

our men. In doing this, he expressed a hope that this would be the last of these cases. So do we. But we are bound to point out that until police interference occurred there was no real obstruction and no disorder; that only Socialist meetings have been stopped; that the unwritten but very real law which recognises certain spaces as sanctioned for open-air speaking has been broken by the police; that hence all these woes. Probably the whole affair began, as the Limehouse one, by injudicious action on the part of some of the inferior police officials, and their superiors have found themselves committed to the unwisdom of this action and all its consequences. It is not too late for them to remedy the blunder made by their subordinates, and by letting well severely alone prevent more ill coming. If this ill-advised interference ends, the meetings will at once fall back to their former level of insignificance.

EDWARD AVELING.

SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

CHAPTER IV.—MODERN SOCIETY: EARLY STAGES.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century the centralising, bureaucratic monarchies were fairly established: nay, in France at least, they were even showing the birth of modern party-government, which since—carried on, indeed, under the veil of constitutionalism—has been the type of modern government. Richelieu—the Bismarck of his time and country—begins the series of prime ministers or real temporary kings, who govern in the interest of class society, not much encumbered and a good deal protected by their cloaks, the hereditary formal sham kings. In England this prime-ministership was more incomplete, though men like Burleigh approached the type. Elizabeth reduced the Tudor monarchy to an absurdity, a very burlesque of monarchy, under which flourished rankly an utterly unprincipled and corrupt struggle for the satisfaction of individual ambition and greed. This grew still more rankly, perhaps, under James I., who added mere cowardice to all the other vices which are more common to arbitrary high place and power.

As to the condition of the people during the latter years of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, the economical and religious revolution which had taken place had oppressed them terribly, and the "free workman" had to feel the full force of the causes which had presented him with his "freedom" in the interest of growing commerce. In England, on the one hand, the expropriation of the yeomanry from the land and the conversion of tillage into pasture had provided a large population of these free workmen, who, on the other hand, were not speedily worked up by the still scanty manufactures of the country, but made a sort of semi-vagabond population, troublesome enough to the upper and middle classes. The laws made against these paupers in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. were absolutely ferocious, and men were hanged out of the way by the thousand.

But in the reign of Elizabeth it was found out that even this was not enough to cure the evil, which of course had been much aggravated by the suppression of the religious houses, part of whose function was the housing and feeding of any part of the workmen temporarily displaced. A Poor Law, therefore, was passed for dealing with this misery, and, strange to say, it was far more humane than might have been expected from the way in which the poor had been dealt with up to that time; so much so, indeed, that the utilitarian *philanthropists* of the beginning of this century felt themselves obliged to deal with it in a very severe way, which left us a Poor Law as inhumane—or let us say as cruel—as could well be. Toward the middle of the seventeenth century things began to improve with our working population: the growth of the towns stimulated agriculture, and tillage began to revive again, though of course under the new system of cultivation for profit. Matters were in fact settling down, and preparing the country by a time of something like prosperity for the new revolution in industry.

The condition of the people was on the whole worse on the Continent than in England. Serfdom was by no means extinct in France and, especially, in Germany, and that serfdom was far more burdensome and searching side by side with the exploitation of the market than it had been in the feudal period. Other survivals of the mediæval epoch there were also—*e.g.*, in Germany the guilds had still some life and power, and the people were not utterly divorced from the land as in England, although the predominant competition of the markets prevented whatever good might linger in these half-extinct customs from acting for the benefit of the people. At the same time the populations were crushed by the frightful wars which passed over them—in all which religion was the immediate excuse.

The first of this series was the war carried on in Holland against the Catholic foreigners—the Spaniards—into whose hands they had been thrown by the family affairs of Charles V. Although noblemen took up the side of the rebels—*e.g.*, Egmont and Horn, executed for so doing—this war was in the main a war of the bourgeois democracy on behalf of Protestantism, embittered by the feeling of a Teutonic race against a Latinised one. There is to be found in it even some foretaste of the revolutionary *sansculotte* element, as shown by the extreme bitterness of the ruder seafaring population, the men whose hats bore the inscription, "Better Turk than Pope."

In Germany the struggle known as the "Thirty Years' War" was between the great vassals of the German empire, the shadow of whose former power was used for the aggrandisement of the house of Charles V., and also for the enforcement of Catholicism on the more northern

countries. It must be remembered, by the way, that these countries were to the full as absolutist as those which obeyed the bidding of the Emperor. This miserable war, after inflicting the most terrible suffering on the unhappy people, who were throughout treated with far less mercy and consideration than if they had been beasts; after having crushed the rising intelligence of Germany into a condition from which it has only arisen in days close to our own, dribbled out in a miserable and aimless manner, leaving the limits of Protestant and Catholic pretty much where it had found them: but it also left the people quite defenceless against their masters, the bureaucratic kings and knights.

In France this religious struggle took a very bitter form, but it was far more political than in Germany. The leaders were even prepared to change their creed when driven into a corner—as Henry of Navarre at the time of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. In France the popular sympathy was by no means in favour of Protestantism: the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, which inflicted such a terrible blow on the Huguenot cause, would otherwise have been hardly possible. It is true that the great Huguenot leader, Henry of Navarre, became Huguenot king of France, but his accession did not carry with it a triumph as a consequence. Henry had to abjure Protestantism; a Protestant king of France was impossible.

The great struggle in England came later, and consequently probably the victory was more decided on the Puritan side. The enthusiasm with which Mary Tudor—"Bloody Mary"—was received, and the Catholic insurrections in the reign of her successor, showed that there was at first some popular feeling on the Catholic side; but by the time of James I. Catholicism was dead in England. The Book of Sports issued by his Government, which encouraged the people to play various games on Sunday, was widely received as an outrage on the feelings of the growing middle-class in town and country; and all was tending towards the irreconcilable quarrel which took place in the next reign between the Court and the Bourgeoisie, and which was nearly as much religious as political. For the rest, the Parliamentary party was on the advancing line of history both as regards politics and religion, and the King's party was simply reactionary; but the war was at furthest waged by a bourgeois democracy, led at first by a constitutional oligarchy against a nobility inspired by a kind of romantic after-glow of mediæval chivalry. The successful outcome of the individual ambition of Cromwell extinguished whatever aspirations towards republicanism were cherished by a few purists, as well as the enthusiasm of the wild sectaries whose hopes of a rule of saints on the earth were tinged by some kind of communistic ideas; which were further foreshadowed by the Levellers, though perverted by the mere asceticism which they held. Nevertheless, these men may be paralleled to the Anabaptists of Münster, although the latter were quite mediæval in spirit, and their fanatic religion had little in common with Puritanism; and though, also, the steady power of bourgeois rule concentrated in Cromwell's absolutism forbade them any opportunity of approaching even the most temporary realisation of their idea. Meanwhile England was unable to endure the weight of the absolute rule of Cromwell, lined with fully developed Puritanism, and a few plotters were allowed to restore the Stuart monarch, under whom the wild religion of the armed men—the victors over the nobility of England and their revived sham chivalry—sank into mere Quakerism, and the religious war was at end, except for a few smouldering embers among the Cameronians in Scotland.

Meantime in France the last remnants of the old feudalism struggled in the party warfare of the "Fronde" against Mazarin and his bureaucracy of simple corruption, till Louis XIV. put the coping-stone on the French monarchy by forcing his nobility, high and low, into the position of his courtiers, while his minister Colbert developed the monarchy as a tax-gathering machine by the care and talent with which he fostered the manufactures of France, which just before his time were at a very low ebb; so that there was no need to touch the revenues of the nobility, who were free to spend them in dancing attendance on the Court: nay, were not free to do otherwise. The century began with the French monarchy triumphant over all its great vassals; it finished by reducing all its vassals, great and small, to the condition of courtiers, with little influence in the country-side, and diminished rents—mere absentee landlords of the worst type, endowed with privileges which could only be exercised at the cost of the starvation of the people and the exasperation of the Bourgeoisie, who furnished the funds for the Court glory. Everything in France, therefore, foreshadowed political revolution. What the advancing constitutionalism of England foreshadowed we shall have to speak of in our next chapter.

E. BELFORD BAX AND WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

The School Committee of the Holborn Board of Guardians, a few days ago, recommended the emigration of three girls between the ages of six and twelve, to Sherbrook, Quebec, under the auspices of the "Society for Waifs and Strays." If these children are to be trained to become useful members of Society, why send them across the Atlantic? Again, if it is assumed, as the title "Waifs and Strays" would seem to imply, that they are so much human rubbish to be got rid of anyhow, it is manifestly a shirking of responsibility and a gross injustice to ship to another country the diseased products of our rotten civilisation. The £10 per head, which it is estimated to cost in "transporting" these poor little victims to Canada, had much better be utilised in founding rational associated homes for our "waifs and strays" in England, and the energies of Boards of Guardians and of the philanthropic societies might be more usefully directed to altering instead of palliating the system which produces paupers at one end of the social scale and millionaires at the other.—T. B.