detachment of the 13th Infantry had arrived from Hörde, the crowd had reached large proportions, and had become very threatening. The troops came up at the double, steaming with perspiration, but in perfect and compact order. At the sound of their approaching tread the people divided into two separate bodies and made a rush for the shelter of a neighbouring railway embankment. On the other side of this is a large "beer garden," kept by one Enser, and much frequented by the miners. Here they made a final stand, and from behind this cover assumed a defiant attitude, hooting and jeering the soldiers, at whom they repeatedly hurled the opprobrious epithet "sandhasen," a slang term equivalent to "cowards" or "white livers." Lieutenant Pape, in command of the troops, thrice summoned the rioters to disperse, but his warning was received with further ridicule. The ominous drum-roll, accompanied with trumpet-blasts, was then ordered, and twice repeated, the preliminary to the firing of a volley. Still the crowd did not move. The word to fire was then given, and a hail of bullets fell amongst the crowd. Six persons instantly dropped dead, amongst them a child of four years old, who was in the front row of the crowd. Shrieks from amongst the compact mass showed that many others were wounded, but these were instantly removed by their comrades in an inexplicably secret manner. One woman was found wounded, but the others were carried away, no one knows where. The other half of the crowd maintained their defiant attitude, and with singular daring faced the troops.

At this moment Director Hahne, willing to save further bloodshed, shouted at the top of his voice, whilst pointing, to the other body of rioters, "There lie six corpses; will you hazard the same fate?" The people then slowly dispersed. The bodies of the dead were removed by their comrades.

At the time of writing it appears that many of the colliery owners have yielded, or in other ways induced many thousands of the men to return to work. Probably the threats of the Emperor have also had their effect upon the less determined section of the miners. A Berlin telegram of May 25 says that it is stated in the Rhenish newspapers that the proclamation of martial law may be looked for. A miner named Weber, who is the President of the Strike Committee in Bochum, has been arrested on account of a speech in which he is alleged to have used the words, "War against capital—victory or death." This was regarded by the authorities as a Socialistic utterance.

In Saxony, Silesia and elsewhere the mining strikes extend and telegrams are continually appearing in the daily newspapers that troops are being sent to the various districts. In Silesia there has been loss of life. Strikes are also being started in other industries. On the 21st of May 3000 masons at Berlin came out demanding that their wages be raised from 5d. to 6d. an hour, that their hours of work be reduced to 9 daily, and that a fortnight's notice should be given before dismissal. Also in the capital the brewers' assistants, basket makers, furriers' assistants, omnibus employees, tailors and carpenters, are either on strike or about to go out. At Bremerhaven the tailors were going to strike for a reduction of their working day to 11 hours and an increase of some shillings a week in their pay, but the masters gave way at once. The men had been working from 13 to 16 hours a day. At Wurzburg, Lubeck, Königsberg and Bunzlau the carpenters and joiners, at Sprottau the builders and at Dortmund the brewers' assistants have also joined the strike movement.

Whether this growing movement in Germany is due to the recent successful example of the tramway men in Vienna or is the result of an understanding between the workers to effect a general strike is difficult to determine. We incline to the belief that there has been a good deal done towards organising a general strike but that the miners' movement in Westphalia is apart from it and due largely to local influences, a rise in the price of coal, and the Vienna example. Undoubtedly the party of action, that is to say the Anarchists, have made considerable headway in Germany since the death of Frederick. Bebel and Liebknecht have no longer the same influence upon the masses; they are beginning to be regarded as too moderate, too slow. So far back as the 5th of March we saw in *Le Matin* of Paris a long letter from its Berlin correspondent in which a general strike was declared to be imminent, which would have Berlin for its centre and which would result in great things. At any rate it is evident that Germany is getting ready to act.

CONTINENTAL BREVITIES.

The growth of Anarchist Communism continues to be rapid in Belgium, and the groups have now started a fortnightly journal at Brussels which we heartily welcome. It is called *Le Drapeau Noir* (The Black Flag) and is sold in Belgium at a halfpenny. In size it corresponds to our Social-Democratic contemporary *Justice*. Comrades who read French will find the articles interesting and can have it sent them post paid for six months for 1s. 3d. The address of the administration is 58 rue du Moulin, Saint-Josse-ten-Node, Brussels. The Flemish organ *Anarchist* is to be had at the same office.

We are glad to see that our comrades in Belgium as in France are turning their attention to the spread of our ideas in country places. "Propagandist groups," says *Le Drapeau Noir*, "are being formed everywhere, and the results have surpassed all that could have been hoped for." The growth of revolutionary Socialism amongst the agricultural workers in France, Italy and Belgium, is a most important factor in the coming social change. It seems that the ruling class will not be able to count much on the peasantry to help them in starving out the revolted workers in the towns, and will find it difficult to gull the country people into supporting any humbugging half and half scheme of land nationalisation.

The government plot against the Socialist workers in Belgium which terminated in the "trial" at Mons has been a complete fiasco. The Pigotts and Le Carons of the Belgian authorities have made a regular mess of the job, and have not only secured an ignoble defeat and exposure for their employers but have succeeded in getting three months' imprisonment each for two of their number. Twenty-two of the twenty-three comrades who had been trapped by these scoundrels have been acquitted and the remaining one, the single victim, has been sentenced to three months' imprisonment for using "inflamatory language."

The Belgian miners are beginning to take part in the strike movement initiated in Germany. In the Mons and Liege districts the miners are now out and large forces of military are there concentrated. In various parts of the Austrian Empire also mining and other strikes have been inaugurated. The most notable are the strike of miners in the Kladno district of Bohemia, where 17,000 men are out, and the tramdrivers strike at Prague.

In Italy the popular movement continues and collisions with the

authorities are frequent. At Rome the omnibus drivers are on strike. In Lombardy and Emilia the agrarian struggle has been especially severe. In the latter province some women employed on rice plantations at Medicina, near Bologna, attacked a number of bakers' shops. In Sardinia, near Cagliari, conflicts between the peasantry and the soldiery have resulted in the loss of several lives. On one occasion a number of soldiers were besieged in their barracks for some hours.

At Oporto, Portugal, there have been street demonstrations followed by conflicts with the military. The capitalist papers record an "alarming conspiracy" at Sueca in the province of Valencia, Spain, and many arrests are said to have been made. We hope to give fuller information on these matters from our own correspondents next month.

Mr. W. T. Stead's friend, Alexander Romanoff of Russia, has discovered some fresh plots against his person and authority, and has caused very many arrests to be made. This time the soldiers are chiefly concerned. How long is this duel between autocracy and the people to continue? Surely even Tolstoi must be getting tired of the Quaker policy?

A serious riot took place on Sunday, May 26, at Belgrade in which many persons were wounded. The police being unable to disperse the crowds of people the troops were ordered out from two barracks and a volley was sent into their midst. They fled precipitately, but again assembled and it is stated in the capitalist press that "the assistance of the military was again sought."

The latest telegrams state that ominous signs of an impending strike have been observed at Bruex, Dux and other parts of Bohemia outside the Kladno district. From Oporto it is said that a dynamite bomb was exploded on Saturday morning, May 25, at the door of the Civil Governor's house.

REVOLUTIONARY MELBOURNE.

THE Australian Continent is fifty-eight times the size of England, but its population is only one-eighth of ours. In other words if Australia was as densely peopled as England it would contain a population as great as that of the entire world at the present time. And we have it on the authority of many scientific men, amongst whom may be mentioned Alfred Russell Wallace, that England could supply all the wants not only of its present number of inhabitants but of very many more. So that it is perfectly safe to assume that Australia is a country of almost boundless resources, and any one would imagine that if prosperity existed anywhere it would be there. But when the emigrant from old Europe gets over there what does he find? Poverty, misery, the unemployed! One or two big cities, a number of wealthy men, and a multitude of wage slaves! Capitalism, Landlordism and Government flourish out there just as here at home and the worker is in precisely the same plight. "I was glad to be able to get back," a workman said to the writer a short time ago; and he added, "thousands more would be if they had the money to pay their passage." About a third of the entire people of Australia inhabit the single colony of Victoria, and one half of the Victorians live in the city of Melbourne. A peculiar and a unique position is that occupied by the chief city of the Southern seas. Nowhere else can a country be found in which half of its people live in the capital. Melbourne is in fact a Whitechapel, a Bermondsey and a Belgravia thrown together on the other side of the planet so as to form a centre of civilisation. It contains some spacious thoroughfares and some narrow streets, mansions and hovels, alleys, courts and boulevards. It is a triumph of capitalism and a revolutionary centre.

A correspondent of our Paris contemporary *La Révolte*, has just recently sent some interesting details about Revolutionary Melbourne, and we reproduce them for the benefit of English Socialists and Anarchists, and especially for those comrades who have friends to warn against submitting themselves to a bitter experience. Every two or three years since 1877-78 the unemployed question has been brought forward by thousands of workers without employment, money or credit. Generally this has taken place in the winter, but recently it has occurred at other times. The worst periods of distress were 1878, 1880, and 1886. Everybody in Melbourne is of opinion that this year the distress will be more severe than in 1886 and as bad as in 1877-78. In 1890 it will probably be worse, and in 1892 it is by no means unlikely that a revolution will take place in which the "ultra-radical" party will try to establish a kind of State Socialism. Riots of the unemployed are very likely this year. But the people are still much too ignorant to effect a revolution such as we desire. The women appreciate the situation more than the men. They recognise that the workers are slaves and that the middle-class and especially those who monopolise the land are their irreconcilable enemies. There is, however, a lack of thorough-going revolutionists to show them the way to effect their emancipation. Yet everybody feels that things cannot continue as they are much longer, and Melbourne will it is thought not be the last to march towards Anarchist Communism.

Every day events work actively for the change. The rents are probably the highest in the world. A little wooden house in a back street in the suburbs costs 15s. a week. You may be told that the workers only work eight hours a day. That is true only in the case of the Trade Unionists, and even then the overtime practically destroys the

value of the concession. The non-unionists who are very numerous, work 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 hours a day and get much lower wages. The shop assistants work from 8 in the morning to 7, 8 or 9 at night and until 11 on Saturdays, for an average wage of £1 a week for the men, and 10s. to 12s. for the women, and 5s. to 10s. for the children. The higher prices of the necessaries of life of course make the purchasing power of these sums less than it would be in England. During the past year there has been much speculation in real estate. Land has been bought at £120 the square mile and sold at from £1 to £2 a foot frontage with a depth of 46 yards. Land in the city has realised from £500 to £9600 the foot frontage, and much higher prices are talked of. Several bankruptcies have followed the "land boom," and many more are expected.

Generally the people are very religious; indeed it is said that there are more churches here than in England for an equal population. This somewhat interferes with the study of the social question. Sunday is divided into the Scotch Sunday in the morning, and what would be a continental Sunday in the afternoon if the government did not close up all the shops with the exception of a few restaurants and fruit shops. After two o'clock everybody goes for a walk along the quays, in the parks and gardens, etc. On the Queen's Wharf on Sundays all kinds of propaganda are carried on. This wharf is on the right bank of the Yarra, below the western part of the city proper. A little higher up is the dead house which has become necessary in consequence of the enormous number of suicides. As many as four bodies have been found in the Yarra in a day, and upon them is generally found either a pawn-ticket or a letter referring to the poverty of the self-murderer. The men may forget these things, but the women do not and it is perhaps from the women that we have most to hope. "This comes from misery," they say, "and misery comes from private property." The government has several times been forced to find work for the unemployed for fear of revolt.

There are in Melbourne counterparts of all the advanced English schools of opinion. The National Party consists chiefly of Republicans who desire to establish the lower middle class in the place of the higher middle class, which is called the aristocracy. They desire also the abolition of the second chamber, the reduction of the hours of labour and the nationalisation of the land. The Secularists wish for the nationalisation of the land, the establishment of national workshops and a republic. The party of "Liberty and Property" want political anarchy without socialism. There are also the State Socialists of the Bismarck school; the Social Democrats; the Individual Anarchists, of whom some are almost Communists and others do not believe in private property in land, but do believe in private property in things; the Christian Socialists and the Anarchist Communists. But beside all these schools of thought there is the enormous body of discontented workers, tired of poverty and hunger and feeling the near approach of a great change of which they know little except that it will improve their position and is likely to come through wars and tumults.

There are two Anarchist papers published in Victoria, the *Australian Radical* of Hamilton, which is practically an organ of Anarchist-Communism, and *Honesty*, which is Individualist-Anarchist. In the February number of the latter is an interesting article which gives details of the police persecution of some of our comrades for speaking on Queen's Wharf; the unemployed agitation at Melbourne and the accompanying persecution; and also an account of an anniversary meeting held on the 11th of November in commemoration of the death of our Chicago comrades. At this meeting there were several speakers who met with a good reception from a large crowd. It was well and fairly reported in the daily press and concluded by the people shouting "Hurrah for Anarchy!" and singing the *Marseillaise*.

THE REVOLT OF THE ENGLISH WORKERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

I. THE ROBBERY OF LAND AND ITS EFFECTS—(continued).

WE have seen how the working men and women of England were driven off the soil by the greed of the rich and idle. The desire to secure their ill-gained possessions led the robbers to spare no pains to crush out the sturdy self-respect and self-reliance of the people they had wronged. It is startling to find how large a part of the public activity of the upper classes has been directly devoted to breaking the spirit of the poor and degrading them into the position of wage-slaves, wholly dependent on the owners of land and capital.

In the earlier days of land-grabbing, the law, always a whip by means of which the rich lash the poor into subjection, empowered Justices of the Peace to settle how much the evicted men forced to seek employment from some property owner might venture to demand from what their labour produced. Naturally this maximum wage, fixed by the landlords, was not too high; but if a man refused employment on these terms, or simply could not find any, he might be imprisoned, whipped, branded, even hanged, as a vagrant, "wandering about without any visible means of subsistence."*

As land stealing progressed, however, the numbers of landless, propertyless people became so great that there was no need to limit wages. Wages were reduced to starvation point by the competition of the

would-be wage-workers, and it became necessary to supplement them instead from the rates, if the wronged and destitute people of England were not to break out into open rebellion like the peasantry of France. The old poor law was a bribe by means of which the ruling classes soothed the rising discontent, which showed itself continually by rick-burning, bread riots, and tumultuous gatherings. It was also a necessary method for the cultivation of the food for powder, required by the said classes in their continual wars with France for colonial and commercial supremacy, and more especially, at the close of the last century, in the great war against the Revolution; for they were sorely afraid that the revolutionary spirit would spread into England. The evicted peasantry must be encouraged to breed not only wage-labourers, but soldiers and sailors (480,000 of them were consumed in that last-named war) and therefore men and women received parish relief in proportion to the number of their children.

The poor law was administered in such a manner as to cut the roots of all remaining self-respect amongst the people. It was entirely in the hands of the land-grabbers and their satellites, and the man who knew best how to toady the squire and the parson got the best out of doors allowance. As for the miserable indoors paupers, they were crowded together men, women and children, the healthy, the sick and the insane, in filthy hovels, where they were maintained as prisoners on prison fare and in enforced idleness, except when the able-bodied or the children were let out to farmers or manufacturers by the parish authorities, like beasts of burden or machines.

This degrading public charity which the ruling classes insulted the people by offering to them in place of their natural claim to the soil of their native land, was supplemented by the most ferocious laws for the protection of private property. Down to the beginning of this century men and women were hanged for taking a shirt from a bleaching ground or a yard or two of ribbon from a shop; and of course for every larger theft, until one comes to robbery on the biggest scale of all, which was reckoned a legal and honourable pursuit as the robbers made the laws.

A long course of such shameless, wholesale spoliation and oppression ended by reducing almost the whole agricultural population of this country to the state of houseless, landless paupers. It went nigh to destroy the free spirit of the English people and created amongst them a vast proletariat, a mass of propertyless, degraded, despairing human beings, who little by little drifted away from the country towards the industrial centres, there to fall helpless victims into the clutches of the rising class of capitalist manufacturers.

(To be continued).

NOTES.

Mr. W. H. S. Alexander has been good enough to present the English people with the necessary funds to establish a National Portrait Gallery in which the public will be able occasionally to see the counterfeit presentiments of the living and dead mediocrities who have honoured this country by being born in it. By occasionally we mean about four times a year, on bank holidays, for of course the show will not be on view on Sundays and will probably be closed pretty early in the evenings, after the fashion of the National Picture Gallery. Mr. Alexander is the son of a solicitor who "made" the one hundred thousand pounds which constitute the gift, and a good deal more, by speculating in house property and land in the metropolitan suburbs. So that in reality this picture gallery has been squeezed out of certain of the London workers in the form of rent by this estimable eccentric's father and his gang.

* * *

Last winter this man distinguished himself in another direction. There were many people out of work at Andover, near which he lives and owns very many acres of land; and he benevolently set gangs of men "to shave off the tops of the hills," as he put it. What a satire on our civilisation for those whose eyes are not shut. Here is a man with a quantity of land which he does not use, and whose ideas are certainly very limited if he believes in there being any inherent virtue in toil, forcing a number of his fellows to do a useless task before he will give them the food to which they are rightfully entitled. On the other hand there are a number of men, restrained by ignorance, prejudice, and government from using this land in a useful manner to supply their wants, degrading themselves by doing unproductive work. Just imagine the Alexandrian system applied all over the country and all the unemployed engaged in doing useless work in order to live: what a grand ideal!

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* In the reign of Henry VIII. 72,000 such vagrants were hanged according to Holinshed.