FREEDOM

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ARE WE GOOD ENOUGH?

One of the commonest objections to Communism is, that men are not good enough to live under a Communist state of things. They would not submit to a compulsory Communism, but they are not yet ripe for free, Anarchistic Communism. Centuries of individualistic education have rendered them too egotistic. Slavery, submission to the strong, and work under the whip of necessity, have rendered them unfit for a society where everybody would be free and know no compulsion except what results from a freely taken engagement towards the others, and their disapproval if he would not fulfil the engagement. Therefore, we are told, some intermediate transition state of society is necessary as a step towards Communism.

Old words in a new shape; words said and repeated since the first attempt at any reform, political or social, in any human society. Words which we heard before the abolition of slavery; words said twenty and forty centuries ago by those who like too much their own quietness for liking rapid changes, whom boldness of thought frightens, and who themselves have not suffered enough from the iniquities of the present society to feel the deep necessity of new issues!

Men are not good enough for Communism, but are they good enough for Capitalism? If all men were good-hearted, kind, and just, they would never exploit one another, although possessing the means of doing so. With such men the private ownership of capital would be no danger. The capitalist would hasten to share his profits with the workers, and the best remunerated workers with those suffering from occasional causes. If men were provident they would not produce velvet and articles of luxury while food is wanted in cottages: they would not build palaces as long as there are slums.

If men had a deeply developed feeling of equity they would not oppress other men. Politicians would not cheat their electors; Parliament would not be a chattering and cheating box, and Charles Warren's policemen would refuse to bludgeon the Trafalgar Square talkers and listeners. And if men were gallant, self-respecting, and less egotistic, even a bad capitalist would not be a danger; the workers would have soon reduced him to the roll of a simple comrade-manager. Even a king would not be dangerous, because the people would merely consider him as a fellow unable to do better work, and therefore entrusted with signing some stupid papers sent out to other cranks calling themselves kings.

But men are not those free-minded, independent, provident, loving, and compassionate fellows which we should like to see them. And precisely, therefore, they must not continue living under the present system which permits them to oppress and exploit one another. Take, for instance, those misery-stricken tailors who paraded last Sunday in the streets, and suppose that one of them has inherited a hundred pounds from an American uncle. With these hundred pounds he surely will not start a productive association for a dozen of like misery-stricken tailors, and try to improve their condition. He will become a sweater. And, therefore, we say that in a society where men are so bad as this American heir, it is very hard for him to have misery-stricken tailors around him. As soon as he can he will sweat them; while if these same tailors had a secured living from the Communist stores, none of them would sweat to enrich their ex-comrade, and the young sweater would himself not become the very bad beast he surely will become if he continues to be a sweater.

We are told we are too slavish, too snobbish, to be placed under free institutions; but we say that because we are indeed so slavish we ought not to remain any longer under the present institutions, which favour the development of slavishness. We see that Britons, French, and Americans display the most disgusting slavishness towards Gladstone, Boulanger, or Gould. And we conclude that in a humanity already endowed with such slavish instincts it is very bad to have the masses forcibly deprived of higher education, and compelled to live under the present inequality of wealth, education, and knowledge. Higher instruction and equality of conditions would be the only means for destroying the inherited slavish instincts, and we cannot understand how slavish instincts can be made an argument for maintaining, even for one day longer, inequality of conditions; for refusing equality of instruction to all members of the community.

Our space is limited, but submit to the same analysis any of the aspects of our social life, and you will see that the present capitalist, authoritorian system is absolutely inappropriate to a society of men so improvident, so rapacious, so egotistic, and so slavish as they are now. Therefore, when we hear men saying that the Anarchists imagine men much better than they really are, we merely wonder how intelligent people can repeat that nonsense. Do we not say continually that the only means of rendering men less rapacious and egotistic, less ambitious and less slavish at the same time, is to eliminate those conditions which favour the growth of egotism and rapacity, of slavishness and ambition? The only difference between us and those who make the above objection is this: We do not, like them, exaggerate the inferior instincts of the masses, and do not complacently shut our eyes to the same bad instincts in the upper classes. We maintain that *both* rulers and ruled are spoiled by authority; *both* exploiters and exploited are spoiled by exploitation; while our opponents seem to admit that there is a kind of salt of the earth—the rulers, the employers, the leaders—who, happily enough, prevent those bad men—the ruled, the exploited, the led—from becoming still worse than they are.

There is the difference, and a very important one. *We* admit the imperfections of human nature, but we make no exception for the rulers. *They* make it, although sometimes unconsciously, and because we make no such exception, they say that we are dreamers, "unpractical men."

An old quarrel, that quarrel between the "practical men" and the "unpractical," the so-called Utopists: a quarrel renewed at each proposed change, and always terminating by the total defeat of those who name themselves practical people.

Many of us must remember the quarrel when it raged in America before the abolition of slavery. When the full emancipation of the Negroes was advocated, the practical people used to say that if the Negroes were no more compelled to labour by the whips of their owners, they would not work at all, and soon would become a charge upon the community. Thick whips could be prohibited, they said, and the thickness of the whips might be progressively reduced by law to half an inch first and then to a mere trifle of a few tenths of an inch; but some kind of whip must be maintained. And when the abolitionists said—just as we say now—that the enjoyment of the produce of one's labour would be a much more powerful inducement to work than the thickest whip, "Nonsense, my friend," they were told—just as we are told now. "You don't know human nature! Years of slavery have rendered them improvident, lazy and slavish, and human nature cannot be changed in one day. You are imbued, of course, with the best intentions, but you are quite 'unpractical.'"

Well, for some time the practical men had their own way in elaborating schemes for the gradual emancipation of Negroes. But, alas! the schemes proved quite unpractical, and the civil war—the bloodiest on record—broke out. But the war resulted in the abolition of slavery, without any transition period;—and see, none of the terrible consequences foreseen by the practical people followed. The Negroes work, they are industrious and laborious, they are provident—nay, too provident, indeed—and the only regret that can be expressed is, that the scheme advocated by the left wing of the unpractical camp—full equality and land allotments—was not realised: it would have saved much trouble now.

About the same time a like quarrel raged in Russia, and its cause was this. There were in Russia twenty million serfs. For generations past they had been under the rule, or rather the birch rod, of their owners. They were flogged for tilling their soil badly, flogged for want of cleanliness in their households, flogged for imperfect weaving of their cloth, flogged for not sooner marrying their boys and girls—flogged for everything. Slavishness, improvidence, were their reputed characteristics.

Now came the Utopists and asked nothing short of the following: Complete liberation of the serfs; immediate abolition of any obligation of the serf towards the lord. More than that: immediate abolition of the lord's jurisdiction and his abandonment of all the affairs upon which he formerly judged, to peasants' tribunals elected by the peasants and judging, not in accordance with law which they do not know, but with their unwritten customs. Such was the unpractical scheme of the unpractical camp. It was treated as a mere folly by practical people.

But happily enough there was by that time in Russia a good deal of unpracticalness in the air, and it was maintained by the unpracticalness of the peasants, who revolted with sticks against guns, and refused to submit, notwithstanding the massacres, and thus enforced the unpractical state of mind to such a degree as to permit the unpractical camp to force the Tsar to sign their scheme—still mutilated

to some extent. The most practical people hastened to flee away from Russia, that they might not have their throats cut a few days after the promulgation of that unpractical scheme.

But everything went on quite smoothly, notwithstanding the many blunders still committed by practical people. These slaves who were reputed improvident, selfish brutes, and so on, displayed such good sense, such an organising capacity as to surpass the expectations of even the most unpractical Utopists; and in three years after the Emancipation the general physiognomy of the villages had completely changed. The slaves were becoming Men!

The Utopists won the battle. They proved that *they* were the really practical people, and that those who pretended to be practical were imbeciles. And the only regret expressed now by all who know the Russian peasantry is, that too many concessions were made to those practical imbeciles and narrow-minded egotists: that the advice of the left wing of the unpractical camp was not followed in full.

We cannot give more examples. But we earnestly invite those who like to reason for themselves to study the history of any of the great social changes which have occurred in humanity from the rise of the Communes to the Reform and to our modern times. They will see that history is nothing but a struggle between the rulers and the ruled, the oppressors and the oppressed, in which struggle the practical camp always sides with the rulers and the oppressors, while the unpractical camp sides with the oppressed; and they will see that the struggle always ends in a final defeat of the practical camp after much bloodshed and suffering, due to what they call their "practical good sense."

If by saying that we are unpractical our opponents mean that we foresee the march of events better than the practical short-sighted cowards, then they are right. But if they mean that they, the practical people, have a better foresight of events, then we send them to history and ask them to put themselves in accordance with its teachings before making that presumptuous assertion.

NOTES.

Last month a million slaves obtained their liberty in Brazil. The newspapers were filled with touching descriptions of the joy of the aged emperor in thus beholding upon his death-bed the peaceful results of a wise series of preparatory measures. Here was, indeed, an example of an enormous social change brought about in accordance with the principles of law and order. What an encouraging example for European parliamentarian Socialists!

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Turning, however, to Number 33 of *La Révolte* we find an extract from the *Porvenir*, a Portuguese Socialist paper, written *before* the official announcement of the emancipation, which throws a somewhat new light on the matter, a light carefully obscured by the bourgeois journals. The extract runs as follows:

"At Grajahu, in the Maranhao, the authorities have been obliged to flee before the revolted slaves. At the Barra Mensa the director of the plantation has been lynched. Campos also is in a state of revolution. The detachment of police has been reinforced by troops from Nictheroy. At Ubatuba the blacks and the policemen had an open fight and the 'representatives of order' got the worst of it. At Ouro Preto mutinous slaves surrounded the houses of the 'Liberals' and besieged them. The police deputy has fled. Flying companies (of troops) hold the country but dare not measure forces with the bands of fugitive blacks." A state of things that reminds some of us of the state of things in Russia which preceded the free gift of emancipation from the Great White Tzar to his faithful peasants. So true is it, 'Who would be free, himself must strike the blow.'"

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The Brazilian slaves have forced their way out of the frying-pan only to find themselves in the fire. Their masters who supported them as beasts of burden at an expenditure of £45 each per annum, will now, according to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, as employers paying competition wages, leave them to support themselves as free men on £20 a year. Well, personal liberty is worth the winning even at the cost of semi-starvation. It is the necessary first step towards the true freedom of Communist Anarchism.

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The Jewish refugee who explained before the aristocrats of the Sweating Commission that he preferred to work 17 hours a day in London instead of 13 hours in Russia, because in London he had more freedom, spoke like a true man. But when will the victims of private property learn that they have but a miserable fragment of freedom after all? Why should a man toil either 13 or 17 hours a day for a master, or rather a series of masters, each of whom appropriates a slice out of the produce of the worker's labour, so that after all only a wretched pittance remains for himself, when he might work only five or six hours and amply supply his needs, if he had free use of the means of production and no idle monopolists to support? Is a man truly free who is the slave of an unnecessary and removable economic system, upheld by an immoral and destructable law?

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Louise Michel's humane attitude towards her would-be assassin has produced its natural effects. Pierre Lucas is deeply penitent for his mad outrage and he has been acquitted at the Rouen assizes amidst the enthusiastic applause of the people. The idea of the justice of the punishment of criminals by society has received a sharper check by this one true hearted action than by years of preaching.

STRIKES.

Strikes are a most characteristic form of the struggle between labour and capital in the present century. Their history is important as reflecting all the chief changes that take place from time to time in the political and economic relations between the opposing classes. This history clearly shows a decided tendency to enlarge the field of action and resort to more and more decisive means.

At first strikes were sometimes secretly incited by rival manufacturers and traders to injure some competitor whom they feared. Or, if not deliberately incited, they were taken advantage of by rival competitors. The strikers were not alone in the field, and this caused a strike to be dreaded by the masters. They never knew who was at the back of it, or who might come to the rescue of their revolted workmen.

This state of things was, however, necessarily temporary; for the employers soon came to understand that such conduct on their part was in the long run too favourable to the interests of the workers and harmful to their own. It now chiefly takes place when some big monopolist company is trying to drive the competition of small capitalists out of the field,—as in the case of the recent glass workers' strikes in Belgium. But, on the whole, capitalists observed a practical neutrality towards strikes amongst other capitalists' wage-slaves, until this attitude was succeeded by general hostility towards the strikers, with the result that workmen felt the necessity of closer organisation to gain strength and command respect by numbers, and that strikes became more and more numerous. The masters on their side proceeded to organise themselves to oppose the coalitions of workers; but generally they did so only after a strike had broken out.

Now, however, they are going further, and their associations are directed, not against some particular strike, but against the workmen's organisations themselves.

Daily examples of this latest phase of the struggle are occurring in America and France. The present lock-out at Pantin in the latter country is a striking example.

The workers in *one* glass factory there stopped work. Whereupon a circular was sent by the employers to all the glass-factories of the Seine and Oise Department, in consequence of which *all* were closed, and nearly 3000 men willing to work were thrown out upon the streets. The reasons given by the proprietors of the glass-works are as follows. Firstly, the glass-workers raised a small subscription to feed the wives and children of the men on strike. Secondly, a glass-workers' association exists, which the masters do not like!

This seems to show that capitalists will no longer wait for an attack on their position of authority and monopoly, but will themselves take the initiative in the strife. Workmen must fight for the very existence of their associations or submit to any conditions the capitalist may dictate. And as their associations will, in the long run, prove powerless in mere legal contention against coalitions of capitalists, they will be driven more and more to face the necessity of extreme measures, to turn strikes into insurrections, and insurrections into revolution.

FREEDOM DISCUSSION MEETING.

The discussion on May 10th was very well attended. It was opened by Comrade Merlino.

Communist Anarchism, he pointed out, is the logical outcome of the tendencies of the thought of our century, especially of the theory of evolution as applied to social development. As illustrations, he alluded to the growth of the new scientific attitude towards crime, and the practical modifications in an Anarchist direction which it is slowly beginning to introduce in the treatment of criminals; also to the growing tendency to criticise and distrust the system of representative government.

The main objections generally raised to Socialism are based on the opposition of these obvious anti-authoritative tendencies of our time to the idea of the extension of the functions of government involved in State Socialism, and supposed to be an essential part of Socialism itself. The ordinary answer of the State Socialist is to criticise the abominations of existing society, and say, Can anything be worse?

Comrade Merlino then reviewed the progress of the Socialist idea from its earlier shape at the time of the French Revolution, through the schools of Cabet, Fourier, etc., down to the International, showing that the principle of Anarchism, the hatred of domination, was part of the essential spirit of the whole movement, and that the development of Socialism, and the attempt to reduce it to practice, gradually brought this essential principle into clear and definite prominence as the avowed faith of the Anarchist section of the International.

In reply, Comrade Blackwell, S.D.F., put forward the idea of Socialism, as understood by English Social Democrats.

The labour, he said, of one man or woman is equal to the labour of another man or woman. A citizen is doing quite as useful a work in driving a tram car as in setting type or writing a book; therefore, it is just that all should be equally remunerated, either in money or the free use of institutions, such as museums, reading rooms, etc. Also that those not able to work should, equally with the workers, have their needs supplied by money and the free use of public institutions. The able bodied who refuse to work should be unpaid and excluded. This is Communism as Social Democrats understand it, and in this sense the great majority are Communists. As to economic and political organisation, they propose the election for each commune (town, village,

or country district) of an administrative council by universal suffrage, for a short term of office, to be dismissed at the pleasure of the majority of the commune, and to exercise strictly limited functions in public matters of local convenience, such as lighting, paving, tramways, housing, feeding, elementary and technical education, laboratories for experiments and the trial of inventions, medical service, organisation of production and exchange, public amusements, libraries, coffee shops, etc. All details of administration in workshops and factories should be left to the workers: they would have to do their work, but the fashion of their doing it should be left to themselves. They should elect their own foreman, and introduce improvements at their will. The Communal council should not prohibit individual competition with the public services (as the present Goverment does in the post office), but should allow anyone or any group to compete with the community on individualist lines if they chose, as long as the workers were voluntary workers. All details of general admininistration should be settled by the referendum, *e.g.*, what time the trains should be started in the morning.

But just as there are matters to which the individual would have to be subordinated to the commune, so there are matters in which the commune (locality) should be subordinated to the nation. A body of administrators, appointed, or elected, by all the communes, would deal with great industries, agriculture, coal mining, metal working, weaving, etc., in such matters as affect the whole community; also with railways, canals, etc., and international exchanges.

In conclusion, Comrade Blackwell demanded how such a decentralised social democracy as this contravened the desire for liberty and hatred of domination which Comrade Merlino had pointed out as the very essence of the Socialist movement? Such a method of organisation, he contended, would serve but to maintain the greatest freedom for all, so long as that freedom was secured by the enlightenment of the whole community.

As stepping-stones towards the Social Revolution, he defended the advocacy of palliative measures, such as the Eight Hours' Bill, extension of the Factory Acts, etc., which would give the workers greater leisure to think and study.

Comrade Blackwell's speech was exceedingly useful in bringing into clear relief the real differences of opinion between Social Democrats and Communist Anarchists. After an animated discussion, it was agreed to deal separately at a series of meetings with the various points raised.

The first of these, and a question of the most fundamental importance, is, On what principle is wealth to be shared in a Socialistic Community—or in other words, What do we mean by Communism? This is to be the subject for the next meeting, when C. M. Wilson will read a paper on, Work and the Distribution of Wealth.

The meeting will be held at 13, Farringdon Road, E.C., on Thursday, June 14, at 8.30 p.m.

FARMINNG IN THE SOUTHERN STATES.

[An American correspondent sends us the following interesting picture of life in the agricultural districts of Alabama]:—

DURING the fifteen years of my residence here settlers have multiplied twenty to one, chiefly from the adjacent State of Georgia, and of late Northern companies have bought up on speculation all land that was for sale. The process is to offer the farmer a few dollars for the option of buying his place within a specified time. When a large enough tract has been thus hypothecated, the agent advertises it for sale in the North. The booming is done with, by, and for Northern capitalists. The fertility of the soil and advantages of climate are praised to the skies, whereas the truth is that except in the valleys, which are agueish, it is only by annual manuring that crops worth their culture can be raised, and the spring frosts cut off fruit about three years out of four. Thus, although my farm is favourably situated, I have peach, plum, and pear trees that have borne but once in eight or ten years. The merchants persuade the ignorant farmers that their imported manures are *the thing*, so the barnyard is neglected and the fertilisers hauled, losing a day for every load, and mortgaging the crop to pay for it. This, and supplies of corn and bacon in the summer (for hardly any one raises enough to eat until next crop), at an advance of from 50 to 100 per cent. for credit, keeps the farmers in the relation of permanent debtors, and I have not seen or known of more than a dollar or two at a time in any farmer's hands since I have been in the country. Nearly every acre of rich river bottom land is owned by some merchant, who does not live there, and who cultivates by either tenant or hireling labour. The wages are about 10 dols. per month all found, or 50 cents. per diem; but government works on the river, canalling, and railroad construction pay 1 dol. to 1 dol. 50 cents.

All children now go to school. The amount of what they learn after several years' teaching is to stammer over a newspaper, or a hymn book, without knowing the meaning of any but the commonest words, to scrawl half legibly, and do the simplest sums in arithmetic. Only the *élite* of scholars reach this acme. Such is our boasted public school system, in so far as the masses of the South are concerned, in the rural districts. Something more is taught in the cities. There is an ornamental extra branch of culture, viz., the old-fashioned system of musical notation, whereby ambitious youths and maidens charm their evenings once a week with psalmody, the arch type of which is "the tune the old cow died of."

Local manufactures are confined to the blacksmith's shop and hand loom; yet until lately the smithy was competent to supply the demand for farming tools, and the hand-loom the clothing of working folk. Effective ploughs imply deep culture, and this, either alluvious or copious manuring. On mountain land, with but an inch or two of organic matter at the surface, shallow culture is the rule, and as it is also the rule to cultivate 25 acres to the hand, this land can never get more than a sprinkling of manure. Most farmers clear new ground every winter, so the forest is being rapidly destroyed, cyclones aiding. Farmers are generally aware that they can never get ahead by cotton culture, all the profits of which are for the merchant and the factory agent—a margin of 7 cents. per lb., while 8 cents. paid or allowed barely covers costs. As our farmers live in log cabins without windows, and on very scarce food, and are temperate, tobacco, home-grown, their only luxury, and as their taxes do not average 5 dols., it might seem feasible to better their condition by a change of cultures; but the merchants exact cotton in payment of dues, and the farmers are all in debt.

If there were steady employment outside one's farm, a man might save enough from his wages in a year or two to enter land and buy a farm and stock it, but there are only occasional jobs to be found. A stout young negro neighbour last spring took such a job in street paving from the hands of his friend, the coloured preacher. When it was done this divine contractor whittled him out of the payment! Then, to get means of cultivating his own ground, he hired himself on a malarial river bottom, with the result that in a few weeks he came home dropsical and died.

No one can borrow on the best security at less than 20 per cent., unless he is a merchant, and credit goods range over that up to 200 per cent. and more. Corn always doubles and trebles in cost during the year; so do potatoes and bacon. (I have to pay 1 dol. 75 cents. per bushel for seed potatoes.)

To break this vicious circle it would be necessary to give up electing sheriffs—the agents for collecting debts—*i.e.*, usury and profits. But this people is saturated with governmentalism. Their automatic legal habits are as ingrained as their Methodism, or their Baptism, or their Presbyterianism. They can no more quit electing sheriffs than worshipping God and his Son, Jesus, which occupies all their spare time both on Sundays and after the crop is laid by. To show you how destitute they are of the consciousness of personal rights, irrespective of government, our local railroad will suffice.

EDGWORTH.

(*To be concluded*).

THE GOOD OLD TIMES.

AMIDST the sordidness and squalor of the carnival of Capitalism, we often find it hard to realise that things have not always been as they are. Not that there is no beauty to fill our hearts and bring the tears to our eyes, in country-side and mountain glen to-day! Not that the exquisite loveliness of human nature is less intoxicating in its eternal freshness than in the older days of romance! Not that our treasure of knowledge is losing its preciousness as it grows, or that the keen joy of thought palls amid the stress that stimulates it! None of this; and yet so bitter is the ever-quickening consciousness of loss and wrong in the social atmosphere, that the purest pleasures of the few who are free to enjoy are darkened and turned to pain by the want of fellowship—the ceaseless sense of the fellow men living mutilated, partial lives, shut out by the cruelty of their brethren from the glory of manhood.

It is in moments when this needless burden of suffering wears most heavily upon our hearts, when it seems most inevitable and hopeless, and its hideous irony eats away the very springs of effort, that the vivid imagination of the poet touches the dreariness of the present with hope by making real to us the reality of change.

Standing in dreamland beside William Morris,[1] we live in the life of the England of the fourteenth century. We feel as with one pulse the aspirations of the peasantry of Kent when they flocked round the standard of rebellion, and marched to London to demand the king's countenance in making good their rights as free men against the attempt of the landlords and lawyers to force them back into villeinage. We see the Kentish village bathed in the evening sunshine, every work of men's hands in it, from the grace of the church spire or bold decoration of the dwelling-rooms, to the neat fencing of the gardens, beautiful with the loving skill of the artist who freely creates for his own satisfaction. We take part in the manly vigour of the fight of the villagers against the armed band of would-be oppressors, including that "bastard of an inky sheepskin," the lawyer. We stand at the foot of the village cross with the crowd of sturdy bow and bill men, and harken to the voice of John Ball, the outcast priest, as he tells of fellowship:

"Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them, and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on for ever, and each one of you part of it, while many a man's life upon the earth from earth shall wane."

[1] "A Dream of John Ball," by WM. MORRIS, author of "The Earthly Paradise." With an illustration by ED. BURNE-JONES. Reeves and Turner, London, price 4s. 6d. A complete series of copies of the *Commonweal* containing this work can be obtained from the office of that paper, 13, Farringdon Road, E.C.; price 1s.

"Forsooth, he that waketh in hell and feeleth his heart fail him, shall have memory of the merry days of earth, and how that when his heart failed him there, he cried on his fellow, were it his wife or his son, or his brother or his gossip, or his brother sworn in arms, and how that his fellow heard him and came, and they mourned together under the sun, till again they laughed together and were but half sorry between them. This shall he think on in hell, and cry on his fellow to help him, and shall find that therein is no help because there is no fellowship, but every man for himself. Therefore, I tell you that the proud, despiteous rich man, though he knoweth it not, is in hell already, because he hath no fellow; and he that hath so hardy a heart that in sorrow he thinketh of fellowship, his sorrow is soon but a story of sorrow—a little change in the life that knows not ill."

In bringing thus vividly before us what has been called the golden age of English labour, when feudal tyranny was dying and capitalistic tyranny was but coming to the birth, William Morris has not only recalled one of the earlier phases of the long fight for freedom, but has cheered our hearts by enabling us to realise what men can be when for a little while they have thrown from them the yoke of despotism and are able to live according to the fulness of their own nature.

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM.

IRELAND.

Since Mr. Balfour's Parliamentary statement to the effect that the National League was a thing of the past, owing to his spirited policy of windy proclamations and gaol cramming, there have been held more than twenty public meetings of the defunct League, most of them "monster demonstrations." The weekly business meetings, too, of the various branches have by no means fallen off, on the contrary fresh numbers are added every day. It would appear that there is still enough vitality in the combination to bring tumbling down that exceedingly rotten structure, English Government in Ireland.

The lying boast of Balfour's is backed every other day in Irish Courts of Justice by the evidence of policemen, who, in swearing against prisoners as having attended League meetings, are careful to add the lesson they have learned by rote, that, "by law," there is no such thing as the aforesaid League. This extraordinary kind of testimony suffices for "Patent Convictors," who have only to reel off sentences dictated beforehand from the Castle.

The *Times*, however, cannot help confessing that "the machinery has been put together with infinite skill by past masters in conspiracy, and that to undo it will yet require much patience and labour, for the work of civilisation in Ireland has not been successfully completed." Surely this is a printer's error! Instead of civilisation one ought to read "extermination." What else can be meant when six thousand families having been served with writs, are but awaiting their landlords' or the Government's convenience to be evicted; when every time the American steamers touch at Queenstown they take on board their vast contingents of exiles from Erin, when those who dare to stay in the old country, and to join hands in a righteous resistance to fraud and violence, are hunted down, fined, imprisoned, bludgeoned, and bayoneted? If these be English means of civilisation, one can scarcely wonder that Irishmen prefer to be their own civilising agents. Which is the better index of the advance of civilisation, a mediæval war-engine battering down the walls of some humble home, or neighbours gathering from eight miles round to till the fields belonging to that plucky Campaigner Keating of Ballydavid. Look at that picture and on this, taken from *United Ireland*, 5th May: Three hundred men and lads voluntarily engaged in erecting a substantial cottage for Michael O'Donnell at Camp, within sight of the one from which he had been evicted. At Coolnarisky, Queen's County, Major Fitzmaurice stands by to see Michael Brennan, aged 78, and his four children, stricken with measles, turned out on the road-side. The unfortunate tenant vainly prays for respite until his little ones are at least convalescent. They are not even permitted time to dress. The father is arrested after the eviction under a Chancery Court warrant, while the children lie huddled together, undressed, in the yard. Fitzmaurice shows his compassion by advising their uncle to "gather them up and send them to the union."

Is civilisation in Ireland to show itself in the shape of the O'Grady, who reigns in solitary grandeur over his 1,800 acres, from which he has just cleared off the last batch of tenants?

In addition to what we Anarchists must call barbarity, pigheadedness is not an infrequent characteristic of the civilised class in Ireland. Take, for example, the case of a tenant who grew faint-hearted, and backed out of the protection of the League, offering to pay the rent demanded. He was rewarded by being served with a bill of costs amounting to £130, including such items as £66 10s. for the Property Defence Association, and £4 10s. for police refreshments.

A fine way to encourage others to keep their necks out of the noose! Let it be remembered when Crown Prosecutor Ronan, or any other, says, "It is a melancholy thing that the Irish farmers should be so silly and foolish as to persevere in attending meetings with apparently no other object than that of getting put in gaol." Luckily falterers are few and far between. The people, for the most part, are of the same metal as those of Collon, Tullyallen, who were actually ashamed that their huge League meeting was allowed to pass without being proclaimed.

To be sure it is not every day that the Government can catch the Leaguers in a death trap, as they did on 7th April at Ennis. The bold front of the peasantry and their leaders then, unarmed save for here and there a blackthorn, must have since made the Government pause about attempting to bludgeon a meeting in more open ground. Especially so, as sympathy with the Nationalists is decidedly on the increase among the soldiers, witness their joining over and over again in the cheers for popular leaders. At Clare, 19th May, the artillery militia stoutly refused to serve under Colonel O'Callaghan, of Bodyke infamy, and greeted their would-be commander with three groans, supplemented by as many cheers for O'Brien. Prior to this a large number of militiamen had been stripped of their uniforms and disbanded at Roscommon for having shown sympathy with political prisoners.

For the past two months the word of order has been "increased severity." The magistrates, in their zeal to curry favour, rather overdid it, and so brought a hornet's nest about the ears of their chief in the House of Commons.

In the Appeal Courts, instead of remission, reduction, or at the worst, confirmation of the sentences, the Castle hacks doubled them, as in the cases of the priests, M'Fadden and Stephens, and Mr. Blaine, M.P., and added hard labour where it had not been already given.

From the 8th April up to the present time 229 men, women, and children have been put through the mockery of a trial, and sentenced to terms ranging from six months to a week. The offences were mostly of the usual character. For unlawful assembly 83 were tried and imprisoned; assaulting the police, 26; boycotting, or inciting to same, 10; resisting bailiffs, 12; re-taking possession, 6; taking shelter in outhouse of their former home, 2 (a man of eighty and his wife); selling *United Ireland*, 2 (one of them going to prison for the fifth time); exhibiting notice of meeting in his window, 1 (six weeks for this crime); groaning the police, 15; laughing at them, 1; stone-throwing, 8 (one an imbecile, another a boy of nine years); using unpeaceful language, 2; intimidation, 12; wearing League cards in hat, 4; refusing evidence, 3; trespass and rescuing cattle, 20; shouting, "Down with evictions," etc., 2; cheering Canon Doyle, 1; playing on a tin whistle, 1 (aged thirteen); rioting 9; carrying bullets 2 (three months each); demeanour not being what it should be, 1 (a month); preventing a land-grabber from carrying a coffin, 1 (five weeks). Finally, it has been decreed that that all children are to be sent to reformatories if allowed by their parents to hoot or cheer.

It is not needful to dwell upon the arrests of Dillon and O'Brien, their mock trials and sentences. The Government may be likened to a blacksmith, who, in striking hard at the good metal beneath his hammer, is welding it to the right shape, and making it all the more durable with every blow.

The Vatican thunder, conjured up to start the people from their stronghold, has rolled harmlessly by. Nowadays a Papal Rescript is not even "a bug to fright a babe withal."

ITALY.

Victims of Capitalism.

In the neighbourhood of Urbino, in central Italy, hidden amongst a chain of mountains, is one of the most ancient Italian sulphur mines, the property of a Mr. Albani. Here, 300 metres under the surface, some hundreds of human creatures—children, women, and men, wander in silence through the galleries, working their lives out for a piece of bread; until exhausted, old before their time, they go to starve in the public street. And there indeed they die of hunger if some charitable people do not find for them a place at the town hospital, where they are allowed to end in peace their martyr's existence. Many of them, however, are spared a part of these troubles: a fall of earth, an escape of gas, an explosion or a fire, so often happens in those profound recesses and snuffs them out by dozens or hundreds, smashing, suffocating, burning them alive; and the happy of the earth do not even hear the cry of agony rising from the victims of these horrid catastrophes.

The wages of the Urbino miners, which are paid fortnightly, are determined not by the hours of work, nor by the quantity of mineral extracted, but by the amount of *sulphur* contained in the latter, a quantity which is estimated at a glance by the overseer and in the absence of the workman.

The average daily earnings of a miner do not reach one shilling, which is paid partly in money, partly in articles of consumption.

Two years ago the agent of the owner of the mine gave out a stock of meal so bad that the workmen unanimously refused it. The refusal having been communicated to the owner in Milan, this gentleman telegraphed to dismiss immediately whoever persisted in his refusal. The meal was taken, eaten, and had its effect. Many workmen were ill, some died. An inquest was held, and it was ascertained that the cause of the death of those workmen was the poisonous character of the meal, but no one was prosecuted.

Now to these causes of grievance a new one has been added. The overseers of the mine are paid at the rate of £6 per month each of them, their wages being subtracted from the collective earnings of the workmen. The latter, therefore, maintain that the present number of ten overseers is quite superior to the need of them; as it is superior to the number usual for hundreds of years past, when the mine worked quite well. If the owner wants more overseers than it is necessary to have, surely he should pay them out of his own profits. The owner, however, seems determined to resist the demand. The mine is closed and guarded by soldiers. The 500 miners on strike wander along the mountain sides, with hungry downcast faces, the very image of squalor and misery.

We now learn that, unable to bear any more their destitution, they have surrendered.

Anarchist Press in Italy.

The first number of the *Questione Sociale* has appeared at Florence (fermo in posta) and, of course, has been seized.

At Mantua have appeared three numbers of the *Amico del Popolo*, an Anarchist paper also.

The *Gazetta Operaia* is republished at Turin as *Nuova Gazzetta Operaia*.

At Reggio Emilia *la Giustizia* represents Communist-Anarchism; whilst the *Operaio* represents it at Reggio Calabria.

The *Ottantanove* pursues its propaganda at Venice, in spite of the Governmental prosecutions. We see with pleasure that at the recent Congress of Venetian baker-shop workmen our comrades were present, and that our principles have been embraced by the largest section of the Italian Federation of Bakershop Workmen.

The Forli *Rivendicazione* has been also once more seized.

At Messina (Sicily) is published the *Riscatto* (via Cavour 400), Communistic-Anarchist.

At Marsala our comrades have published a special paper entitled *May 1860—May 1871*, to compare the Italian Revolution with the French Communes.

At Tunisi is published the *Operaio*, organ of our Tunisian and Sicilian comrades.

SPAIN.

Our readers will remember the barbarous suppression of the Rio Tinto strike, when the victims of the English Copper Mining Company there ventured to protest against the whole district being poisoned by the calcination of copper pyrites in the open air. For this, 300 men and women were murdered by the Spanish troops, and a number arrested. The arrested men have now been released by the Spanish Government, but the English capitalists refuse to allow them to return to the mine. The profit-mongers are furious, because the miners' protest, though timid and hesitating, and at the moment quenched in their blood, has nevertheless had such an effect on public opinion that the Spanish Government, in spite of the howling of the mining shareholders about a decrease of dividends, have found themselves obliged to forbid open air calcinations for the future.

NOTICES.

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