

"oakum," was the answer, accompanied with a brutal jeer. "Did I take butter with my bread?" "Now, get along there; we don't waste time talking with the likes of you." All were ordered under the sheds and told to stop jawing. A more wretched crew could not be gathered together. Their rags hung upon them soaked with the rain they had been exposed to outside, and now it poured under the straw from the surrounding ground and soaked us again as we lay. About eleven o'clock a man feverish and ill raised a cry for water, and after repeated calls an official attired like a jailer and armed with a truncheon, made his appearance with a can of water. After bestowing curses deep and hearty on us all, he asked for the particular one who had disturbed him, flashing the light of his night lantern along the prostrate forms. He discovered a thin, feeble man, who asked him for some of the water he carried. The official, who was evidently drunk, poured the water over him. The gurgles and gasps of the man evoked loud cries of "Shame" from the others, but the warder unloosed his truncheon, and with many curses and threats was on the point of laying about him with it when he was stopped by the arrival of another official.

The hubbub subsided, but sleep was denied me. My swollen feet caused me intense pain, and whilst my neighbours cursed me for restlessness they stealthily abstracted as much straw as possible from under me in order to increase their own litters. The morning found us damp and wretched. We were ordered out on the paths of the workhouse grounds, and those who elected to stay for what the warder satirically styled breakfast, were given a pound of oakum to pick and a piece of dry bread. The oakum was picked sitting on the saturated ground.

After many more privations I re-entered the huge city and was fortunate enough to secure employment. My object in penning this narrative is to pourtray the fate of those who are unfortunate enough to fall out of the ranks of labour into the abyss of misery prepared for them by the institutions of Modern Society in England.

The slavish portion of the working-class, especially in England, whose sole criterion of human life is to always be in one place and at work, generally regard the travel-stained tramp as a pariah and outcast, and join more or less vociferously in the abuse which the rest of Society heaps upon him. A vagrant class is, however, indicative of social injustice and decay. The nomads, half peasants half tramps, who are always upon our highways, are the descendants of the dispossessed commoners and freeholders, whose heritage has been stolen by bloated land thieves and squires. Great strikes, lock-outs, all labour crises send a number of workmen and their families upon the road.

Again, there is a large contingent whose rebelliousness against the rigid, cold, and exhausting conditions environing labour to-day, takes the form of vagrancy. They will tell you plainly that there are already enough at work, and whilst so many get rich without work they don't clearly see why they should work and be poor; so they learn the tricks of the road and keep to it. Certain it is that under our present system of production all cannot get employment, and the tramp at least escapes the grime and filth that surround poverty in the great cities.

My own experience has shown how soon the cleanest and smartest can become unkempt and ragged when upon the road, and when meeting such, whether it is the workman forced to it for the first time, or the one who has been born into it, I adjure the reader not to pass the usual hasty verdict that rises to the lips of the unthinking, and condemn for misfortune, but to take a broad philosophical view of the economical condition of Society and of the unjust monopolies of the means of production, which here and in America have, for one of its chief results, the homeless, helpless Tramp.

JOHN LITSTER.

### "An empty pocket is the worst of crimes."

The poor lad who set out from Fulham to find work, and found it at Eastbourne in the form of oakum-picking rewarded by bread-and-water, will have leisure to consider the enormity of his crime in daring to be born and to require sleep and shelter. But after all, though the Eastbourne magistrates might have tempered their logic with mercy, and though all persons of a kindly nature would be glad to lend a hand to their tarring and feathering, their view of the property in an empty boat, looked on as a potential lodging-house, is in strict logical accordance with the bourgeois view of property in general. "This is mine, and whether I can use it or not, nobody else shall," is the watchword of property; and Queen, Lords and Commons, Army and Navy, Judge, Magistrate, Lawyer, and Policeman are kept in their places and paid (handsomely too) by Society in order to carry out this watchword to its legitimate consequences, that is, the semi-starvation and complete degradation of the majority of the people.

W. M.

There are dreadful punishments enacted against thieves; but it were much better to make such good provisions by which every man might be put in a method how to live, and so to be preserved from the fatal necessity of stealing and dying for it.—*Sir Thomas More's 'Utopia.'*

"There are two things," says Socrates, "which the magistrates of Athens will be careful to keep out of our city—opulence and poverty. Opulence, because it engenders effeminacy; poverty, because it produces baseness; both because they lead to Revolution."

The total amount of labour needed to provide for our wants will be as follows: Food, half an hour's labour daily; clothing, fifteen minutes' labour daily; houses, etc., half an hour's labour; that is (assuming every man did his share), a total of 1½ hour's labour daily would suffice to supply us in abundance with all the comforts of life. The progress of invention and the increasing application of machinery are daily reducing even the amount of labour, so that the part which has now mainly to be played by man, is simply to superintend the machinery which does the work.—*William Hoyle.*

## SONGS FOR THE PEOPLE.

### I.—THE SELFISH, TYRANNICAL WHIG.

TUNE—"The Shamrock so green."

Know ye the man who is fawning and sly,  
With a smile on his lips, and a leer in his eye,  
As cunning's a fox, and as stubborn's a pig,  
A beautiful snake with a venomous bite,  
Caressing with fondness and ranking with spite—  
A legal assassin, too dastard to fight—  
A dissembling Reformer, who tramples on right?  
Mark him well, he's a selfish, tyrannical Whig!

Know ye the man who betrays with a smile,  
Like Judas, the traitor, ungrateful and vile,  
And for aught but his selfishness cares not a fig—  
With a patriot's tongue and a renegade's mind,  
Oppressing the poor, and deceiving mankind—  
To Chartists a tyrant, to freemen unkind—  
Unfeeling as rock, and as empty as wind?  
Mark him well, he's a selfish, tyrannical Whig!

Know ye the man who is crafty and base,  
Deceives his old friends, and the people betrays—  
Wheels like a harlequin—cheats like a prig—  
To Freedom a despot—to knowledge a knave—  
Exalting the sycophant, trampling the brave—  
Who scorns the poor workman, and makes him a slave—  
A white painted urn on a rank, hollow grave?  
Mark him well, he's a selfish, tyrannical Whig!

—*Chartist Circular, 1840.*

### ON THE SUPPRESSION OF FREE SPEECH AT CHICAGO.

With stifled voice who crieth from the West,  
Where sinks the ensanguined sun of Freedom, erst  
That spread her stainless wings, and sheltering nurst,  
From out all lands, the hunted and oppressed?  
America! shrink not from thy new guest,  
For Liberty was thine for best and worst:  
How should her seed upon thy land be curst  
Till her false friends as traitors stand confest?

Doth Freedom dwell where ruthless kings of gain  
Like stealthy vampires, still on Labour feed—  
Though free to toil, or starve on plenty's plain?  
Then what of Labour's hope—the will to be  
Equal, Fraternal, knowing want nor greed—  
Throned in a people's heart when states are free?

June 1886.

WALTER CRANE.

### A LETTER FROM AMERICA.

In connection with the above sonnet by comrade Crane, the following extract from a letter just received from an American comrade will be read with additional interest:

Geneva, Kane Co., Illinois.

"My mail has, for the past month, been opened and read by the detectives who are set to dog us (my wife and myself), and several letters of value have 'gone astray.' Of course we have to bear such annoyances. This is practically Russia now; and to be known as a Socialist is to be a marked man or woman. Many times we have been made aware that our every move is now watched; and not content with entering and searching our house and opening and stealing our letters, we are threatened with mob-violence to compel us to leave the town. Anonymous articles are printed in the local papers, containing threats of personal violence to us, and abounding with such pet names as 'bloody Anarchists,' 'rioters,' 'bomb-throwers,' 'murderers,' and the like. Of course we are not going to be driven out of town by any such means, but it is hurting my business, and we may have to leave on that account.

"There is little of interest to write in regard to the movement in this locality (I am 35 miles from Chicago). The trial of the Anarchists occurs immediately, and you will probably have learned the result before this reaches England. Many of our comrades, and our lawyers, are sanguine of an acquittal, but I confess I have grave fears for the result. If it was simply a case of justice and law our comrades would certainly be acquitted, as there is not the least evidence against one of the men now awaiting trial; but the whole course of the press and the authorities during the past few weeks proves that they are determined upon vengeance, and that no stone will be left unturned to force a verdict of murder and sentence of death upon at least one of the prisoners. The attitude of the press reminds one of the closing days of the Paris Commune. They have been unceasing in their cries, not for justice but for vengeance. The future may bring about strange events."

An evil is not cured by counteracting its symptoms, or external phenomena, but by attacking it at the root.—*Büchner.*

The boundless and most pernicious rage of speculation will come to an end, and in place of incalculable national debts we shall have an inexhaustible national wealth.—*Büchner.*

All violence exerted towards opinions which falls short of extermination serves no other purpose than to render them more known, and ultimately to increase the zeal and number of their abettors. Opinions that are false may be dissipated by the force of argument; when they are true, their punishment draws towards them, infallibly, more of the public attention, and enables them to dwell with more lasting weight and pressure in the mind. The progress of reason is aided, in this case, by the passions, and finds in curiosity, compassion, and resentment, powerful auxiliaries.—*Robert Hall.*

It is the uncertainty generated by these recurring hard times which indisposes poor men to habits of thrift and stays the development of labour. Of old the worker felt reasonably sure of his future. Now the average worker knows not what a day may bring forth. The wolf is ever growling behind his door. Meancius, the great Chinese sage, three hundred years before Christ, taught that uncertainty as to the means of existence is one of the most important factors in the demoralisation of a people. There is a lesson for us in this sagacity of "the heathen Chinese."—*Heber Newton.*