

THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON PASSING EVENTS.

Hospital Sunday is nearly upon us once again. More than ever it behoves Socialists to press upon the labour-classes that they abstain from subscribing, and that they give their reasons for abstaining. The hospitals are for the most part on the same footing as the workhouse. They are, as regards most of the ills treated in them, and as regards the needy position of all that use them, an outcome of our present commercial system. Let those, therefore, who batten on the system, not those that are crushed under it, see to the keeping up of the institutions for the "sick poor."

Any one in want of arguments against working-class contributions to the Fund, should read the reports of the meeting held at the Mansion House on Monday, under the auspices of the Council of the Fund. At the Mansion House! Not that the sick poor live there. But this is the official home of the official representative of metropolitan capital. Besides, a police-court is held there.

Sir Andrew Clark, a baronet and a guinea-a-minute pocketeer (he is a fashionable physician), Sir Edmund Currie (a successful brewer), a General, an M.P., a Canon, a Dissenting minister, were all to the fore. The first-named urged the paying of "the balance of the bill for the treatment of the sick poor"—on "moral grounds as well as those of *self-interest*"—a fine distinction difficult to follow at the Mansion House. And if the balance only is to be paid by the Fund, there is tacit admission that the bulk of the account is discharged by the "poor."

Another unconscious admission is made in the words that "hospitals were more advantageous to society at large than to the sick poor themselves"—for they have, besides other blessings to the capitalist, "increased the quantity and quality of both bodily and mental work," and thus rendered the possibilities of surplus-value the greater.

The Corporation have been spending £93,000 of their enormous mass of surplus-value on premises for a picture-gallery. "It has always been a reproach to the wealthiest city in the world that it has no art gallery," says a newspaper, forgetting the unimportant fact that "the wealthiest city in the world" has no art. The busts of the illustrious include those of Cobden, Nelson, Wellington. These be thy gods, oh City!

More obstruction! This time by costermongers. The Westminster District Board of Works are attacking these "harmless necessary" folk (harmless and necessary when pursuing their calling), because they have come between the wind and the gentilities of Westminster on their way to church on Sunday.

"We are glad that these workmen have decided to unite as one body. . . . No outside agitation can be of much avail unless the men themselves unite and take an interest in the matter. Let this be done, and the workers will see that they have an unlimited power in their hands. . . . Let a blow be struck at the root of the evil, and the system itself destroyed. Until this is done the evil will remain." This is not bad for a capitalistic print, is it? Only it refers to the "sweating-system," not to the capitalist system. Even Mr. Fox Bourne, however, must have some faint glimmering of the fact that all he says here of the less applies in larger degree to the greater system.

Here is another quotation from the same paper—the *Weekly Dispatch*. "When men begin to recognise their own skill and ability, employers will be forced to take advantage of them." Unfortunately, employers have been "taking advantage of them"—skill, ability, and men—any time this 300 years. When men really recognise these, there will be no more employers to take advantage of them.

The Co-operative Society has been meeting at Plymouth. The unfortunate fallacy, from our point of view, that runs through all papers and discussions read or carried on there is the belief that the old system of employer and employed, of profit and wages, is likely to last.

A conference of tenant-farmers of Wales has passed resolutions in favour of the establishment of a Land Court in Wales and a general

reduction of rent. A good sign. The necessary forerunner of an understanding of Socialism is with most Radicals an understanding of the land monopoly. That leads to the comprehension of the monopoly of all the other means of production.

A fashionable wedding in Paris. The bride's veil alone cost £400, and a mere trifle of neck ornament £20,000. The man's fortune was made out of *extractum carnis* (extract of flesh). Add the word *humani*, and I'll believe it. Fortunes can only be made out of *extractum carnis humani*.

On August 17, at Paris, an International Congress of Working-Men is to take place. The debates are to be non-political—only economical, trade, and technical topics are to be considered. A fatal limitation. No real work will be done for Socialism until the workers understand that they are to be a political party, distinct from, antagonistic to all others, destined to swallow up all others and to leave but one party, one class—the workers.

A quotation from an appeal in respect to this Conference issued by the Parliamentary Committee of the English Trades' Unions: "Differences in forms of Government, varying social customs, or divergent commercial policy have not saved the workers from the effects of the depression [of trade]." That the Parliamentary Committee are beginning to see that only one cause underlies all suffering in all countries, is great gain. Only let them look to it that they find out that cause. It is the method of production and of distribution of goods to-day.

There is in all lands, however, but one commercial policy—"Beggars my neighbour." Only the unanimity with which all civilised nations are striving for the world-markets means a startling want of unanimity among the nations. And the outward and visible signs of this are annexations, wars, and the like.

Female labour among the Staffordshire nailers is now under attack. Its advocates point out that "after the first astonished shock" [*sic*] at dirty faces, filthy clothing and so forth, "it is no more repellent to see a woman using a hammer than to see her washing tin at the pit's mouth, weaving in a cotton-mill, or even bending with pale face and contracted chest over a needle." Certainly, it is no more repellent. But it is no less repellent.

If the East-End tailors can only prove and keep before the public that the "hands" in the sweating-dens are systematically got out of the way when an inspector is coming, some transient alleviation may follow. For your average Briton who will see with perfect equanimity men, women and children die, if the murder is legal, rebels against an infraction of the law—so long as his own trade is not concerned.

E. B. A.

WHIGS, DEMOCRATS, AND SOCIALISTS.

[Read at the Conference convened by the Fabian Society, at South Place Institute, June 11.]

WHAT is the state of parties in England to-day? How shall we enumerate them? The Whigs, who stand first on the list in my title, are considered generally to be the survival of an old historical party once looked on as having democratic tendencies, but now the hope of all who would stand soberly on the ancient ways. Besides these, there are Tories also, the descendants of the stout defenders of Church and State and the divine right of kings. Now, I don't mean to say but that at the back of this ancient name of Tory there lies a great mass of genuine Conservative feeling, held by people who, if they had their own way, would play some rather fantastic tricks I fancy; nay, even might in the course of time be somewhat rough with such people as are in this hall at present. But this feeling, after all, is only a sentiment now; all practical hope has died out of it, and these worthy people *cannot* have their own way. It is true that they elect members of Parliament, who talk very big to please them, and sometimes even they manage to get a government in power that nominally represents their sentiment, but when that happens the said government is forced, even when its party has a majority in the House of Commons, to take a much lower standpoint than the high Tory Ideal; the utmost that the

real Tory party can do, even when backed by the Primrose League and its sham hierarchy, is to delude the electors to return Tories to Parliament to pass measures more akin to Radicalism than the Whigs durst attempt, so that though there are Tories there is no Tory party in England. On the other hand there is a party, which I can call for the present by no other name than Whig, which is both numerous and very powerful, and which does, in fact, govern England, and to my mind will always do so as long as the present Constitutional Parliament lasts. Of course, like all parties it includes men of various shades of opinion, from the Tory-tinted Whiggery of Lord Salisbury to the Radical-tinted Whiggery of Mr. Chamberlain's present tail. Of course I don't mean to say that they are conscious of being a united party; on the contrary, the groups will oppose each other furiously at elections, and perhaps the more simple-minded of them really think that it is a matter of importance to the nation which section of them may be in power; but they may always be reckoned upon to be in their places and vote against any measure which carries with it a real attack on our constitutional system; surely very naturally, since they are there for no other purpose than to do so. They are, and always must, as long as they have any cohesion as Tories, Whigs, Liberals, or Radicals, be conscious defenders of the present system, political and economical. Not one of them probably would go such a very short journey towards revolution as the abolition of the House of Lords. A one-chamber Parliament would seem to them an impious horror, and the abolition of the monarchy they would consider a serious inconvenience to the London tradesmen.

Now this is the real Parliamentary Party, at present divided into jarring sections under the influence of the survival of the party warfare of the last few generations, but which already shows signs of sinking its differences so as to offer a solid front of resistance to the growing instinct which will before long result in a party claiming full economical as well as political freedom for the whole people.

But is there nothing in Parliament or seeking entrance to it except this variously-tinted Whiggery, this Harlequin of Reaction? Well, inside Parliament, setting aside the Irish party, which is, we may now well hope, merely temporarily there, there is not much. It is not among people of "Wealth and local influence", who I see are supposed to be the only available candidates for Parliament of a recognised party, that you will find the elements of revolution. We will grant that there are some few genuine Democrats there and let them pass. But outside there are undoubtedly many who are genuine Democrats, and who have it in their heads that it is both possible and desirable to capture the constitutional Parliament and turn it into a real popular assembly, which, with the people behind it, might lead us peaceably and constitutionally into the great Revolution which all thoughtful men desire to bring about, all thoughtful men that is who do not belong to the consciously cynical Tories, *i.e.*, men determined, whether it be just or unjust, good for humanity or bad for it, to keep the people down as long as they can, which they hope, very naturally, will be as long as they live.

To capture Parliament and turn it into a popular but constitutional assembly is, I must conclude, the aspiration of the genuine Democrats wherever they may be found; that is their idea of their policy. The questions to be asked of this, as of all other policies, are first, What is the end proposed by it? and secondly, Are they likely to succeed? As to the end proposed I think there is much difference of opinion. Some Democrats would answer from the merely political point of view, and say: Universal suffrage, payment of members, annual Parliaments, abolition of the House of Lords, abolition of the monarchy, and so forth. I would answer this by saying: After all, these are not ends but means to an end, and passing by the fact that the last two are not constitutional measures, I would say if you had gained all these things and more, all you would do would be to establish the ascendancy of the Democratic party; having so established it, you would then have to find out by the usual party means what that Democratic party meant, and you would find that your triumph in mere politics would lead you back again exactly to the place you started from. You would be Whigs under a different name. Monarchy, House of Lords, pensions, standing army, and the rest of it, are only supports to the present social system,—the present system of economics,—and are worth nothing except as supports to it. The real masters of Society, the real tyrants of the people, are the Landlords and Capitalists, whom your political triumph would not interfere with. Then, as now, there would be a proletariat and a monied class. Then, as now, it would be possible sometimes for a diligent, energetic man, with his mind set wholly on such success, to climb out of the proletariat into the monied class, there to sweat as he once was sweated; which, my friends, is, if you will excuse the word, your ridiculous idea of freedom of contract. The sole and utmost success of your policy is that it might raise up a strong opposition to the condition of things which it would be your function to uphold; but most probably such opposition would still be outside Parliament and not in it; you would have made a revolution probably not without bloodshed, only to show people the necessity for another revolution the very next day. Will you think the example of America too trite? Anyhow, consider it! A country with universal suffrage, no king, no House of Lords, no privilege as you fondly think, only a little standing army, chiefly used for the murder of red-skins; a democracy after your model; and with all that, a Society corrupt to the core, and at this moment engaged in suppressing freedom with just the same reckless brutality and blind ignorance as the Czar of all the Russians uses.

But it will be said, and certainly with much truth, that the Democrats are not all for mere political reform. I say that I believe that

is true, and is a very important truth too. I will go further and will say that all those who can be distinguished from Whigs do intend social reforms, which they hope will somewhat alter the relations of the classes towards each other, and there is, generally speaking, amongst Democrats a leaning towards a kind of limited State-Socialism, and it is through that that they hope to bring about a peaceful Revolution, which, if it does not introduce a condition of equality, will at least make the workers better off and contented with their lot. They hope to get a body of representatives elected to Parliament, and by them to get measure after measure passed which will tend towards this goal; nor would some of them, perhaps most of them, be discontented if by this means we could glide into complete State-Socialism. I think that the present Democrats are widely tinged with this idea, and to me it is a matter of hope that it is so; whatever of error there is in it, it means advance beyond the complete barrenness of the mere political programme. Yet I must point out to these semi-Socialist Democrats that in the first place they will be made the cat's-paw of some of the wilies of the Whigs. There is no end of these semi-Socialist looking measures one may name; for instance, the allotment scheme, and other schemes tending toward peasant proprietorship, co-operation, and the like, which after all, in spite of their benevolent appearance, are really weapons in the hands of reactionaries, having for their real object the creation of a new middle-class made out of the working-class and at their expense; the raising, in short, of a new army against the attack of the disinherited. There is no end to this kind of dodge, nor will be apparently till there is an end of the class which tries it on; and a great many of the Democrats will be amused and absorbed by it from time to time. They call this sort of nonsense "practical;" it seems like doing some thing, while the steady propaganda of a principle which must prevail in the end is, according to them, doing nothing. For the rest it is not likely to become dangerous farther than as it clogs the wheels of the real movement somewhat, because it is a mere piece of reaction on the one side if, I mean, it takes the form of peasant proprietorship, flying right in the face of the commercial development of the day, which tends ever more and more towards aggregation, thereby smoothing the way for the organised possession of the workers when the true Revolution shall come. On the other hand, when this attempt to manufacture a new middle-class takes the form of co-operation and the like, it is not dangerous otherwise than as above stated, because it means nothing more than a slightly altered form of joint-stockery, and everybody almost is beginning to see this. The greed of men stimulated by the spectacle of profit-making all around them, and also by the burden of the interest on the money which they have been obliged to borrow, will not allow them even to approach a true system of co-operation. Those benefited by the transaction presently become rather eager shareholders in a commercial speculation, and if they are working-men are also capitalists. The enormous commercial success of the great co-operative societies and the absolute nothingness of that success on the social conditions of the workers, are sufficient tokens of what this non-political co-operation must come to: "Nothing—it shall not be less."

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL BASIS OF SOCIETY.

NATURAL.

The smallest unit of life is a single cell.

Cells may either remain independent of, and aggressive to, each other, or may be united together in a compound organism, as a human being.

In the former or individualistic state each cell prospers in proportion to the decline of its fellows, and the power of each is extremely limited.

In the latter or Socialistic state the cells act in harmony with and are dependent on one another, while the premature decline or death of any is directly harmful or even fatal to the whole.

The power of the whole is enormously greater than that of a similar number of independent cells, as for instance in the matter of locomotion.

A single cell cannot by itself progress at a greater rate than seems slow even under the microscope, and any number separately will obviously get along no faster; but the compound organism may readily move at the rate of several miles an hour.

A single independent cell fulfils in itself all the possible functions of existence, but, since its powers are limited, only in the most simple

SOCIAL.

The smallest unit of human life is a single individual.

Individuals may either remain independent of, and aggressive to, each other, or may be united together in a compound organism, called Society.

In the former or individualistic state each individual prospers in proportion to the decline of his fellows, and the power of each is extremely limited.

In the latter or Socialistic state the individuals act in harmony with and are dependent on one another, while the premature decline or death of any is directly harmful or even fatal to the whole.

The power of the whole is enormously greater than that of a similar number of independent individuals, as for instance in the matter of locomotion.

A single individual cannot by himself progress at a greater rate than a few miles an hour, and any number separately will obviously progress no faster; but the whole acting together in society may readily contrive a means of increasing their speed tenfold.

A single independent individual fulfils in himself all the possible functions of existence, but, since his powers are limited, only in the