

THE COMMONWEAL

The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

SIR CHARLES WARREN (no doubt in self-defence and defence of the police) has given a blow to contemporary history as written by the daily press, by a sudden demolition of the very rapidly grown myth of the *Wicked Socialist and the Heroic Butcher*, which is, after all, perhaps the very latest example of the solar myth. The bright and ruddy hero dispelling the murky crowds of the cloudy night with the shooting forth of his bright rays must be, according to the solar theory, what is really typified by this apparently historical incident. Mr. Andrew Lang perhaps could tell us what it might signify according to the explanation of the "customary" theory of myths.

To one person it must have signified victuals and drink, temporarily at least; to wit, to the ingenious gentleman who produced the detailed and dramatic "Siege of a Butcher's Shop" in the *Daily News*. I hope I have all due professional sympathy with our injured contemporary, but I really cannot help saying with Mr. Bounderby in 'Hard Times,' "We are waiting to hear what apology you are going to offer us for going about the country express with no other luggage than a story of a cock and a bull!"

The *Pall Mall Gazette* gave us lately the account of interviews with various business men as to the present condition of trade. The views of these gentlemen were mostly what under the present circumstances may be called optimistic, that is they all seemed to think that things were mending a little. But, after all, what they said amounted to little more than that the public were getting rather eager for investments, which fact may mean nothing more than the beginning of a brief swindle-period.

Judging by the condition of production, which is indicated by the plain statement of facts given in the columns of our own paper under the heading "The Labour Struggle," this seems to be all that it does mean. The hunger-riots of the Scotch coal miners also do not point to our nearing a period of plain-sailing prosperity.

Mr. Bright "is at it again." He really does seem as if he were determined to show that his claim to have been a popular leader was mere moonshine; it would be difficult for any enemy of his to be as successful in this demonstration as Mr. Bright himself.

The *Daily News* the other day was righteously indignant with the sentence of a country magistrate on a labourer, convicted of the terrible offence of setting traps to catch wood-pigeons, for which in the upshot the poor man got two months' imprisonment. Probably, however, such sentences are as common as frosts in winter, and not nearly so much noticed. Our own experience has taught us that, since neither the *Daily News* nor any other bourgeois paper made any comment on Judge Nupkins-Grantham's sentence on Mowbray and Henderson; the *Pall Mall Gazette* joining in the conspiracy of silence, although when convenient it can say a good deal about the doings of one section of the Socialists.

The Chiswick poisoning mystery has been explained, say the daily papers: "the Government analyst has failed to detect any traces of irritant poison of the contents of the stomachs of the two children . . . having regard to the fact that the mother and six children slept in a single bed in a room only measuring 8 ft. by 9 ft., and that the cold and the scanty covering on the bed and the clothing generally in the house compelled them to huddle together to keep themselves warm, shutting out at the same time all ingress of fresh air into the room where for hours there had been a lamp burning, he has, it is reported, come to the conclusion that the cause of the death of the two children was vitiated atmosphere." Misery is a shorter word than vitiated atmosphere, and yet a more explanatory one. I suppose these victims of vitiated atmosphere will not be set among the record of those who were starved to death? (I have not patience to remember the euphemism for that), but starved to death they were.

In his first debate with Mrs. Besant Mr. Foote affected (surely it was affectation) scorn at those who distinguish between competition and emulation, and asked what was the difference between them. Mr. Foote knows well enough that competition, as we use the word in English, means seeking one's own advantage at the expense of one's

neighbours (compare the French *concurrency*). As to emulation, judging by the tone of his attack on Socialism, it is probable that he does not understand what that means, as it is certainly a generous quality. To give the difference between the two shortly, emulation means making the *best* of one's own capacity; competition, making the *worst* of one's neighbour's.

Mr. Bradlaugh was enthusiastically cheered at a meeting held on behalf of the crofters for saying amongst other things "that we had no right to pauperise the crofters by law and then send them into other lands to die." Most true; but how strange that Mr. Bradlaugh should object to the substitution of the word "working-men" for crofters! He has been lately taking some trouble to attack those who are trying to show that we have no right to pauperise, not the crofters only, but all workers, by forcing them to yield to "capital" a tribute for leave to work—that is, to live. How utterly illogical it is in him to attack also a small section of the monopolists of the means of production!

They have exactly the same "rights of property" as every one else has, neither less nor more; and those rights leave them free to use or abuse their property according to their own will. If the abuse of their property should be interfered with, why not other abuses of property? And is it not an abuse of property to employ it as a mere means of compulsion to force other men to work for the compeller—or privileged thief? How can it matter whether the instrument of violent robbery is called "land" or "capital"?
W. M.

One of the signs of the times is the manifestation of decadence in the superstitious reverence for "law" which was afforded several times during the debate on Mr. Parnell's amendment. Two lawyers, one the son of the Lord Chief Justice, led the attack upon "law-in-itself," and put very plainly and well the position that a "law" is an absurdity and a crime unless "approved by the moral sense of the community at large." Mr. Holmes, the Attorney-General for Ireland, was—and the *Spectator* laments it piteously—in despair over ever again getting people to obey laws in which they do not believe.

Mr. John Morley put into a phrase the other day the history of the people everywhere. It was much more than "the history of Ireland in a nutshell" that he called it. "Unredressed grievances, moral wrongs without a legal remedy, and then the resort to illegal acts to secure justice."
S.

THE CRIMINAL CLASSES OF THE FUTURE.

A RETROSPECT AND A PROSPECT.

THE persistent preaching of Socialist principles had leavened men's minds with new ideas, and the old prejudices against the poorer inmates of our jails and convict establishments had given place to a feeling that they were more sinned against than sinning. Bad training amidst filth, squalor, and manifold temptations, were held as (outside the judicial bench) excuses and condonation of offences against property. There, on the contrary, as the feelings of the people became more liberal, the harshness of their decisions became more marked. Shameful sentences and gross partiality were the order of the day. Prison discipline bore the marks of the haters of the people, and the brutal tortures of the past were replaced with refined cruelties. That made a sentence of imprisonment, in many cases, a sentence of death. Pitiful cases of half-starved desperate men sent to jail for stealing food, with the brutal comments of the well-fed magistrate ringing in their ears, of paupers ill-treated with impunity by workhouse jailers, and of myriads preferring to lie and die by the roadside rather than accept the brutal charity of a corrupt Society, were the order of the day. The mass of unemployed workmen were insulted by the paid hirelings of the affrighted bourgeois with schemes of dietetic reforms, sterilisation, etc., etc. It seemed that the old saying that those whom the "Gods seek to destroy they first make mad" was having its illustration in Old England. Alternating with the insults as to raggedness, laziness, and depravity heaped upon the dispossessed, were demands for bludgeons and coercion; and the Russian legislation, hitherto confined to the sister island, was made applicable to the whole kingdom. The police, acting on the cue of their employers, changed their tactics of petty spydom for wholesale arrests, and plots smacking of the "Woolf and Bondurand" flavour were common discoveries.

It was during this social discord, and whilst the social contract was being challenged by simple and learned alike, that the European war-cloud, so long brooding over the Continent, burst. Two great nations, goaded on by vulture statesmen, were at each others throats, and wholesale carnage and desolation spread over their peaceful fields. England led by purblind rulers was insensibly drawn into conflict, but with another combatant. Her antagonist fitted out fleets of privateers who preyed upon her commerce. To transfer her freighting to foreign bottoms was tried and failed, for England had few friends. The American-Irish, with their burning memories of wrongs inflicted, effectually prevented the United States from rendering any indirect assistance. As a consequence her vast populations herded in the great centres divorced from the soil, and dependent mainly upon foreign supplies for food were famine-stricken, and although the propertied classes were preaching to them endurance on patriotic grounds, the spectacle was continuously before them of contractors defrauding the nation and furnishing the soldiers with rotten food and accoutrements, and even supplying the enemy with munitions of war. The trading hucksters waxed fat out of the famine prices extorted from their countrymen whose patriotism they relied on.

Alarmed by the condition of things, the wealthy classes betook themselves to the pleasure resorts yet out of the zone of foreign war. The case of the people was desperate, and in striving to suppress expression of discontent by arresting a Socialist speaker at a large meeting, the fires of insurrection were lit. The capital, denuded of troops for foreign service was only defended by a few regulars and volunteers. At the first a mass of the latter joined the people, whilst the snob clerk element brought about their speedy defeat and destruction by firing on the people. The towns and cities of the country fell one by one, sometimes without a struggle, into the hands of the people. Everywhere the Cause triumphed. Trusty messengers were despatched to Ireland, and at once the standard of revolt was raised. The thin garrisons were powerless against the onslaught, and at one fell swoop Ireland and England freed themselves from the curse of landlordism and capitalism. Strange things happened at the original seat of war, large masses of troops revolted on both sides and fraternised; the officers either fled or were destroyed, and the two peoples passed out of the valley of despair into the dawn of the Social Revolution. In the first flush of rage the English revolutionists desired to destroy the workhouse bastilles and prisons, after emptying them of their unfortunate occupants, but wiser councils prevailed and they were put to a better purpose. For the wealthy who still remained were using their money to overthrow the new regime, and they were aided by the fast returning money-mongers who had fled at the first noise of war. The people, however, through their chosen delegates, declared the old currency null and void, and issued a new one representative only of labour. Gold and silver, so long the curse of nations, were no longer used as coinage, but a base metal of no intrinsic value took their place. By a decree issued simultaneously the idlers, whose monetary wealth was thus rendered useless, were cited to appear before the local Assemblies and give account of themselves, and many haughty dames and distinguished swells were charged with being without visible means of subsistence. The answers to this charge were many and curious. A local Assembly sitting was occupied with a batch of culprits who had been in their day the *élites* of Society.

Chairman (to first accused): What are you?

Accused: I am the eldest son of Lord Broadlands, now abroad for the benefit of his health.

Chairman: How have you got your living hitherto?

Accused: Oh, I had great expectations and an allowance.

Chairman: Ever done any work?

Accused: Boating, cricketing, lawn-tennis, and so forth.

Chairman: No trade?

Accused: Oh, dear no.

Chairman: You are allowed three weeks to choose an occupation, and as you are unskilled you will have to go the workhouse during this time. Next case!

Chairman (to second accused): What are you?

Accused: I am a stockbroker and shareholder in railways, mines, and so on.

Chairman: You have had a good education, I presume. Ever contributed anything to literature?

Accused: No.

Chairman: Do you know any trade, for your occupation is now gone?

Accused: Oh, dear no.

Chairman: I consider some punishment necessary in your case, for you are one of those who plunged the country into incessant wars in order to get your dividends; three month's hard labour. Next case!

Chairman (to third accused, an austere looking maiden lady): What are you?

Accused: I am the daughter of a colonel in the army, who died fighting for the honour of his country.

Chairman: Indeed! Where did it happen?

Accused: In Mandalay, Burmah.

Chairman: Humph! How do you get your living?

Accused: What impertinence! Well, if you must know, I have shares in some coal mines.

Chairman: Ever done anything useful yourself?

Accused: The idea of such questions. I am the greatest collector of used foreign stamps in England, and my cat has taken a prize at the last cat show.

Chairman: Anything else?

Accused: I have written articles to the *Parish Magazine* how to make vegetable soup for the poor on an economical basis.

Chairman: You must go to the workhouse laundry for a training. Next case!

Chairman (to fourth accused): What are you?

Accused: I am a ratepayer and guardian of the poor. Have been labour master in the union—

Chairman: Stop! Take him away and put him in the oakum shed on bread-and-water; give him his water hot!

F. KITZ.

(To be continued.)

IMPRESSIONS "ON THE ROAD."

II.

(Continued from Vol. II., page 203.)

OUR carriage stops just alongside a signal-box, encased in which stands the over-worked and under-paid slave of the railway company, holding in his hand the lives of travellers. How careful many of us are lest we should be tyrannised over not only by princes and parliaments, by laws and institutions, but mayhap also by comrades and fellow-workers in the cause! And here we submit our fate to the goodwill or ill-disposition of a few fellow-slaves! One pull of his brawny hand—if he so wills it—and we run into death and destruction. Nor is it necessary to conceive the far-fetched notion of a British railway-hand bearing malice towards any one. If but his energies *did* flag, his watchful eye grow dim, and his hand leave untouched the lever which to pull so many times a-day is said to be his duty! Yet are there folk who cannot see how much, how everything depends on mutual goodwill and on the punctual work of public organisation!

How crowded these railroads are; how lightning-like are these vapouring monsters, chasing and shooting past one another, laden with human lives and crammed with dead and living values of exchange! Are not they right who abhor railways as abominations, prosaic and incorrigible? I am no lover of railways in their present nastiness; but I cannot help thinking that those who condemn them altogether and for all times are pouring away the child along with the bath. I find a great deal of good in them, and fancy that they could even be rendered beautiful and vastly enjoyable, if worked by enlightened spirits and for the people's benefit. What makes them so mean and detestable is their present purpose. It is because they are instruments of gain in the hands of commercial speculators that they lack beauty, comfort, and security. There will not be half the number of people travelling in socialistic communities as there are travelling now. If they do, they will mostly travel on foot, and have only their little luggage carried for them. Even now, most men and things on the railroads would not care to travel, if they were not made to; if it were not their business to hurry to and fro and change hands constantly. If goods were made for use instead of for profit, the craftsman could afford to stay at home and wait for their custom, as they did in the "good old times," where a master's brain and handiwork had only one ambition: to suit most fully and enjoyably the purposes for which they were needed.

To-day the makers of goods are, seldom masters of their craft or of their tools or of their brains; they are mostly slaves of other people's money or machines. The honest, tailor of the age of chivalry would have as little dreamt of making garments for a man whose taste and whose proportions he knew nothing of as Æsop did of telling the traveller how long it would take him to reach the next village before he had seen him walking and could estimate the capacity of his step. Our modern operative seldom sees or knows whom he is working for, whom his labour is to fit or benefit; nay, the child may not yet be born whose baby-shoes are passing through his hands and through the mill at Leicester or Northampton. He helps in making shoes or clothes, not because there are people who need them (the needy are generally left without either) but because his master thought fit to invest his money in putting up machinery, which is calculated with the employment of some leather and human labour to turn out boots. These boots are supposed to find a market, and in the market a sale at a price which leaves the enterprising employer of labour a profit. As there are many who follow his example, and as each one produces without regard to his neighbour, there results a keen competition for the best position in the market. For the machines, once put in motion, cannot wait for customers, but run on without thinking and let the boots and clothes look out for themselves. These are poured in never-ceasing streams into the market, where they knock about, seeking whom they may fit in size and price, in style and quality.

With the poverty and vulgarity stricken crowd in the market-place quality and style are at a discount, and hence the biggest sizes and lowest prices are bound to fetch the gapers. To sell, then, means to be cheap, and to be cheap, production must be intensified and its means economised. This, again, means increased division of labour and the introduction of labour-saving machinery. Hence the wholesale fabrication of specialities, and the fostering of such specialities in certain towns and districts where once the machinery has been planted and the "hands" have been trained to its use. In this wise some towns are growing a population of boot-hands, others of cotton or woollen spinners, others of metal-workers, and others again of clerks and warehousemen, of bosses and speculators. This explains the restless bustle on the railroad; the ceaseless shifting of raw material from the spot of its growth to the "centres of industry"; thence in the

shape of wares to the "centres of commerce"; and thence again through the agency of a host of hawkers and canvassers into the hands of the shopkeepers, the middlemen (the famous "backbone of the nation"), who retail them out to the thrice-cheated, patient and gullible consumer.

Whilst at the beginning of home industry men made things of use which they found themselves most adapted for, first for themselves and then for others who gave them their produce in return, either direct or through a medium of exchange, the workers now are the very last thought of in the distribution of the valuables they make. The object of production then was *the thing of use*, now it is *the thing of profit*. Things are of value only in so far as they are exchangeable, and are handled and bundled about from post to pillar not for the sake of the producer or consumer, but for the sake of the seller, the capitalist.

The hop which grows in Kent is not for the labourer's beer, but travels first to the broker, from whom the labourer must buy it by paying the retailer's keep and rates and taxes; and the brewery labourers in Burton-on-Trent taste little of their own brewing, but must put up with cheaper stuff brewed with polluted water. The fish caught off the South Coast, of course, runs up to London, whilst in Exeter and Weymouth you get the catch fresh from—Grimsby. The silk spinners of Macclesfield and Congleton, and the woollen weavers of the West of England, can hardly afford to buy the shoddy which their brothers at Batley and Dewsbury turn out for the toilers of this mighty Empire, whilst the shoddy-makers themselves go about in rags. The manufacture in this country of cotton for India has ceased to be profitable since the workers there need no wrappers at all, and are, therefore, most "fit to survive" the British factory-hand, and supply him with a shroud when dead.

The same principle is applied to food, which is not grown now to feed the hungry but to enrich those capitalists who force it down the throats of all and sundry who are able to pay for it. If the jolly old English roast beef had become a myth to the wage-workers of these islands only because they had converted themselves to the "eating of the green," nothing could be said; but they are treated to Australian carcasses, brought over in iced coffin-ships to prevent them from rotting and thereby losing their exchange-value. Food is kept from the starving poor and stored up air-tight, the better to bide the changing fortunes of the market. Thus the female factory-hand, who has no time for cooking, if she but owns the money, can get meals ready-made and preserved in "tins of family size, artistically shaped and labelled."

Of course, the right brand, "without which none are genuine," is of some importance (to the manufacturer); hence, you must "see that you get it." Nevertheless, although you *have* got it, I should advise you to make sure about your quality; it is just possible, in spite of Christian assurance and threatening hell-fire, that you have candle-grease instead of butter, and a solution of logwood in vinegar instead of wine. There is at least one place I know of out of a thousand (somewhere in the North-East of Great Britain) from where such grease is sent over to Holland, not indeed for sale, but for the sole purpose of being there branded as "Prime Dutch Estate" butter, and of being sent back again for sale all over the world as what it is not.

Thus men and wares are being hunted to and fro in burning haste with profit-making lies imprinted on their faces. And since Capitalistic Commerce is dirty, mean, and full of thievish trickery, how can its vehicle, the railroad, be clean and noble, and honestly beautiful?

ANDREAS SCHEU.

Labour is wronged and plundered in all countries. The labourer is subjected to the same economic subjection under the Czar of Russia or the Emperor of Germany as in the United States. Labour will be emancipated when the wage-labourers of the world have made common cause. The oppression of labour is international; and to be successful the cause of labour must be international.—*Paterson Labor Standard*.

A curious proceeding is reported from Mitchelstown. It appears that there has for some time been some commotion amongst the children of the Christian Brothers and Nun Schools, because the children of an unpopular person in the town were allowed to attend the school. On the 10th inst. seven hundred children absented themselves and paraded the streets, cheering for the Plan of Campaign, and listening to a juvenile band which they had formed. Mr. Cullinan, Poor Law Guardian, addressed the children and advised them not to return to school until the children of their enemies were removed from it.

ARMIES, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL.—The incarnation of the "patria" is in Bazaine Traitor, MacMahon Fool, Trochu Catholic, Ducrot Boaster, finally in Thiers Vampire, and Gallifet Assassin. Soldiers, "well-disciplined and obedient," drunk with brandy, gold in their pockets, march to the assault of Paris, who struggles for her emancipation, they take the barricades behind which stand their brother-workers, shoot down Flourens, Delescluze, Milliere, Ferré, and many others, and finish by killing out for a time the attempts of the proletariat. Poor gulls, not to perceive that they are killing themselves in massacring 35,000 men of the people, the people whence they too come! This is the "national army." . . . See all these sleek men, well-dressed, rich, whose very coats resemble strong boxes, bankers, stockjobbers, swindlers, "bubble companies," organisers of distant expeditions, all coming and going, exchanging, intriguing to-day, governing to-morrow, commanding the slaves of the workshops while their accomplices command the slaves of the army, eating up all, monopolising, starving, stamping beneath their feet all traditions, familiar with every form of shame, trafficking with the daughters of the people, poisoning the world with their journals and writings as they poison it with their goods. This is the international army. When, oh peoples of the earth, will you realise it? When will you also have your international army? Have you not served long enough as playthings to these men who exploit your labour to-day and will cut your throats to-morrow? When shall we see the brotherly greeting and hand-grasp which will overturn all frontiers and barriers, and the abolition of all the privileges which destroy you? When shall come the Revolution which is to bring with it Social Equality?—*Cri du Peuple*.

DESPAIR.

Now, wife, let me out, I say!
I will strive with my fate no more.
I have travelled for scores of miles,
I have halted from door to door.

Work, work, give me work! I cried,
'Tis no matter what sort it be,
So the meed be a slice of bread
For the famishing babes and thee.

I have begged, I have sought in vain,
I have done all that mortal can;
So, wife, get thee out of the way
Of a hopeless and fearless man.

A whisper has come from the pool
That has told me how this may end
And the knife and the rope have looked
Like the face of a faithful friend.

But first these oppressors shall know
That I value not limb nor life.
Let them bury their gold in their hearts—
I will dig out the hoard with my knife!

A curse on the cruel rich,
On the fat of the land o'erfed!
And a curse on all lords and laws
That stand between me and bread!

God! God! God!—nay, there is no God!
'Tis a Devil that rules on high,
For a beast may labour and live,
But a poor man must starve and die.

The dogs of the squire are gorged,
And his ox grows fat in the stall—
Thou God of the Rich I hate,
And I curse thee most of all!

Gilstead, near Bradford.

BEN PRESTON.

Mr. Bright and Trades' Unionism.

FROM THE 'COTTON FACTORY TIMES.'

MR. JOHN BRIGHT has given offence to the members of the Birmingham Trades' Council, owing to the denouncing, in a recent letter to a gentleman of that town, the principles of Trades' Unionism, and averring that a workman would be better off without them than with them. Having been written to by the Council in reference to the contents of his letter, Mr. Bright says there is no condemnation of trades' unions in his letter, and that the criticism of the Trades' Council is not necessary and is not just. We read Mr. Bright's letter, and confess that we put the same interpretation upon it as the Birmingham Trades' Council seem to have done; and however much he may try to wriggle out of the real meaning of his letter, the working classes can only come to one conclusion, and that is that Mr. Bright is no friend to those who join in combination for their own improvement in the social scale, and that he judges the question merely from an employer's point of view. He was never popular with the working classes of Rochdale, and we don't know that he ever assisted the working classes in any great movement having for its object the amelioration of their condition as working men and women. We know that on one occasion when a deputation waited upon him at his mill in Rochdale respecting a dispute which his spinners had with him in respect to their wages, he took the two gentlemen who formed the deputation up a lobby, and opening a door told them to go down some steps. Having done so, he closed the door upon them, and left them in that strange place, surrounded by a high wall, over which they had to climb as best they could; and this was the only satisfaction the deputation received in regard to the spinners' grievances. This circumstance occurred many long years ago, but serves to show what kind of feelings he then entertained respecting trades' unions. We don't suppose he would treat a deputation in these days in such a cool fashion; still he would not be the individual we should expect to receive any favours from in any movement which the labouring classes got up for their mutual advancement. It is well that cotton operatives have not to rely upon men such as he to battle for their cause, and none know better than they the value of good trades' organisations; and whatever Mr. Bright may say to the contrary, his opinion on trades' unions will carry no influence with those who have to earn their bread by daily toil.

A Provincial Propagandist Tour.

Comrade Mahon's engagements in the provinces are: Feb. 17 to 25, Leeds, Bradford, Bingley, Shipley, etc.; 27, 28, and March 1, Hull; 2, Newcastle. Mahon will be glad to hear from any persons willing to arrange meetings at York, Middlesbrough, Shields, or Yarmouth.

WALSALL.—On Wednesday the 9th inst., J. L. Mahon delivered a lecture at the Radical Club, subject, "A Plea for Socialism." The audience was small but highly appreciative, and a Branch of the Socialist League has resulted. Mahon also addressed a meeting of chainmakers and others on Friday the 11th, and was well received.



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

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

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

NOTICE TO ALL SOCIALISTIC NEWSPAPERS.—The *Commonweal* will be regularly sent to all Socialistic Contemporaries throughout the world, and it is hoped that they on their side will regularly provide the Socialist League with their papers.

Periodicals received during the week ending Wednesday February 16.

ENGLAND		ITALY	
Justice	New Haven (Conn.)—Workmen's Advocate	Milan—Il Fascio Operaio	
Jus	Portland (Oreg.)—Avant-Courier		SPAIN
Norwich—Daylight	Milwaukee (Wis.)—Volkshlatt	Madrid—El Socialista	
Londoner Arbeiter-Zeitung	Valley Falls (Kan.)—Lucifer		PORTUGAL
Cotton Factory Times		Oporto—A Perola	
Christian Socialist	FRANCE		HUNGARY
Worker's Friend	Paris—Cri du Peuple (daily)	Arbeiter-Wochen-Chronik	
	Le Socialiste		ROMANIA
	Le Revolte	Jassy—Lupta	
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	Guise—Le Devoir		DENMARK
Adelaide—Our Commonwealth	Lille—Le Travailleur		Social-Demokraten
			SWEDEN
UNITED STATES	Holland	Stockholm—Social-Demokraten	
New York—Volkzeitung	Hague—Recht voor Allen		NORWAY
Der Sozialist		Kristiania—Social-Democraten	
John Swinton's Paper	Belgium		
Boston—Woman's Journal	Liege—L'Avenir		
Springfield (Ill.)—Voice of Labor	Antwerp—De Werker		
Chicago (Ill.)—Vorbote	SWITZERLAND		
	Zurich—Sozial Demokrat		

FACING THE WORST OF IT.

THOUGH we Socialists have full faith in the certainty of the great change coming about, it would be idle for any one of us to attempt to prophesy as to the date of the realisation of our hopes; and it is well for us not to be too sanguine, since overweening hope is apt to give birth to despair if it meets with check or disappointment. Although the oppression and robbery of the past and the present is preparing a certain revenge in the future, yet history has shown us over and over again that retribution is half-foot; or perhaps, to put it with as little metaphor as language will allow of, great revolutions have to wait till the force which is to destroy the old order and create the new is so overwhelming that there is no chance of any real or serious reaction marring the effects of the hopes and necessities which make great revolutions.

There are two streams of the force which is creating the new order of things, and which, already visible to thoughtful persons, will one day rise into a great flood-tide of change visible to every one, and make a new world. On the one hand the system under which we now live and which is, we are firmly convinced, the last development of the oppression of privilege, is of its own weight pushing onwards towards its destruction. The energy and ceaseless activity which made its success so swift and startling are now hurrying it towards its end; there is no turning back possible, no pausing for the tide of that commerce which bears all life with it in the present; it is not only that its goal is ruin, but the goal is now within sight. Yet though the energy which is now sweeping onward to the sea of destruction cannot falter, yet it may itself create checks—eddies, to keep up the metaphor—in which we now living may whirl round and round a long time. So, that we may not be disappointed and be taken unawares, it is well to consider what these may be.

At the same time, although commercial ruin *must* be the main stream of the force for the bringing about revolution, we must not forget the other stream, which is the *conscious* hope of the oppressed classes, forced into union and antagonism by the very success of the commercial system which their hope now threatens with destruction. The commercial or capitalistic system is being eaten out by its own energy; but that energy may on the one hand create partially new conditions for it, yet, on the other hand, in doing so it will stimulate the energy which is consciously attacking it; and these attacks will be more powerful than its struggles to resist its coming fate, the eddies in the stream above said.

As for these, let us look a little closer to see what form they are likely to take.

First, the downward tendency of commerce may and probably will be checked by recoveries something of the nature of the rebounds from

depression which were the rule for the last forty years before the depression of the six or seven years just passed set in, but far less complete and much shorter lived. We are threatened with such a recovery at present, and there may be some foundation for the threat. of course if it is realised we shall have plenty of discourses addressed to us of the "I told you so" kind, and the advocates of the capitalists who have any power of pen or tongue will be jubilant and noisy. We Socialists, however, need not trouble ourselves much about their joy; because such a period is sure to be fruitful of disputes between the trades-unionists and the capitalists; and it will be our business to stimulate and support the claim to a higher standard of livelihood which the brisker business and consequent bigger profits of the manufacturers will enable the workmen to make with success. The period of recovery will certainly be followed by another depression, and the discontent of the workmen will be much increased by their losing, or their dreading to lose, the advantages gained in the better times; so that after all even this apparent check to the progress of the disintegration of the present system will but lead us so much nearer to revolution by making clearer to the workers the antagonism which exists between them and the thief-class—the employers.

Such recovery as above mentioned would come in the ordinary condition of things, and would mean simply an emptying more or less of the shelves of the salesman. But recovery may come from another and more dramatic cause—to wit, the great European war with which we are now threatened. Such a war would give a great stimulus to trade while it lasted; just as if half London were burned down, the calamity would be of great service to those who were not burned out,—all this, of course, applying only to the idiotic system of rewarding labour under which we now suffer, and having nothing to do with a system in which work means production or service of some sort to the community.

But "good" as the war might be for trade, it could not last for ever; and quite apart from the more specially political results which might come of it, the time would come when some one would have to say, as Owen said after the end of the great war of the beginning of the century, "the war, our best customer, is dead."

Then would come the inevitable reaction, and what between falling prices, and crowds thrown out of employment, and the certain disappointment and disgust which would attend the exhaustion of the finish of the struggle, our present thief-society would receive a rude shake, which one might hope it would scarcely recover. But whether that were so or not, at least the inflation of the war-time would be far more than counterbalanced by the depression of the following peace. Only the most short-sighted of the capitalists can pray for war in the times we are now in, one would think, because behind the brilliant "respectable" war stands its shadow, revolution.

And yet though they may dread war, still that restless enemy of the commercial system, the demon which they have made, and is no longer their servant but their master, forces them into it in spite of them; because unless commerce can find new capacities for expansion it is all over, or will be in a very few years; the partial and brief recovery of trade before mentioned is too insignificant to be worth much notice; the one thing for which our thrice accursed civilisation craves, as the stifling man for fresh air, is *new markets*; fresh countries must be conquered by it which are not manufacturing and are producers of raw material, so that "civilised" manufactures can be forced on them. *All wars now waged, under whatever pretences, are really wars for the great prizes in the world-market.* And certainly if the countries, the chances for whose monopolisation (distant chances too) are now leading Europe into a war the end of which no one can foresee, can be opened up to commerce, and when opened up satisfy the expectations of the national pirates who are "on the account" in this matter, the dissolution of our present system may be somewhat checked. Yet, on the other hand, this very success would stimulate the cut-throat competition of the commerce-gamblers; and once more, since of their plunder they would only yield to the workers as much as the latter compelled them to yield, whatever "prosperity" might follow such enterprises, would, now that the idea of Socialism has taken root amongst the workmen of Europe, be accompanied by fresh demands on their part; and these demands again would necessarily act as a spur to the competition of the gamblers, and make the pace faster and more furious; so that perhaps even the glorious hope of flooding Central Africa and China with trade "goods" which nobody wants, will turn out when attained but Dead Sea apples to the capitalist.

These three chances of checking the onward course of capitalistic commerce to its annihilation, are the only visible ones I think:—1st. The lessening of stocks and consequent slight temporary recovery; 2nd. A great European war, perhaps lengthened out into a regular epoch of war; and 3rd. The realisation of the hopes of important new markets, which hopes are the real causes of hostility between nations. How far they might act as checks on Socialism it is not possible to foretell; but that they will not be unmixed advantages to Capitalism is, I think, certain, nor is there anything about the possibility of their happening which need discourage us. Probably none of them would have much influence in checking the growing tendency towards the union of the workers in England. Certainly they would have no power to break that spirit of union which already exists among the great nations of the Continent.

Besides these obvious resources of the system we are attacking, there are less obvious possibilities about which one may speculate, perhaps with some profit; these more speculative possibilities point to attempts of Capitalism at avoiding its doom, which would lead to more ruin and suffering than are likely to be involved in even those

above-mentioned. I have not space to call our reader's attention to them at present, so I will end by saying that our part as acknowledged and organised Socialists is, while we watch keenly the development of the causes which would lead to the destruction of the present system, even if there were no acknowledged Socialists at all, to do all we can to aid the *conscious* attacks on the system by all those who feel themselves wronged by it. It is possible that we may live to see times in which it will be easier than now for the labourer to live as a labourer and not as a man, and there is a kind of utilitarian sham Socialism which would be satisfied by such an outcome of times of prosperity. It is very much our business to meet this humbug by urging the workers to sustain steadily their due claim to that fullness and completeness of life which no class system can give them. The claims of non-Socialist workmen go little beyond the demand for a bigger ration, warmer coat, and better lodging for the slave; and even Socialist workmen, I think, are apt to put their claims too low, at least in this country; for, indeed, one must say with a sense of shame in one's own better luck not possible to express, that the conditions under which they live and work make it difficult for them even to conceive the sort of life that a man should live.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

MINERS AGITATION IN SCOTLAND.

GREAT DISTRESS IN LANARKSHIRE—SOCIALIST DEMONSTRATION IN GLASGOW.

REPORTS of the progress of the agitation amongst Scottish miners for an advance of wages have appeared pretty regularly in the Labour Column of *Commonweal*. Readers of that column are no doubt aware that about a month ago the Central Board of the Federation of Scottish Miners recommended the various districts to cease work for some four or five days with the view of bringing the struggle to a crisis and forcing the masters to concede the advance demanded. Acting upon this advice, the great majority of miners in the north and west of Scotland ceased work. As a result of this policy a considerable number of the masters yielded, and their men resumed work at advanced wages. The greater portion of the masters, however, absolutely refused to grant any increase of wages whatsoever. In consequence of this refusal the men in most districts prolonged their holiday. A fortnight ago the Board, fearing the holiday would become an actual strike, recommended the men to return to work in the meantime. This advice was rejected with indignation by the overwhelming body of the miners of the Hamilton, Motherwell, and Airdrie districts of Lanarkshire—the districts, I may say, where Socialist opinions have most deeply penetrated. The serious consequences of this resolution the men knew only too well. For many months now they had been working only five days per week, at a wage of 3s. per day—which, after deductions for doctor, powder, tools, etc., left only some 12s. 6d. per week on which to keep themselves and their families. It is obvious that on such an income the miners would have little or nothing saved to meet the present emergency. Indeed their families in many instances were at starvation's door before the strike began. Their present condition is distressing in the extreme.

Painful scenes have been witnessed in some of the mining villages. Women and children begging for food at their own doors. Little children wandering about the streets crying for bread. In some instances the shopkeepers, partly through sympathy and partly through fear of bread-riots taking place, have distributed loaves amongst the starving people. In one village a butcher distributed half a cow. The authorities, too, alarmed at the aspect of affairs, have advised the merchants to shut their shops early and barricade their windows. In anticipation of disturbance mounted police have been drafted to some of the districts.

And it is thus, in the nineteenth century in Christian Britain, that the workers must plead with their Christian masters for justice—their masters, who plunder them and toil them to death; who strip their little children and cast them naked and famishing out into the winter's cold!

J. B. G.

Since receiving the above the news has reached London of the hunger-riots at Blantyre and elsewhere in the district; but the bourgeois press is usually not anxious to give any real explanation of such occurrences, and has not done so on this occasion; therefore our communication has some interest even at this date.

On Sunday last, the Glasgow Branch of the Socialist League held a great demonstration on Glasgow Green, for the purpose of expressing sympathy with the miners on strike. The local press puts the number present at not less than 30,000. There were three platforms, at which the following resolutions were spoken to by members of the League, Wm. Small, the Secretary, and Mr. M'Munn, Chairman of the Lanarkshire Miners' Association, and other comrades and friends:—

"That this meeting of the workers of Glasgow hereby expresses its heartiest sympathy with the miners, their wives and children, in their present sufferings, and wishes full and speedy success to the resolute effort now being made to obtain an advance in wages; and that it condemns the attitude of the masters as grossly selfish and unjust."

"That this meeting is of opinion that the cause of all those who work for wages is one and the same, that the present struggle is only one incident in the world-wide conflict between the labourer and the capitalist, and that not until the land, mines, and machinery, and all means of production and distribution are held and used by the workers for the common benefit can that conflict cease, and a secure and happier social system be attained."

In supporting the second resolution, Mr. M'Munn said the present

fight was not about 6d. a-day. The masters had made up their minds to fight Socialism, and he admitted that Socialistic opinions were spreading amongst the miners.

Our comrade Glasier writes:

From copies of newspapers sent you will see that our demonstration was a great success. We have allied the miners with Socialism definitely. The press reports give but a poor notion of the speeches. At the platform presided over by comrade McLaren, M.A., three cheers for the Social Revolution were given with great enthusiasm. Not a single hand at any of the platforms was held up against the second resolution, which you will observe was a purely Socialist one. Our meeting has created a profound impression, and has alarmed the bourgeoisie not a little. It is greatly to the credit of our comrades R. F. Muirhead, M.A., and Arch McLaren, M.A., that they bravely came forward and took the chairs at two platforms, as they are both well connected and run seriously the risk of damaging their academical careers. We have given our large room here up to the miners for the time being as a place of call, etc. They are in Glasgow in large numbers collecting subscriptions. We handed over to them as the result of collection £24. In great haste, yours fraternally,
84, John Street, Glasgow, Feb. 14.

J. BRUCE GLASIER.

The *Scotsman* states that the above sum of £24 was collected mostly in copper, which is gratifying evidence of the widely-felt sympathy with the object of the demonstration, notwithstanding the large discount which the capitalist press endeavour to make for "small, ragged, dirty boys," "loafers," and the "respectable people attracted by curiosity." The Branch also distributed 15,000 copies of a stirring, well-written manifesto, which cannot fail to do good in awakening the workers to a sense of the necessity of the Socialists' claim for a change in the basis of Society. Altogether the Branch deserves credit for the admirable manner in which the demonstration was got up and carried through. The news will comfort and encourage the Brotherhood throughout the world.

T. B.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"T. LEMON AND THE S. D. F."

Our friend Sturt's letter should have been sent to *Justice*, as the provocation came in this instance from that quarter. If I had been less moderate and acted with less consideration for the Cause, and unsparingly exposed the "tactics" I only pointed at, it is probable that comrade Sturt's letter would not have been penned, or he might perhaps have shared in the "sore feelings" which in my case provoked the sarcasm, the use of which he deprecates. Removed as he is far from the "madding crowd," and with only partial knowledge of the case before him, he can easily perform the easy task of the candid friend.

F. KITZ.

"ABSENTEEISM."

I quite agree with G. D. L., and yet I hold by the view that if a man receive a thousand pounds or a thousand pounds' worth, it makes no difference where he consumes it. Take the first law of motion, as often expressed: "A body once set in motion will continue to move in the same straight line for ever." It is no contradiction to this law to point to bodies set in motion and then stopping. Again, the law of gravitation is not contradicted by the fact that balloons and other bodies ascend from the earth. Such occurrences merely demand further explanation, which goes towards confirming the general statement.

Suppose that an Irish landlord receives £1000 from his tenant and remains in Ireland. There he spends his £1000—returns it, so to speak, to the Irish; but he returns it for the worth of £1000—he consumes that much. Thus, instead of having a thousand sovereigns less, Ireland has so much less commodities. The landlord, by the hypothesis, does nothing; he simply consumes. How can that increase, *by itself*, the resources of Ireland? Suppose that instead of landlords we had bottomless pits, and that into these pits it was customary to throw rent (Ireland, however, has no pits of her own, so her rents come over to the pits of this country), would Ireland be under any disadvantage then, provided she had not the additional trouble of sending her rents a longer distance? I can see between a landlord and a bottomless pit no difference—except this: a bottomless pit may be harmless, an idle landlord *cannot* be.

Let us again suppose that Irish landowners remained in Ireland and spent their rents there. I am now going to speak of what would happen *under existing circumstances*. Ireland would then become quite a gay, prosperous looking place. Population would increase, and the increase would be of the well-to-do. All these well-to-do people, however, called into being by the needs of the landlords, would practically be creatures of the landlords. There would be just as much misery and suffering as there is now—yea, more, the voice of the suffering would never be heard, it could never penetrate the mass of toadyism that lay between it and the free air. I don't suppose Ireland is any worse off just now than England—I am sure she isn't. Perhaps the briefest way to bring this out is to imagine what the effect in England would be if our landlords were to become absentees—were to spend their rents somewhere else. One very marked effect, and about the first, would be an extraordinary diminution in the number of prostitutes (This just reminds me, by the way, of the high virtue ascribed to Irish women, which they doubtless owe to absenteeism.) Following on this diminution in the number of prostitutes would be the disappearance of all sorts of hells; then would go the oily shopkeepers—The reader, however, may be safely left to fill in the picture for himself. England would then assume its real appearance—a sepulchre; now it is a very much whitened sepulchre; so much so, indeed, that many think it a gay saloon, and exclaim—poor devils!—"Oh, what a happy place is England!"

Absenteeism is a good thing; it brings home to the commonest understanding the absurdity of landlordism; if practised more widely, would soon lead to its extinction. With all this I don't suppose any will more readily concur than G. D. L.

W. B. R.

It has been decided by the Council of the Social-Democratic Federation that there shall be a Church Parade of its members at St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday afternoon, the 27th of the present month.

THE LABOUR STRUGGLE.

This department is under the direction of the Strike Committee. Labour News and Contributions to the Fund should be sent to T. BINNING, at the Offices.

The Strike Committee.

Since our last report the Committee have been busy in various directions. Immediately on receipt of news that Lyon had succeeded in inducing Swedish workmen to come over (by misrepresenting that there was no strike at his works) to take the place of the English glass-bottle makers at St. Helens, the Committee dispatched a Swedish comrade to meet his countrymen and explain the position to them and persuade them not to allow themselves to be used as tools by the capitalists against their English fellow-workmen, with the result that only about half of them started work.

Our comrade Mahon has also on behalf of the Committee been holding meetings and making propaganda among the chainmakers at Cradley Heath, with good results.

The strike of the Northumberland Miners has also claimed the attention of the Committee, and on Saturday a propagandist was dispatched to that district with a large supply of literature, and with instructions to remain at least a week. A report of work done will be given next week.

A supply of leaflets has also been dispatched to miners on strike at Abercane and other districts.

Funds are urgently needed to carry on this the most important of the League's work, as much more might be done if we had money to do it with.

J. LANE, Sec.

THE LANARKSHIRE MINERS.—Work has been resumed in a large number of the smaller collieries in Lanarkshire at an advance in wages, but the men at the Rosehall Collieries came out on strike on Monday. Owing to the scarcity of coal, Messrs. Baird's extensive iron works at Gartsherrie have been damped down, 1000 men being thereby thrown out of work. It is expected that the Langloan and Summerlee Iron-works will also have to damp down in the course of a day or two. (See special report.)

THE GLASS-BOTTLE MAKERS AT ST. HELENS.—The introduction of Swedish workmen into Messrs. Lyon's glass-bottle works has resulted in much local feeling. On one occasion they were roughly handled by a crowd of about a thousand men and women, and Mr. Lyon was stumped by a large glass bottle. A number of extra constables have been placed on duty to guard the Swedes, and a large force of county police has been drafted into the town.

Termination of the Strike—Capitulation of Masters.—Our Swedish delegate reports that the strike has terminated. The men have resumed work and the Swedes have been shipped back to their own country. This strike shows what the international solidarity of the workers can accomplish.

THE NORTHUMBERLAND MINERS' STRIKE.—Feb. 11.—The Northumberland miners continue out on strike, and the Union funds are about exhausted. The officials of the Union have resigned in consequence of votes of censure having been passed upon their conduct in the negotiations with the masters' executive, when they went so far as to mention a 10 per cent. reduction. The miners as a body contend that they are poorly paid, and are fully determined to remain out of the pits rather than succumb to the demand of the employers, which is a reduction of 12½ per cent. from the wages at hard or steam-coal collieries, and 7½ per cent. at soft or house-coal pits. The secretaries of the Union have issued an appeal for help. Meetings are daily held in the colliery villages.

UNITED SOCIETY OF SHOP-ASSISTANTS.—It is much to be regretted that those having charge of the administration of this society should by their flunkey demonstration in Trafalgar Square on Sunday have to a certain extent discredited the cause of their union. The shop-assistants, like the clerks, have the reputation of being a somewhat spineless class amongst the workers. Being brought into more direct contact with their employers, they seem to have acquired some of the habits of the small-souled bourgeois. But making due allowance for this, it was a little too ridiculous to proclaim their "respectability" by marching into the Square to the Jingo-flunkey strains of "Rule Britannia" and "God save the Queen." This it was, and not the "roughs" as the capitalist press pretend, that damned the demonstration. The shop-assistants, if they want the support of earnest men, will have to quicken their paces and march to far different tunes.

STAFFORD—THE SHOE-TRADE.—Trade affairs are still in a very unsettled condition here. Since my last notes a fortnight ago, the lasters (excepting those engaged on weekly wages) employed by Messrs. Peach and Co. have again struck work and many of the men have left the town. The reduction which this firm wish to enforce should be 2s. 3d. per dozen, or about 25 per cent., and not 4s. 3d. per dozen or 50 per cent.: as, owing to the introduction of labour-saving, or profit-creating, machinery, the men will be "relieved" of a portion of the work they have hitherto performed. On Saturday last Messrs. Elley and Co. advertised in a local paper for a number of men to take the places of those on strike, offering from 20s. to 30s. per week. It is well worthy of notice that previous to the introduction of the machine alluded to the men could earn from 40s. to 50s. per week, and they are now "offered" the miserable pittance of 20s. This is a sample of the benefits machinery confers upon the working man. When will the wage-slaves of Stafford be prepared to say that the horrible and abominable capitalist system, which gives them the bare necessities of life while it enables their employers to live in luxury, shall be for ever swept away? How long will they be ere they apprehend "that there is no duty performed by capitalists to-day that cannot be performed equally as well by organised workmen"?—C.

Another Report.—The dispute at Harris and Marson's has been settled by the firm agreeing to withdraw the new statement, and the men have now gone to work on the old wages. It is stated that one of the "scabs" employed by the firm during the dispute is secretary of a (so-called) working-men's Conservative club in the town, a pretty "working man"! This dispute having been settled, another occurred on Wednesday 9th at Messrs. Elley and Dudley's. These two gentlemen are splendid specimens of the unadulterated British bourgeois. The former, whose father was a workman, has set up for a country gentleman, and at his men's expense apes the territorial plunderers outside the borough. Mr. Dudley is heartily disliked by the great mass of the townspeople. His overbearing, dictatorial manners and his determination to get richer "somehow," have made his name a household word. His wife is now taking a prominent part in the beggarly sham known as the "Woman's Jubilee Offering" to "Her Majesty," and in order to increase his men's loyalty at this juncture, Mr. Dudley proposes to celebrate the jubilee by reducing their wages from 7s. 6d. per dozen pairs to 5s. and even 4s. It should also be stated that a deduction of 3s. per dozen

pairs has already been agreed to by the men on account of the work done by the new heeling machine. About 50 men have decided to "come out," and though unfortunately they are nearly all non-unionists, it is hoped they will succeed. Many men now are not earning more than 5s., 6s., or 7s. per week, and in order to keep body and soul together their wives have to neglect their homes and ruin their health by working at that modern "rack" of capitalism, the "back-strapping" machine. And then the philanthropic Mr. Dudley, who a year or two ago gave a hundred guineas to the local infirmary, proposes to make a further reduction on the present pitiful wage!

BOLTON.—FEMALE LABOUR IN SPINNING ROOMS.—The strike at Lostock Spinning Mills still continues, and without much hope of an immediate settlement. Only one-third of the machinery is running.

Huddersfield.—WORK AND WAGES.—"Operative," writing to the *Huddersfield Examiner*, says:—In the annual report of the Huddersfield Chamber of Commerce I find it stated that "the operatives of this district have been blessed with good wages and continuous employment." As an operative, I fail to recognise either the blessings of the good wages or the continuous employment. I admit that more cloth has been produced than for a few years back, more cotton been made into warps and cops, and exported, but I deny that the operatives have received the blessings stated in the report. If we turn to our weaving sheds, we shall find considerable additions and extensions have been made during the past twelve months. Slow looms have been taken out and fast ones put in their places, but that has made no improvement in the wages or the employment of the weavers as a body. With the general introduction of fast looms a general and unjustifiable reduction of wages has taken place, for the fast loom statement for men is ignored, and only women's prices paid. At many places where they have been busy, where some have been working overtime, a considerable number of the work-people have not had above eight months' work out of the twelve. In some instances where they have had extensive orders and executed them, they have let out the work on commission, and their own looms have been standing idle. This sort of thing has been done in a very glaring manner at some places. I firmly believe that if the average wages of all weavers in this district could be got at, it would fall short of £1 per week. I say this after much careful thought and consideration. If we turn to the cotton trade, we find that almost all the firms have had slack times in greater or less degree during the past twelve months; and although through having higher speeded machinery they can turn out more weight in the same time than formerly, yet the workpeople take less wage home than before, owing to having been reduced considerably in scale price. The present piecework system, which becomes more general every year, is one of the best ever devised for grinding down the workers. Possibly and probably manufacturers have not felt the pinch like hundreds of our workers in the district have done. Their incomes have likely been as high as usual, and in the ecstasy of the moment they have inserted the above untruthful paragraph in their report. They should remember that their incomes have been wrung from the workpeople by paying small wages, and also by the iniquitous system of bating, which is very common in our mills and workshops.

FRANCE.

VIERZON. There is a new strike of porcelain-makers at Vierzon at the Lachaise establishment, owing to the threatened dismissal of one of the best workers on account of his Socialist opinions having been put into effect. On hearing of this move, all the workers agreed to strike and hold out until the "patron" gave in. There is among these men as great a feeling of solidarity as among their fellow-workers the metallurgists. At the same time, the *Sieur Lachaise* can hardly be said to be wrong from his point of view to attempt to bluster a little over his Socialist employés; he may well feel a little uneasy, a little suffocated in so revolutionary an atmosphere as that of Vierzon certainly is.

PORQUEROLLES.—It will be remembered that in the summer of last year a great scandal came to light concerning the treatment of the orphans employed in the "Industrial School" in this island. At present the trial of the infamous slave-drivers who direct it is taking place before the "Tribunal Correctionnel" of Toulon, and the details of maltreatment of these unfortunate boys, which come to light in the course of the trial, are, if correctly stated (which there is no reason to doubt) shocking and heart-rending in the extreme. We hear of the half-starved youngsters, too exhausted to get through their daily toil to the satisfaction of the overseer, undergoing as punishment for their "laziness," a sort of body-stretching torture under the burning southern sun, their sufferings pointed with the lash of a leather thong; or else rotting for weeks half-forgotten on the damp stones of the punishment-cells, choking in the pestilential atmosphere. The details in short read pretty much like a chapter of horrors out of one of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances, once the terror and delight of English youth. The organisation of the "Assistance Publique," which benevolently "let out" their stock of orphans to learn agriculture (with "morals" thrown in) of M. and Mme. de Roussen, is already much beloved by the Parisians for various misdeeds: to what height its scarcely enviable popularity will now attain after these disclosures of wholesale child-barter we scarcely know!

BELGIUM.

BRUSSELS.—The zinc-workers and plumbers of the Pierre establishment at Brussels have put themselves on strike owing to the directors attempting to prevent them from joining the workmen's syndicates.

CHATELAINAUX.—We are sorry to learn that the miners on strike in the Gonflue coal-mines have gone back to work on the same conditions as those under which they worked before the strike.

JOLIMONT (CENTRE).—A general congress of miners has been held at Jolimont on the premises of the co-operative bakers of "Le Progrès." At the afternoon sitting the important question of a general strike among the miners was brought forward and discussed. Although the delegates of the Centre opposed this proposition, a great majority of the other delegates pronounced in favour of a universal strike.

GHEENT.—By an inadvertence we omitted to note last week the release of Ansele from prison, and the Socialist celebration of the same. There was considerable excitement in the town on the day of his release, the crowd gradually growing round all the approaches to the office of the *Vooruit* until it became almost impenetrable. The "drapeau rouge" hung from the houses in the streets, the sun came out merrily, the Marseillaise was sung (when shall we have a new revolutionary hymn, an international one, suited to the times?) Ansele and the "Social Revolution" were cheered incessantly, and the fête in short proceeded with great vivacity.

SOCIALISM IN THE PROVINCES.

THE Socialist movement at Lancaster is not very old yet, but it has thriven well. The first token of Socialism was a debate on the subject opened some few months ago at the "Reform Club" by the Unitarian minister of the town, our comrade E. P. Hall. Several Socialists turned up in the course of the discussion, and Hall's masterly rejoinder at the close of the debate won a few more. Some weeks ago a Branch of the League was formed, which is now doing splendid work and growing steadily. The Branch has the advantage of several good speakers among its members. I reached Lancaster on Friday Feb. 4, and on that night had a conference with the members, hearing how they were getting on with their local agitation and telling them all that would interest them about the other branches and the movement generally. A propagandist campaign had been arranged for the three following days, and large red placards posted announcing the series of meetings. The police took alarm, and made all sorts of absurd preparations. At every meeting there were several constables, a sergeant, and the chief of police. The first meeting was held on Saturday afternoon, just outside the town. There was a good and very attentive audience. Rev. E. P. Hall took the chair, and said a few words before and after the address. On Saturday night a successful meeting was held indoors. On Sunday three meetings were held: at the Quay Side, in one of the parks, and, at night, in the Market Square. Each meeting was bigger than the one before it, all of them were attended by quiet and earnest people, and, to the surprise of the police no doubt, it is generally said that the meetings were the best and most orderly that have been held in the town for some time. A meeting to express sympathy with the St. Helens bottle-makers in their struggle, and to protest against the brutal sentences on our Norwich comrades, was announced for Monday night in the Market Square. The police at last took to interfering. When the Sunday night meeting in the Square was advertised, the chief told one of our comrades that he was glad to see that we had chosen a time which would not clash with other meetings. On Sunday night, while the meeting was going on, another comrade was told by the police that we had no right to meet there without special permission from the mayor. On Monday morning the chief constable called upon me to state that the mayor's permission was needed before a meeting could be held. The chief (Mr. Ward) was very courteous, and reminded me that he was merely doing his duty, and that the town authorities were his masters. Having consulted some members of the Branch, I told Mr. Ward that we did not care about asking the mayor's permission unless it were a mere matter of etiquette, as his refusal would not deter us from holding the meeting, and that we would always choose a time which would not clash with other parties or impede the traffic; that the market places were really bits of common land, which any one had a right to use so long as they did not deter others from similarly using them. Our interview ended in the most pleasant manner—firmness and gentleness on both sides. At eight o'clock the meeting was begun. The chief constable was present with a nice little force. We were formally commanded to disperse: we formally refused. Half a dozen names were taken down, and then the police became part of the audience and listened with much attention to the address. I explained the fight which the International Bottle-Makers' Union have carried on against the importation of cheap foreign labour, and a resolution was passed which has already appeared in the *Commonweal*. I also gave an account of the Norwich affair, and a strong resolution was carried with enthusiasm. We then had three cheers for the social revolution, and the meeting quietly dispersed. The Lancaster campaign was thoroughly successful; the meetings were well organised, each one was larger than its predecessor, nearly four times the usual number of *Commonweal* were sold, and other literature went fairly well. The members of the Branch are very enthusiastic and business-like, and are sure to make the propaganda effective.

After calling at Leeds on the 8th to make some arrangements, I got to Walsall on the 9th, and lectured to an advanced Radical club. The members were very sympathetic towards Socialism; the discussion was short and sensible—as, alas! few discussions are—and the literature was taken up eagerly. I walked over to Birmingham on the 10th and attended a Jubilee meeting in the council chamber. A very foolish person who was unfortunately at one time connected with a Socialist agitation in the town got up and made a row over a proposal which no one could understand, embodied in a long document bristling with legal phraseology. This somewhat put me at a disadvantage in urging a peaceful and practical proposal which I afterwards submitted to the meeting in the following words: "As jubilees are eminently suitable times for analysing past progress and making way for future changes in a spirit of general forgiveness, this meeting suggests that a committee of five labourers, five capitalists, and five political economists be selected for the following purposes: (1) To find out why, in spite of our enormously increased power in producing wealth, the contrast between the luxurious idle class and the penurious working class still persists; (2) To find a means of abolishing these class distinctions and realising an economic system which will secure to every man a chance of earning his livelihood and prevent any man from getting a livelihood which he has not earned." This proposal was listened to with attention and suspicion, and, to the disgrace of the meeting, found no supporters. (The meeting was held at three in the afternoon, and consisted almost entirely of respectable professional people.)

Feb. 14.

J. L. MAHON.

An International Celebration of the Paris Commune will be held at SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL on THURSDAY MARCH 17.

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

OFFICES: 13 FARRINGTON ROAD, E.C.

STRIKE COMMITTEE.

W. M., ls.; P. W., ls.; Mrs. Gostling, ls.; E. P., 6d.; S. M., ls.; Anonymous, £3. T. BINNING, Treasurer.

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Hammersmith Branch (two weeks), £1; Bloomsbury Branch (weekly), 5s.; T. B. (two weeks), ls.; M. M. (three weeks), 3s.; H. Ch. (weekly), ls.; Mainwaring (sale of *Commonweal*), 5d. PH. W., Treasurer, Feb. 15.

THE NORWICH PRISONERS' AID FUND.

(It is suggested by the Committee that each Branch organise a Concert for the purpose of raising funds.)

Already acknowledged, £9, 11s. 11d. Morris (second donation), £1. Davis, ls. Arthur, 6d. T. Finn, 2s. Collected in Hyde Park, 3s. 1d. Per H. Davis (card 42); H. Davis, 6d.; L. Lilly, 3d.; E. White, 2d.; H. White, 2d. Collected by Taylor (cards 61, 62); Taylor, ls.; Morey, ls.; Watson, 6d.; Barker, 6d. Collected at Wallham Green: Feb. 6, 6s. 2d.; Feb. 13, 3s. 1d. Tochetti, 9d. J. W. Browne, £1. Leeds Branch (weekly), 2s. Per W. Blundell (card 48); W. P. Walker, 6d.; Fred. White, 6d.; W. Shelton, 6d.; H. Fuller, 6d.; B. Somerville, 6d.; — Callow, 6d.; F. Taylor, 3d. (members of the Patriotic Club); D. C. Dallas, 6d.; J. Marshall, ls.; A. Friend, 2s. 6d.; A. Yates, 6d.

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BRANCH REPORTS.

CLERKENWELL.—On Wednesday, Feb. 9, Dr. W. M. von Swartwout gave a continuation of "The Only Practical Solution of the Capital and Labour Question;" a very interesting discussion followed. On Sunday, Feb. 13th, Wm. Blundell lectured on "Starvation: Physical and Mental." He referred to the shocking conditions under which the children of the workers derive their scanty pittance of so-called "education," and maintained that the workers should combine to break down the system of commercialism and superstition with which this "education" is enmeshed. Good discussion followed. Other meetings have been attended by members of this Branch with great success. Literature has sold fairly well.—W. B. and T. E. W., secs.

CROYDON.—On Sunday, February 13th, H. H. Sparling gave an interesting lecture on the "Evolution of Cannibalism," in which he showed that the primitive man-eating still persists in the modern labour-theft of landlordism and capitalism. On Thursday, Feb. 10, a resolution expressing sympathy for Mowbray and Henderson, and condemning Grantham, was carried unanimously.—T.

GARRETT AND SUMMERSTOWN.—On Tuesday the 8th inst. our first meeting was held, when a lecture on "Socialism" was delivered by comrade Kitz. An Odd-fellows' demonstration close by, a smoking concert at a club in the village, and a certain amount of police intimidation all influenced our meeting unfavourably. In spite of it all the audience was a good one and the lecture was well received. The lecturer began by explaining the miserable fare and monotonous work that thousands must inevitably be born to with the prospect of the workhouse to die in; and showed that the only remedy was the collective ownership and control by the people of all the means of production, etc. Some questions were satisfactorily answered by the lecturer.—H. H.

HACKNEY.—On Sunday morning, the weather being bitter cold, we moved from our station at the "Salmon and Ball" to the church opposite, and there held what might be called a debate. Mr. Poulson, of the Christian Evidence Society, opened the meeting. After referring to Plato, Sparta, the Republic of Rome, the Paris Commune, and Robert Owen, stating that these had tried Socialism and found it would not work, he went on to say that the Socialism of to-day was "riot and disorder," and repeated all the ridiculous fallacies about dividing up the wealth, etc. By the time he had finished there were about 500 people present, and H. Graham replied to the evident satisfaction of the audience. H. Davis also answered some of the objections. In the evening, H. A. Barker gave a lecture on "Material and Spiritual Consolation." The "material" requirements of man, he explained, were good clothing, good housing, and good food. He showed how these things were unobtainable by the great bulk of the workers. As for "spiritual" consolation, it was too much of a flighty and unreasoning character to be of any material benefit to the workers. After the lecture we had a very lively discussion. Fair sale of *Commonweal*.—M.

MITCHAM.—On Sunday evening we had a good muster to hear comrade Charles, who gave a very interesting account of the "Rise and Progress of the League," showing how a few men united together in a noble Cause could in many ways assist the propaganda. Comrades Harrison and Hill also spoke, and altogether a pleasant evening was passed. We closed as usual with singing.—S. G., sec.

EDINBURGH.—On Monday Feb. 7th, in Free Tron Hall, J. A. Campbell gave a lecture on "Organism, Functions and Environment of Society," in lieu of R. W. Armour, who was to have given a lecture on "The Use of Banks." There was a fair audience.—J. G.

GLASGOW.—Owing to our great demonstration on behalf of the miners on Sunday (an account of which is given elsewhere), we had to abandon our other outdoor meetings. On Sunday evening, comrade McLaren, who had presided at one of the platforms, delivered a lecture on "Anarchism," in which he ably defined and justified the principles of Anarchy. He did not believe, however, that Anarchism could be realised until Socialism had modified the present unsocial habits of the people. In the discussion which followed, John Barlas, B.A., of the S.D.F., who ably assisted us in getting up our demonstration—took part.

HULL.—On Sunday, at our club-room, comrade Sheckell gave a lecture on "Equality," which was well received. Only one opposed, who wanted to know who would do all the dirty and disagreeable work when we were all equal. He was very ably replied to by Sheckell and others. We are doing our best for the Henderson and Mowbray Defence Fund, and we have decided to keep the cards open for another two or three weeks longer.—J. D., sec.

LEEDS.—On Friday, February 11, Maguire delivered a lecture to the members of No. 7 Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers on "Socialism and Trades Unions." There was no opposition, but several spoke in support. Among these was our comrade Braithwaite, who said it was urged that profit was the only incentive to production. If this be so, he was surprised that the workers did not give over producing, as it was very little profit they made out of the transaction. A number of *Commonweals* were sold at the close of the meeting. On Sunday afternoon we held our usual open-air meeting in Vicar's Croft. Maguire spoke on the "Work of the Socialist League." Next Sunday morning we shall have comrade Mahon to address an open-air meeting in Vicar's Croft at 11 a.m.—F. C.

NORWICH.—Good meetings were held last Sunday on Tombland in the morning and Market Place in the afternoon, which were addressed by F. Kitz, who also delivered a lecture on "The Russian Nihilists" in the evening, which was well received and discussed by the members. A good meeting was also addressed on Prince of Wales's Road by Morley and Darley. Literature sold well as usual, and 3s. was collected at one of the meetings for the Prisoners' Aid Fund. Next Sunday we commence our open-air meetings at St. Faith's and other country stations for the purpose of developing some of our latent speaking power.

LECTURE DIARY.

London Branches.

Bloomsbury.—Communist Club, 49 Tottenham Street. Friday Feb. 18, at 8.30. W. Uley will lecture.—On Thursday 24th Mrs. Wilson will lecture for the Branch at Cleveland Hall.

Clerkenwell.—Hall of the Socialist League, 13 Farringdon Road, E.C. Sunday Feb. 20, at 8.30. D. J. Nicoll, "The Charms of Civilisation." Wednesday 23, at 8.30. Edith Bland (Fabian), "Ancient Rome and Modern Babylon."

Croydon.—Royal County House, West Croydon Station Yard. Sunday February 20. James Macdonald on "Socialism from a Workman's Standpoint."—Committee Meeting every Friday at 8 p.m. sharp, at Parker Road.

Hackney.—23 Audrey Street, Goldsmith Row. Club Room open every evening from 8 till 11. Business Meeting every Tuesday at 8.30. Discussion Class Thursday evenings. On Sunday Feb. 20, at 8.30., J. Lane will lecture on "The Different Schools of Socialistic Thought."

Hammersmith.—Kelmescott House, Upper Mall, W. Sunday Feb. 20, at 8. Graham Wallas (Fabian) on "The Tithes Agitation."

Hoxton (L. E. L.).—Meetings at Exchange Coffee House suspended. Members are requested to meet at new premises, 2 Crondel Street, New North Road, on Sunday Feb. 20, at 8 p.m.

Merton.—11 Merton Terrace, High Street. Club Room open every evening. Committee every Thursday. Discussions held every Sunday morning at 11.

Mitcham.—Corner of Merton Lane and Fountain Place. Club Room open every evening from 7.30 till 11.

Country Branches.

Bingley.—Coffee Tavern. Every Monday at 7.30 p.m.

Birmingham.—Carr's Lane Coffee House. Every Monday evening, at 8.

Bradford.—Morris's Dining Rooms, 114 City Road. Wednesdays, at 8.

Edinburgh (Scottish Section).—4 Park Street. Meets every Thursday at 8 p.m. Reading Room and Library open every Wednesday evening, 8 till 10.—Free Tron Hall, Monday February 21, at 8 o'clock. Patrick Geddes, F.R.S.E., on "Theory and Practice of Social Reform." (Second lecture.) Monday Feb. 28, Edward Carpenter, M.A., Sheffield, "Civilisation, its Cause and Cure." Admission, 6d, and 3d.—Treasurer will receive Subscriptions for Prisoners' Aid Fund.

Glasgow.—Reading-room of the Branch, 84 John St., open from 10 a.m. till 10 p.m. daily.—On Sunday, open-air meetings on Jail's Square at 1 and 5 o'clock; members requested to turn up to sell literature. In the evening, at 6.30, in Hall, No. 2 Carlton Place, Clyde Side, J. Bruce Glasier, "Socialism in Scottish Song."

Hamilton.—Branch meets every Thursday at 7.30 in Paton's Hall, Chapel Street.

Hull.—11 Princess Street, Sykes Street. Club Room open every evening. Lectures every Thursday and Sunday at 7 p.m. Feb. 20. R. Muir, "Land Question."

Lancaster.—Market Hall Coffee Tavern Lecture Room. Friday evenings at 8.

Leicester.—Spiritualist Hall, Silver Street. Fridays at 8 p.m.

Manchester.—145 Grey Mare Lane, Bradford, Manchester. Club and Reading Room open every evening 6 to 10 p.m. Lecture and discussion every Wednesday at 8 p.m.

Norwich.—No. 6 St. Benedict St. Lecture and discussion every Sunday and Monday at 8 p.m. Reading-room open every day from 8.30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Oxford.—Temperance Hall, 25½ Pembroke Street. Thursdays, at 8.30 p.m.

Open-air Propaganda—Sunday 20.

11.30... Hackney—"Salmon and Ball" Allman & Davis
11.30... Hammersmith—Beadon Rd. The Branch
11.30... Hoxton Church, Pitfield Street Barker
11.30... Regent's Park The Branch
11.30... St. Pancras Arches The Branch
11.30... Walham Green—Station Johnson
3.30... Hyde Park (near Marble Arch) Mainwaring

PROVINCES.—SUNDAY.

Norwich.—St. Mary's Plain, 11; Market Place, 3.
Leeds.—Hunslet Moor, 11 a.m.; Vicar's Croft, 7 p.m.

CLEVELAND HALL, 54 Cleveland Street (near Portland Road Station).—Sundays at 11.30 a.m. Feb. 20. George Bernard Shaw, "Driving Capital out of the Country."

"THE PEACOCK," High Street, Islington.—Tuesday Feb. 22, at 9 p.m. Thomas E. Wardle, "Is Socialism Terrorism?"

THE DECORATOR'S CLUB, 37 Howland St., Tottenham Court Road, W.—Thursday Feb. 24, at 8.30. Thos. E. Wardle, "The Truths of Socialism." Music.
"THREE KINGS," Clerkenwell Close.—Sunday Feb. 27, at 8.30 p.m. Thomas E. Wardle will lecture.

Free Lectures on Socialism, in reply to recent Criticism, will be held in Farringdon Hall, 13 Farringdon Road, on Sunday mornings in February.—Sunday February 20, at 11.15 a.m. Alexander Donald, "Some Objections to Socialism Answered."

Debate on Socialism.—A Debate is taking place at the Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, City Road, E.C., on February 2, 9, 16, and 23, at 8 p.m., between Mrs. Annie Besant and Mr. G. W. Foote, on the question, "Is Socialism sound?"

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