

SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

CHAPTER XI.

REACTION AND REVOLUTION ON THE CONTINENT.

WHEN the great war which Napoleon waged against Europe came to an end by his defeat and ruin, France was once more handed over to the Bourbons, and Europe fell into the arms of reaction and sheer absolutism. The Holy Alliance, or union of reactionary monarchs, undertook the enterprise of crushing out all popular feeling, or even anything that could be supposed to represent it in the persons of the bourgeois.

But the French Revolution had shaken absolutism too sorely for this enterprise to have more than a very partial success even on the surface. The power of absolutism was undermined by various revolutionary societies, mostly (so-called) secret, which attracted to them a great body of sympathy, and in consequence seemed far more numerous and immediately dangerous than they really were. Still there was a great mass of discontent, mostly political in character, and by no means confined to the poorer classes.

This discontent went on gathering head, till in 1830, and again in 1848, it exploded into open revolt against absolutism all over Europe. This revolt, we must repeat, was in the main a mere counter-stroke to the reaction which was diligently striving to restore the aristocratic privilege which the French Revolution had abolished, and to sustain what of it had escaped its attack. In 1830 the revolt was purely bourgeois in character, and was in no sense social, but, as above said, political. In 1848 it had in some places a strong infusion of the proletarian element, which however was dominated by middle-class patriotism and ideas which led to the assertion and consolidation of nationalities. But a new element was present in these latter revolutionary movements, though at first it did not seem to influence their action much. This was the first appearance in politics of modern or scientific Socialism, in the shape of the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, first published in 1847. The rise and development of this phase will be dealt with in detail further on; at present we can do no more than call attention to the steady and continuous influence of this last-born Socialism, compared with the rapid extinction of Babeuf's propaganda, although he had a numerous body of adherents; since this fact marks a very great advance in opinion since the end of the eighteenth century.

The general effect, however, at least as seen openly, of these insurrections was little more than the shaking of absolutism and the supplanting it in various degrees by middle-class constitutionalism; and also, as aforesaid, an added impulse to the consolidation of nationalities, which later on produced the unification of Italy and of Germany, and the assertion of the independence of the Hungarian nationality.

In France the outward effects of the insurrection were most obvious and lasted the longest; but the bourgeois republic which took the place of Louis Philippe's corrupt constitutional monarchy asserted itself tyrannically enough against the proletariat, and in consequence had no strength left to meet the political adventurer Louis Napoleon, whose plot against the republic received just as much resistance as gave him an excuse for the massacre of 4th of December 1851, by means of which he terrorised France for many years; although as to numbers it was quite insignificant compared with those which followed the taking of Paris by the bourgeois troops at the time of the fall of the Commune in 1871.

This successful stroke had really no relation to any foregoing reactionary dictatorship. It even professed to be founded on democratic feeling, though as a matter of fact it was the expression of the non-political side of bourgeois life—the social and commercial side—the ideal of the shopkeeper grown weary of revolutions and anxious to be let alone to make money and enjoy himself vulgarly. Accordingly France settled down into a period of "law and order," characterised by the most shameless corruption and repulsive vulgarity. She got at last into full swing of the rule of successful stock-jobbery which had already been established in England, and carried it on with less hypocrisy than ourselves, but perhaps with more open blackguardism.

To sustain this régime various showy military enterprises were undertaken, some of which it was attempted to invest with a kind of democratic sentiment. It was also of some importance to make at least a show of giving employment to the working classes of France. This principally took the form of the rebuilding of Paris and the restoration, or vulgarisation, of the mediæval cathedrals and public buildings, in which France is richer than any other country; so that this apotheosis of middle-class vulgarity has left abiding tokens of its presence in a loss which can never be repaired. But in spite of this militarism and the attempt to gain the support of the proletarians by gifts of "bread and pageants," discontent of various kinds sprang up and steadily increased. Moreover, the new birth of Socialism was beginning to bear fruits; the Communist propaganda got firm hold of the city proletariat of France. Socialism was steadily preached in Paris at La Villette and Belleville, which latter, originally laid out and built upon as an elegant suburb for rich bourgeois, proved a failure, and became a purely workman's quarter in consequence.

While all this was going on underground as it were, the Cæsarism of the stock-exchange was also beginning to get the worst of it in the game of statecraft; and at last the results of the consolidation of nationalities which was the chief aim of the bourgeois revolt became obvious in the revival of the old animosities between Germany and France. Bismarck, who had become the attorney-dictator of Germany,

had got to know the weakness of the showy empire of Louis Napoleon, and had a well warranted confidence in that carefully elaborated machine the German army. He laid a trap for the French Cæsar, who fell into it, perhaps not blindly, but rather driven by a kind of gambler's last hope, akin to despair.

A great race war followed, the natural and inevitable outcome of which was the hopeless defeat of the French army, led as it was by mere selfseekers and corrupt scoundrels, most of whom lacked even that lowest form of honour which makes a Dugald Dalgetty faithful to the colours under which he marches. The Second Empire was swept away. The new Republic proclaimed after the collapse at Sedan still kept up a hopeless resistance to the unbroken strength of Germany—hopeless, since the corruption of the Empire still lived on in the bourgeois republic, as typified in the person of the political gamester Gambetta. Paris was besieged, and taken after a long resistance, which reflected infinite credit on the general population, who bore the misery of the siege with prodigious patience and courage; but no less disgrace on those who pretended to organise its defence, but who were really far more inclined to hand over the city to the Germans than allow it to gain a victory under the auspices of the revolution.

All this must be looked upon by us as Socialists as merely the prelude to the great drama of the Commune, whose aims and influence will form the subject of another chapter.

E. BELFORT BAX AND WILLIAM MORRIS.

CORRESPONDENCE.

INTERNATIONALISM.

As the references to the starting of various associations in "Socialism from the Root-up" are necessarily brief, I desire as one who took a part in bringing together English and foreign workers, to supplement them. If we select the period immediately subsequent to the death of Robert Owen, we look upon a gloomy phase of working-class history. Remnants of the great Chartist and Socialistic agitations were following upon divergent roads the lead of Bronterre O'Brien and Ernest Jones; the former attacking the evils of landlordism, usury, and profit, and proposing what might be termed a mixture of Individualism and Socialism as a remedy, and the latter seeking through political Parliamentary means to alleviate social ills. Away from these sincere men was a mass of what may be termed the disbanded army of Chartist workers, men who probably were never sincere in their temporary adherence to the great principles put forward during the previous great agitations, and now sought their own aggrandisement at the expense of the people's Cause. All sorts of middle-class humbug was upheld and preached by these renegades—Thrift, Emigration, National Insurance, and Malthusianism—a host of bogus associations sprang into existence for these several objects, and one or two middle-class saviours of Society became general banker and treasurer to the whole; our old friend Samuel Morley might consider this a personal reference. How these fellows scrambled for the middle-class gold thrown amidst them! How they belittled the great principles which they had formerly professed, and derided the enthusiasm of young men who sought to carry these principles forward, is well known to many who have pioneered the present Socialist revival.

The birth of the International was a gleam of hope for the workers, but even upon that body they intruded their presence; sleek trade unionists, who only believe in a corrupt aristocracy of labour and the "rights of those who can get them," irrespective of those who are entitled to them, joined with the aforesaid middle-class hacks in an hypocritical make-believe of adopting the economic theories of Marx and the principles of universal emancipation. But whilst the English delegates were playing a rôle, the "foreigners" were in earnest, and the Commune was proclaimed in Paris. It acted as a solvent upon these members of the British Federation, and they hastened to assure their patrons that they had no sympathy with violence, and a few belonging to that curious combination known as the Workmen's Peace Party, chief product of benefactor Morley, went to Paris and wept crocodile's tears over the effigy of the executed Archbishop of Paris, and thus added insult to the injuries endured by the martyr Parisian people in striving to prevent the re-imposition of the shackles of Capitalism. Favourable mention must be made of those members of the Federation who did honour to the heroism of the Parisian workers, but their enthusiasm could not withstand the dull apathy and hostility of the masses—apathy in a large degree due to the spectacle of apostasy presented to them. Their expiring effort was the formation of a club in 1873, which, however, was short-lived, and the earlier celebrations of the Communist uprising as a consequence were almost confined to foreigners resident in London. The persistent efforts of the London refugees to establish relations with English workmen resulted in a meeting of English, French, and Germans in August, 1877, whereat a resolution was agreed to form an International Club, and a few months saw its inauguration at Rose Street, Soho. I might record that they had previously rendered generous service to the English Trades' Unionists by causing the return of a large number of German masons, who, through the misrepresentation of the employers, were inveigled over here during the famous masons' strike. Their efforts were rewarded by the somewhat Internationalist Broadhurst rushing into print to deny that the International had any hand in the business. The passing of the Anti-Socialist Law in Germany crowded the ranks with exiles, and clearly demonstrated the futility of lawful agitation against despotism. The sudden strain of supporting a mass of expatriated men, women, and children was immense, but it was met and overcome. Suffice it to say that outside of the few Englishmen comprising the English section, not one penny of help did we receive. The Englishmen in association with this club now commenced attacks upon the cant and humbug which the enemies of progress were indulging in. Anti-Emigration meetings were held, whereat resolutions were passed denouncing the monopolists and their tactics, and the unemployed were stirred to resist the process of slow starvation. The execution of the Czar, and the prosecution of Most for commenting upon this event in the German *Freiheit*, together with the publication by the English section of a manifesto and English edition of the *Freiheit*, drew general attention to the principles of