

## SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: THE PROLETARIAN STAGE.

THE insurrection of the 10th August, which culminated in the final downfall of the monarchy and the imprisonment of the king and royal family in the Temple, was headed and organised by a new body definitely revolutionary, intended to be the expression of the power of the proletariat, the new Commune of Paris, the moving spirit of which was Marat, who even had a seat of honour assigned to him in the Council. Already, before the king had been sent to the Temple, the Girondin Vergniaud, as president, had moved the suspension of the "hereditary representative" and the summoning of a national convention. Danton was made minister of justice; Robespierre was on the Council of the Commune. A new Court of Criminal Justice was established for the trial of the crimes of August 10th. The members of the Convention were chosen by double election, but the property qualification of "active and passive citizens" was done away with.

While all this was going on, the movement of the reactionary armies on France was still afoot; and the furious flame of French national enthusiasm, which was afterwards used by the mere self-seeking conqueror Napoleon, was lighted by the necessity of the moment—not to be extinguished in days long after his. We mention this here because, in order to appreciate what follows, it must be remembered that an armed coalition of the absolutist countries was gathering together, threatening to drown the Revolution in the blood of the French people, and especially of the people of Paris; and that one of its armies, commanded by the Duke of Brunswick, a famous general of Frederick the Great, was already within a few days' march of the city; and that nothing was between Paris and destruction but undisciplined levies and the rags of the neglected army formed under the old régime; while at the same time the famous royalist insurrection had broken out in La Vendée. Every republican in Paris, therefore, had good reason to feel that both his own life and the future of his country were in immediate danger at the hands of those who did not care what became of France and her people so long as the monarchy could be restored.

Danton now demanded a search for arms, which was carried out on August 29th; and the prisons were filled with prisoners suspected of royalist plotting, and many of them surely guilty of it.

Verdun fell on the 2nd September, and the Duke of Brunswick boasted that he would presently dine in Paris; and on the same night insurrectionary courts of justice—Lynch-law, as we should call it now—were established at the prisons, and the prisoners were brought before them and judged. If found guilty they were turned out into the street with the words, "Let the prisoner be enlarged," or, "Let him be conducted to La Force" or "the Abbaye," according to whether he was at one or the other. He was then immediately cut down and slain by a body of men waiting for him. If he was acquitted, the word went, "Let him be enlarged," with the cry of "Vive la nation!" and he went free. It should be noted, in order to show the hysterical excitement amidst which all this was done, that the acquittals were greeted with cries of joy, tears, and embraces on the part of the court and its sympathisers. It may be further noted that the watches, rings, etc., of the slain were brought to the town-hall by the slayers, who claimed each a louis (20s.) for their night's work. The number of the slain was one thousand and eighty-nine.

The next day a circular was issued by the Committee of Public Safety approving of the massacre, signed by Sergent, Panis (Danton's friend), and Marat, with seven others.

The Girondins in the Assembly and elsewhere kept quiet for the time, though they afterwards used the event against the Jacobins.

Meanwhile the French army, under Dumouriez, had seized on the woodland hills of the Argonne, checked Brunswick, defeated him at Valmy, and Paris was saved.

The Convention now met—on the 20th September—and the parties of the Girondins and the Mountain, or extreme revolutionists, were at once formed in it. It is noteworthy that while it declared as its foundation the sovereignty of the people and the abolition of royalty, it also decreed that landed and other property was sacred for ever. Apropos of which, it may here be mentioned that the bookseller Moreau, having hinted at something like agrarian law, and some faint shadow of Socialism, had to go into hiding to avoid hanging.

So far, therefore, we have got no further than the complete triumph of bourgeois republicanism; though, indeed, the possibility of its retaining its position depended, as the event showed, on the support of the proletariat, which was only given on the terms that the material condition of the workers should be altered for the better by the new régime. And those terms, in the long-run, bourgeois republicanism could not keep, and therefore it fell.

The Girondins or moderate party in the Convention, began their attack on the Jacobins on the subject of the September massacres, and also by attacking Marat personally (on the 21st September)—which attack, however, failed egregiously. The Girondins, as their name implies, leaned on the support of the provinces, where respectability was stronger than in Paris, and tried to levy a body-guard for the defence of the Convention against the Paris populace; but though they got the decree for it passed, they could not carry it out. In their character of political economists, also, they resisted the imposing a maximum price on grain, a measure which the scarcity caused by the general disturbance made imperative, if the proletariat were to have any share in the advantages of the Revolution. In short, the Girondins

were obviously out of sympathy with the mass of the people—the only power that can support revolutionists; therefore, though they were posing as supporters of the rights of the people, they were bound to fall.

The trial of the king now came on, and tested the Girondins in a fresh way; they mostly voted his death, but as if driven to do so from a feeling that opinion was against them, and that they might as well have some credit for this. The king was beheaded on January 21st, 1793, and as an immediate consequence England and Spain declared war. But this business of the king made a kind of truce between the parties, which, however, soon came to an end. Marat was the great object of attack, and on the 25th February, 1793, he was decreed accused on account of some passages in his journal approving of the bread riots which had taken place, and suggesting the hanging of a forestaller or two. On the other hand, on the 10th of March, the section Bonconseil demanded the arrest of the prominent Girondins. Meantime, Danton had been trying all along to keep the peace between the two parties, but on April 1st, the Girondins accused him of complicity with Dumouriez, who had now fled over the frontier, and so forced him into becoming one of their most energetic enemies. The position of the Girondins was now desperate. On the 24th March, Marat was acquitted and brought back in triumph to the Convention.

The Girondins got appointed a packed committee of twelve in the interest of the Convention as against the Paris sections. As an answer to this a central committee of the sections was formed, which on May 31st dominated the Municipality (not loth to be so dealt with) and surrounded the Convention with troops. After an attempt on the part of the Girondins to assert their freedom of action, the Convention decreed them accused and they were put under arrest. They died afterwards, some by the guillotine, some even more miserably, within a few months; but their party is at an end from this date. All that happened in the Convention from this time to the fall of Robespierre in "Thermidor" was the work of a few revolutionists, each trying to keep level with the proletarian instinct, and each failing in turn. They had not the key to the great secret; they were still bourgeois, and still supposed that there must necessarily be a propertyless proletariat led by bourgeois, or at least served by them; they had not conceived the idea of the extinction of classes, and the organisation of the people itself for its own ends.

Marat's death at the hand of Charlotte Corday, on July 14th, removed the only real rival to Robespierre, the only man who might, perhaps, have made Napoleonism unnecessary.

The law of maximum was now passed, however, and a cumulative income tax, so that, as Carlyle remarks, the workman was at least better off under the Terror than he had ever been before; but without a direct attack on the root of exploitation there can be no true equality, and nothing that can be laid hold of as a principle of Society; the people cannot understand, and therefore cannot themselves organise themselves. Until labour is free, it has to be organised by those who are the masters of the labourers, and the revolutionists of this period were at once too good and too bad to be their masters; therefore, as above said, they could only drift on the current of events.

Robespierre, Danton, and the Hebertists were now what of force was left in the Convention, and doubtless the first of these had made up his mind to get the reins of power into his own hands. Meantime, a new calendar, in which the months were distinguished by names taken from the march of the natural drama of the year, was published, and an attempt was made to establish a new worship founded on Materialism; but, like all such artificial attempts to establish what is naturally the long growth of time, it failed. Chaumette, Hebert and their followers were the leaders in this business, which Robespierre disapproved of, and Danton growled at.

The Extraordinary Tribunal under Fouquier Tinville was now the Executive in Paris, and backed by the law of suspects, speedily got rid of all obstacles to the Revolution, and of many also who had worked according to their lights for its furtherance. Robespierre, it is hard to say how or why, became at last practical dictator.

The Hebertists under the name of the "Enragés" (rabids) were accused at Robespierre's instance, found guilty and executed. Danton, giving way it would seem to some impulse towards laziness inherent in his nature, let himself be crushed, and died along with Camille Desmoulins on 31st of March, 1794, and at last Robespierre was both in reality and appearance supreme. On the 8th of June he inaugurated his new worship by his feast of the Supreme Being, but did not follow it up by any diminution in the number of batches for the guillotine; and ominous grumbings began to be heard. According to a story current, Carnot got by accident at a list of 40 to be arrested, among whom he read his own name. On the 26th July, Robespierre was met by unexpected opposition in the Convention. The next day he was decreed accused at the Convention, and Henriot deposed from the commandship of the National Guard; but there was a respite which a more ready man, a man of military instinct at least, might have used. Robespierre lacked that instinct; Henriot failed miserably in his attempt to crush the Convention. The insurrectionary troops on being appealed to by the Convention, wavered and gave way, and Robespierre was arrested. In fact, Robespierre seems to have worn out the patience of the people by his continued executions. Had he proclaimed an amnesty after his Feast of the Supreme Being, he would have had a much longer lease of power; as it was he and his tail died on the 28th July.

<sup>1</sup> A curious exemplification of the change in the speed of the transmission of news, is given by the fact that *The Times* published the first news of this fall of Robespierre three weeks after the event.

There was nothing left to carry on the Revolution after this but a knot of self-seeking politicians of the usual type; they had only to keep matters going till they were ready for the dictator who could organise for his own purposes people and army, and who came in the shape of Napoleon. The proletarians were no longer needed as allies, and disunited, ignorant of principles, and used to trust to leaders, they could make no head against the Society which they had shaken indeed, owing to its internal dissensions, but which they were not yet able to destroy.

One event only there remains to be mentioned; the attempt of Babœuf and his followers to get a proletarian republic recognised; it has been called an insurrection, but it never came to that, being crushed while it was yet only the beginning of a propaganda. Babœuf and his followers were brought to trial in April, 1796. He and Darthes were condemned to death, but killed themselves before the sentence could be carried out. Ten others were condemned to prison and exile; and so ended the first Socialist propaganda.

It is commonly said that Napoleon crushed the Revolution, but what he really did was to put on it the final seal of law and order. The Revolution was set on foot by the middle-classes in their own interests; the sentence which Napoleon accepted as the expression of his aims, "la carrière ouverte aux talens"—"the career thrown open to talent"—is the motto of middle-class supremacy. It implies the overthrow of aristocratic privilege and the setting up in its place of the money-aristocracy, founded on the privilege of exploitation, amidst a world of so-called "free competition." The Middle-class, the first beginnings of which we saw formed in the Middle Ages, after a long and violent struggle has conquered and is supreme from henceforth.

E. BELFORD BAX AND WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued).

## PROFESSION VERSUS HANDICRAFT.

It is a very common point for anti-Socialists in discussion to cite the case of our leading professional men, and ask will such men be content to have their day's labour classed with that of the mechanic—can it be expected that Socialism should be applied to them—men who now fairly earn their thousands a-year? At first sight it would seem a stumbling-block to the equalisation of all employment. The fact that our eminent professional men command such high salaries only points out that good physicians, surgeons, engineers, architects, etc., are scarce, although the learned professions are overstocked, and overstocked, to a great extent, with intellectual failures. This is due to our present commercial system, as I shall now try to prove.

It is generally admitted and acknowledged by our middle and upper classes—that is, by the class who live on what is commonly called private property, or even partially live on it—that manual labour in the United Kingdom is degrading, although when they are driven, through misfortune, to go to the colonies, Canada, or the United States, they rapidly change their minds on this subject. The middle-class don't object to their sons being shepherds, providing it is beyond the seas somewhere. The consequence is that those who can afford it put their sons into the "gentle callings." Parents and guardians never ask the question, "Has this youth the intellectual capacity for this profession?" or "Is he socially and morally fitted for this work?" No; it is simply a question of money. The only questions that are asked are, "What will it cost to make him a doctor?" "Can I support him until he gets a practice?" A youth can be made a doctor for so much. Some of our leading engineers will take pupils for from three to five hundred pounds per annum; and after three to five years they are turned out on the world as civil engineers. From this system it will be seen how the professions are overstocked with mental failures.

It would be waste of time to cite the cases of doctors who have hated their work from the time they entered the dissecting-room. Many medical men have come to grief, not because they were bad men, but simply from the fact that the work did not suit their intellectual and moral organisation. Apart from the formation of the forehead—and a certain formation is necessary to make a good surgeon—there are moral and social faculties which must be taken into account before a man is qualified to attend to the young, the feeble, and the helpless.

All men are good, providing they are employed on the occupation suited to their intellectual, moral, and social characteristics.

It will be now seen why some professional men are so eminent. They happen to be suited for the work their friends put them to, consequently they are successful; but how about the others?

I should think that under a Socialistic system better means would be adopted for making doctors, engineers, architects, etc., than are in vogue at present.

H. C. D.

"THESE ARE THE GESE."—A correspondent writes to the *Daily News*:—"Anent your article on Colonel Makins referring to his extraordinary announcement 'that 80 years ago Ireland had no railways,' I may remark that so wonderful and sage a statement was capped by another not perhaps quite so marvellous, but certainly equally as true, by one of his supporters, a pseudo-working man named Copley, the secretary, I believe, of the Conservative Club at Walthamstow, who, in the course of a diatribe against Mr. Gladstone, said—'What should we do without gentlemen? How should we be paid our wages if it were not for the gentlemen? You have all of you heard of the goose that laid the golden egg. Well, gentlemen, these (turning dramatically to Colonel Makins and his friends on the platform) are the geese.'"

## SONGS FOR THE PEOPLE.

### II.—THE COMING OF THE LIGHT.

TUNE—"The rising of the Moon."

Hark! the sound of many voices proclaims the dawn of day,  
And in the glow of morning the shadows fade away;  
Lo! the trumpet call is ringing, and the sky is clear and bright,  
And your masters flee in terror at the coming of the light.  
O, the coming of the light! O, the coming of the light!  
Lo! your masters flee in terror at the coming of the light.

March! march! ye swarming myriads, from the alley and the slum,  
See, the gods of this world tremble with a fear that strikes them dumb.  
Arm! arm! then, and make ready. Ye know that might is right!  
And the workers' strength shall prove it at the coming of the light.  
O, the coming of the light! O, the coming of the light!  
And the workers' strength shall prove it at the coming of the light.

Raise again the blood-red banner, that your masters fear to see,  
With the Phrygian cap upon it that tells of liberty.  
Once, more, then, raise that banner, short and brief shall be the fight,  
For the people march to battle at the coming of the light.  
O, the coming of the light! O, the coming of the light!  
When the people march to battle at the coming of the light.

Now, beneath the rule of robbers the world grows sad and old,  
The people bound and fettered by a chain of glittering gold;  
But when the trumpet soundeth, the world shall see a sight,  
The golden chain is broken, at the coming of the light.  
O, the coming of the light! O, the coming of the light!  
The golden chain is broken at the coming of the light.

D. NICOLL.

## LITERARY NOTICES.

*Die Neue Zeit*, of Evansville (Ind.) U.S.A., has ceased to exist. Started under what were apparently promising auspices and run with a good deal of sagacity and enterprise it has, after a brief career, shared the fate of so many other pioneers and "gone under."

The *Irish World*, the paper which was honoured by the English Government with an interdict upon its being allowed to enter England, and for fear of whose trenchant attacks have been adopted the tactics put in force by their predecessors against Mazzini and Garibaldi—the "Grahamising" of the mails—is not only an alert and vigorous foe of English misrule in Ireland, but also takes an advanced stand upon all labour-matters. Its editor and his staff have a pretty thorough grip of social economics, and are educating their clients to see that merely political liberty leaves a good lot yet to be striven for. "Hence these tears" on the part of our rulers, who have given to Patrick Ford's outspoken paper the proudly unique position of being the one in the wide world forbidden to enter our free and happy land!

"It is to be regretted that the failings of the other sex so often compel a woman after marriage to support her family," etc., etc.—(Boston) *Woman's Journal*. It is to be regretted that women offer their labour for a lower price in the market and undersell their husbands. It is also to be regretted that the woman's suffrage advocates do not go a little deeper into the economic causes of woman's position to-day instead of wasting their breath in abusing the male animal.—M. M.

We are sometimes accused of ill-nature when we hint that the disinterested benevolence which prompts mercantile folk to support foreign missions is not quite "all wool," and that besides the advertisement secured in solid papers, there is withal a good return for their investments in this direction. In alluding to the advent of an interesting stranger at one of the outlying military posts in Burmah, *Allen's Indian Mail* of 12th inst. says: "It was then ascertained that he was a missionary who had just made an adventurous journey from China. Possibly he may have gone over a portion of the ground that will be used in opening up a trade route between Burmah and China; but in any case he will doubtless be able to give information which will be of great service in establishing commercial relations between the two countries, and the trader will once more be indebted to the missionary as a pioneer." Just so!—S.

WHAT IS MURDER?—"Does murder become sanctified in proportion to its likelihood of resulting in wholesale massacre?" This important question is asked by that highly respectable Conservative organ the *Globe*, in a more than usually eloquent article on the extradition treaty between England and America. To this one can only reply that that entirely depends by whom the murder is committed. If a few individuals come over here and use dynamite and thereby endanger the personal safety of a Tory minister, we can understand that the action is a very wicked one, and those individuals should be immediately suppressed by all the resources that civilisation has at its back, in the shape of spies, policemen, prisons, and rope. But when a civilised government sends its troops armed and equipped with all the appliances that can be furnished by military science, to destroy the "life and property" of Arabs and Burmese, that of course is highly laudable; murder is "sanctified," "wholesale massacres" become "glorious victories," and decorations, pensions, and titles are showered upon the chiefs of the "civilised" banditti. The future, however, will decide who are the greater criminals; whether they are the men driven mad by tyranny and oppression—men who see all justice denied them, their wives and children starving, that their landlords and their governors might riot in riches and luxury—or the scoundrels who sit in high places and send their slaves and lackeys to do the deeds they dare not do themselves.—D. N.

"The ordinary Chinese peasant is far better off than the agricultural serf in England. And if some of the Chinaman's homes seem squalid to herd in, they are at any rate better than the dens which some English and Irish landlords think good enough for their Christian brothers. In England, too, how often will you see a peasant tilling his own land? How often will you find a peasant, who has any hope of possessing property, or any notion of any right except the right for which he struggles hard—a share in the public aims?"—"The Cruise of the Bacchante," by Prince Edward and Prince George of Wales.