

for themselves,—or rather, left without a chance of looking out for themselves, for there is not the least likelihood of one-third of these discarded hands finding employment. Trade is bad enough in Leeds, but worse in nearly every other part of the country. These hands are now left, outcasts in their own land, to intensify the distress and swell the army of unemployed.

Some of these employés have worked all their lives, and are now unable to begin work afresh at a new task. The provision made for those who have grown grey in the service of the firm is instructive as an example of capitalist generosity. One man who has toiled for them for fifty years is to be pensioned off with 2s. 6d. per week. He would have got this much at least from the parish, but being now a "pensioner," is disqualified for receiving poor-law relief. Yet he is one of a fortunate few; for some old people who had been with the firm for from thirty to forty years were told on applying for similar favours that they must wait until some of the older pensioners have dropped off. The total sum paid in pensions is twenty-nine shillings per week.

The conditions under which most of the hands work are of the "hell-hole" kind usual in most large factories. About seventy men are employed as "hecklers." The atmosphere of their workroom is permeated with a fine dust, which comes from the flax and settles on their lungs. The men are all short-lived: an old man is exceedingly rare. This kind of work is just what forces men to drink. Sobriety becomes an impossible virtue (if it be a virtue at all). Many of the girls work under conditions little better—and of course with the usual results.

The wages of these employés are regulated by the usual method of competition. Of late they have been steadily decreasing. Ten years ago the weaving girls could earn from twelve to fifteen shillings per week—an enormous income for a young factory lass in the best of times. But declining trade and intensified competition overtook the struggling capitalists, and in order to keep a grip on their profits the girls' wages were gradually reduced, until now the average will be from 3s. 6d. to 5s. 6d. weekly. This is but an illustration of what is going on in other departments.

There is another mill at Shrewsbury owned by the same firm, which at one time employed two thousand hands. All that has been said of the Leeds mill is equally true of the Shrewsbury one.

It would be useless to speculate on what will become of the people thus deprived of their living. We can, however, feel sure that their future will be hard enough and that Society, which has so heavily sinned against them, will hear more of them some day. It is a curious proof of the brutality of the commercial system, and shows off the "free workman" of modern times in a strange light. A few thousand people turned adrift in the richest country in the world: many of them into the most abject misery.

In conclusion, a few words to you, Mr. Stephen Marshall. Pray don't think the above is a personal attack upon you, or even upon the distinguished firm of which you are the head. This case was selected merely as a type of others, to illustrate the system. You are, no doubt, as good as most of your class, and perhaps better than a great many. If you did not get your fortune by work—the only *honest* way of getting anything—neither did your fellow capitalists. Indeed, if you are any way inclined to moralise, you will probably console yourself with the reflection that if *you* hadn't appropriated the wealth made by these poor old men and unfortunate girls somebody else would. After all, the blame is not entirely to be laid at your door, or even at that of your class. If the workers were more alive to their own interests, the cunning and dishonesty of the capitalist would avail nothing. No doubt you will find a multitude of excuses to calm your conscience. Besides, it must be mentioned in your favour that if you have left your employés in poverty, you have also left them a church, erected at the expense and by the generosity of your firm. Therein they may find at least spiritual comfort, and learn to despise earthly treasures—which they might as well do, seeing that the little you have left them is hardly worth respecting. But you are not merely a gross money-grabber, absorbed in the pursuit of pelf. You are an ardent patriot and upholder of your country's greatness. When the integrity of the empire was threatened, you, like a true Whig-imperialist, rushed to its support. You are a member of the Loyal and Patriotic party, and no doubt you will subscribe more to its funds than you will give to relieve the workers, without whom your funds would have been as small as men of average ability usually possess. It is not very loyal and patriotic of you to scurry out of the country with your capital because profits are higher elsewhere. Surely a disinterested patriot would prefer a small profit in his own country to a larger one in a foreign land. But let that pass; it is only what the most patriotic of your fellow loyalists would do in similar circumstances. It is no use raking up these things now when you are leaving us. Get yourself off to America, and your capital with you. None of us will lament the loss of you,—though we would have liked to nationalise the machinery. However, the Socialists in America will see to that soon enough. Farewell, and may the Revolution overtake you before you have squeezed another million out of the people of America!

Leeds.

J. L. M. and T. M.

How many men are there who have lived as idle parasites, and who, if they had been compelled to work in order to gain their bread, would have made good and industrious citizens.—*Letourneau*.

No man could be rich, no man could be poor, in Peru; but all might enjoy, and did enjoy, a competence. Ambition, avarice, the love of change, the morbid spirit of discontent, those passions which most agitate the minds of men, found no place in the bosom of the Peruvian.—*Prescott's "Conquest of Peru."*

## REVIEW.

MODERN SOCIALISM. By Annie Besant.

MRS. BESANT has written a useful pamphlet under this name, all the more useful as with her name on the title-page it will reach some groups of advanced political thinkers who would otherwise have been frightened off the subject. It is clearly and pleasantly written, with as little technicality as may be, and in the main steers clear of subjects that are in controversy among Socialists. The arrangement is good. After a brief notice of the utopian Socialism of Robert Owen and the communities which resulted from it, it takes up the question of production for profit, with the consequent antagonism of classes; then deals with competition, and points out its evils and the remedies for it; then points out what capital is, and deals with the objections to a society producing without profit. The opening sentence of the chapter on Land which follows, is somewhat sanguine: "It is hardly necessary to argue at this time of day that land—*i.e.*, natural agents—ought not to be the private property of individuals"; but that there *is* a public to whom such words can be addressed is true, and is a hopeful truth indeed. The concluding chapters deal with Education, Justice, and Amusement, and the Conclusion takes up some of the more ordinary objections which anti-Socialists make who have pretence to economical knowledge.

Perhaps the American communities are dwelt on rather disproportionately to the length of the pamphlet. Although these communities were experiments in association, from one point of view they were anti-Socialistic, as they withdrew themselves from general society—from political society—and let it take care of itself. They were rather modern and more extended forms of monasticism, and were distinctly exclusive,—hence their failure. To me, in common with other Communists I should suppose, Mrs. Besant's definition of Socialism and Communism seems incorrect: "Socialism merely implies that the raw material of the soil and the means of production," says Mrs. Besant, "shall not be the private property of individuals, but shall be under the control of the community." But I ask is not the part of wealth which can be called "the means of production" that part which individuals do not use for satisfying their personal needs? And that part which they are so using no Communist would meddle with. What each takes from the common store for his personal needs he will use as he pleases, so long as he does not turn it into an instrument of compulsion for the exploitation of others. The Socialism which Mrs. Besant and others sometimes distinguish from Communism, is only an initial and imperfect form of it. The abolition of private property in "the raw material of the soil and the means of production" *must* lead to Communism, as the present monopolists will instinctively perceive, and they will in consequence resist the initial stage by any and every means in their power.

In a future edition Mrs. Besant might put back the commencement of the Industrial Period to a date before the Great Machine Industry. Adam Smith belongs to the Division of Labour Period, what Marx calls the "Periode Manufacturière," during which the workman was himself the part of a machine, the *group*, which was the unit of industrial production. This system was at work early in the seventeenth century, and under it exploitation of labour went on merrily, though of course the old individualist system of production survived partly amidst it, just as the division-of-labour system still survives amidst our machine-industry. A sentence or two on this point need not interfere with the clearness of Mrs. Besant's exposition of profit-mongering.

I may add that Mrs. Besant has had a testimonial to the usefulness of her pamphlet in the eagerness, or indeed the brutality, with which it has been attacked by some of the members of the party with which she has hitherto been identified.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

## OBJECTIONS TO SOCIALISM.

(A Reply to Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, M.P.)

VI.

(Continued from p. 93.)

AFTER the very serious mis-statement that Socialism aims at taking "the private economies of millions of industrious wage-earners for the benefit of those who may have neither been thrifty nor industrious"—a misstatement the more serious in that the present system, of which our objector is champion, does precisely this very wrong—we have the time-honoured deprecation of "physical force." This deprecation always seems to me so queerly out of place in the mouths of those who defend our modern methods. For these, initiated by physical force, are based on physical force and entirely maintained by physical force.

When as an objection to Socialism it is urged that one final and supreme use of physical force may have to be and there an end of it for ever, we note, first, that it ill becomes the advocates of capitalistic production to complain of their own weapon being turned against their own throat. We note next, as has been noted before in this series of papers, that not to keep constantly before men's eyes the certainty of such an actual struggle is to preach peace when there is no peace. We note third (and for the repetition of this for the thousandth time the constant repetitions of our antagonists are to blame) that the revolution could and would be a perfectly peaceful one, were it not for the resistance to their perfectly righteous dispossession that will be forthcoming at the hands of the privileged classes, when the process of dis-gorgement sets in.

Mr. Bradlaugh reads Shelley. Let him turn to the "Masque of