THE COMMONWEAL

February 26, 1887.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

NOTICE TO ALL SOCIA LISTIC NEWSPAPERS.—The Commonweal will be regularly sent to all Socialistic Contemporaries throughout the world, and it is hoped that they on their side will regularly provide the Social League with their papers.

Ch. Bargue (Carvin, Pas de Calais).—We thank you for your pamphlet and shall be pleased to receive from the mind of the workers the number of copies they are able to attain to that complete union and perception of the interests of labour, by which alone can they meet the organization of capital on equal terms: and this is the more worth noting, as the Cotton Factory Times is an excellent paper, and really devoted, according to its lights, to the interests of labour.

Our contemporary, the Cotton Factory Times, has an article on the Lanarkshire riots and the position of the men there which is worth noting, as showing the kind of prejudices and superstitions which will be removed when the minds of the workers before the idea of cooperation, and the realization of that unity which can attain to that complete union and perception of the interests of labour, by which alone can they meet the organization of capital on equal terms: and this is the more worth noting, as the Cotton Factory Times is an excellent paper, and really devoted, according to its lights, to the interests of labour.

Surely our contemporary does not seem to have understood the meaning of these riots, or the necessities of the men who made them. They were distinctly hunger-rioters, that is to say the expression of the despair of men driven to a corner, dying by inches of starvation: and we may be sure that such events will, at the rate we are now going, become common and increase in misery and terror, unless the workers become conscious of their present position and remedy it, their position being to speak plainly that they have to pay the piper in the game of cutthroat competition played by their masters, who are themselves forced by the rules of the game to force their men to accept the very lowest wages possible. This is the result of the famine-test of wages (for that is what it is) must be such misery as we now see in Lanarkshire coupled from the lives of the working men as they apply the rule of the other day are a hint to the masters that the wages they now offer are impossible of acceptance.

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But what provision can be made against "biry-banges" when even the better days are so bitter!

Here are some questions for our contemporary: How much is it possible to save out of a (precarious) income of 12s. 6d. a week? If it be possible to save anything out of such a pittance without being actually starred to death, why should a man be put to such torture and degradation as this saving involves, when we all know that he actually-provoked? And, yet enough to keep him in content, unless his soul is utterly wasted? Again, can the getting of coal be carried on gainfully in Lanarkshire? If it cannot, why is it carried on? And if there is a due gain in it, why are the getters starved? These are but a few of the kind of questions which the working-men who profess to be organized must ask and have answered if their organization is to be of any use: they must not fight capitalism blindly, as they mostly do now, but be conscious of the nature of the fight, and especially never give an attitude to the capitalist to any advantage in his nostrils. He says, e.g., "A fair stand-up fight between capital and labour with no striking below the belt frightens no one. The best men win, and then both sides can be as friendly as before, with no bitter memories to cherish.''

Well, well, if I had but 12s. 6d. a week as the "reward" of hard and repulsive labour, I think I might be bitter without drawing on the resources of my sympathy. But in the fight between capital and labour on the Lanarkshire terms i.e., the capitalist with his money resources to stand by on, and the miner with the three choices of 12s. 6d. a week, and the workers is about as fair (if we are to keep up the metaphor of the ring) as the champion against a London errand boy. And again, the writer speaks cheerfully of these "fair fights" can he possibly think that a condition of industry to which they are necessary (and frequent) incidents can be a stable one? These "fair fights" are but incidents, skirmishes, or battles in the continuous war on which all industrial society is founded at present. Like all other wars, the one must come to an end (or to exhaustion of the combatants: either the workman must be subjugated into a hopeless slave, receiving such housing, clothing, and rations as it may be convenient for his master to give him (and for that matter it could not be less convenient) or the worker will take his stand, and the capitalist must disappear altogether, and his privilege of usury be a thing of the past; and that whether he be the boss of a big business, or a small老板n's "co-operated" business, "no wages, no rent, no profits.

Now I will ask our trade's union friends which of the two results of the struggle they are fighting for! They have no choice, it must be one or the other, or indeed is there a choice even between these two results? Is not the final subjugation of the workers the only possible end? Even now, even when the strikers are least conscious of it, their limited and local fight is really, as I have said, a part of the great labour war: but when they do become conscious of what the end of that war will be, the alarm of privation and fear of the future of production, the inequality between the two combatants will be no longer against them, but against their masters, and the war will soon be over. On the other hand, although they may be unconscious of what they are striving for, it will probably be long delayed through a period of fertility of mining and degradation to the workman, and terror and degradation to the master, and even that will not be the result.

The choice of these two alternatives gives the reason why sober, thoughtful, and peaceable men, even when they themselves are not pitched by the present system, when they have once learned the economic truths of Socialism are so paper in the Revolutionary propaganda: it is for peace they are working, not war.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

SOCIALISM IN THE PROVINCES.

The chiamakers of Walsall and Bradley Heath are about the hardest workers and most poor paid slavers and at one time working 10 to 12 hours a day, may average ten shillings a week, and out of this he must buy fuel for his little forge. The development of machinery is largely, and is necessarily, affected this trade, and the men. These efforts were made to design machinery, but as under the present system machines are carried out to do away with disagreeable or degrading labour, but simply cheaper out of unhappy and wretched work, the work is no early likelihood of such attempts being made. Then women and children can help and compete in various ways, and hence the smallness of the husband and father's wage.

But in the wonderful way that the minds of the leaders of the chiamakers got together and I explained Socialism to them. There was no difficulty in getting them to understand it. They were very quick-witted, and what was more surprising and satisfactory, very little of the prejudices and prejudices, but there is no early likelihood of such attempts being made. Then women and children can help and compete in various ways, and hence the smallness of the husband and father's wage.

William Morris.