

COMPETITION.

THE great stumbling-block which so many of the muddle-headed fossils of the present system of society find it impossible to surmount, is commercial competition and the blessings which are supposed to flow from it; and to conceive a state of society in which progress is without such competition is beyond their feeble comprehensions.

"Competition is necessary for progress," say our opponents, and we reply, "Agreed—under the present system." Indeed, our opponents continually cite instances of the wretched way in which railways and other big public concerns are administered under the present system, in cases where there is no competition. We, in reply, simply point out that all business at the present day is conducted in the interest of shareholders and employers of labour, whose one object in conducting these concerns is not to increase our comforts, but to obtain from these enterprises as much as possible of the wealth produced by the workers. Is it astonishing that under such a system there is no tendency to progress, except what is due to competition between the gamblers? And in how many cases does the competition produce improvement? In the majority of cases it results in lowering wages, in the replacement of human labour by machinery, or in the production of cheap and nasty goods.

Competition is of two kinds—viz., (1) that which prevails amongst the robbers for the chance of being able to rob their workmen, and (2) that which prevails amongst the workers for the privilege of being robbed. The first of these is the cause of the second. The competition between the robbers causes them to employ as few human machines as possible and to replace them as far as possible by iron machines, because the latter don't require clothing and houses, they are not encumbered with wives and families, and above all things they are not given to striking. Then as a number of human machines can't get work, there comes in that great and divine blessing to the human race, commonly known as the "struggle for existence." A great many of our opponents are pious people who believe in the six days' creation, Adam and Eve, etc., and look upon scientific men as a desperately wicked set; yet it is astonishing how eagerly they take to Darwinian theories as soon as they are confronted by Socialists.

Yes, the struggle for existence may have resulted in the "survival of the fittest" whilst our ancestors were hairy quadrupeds and the like; but we absolutely fail to see how it does so in the present position of the human race, when we are no longer the servants of Nature, but Nature herself is fast being brought into subjection to the human intellect.

Moral principles and intellectual faculties are the characteristics which should now distinguish the human race from the rest of creation, and the fittest to survive are those that possess these in the highest degree. Yet does the present struggle for existence bring about such a survival of the fittest? Absolutely nothing of the kind. It tends to develop all the basest tendencies of man—deceit, injustice, selfishness, the desire to rob one's fellow-men and succeed at their expense; and those who possess these in the highest degree succeed in surviving.

A nice prospect for the human race! A return to the condition of wild beasts or worse!

Grimy towns, filthy homes, dirt, squalor, starvation, such are the results of this devilish dishonesty; the human race, the masterpiece of Nature, diverted from its true destiny; and many of the inhabitants of this great Empire living under circumstances to which the condition of the least advanced races of mankind were infinitely preferable.

There is one bright feature about competition, and that is that it will bring about the ruin of the great gambling system called business. We see this in the case of gambling of a similar kind on a small scale. Consider, for instance, the word-competitions which are now all the rage. When one person found he could make a good thing out of the general idiocy of the middle-classes, plenty of others followed his example, and as more and more do so, profits will grow smaller owing to competition, until either the dupers will find it not worth while carrying on, or the duped will find they lose more than they gain and cease to patronise the sport. It is just so with the business of the world: either the gamblers will find it doesn't pay well enough and will drop the game, or the human dice they play with will see through it all and put a stop to it themselves. It is to be hoped that the latter course will be adopted; in fact, it is the aim of us Socialists to make the workers take matters unto their own hands.

Because they have rather more of the comforts of life than their ancestors of 100 years ago, many amongst the working-classes are contented. They are like a man who has a right to an estate and is contented to take one square yard of it, and let the rest fall into the hands of a robber-band, and not only that, but consent to become the slave of those who have stolen his property.

It must be remembered that all the greatest inventions and improvements have not been due to competition amongst the capitalists, nor have they issued from their brains, although some people seem to think they are the only people possessed of that commodity. They have come in great measure from the hands and heads of working-men, and the means by which capitalists have obtained the advantages of these inventions are characterised by injustice and dishonesty.

When we consider on the one hand all the beautiful things which man has produced; the cathedrals, the like of which our modern resources fail to reproduce; the works of the great masters, the thoughts and the literature of past ages, and even the most beautiful productions of the present age, our parks, public gardens, and boule-

wards, we find that in no case do we owe them to the competition between robbers and slaves, but to the freely-developed genius of man, encouraged by the demands of the community. Whilst on the other hand, when we contemplate the wretchedness, the filthy living, the starvation, the paucity of great thinkers in proportion to the population and to the advanced position to which some of the human race have attained, when we find also an almost total absence of any classical production in art, we perceive that all these evils are due to the competitive warfare of the present time and the hurry which is everywhere manifest in the education of the race, even the mighty human intellect which was fast conquering Nature becoming itself enslaved to the sordid and debasing thirst for gold.

Under an honest system of society, progress, due to the power man possesses over Nature, will take place far faster than now. Public opinion will see that necessary improvements are carried out, and there will be all the free scope for moral and intellectual development which is almost impossible in the present age of selfishness and hurry.

A. TARN.

SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRANSITION FROM THE UTOPISTS TO MODERN SOCIALISM.

(Continued from Vol. II., page 243.)

OF the Socialist thinkers who serve as a kind of link between the Utopists and the school of the Socialism of historical evolution, or scientific Socialists, by far the most noteworthy figure is Proudhon who was born at Besançon in 1809. By birth he belonged to the working-class, his father being a brewer's cooper, and he himself as a youth followed the occupation of cowherding.

In 1838, however, he published an essay on general grammar, and in 1839 he gained a scholarship to be held for three years, a gift of one Madame Suard to his native town. The result of this advantage was his most important though far from his most voluminous work, published the same year, as the essay which the Madame Suard's scholars were bound to write: it bore the title of 'What is Property?' his answer being, Property is Robbery.

As may be imagined, this remarkable essay caused much stir and indignation, and Proudhon was censured by the Besançon Academy for this production, and narrowly escaped a prosecution. In 1841 he was tried at Besançon for a letter he wrote to Victor Considerant, the Fourierist, but was acquitted. In 1846 he wrote his 'Philosophie de la Misère' (Philosophy of Poverty), which received an elaborate reply and refutation from Karl Marx.

In 1847 he went to Paris. In the Revolution of 1848 he showed himself a vigorous controversialist, and was elected Deputy for the Seine; he wrote numerous articles in several journals, mostly criticisms of the progress of the revolution: in the Chamber he proposed a tax of one-third to be levied on all interest and rent, which was, as a matter of course, rejected. He also put forward a scheme for a mutual credit bank, by which he hoped to simplify exchange and reduce interest to a vanishing point: but this scheme was also rejected.

After the failure of the revolution of '48, Proudhon was imprisoned for three years, during which time he married a young woman of the working-class.

In 1858 he developed his system of 'Mutualism' fully in his last work, entitled 'Justice in the Revolution and the Church.' In consequence of the publication of this book he had to retire to Brussels, but was amnestied in 1860, came back to France, and died at Passy in 1865.

Proudhon's opinions and works may be broadly divided into two periods: In his 'What is Property?' his position is that of a Communist pure and simple; but after this one clear development of a definite thesis we meet in his works, and we must add, in his political actions also, with so much paradox that it is next to impossible to formulate in brief any definite Proudhonian doctrine. At one time a Communist, at another the vehement opponent of Communism; at one time professing Anarchy, at another lending himself to schemes of the crudest State Socialism; at one time an enthusiastic Theist, at another apparently as strong an Atheist; in one passage of his works giving his eager adhesion to Auguste Comte's worship of women, in another a decided contemner of the female sex,—it is with a sense of confusion that one rises from the perusal of his works.

His connection with the Revolution of '48 seems to have been the turning point in the history; in his address to the electors of the Seine, in which he put forward the scheme for a credit bank backed by a number of decrees of a State-Socialistic nature, and strongly smacking of Bismarck, he announces himself as the man who said Property is Robbery, says that he still maintains that opinion, and then goes on to defend the rights of property which he had so successfully annihilated in his first work.

But as to his political career, the element he had to work in was an impossible one for the success of a man holding definite Socialistic ideas. On the one hand were the Jacobins with their archæological restorations of the ideas and politics of 1789; on the other Socialism showing itself and taking hold of people's minds, but attempting to realise its doctrines by crude, dislocated and consequently hopeless schemes of action. Into all these affairs Proudhon looked shrewdly and with insight, and his bitter criticisms of the confusion of the period were shown by the event to have been well founded.

Proudhon defended the modern family and monogamy in its strictest sense, and does not seem to have troubled himself to study the history of those institutions even superficially: in short, he seems to have been singularly lacking in the historical sense, and had not formed any conception of the evolution of society. Those who read his works will find themselves forced to return to his first essay, 'What is Property?' if they are seeking in him for any consistent series of ideas. He was an eager and rough controversialist, and his style is brilliant and attractive in spite of its discursiveness.

We may now mention the names of two men of no great importance in themselves, but worth noting as forerunners of the sentimental Socialists and Christian Socialists of the present day. Hughes Felicité Robert de Lamennais (born 1782, died 1854), is the type of the Christian Socialist: he was intended for a priest from the first, and duly took orders. He began by efforts to reform the Catholic Church, so as to make it an effective instrument for happiness and social morality and reform. He expected to be helped and encouraged by the clergy in these efforts, and at first, before they perceived their real tendency, he received some acknowledgment from them. At last, in his paper *L'Avenir* (the future), he took so decidedly a democratic turn that he incurred the animosity of the whole Church, especially of the then Pope, Gregory XVI. The signal for his complete rupture with the Church, however was the publication (in 1834) of his 'Paroles d'un Croyant' (words of a believer), which the Pope characterised as "small in size but immense in perversity." After that he became thoroughly democratic or even Communistic, as Communism was then understood. A series of political works and pamphlets followed, all in the sense of his new departure. He started, in 1848, two papers, one after another, which were suppressed. He sat in the Republican Constituent Chamber till the *coup d'état*: and while Deputy drew up for the Left a plan of Constitution which was rejected as too revolutionary. He was buried by his own direction without ecclesiastical rites.

Pierre le Roux (born 1798, died 1871) was originally a disciple of St. Simon. In 1840 he published his most important work, 'De L'Humanité,' whence the name of his school, the Humanitarians. He joined George Sand and Niardof in a literary review, and it was owing to this connexion that the humanitarian tendencies of some of her novels are to be traced. In 1843 he set on foot a co-operative printing association, and started a journal advocating co-operation, or as he termed it, "the pacific solution of the problem of the proletariat." He also sat in the Republican Chamber of 1848: was exiled in 1851 and lived in Jersey, not returning to France till 1869. He died in Paris under the Commune, who deputed two of its members to attend his funeral, in the words of the *Official Journal*, "not in honour of the partizan of the mystical ideas of which we now feel the evil, but of the politician who courageously undertook the defence of the vanquished after the days of June." This is an allusion to the unpractical and non-political tendency of his teaching, which undertook to reform society by the inculcation of morality blended with mysticism, the result of which was to be the gradual spread of voluntary co-operation.

We finish this series with the well-known name of Louis Blanc, a personage more important than the last-named, and more definitely Socialistic in principles than either he or Lamennais, though his political career finished in a way unworthy of those principles, even if we accept the excuse that he never grasped the great truth that only through the class struggle can the regeneration of society be accomplished. He was born in 1813, of a middle-class family which, on the maternal side, was Corsican, and an incident of the relations between him and his brother Charles is said to have suggested to Dumas his famous novelette and play of the 'Corsican Brothers.'

In 1840 he published his 'Organisation of Labour,' the ideas of which he attempted to realise in the famous "National Workshops," by which he is best known. In this work he put forward the genuine Socialistic maxim of "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs" as the basis of the production of a true society.

He took an active part in the Revolutionary Government of 1848, and got an edict passed abolishing the punishment of death for political offences. And we ought here to notice that the common impression that his National Workshops failed from inherent defects is wrong; they were suppressed as dangerous by the Government, and their suppression was largely instrumental in causing the June revolution. We must, however, also note that this scheme was not founded on purely Socialistic principles, dangerous as it was thought to be at the time. In consequence of the events of June Louis Blanc was compelled to flee from France to England, where he wrote his 'History of the French Revolution.'

He returned to France 1869, was elected to the legislative body, but played only a subordinate part in the stirring times that followed. It remains, indeed, an indelible stain on his character that he deserted the cause of the people in the days of March, leaving Paris to sit amongst the "Liberals" in the reactionary Chamber at Versailles.

He died in 1883, having outlived his reputation and his influence.

E. BELFORT BAX AND WILLIAM MORRIS.

The Prince Regent of Bavaria has given the order that each of his grandchildren shall learn some handicraft. The future king has chosen the trade of turner, and works every day in the shop of a Munich workman. Prince Franz wishes to be a house-painter, while Charles prefers to follow the calling of gardener. The Prince Regent of Bavaria appears to us to have a very good idea of the want of solidity of the foundations of thrones to-day. One never knows what may happen!—*Cri du Peuple*.

THE LITTLE VAGABOND.

(WILLIAM BLAKE: born 1757, died 1828.)

[William Blake was almost the first, if not the first, of those poets who drew English poetry from the slough of conventional twaddle in which the 18th century had sunk it; and visionary as he was, he was able to look at realities, and to make his words mean something; whereas it was an understood condition of the so-called "poetry" of the 18th century that they should mean nothing.—W. M.]

Dear mother, dear mother, the Church is cold,
But the Ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm.
Besides I can tell where I am used well,
Such usage in heaven will never do well.

But if at the church they would give us some ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,
Nor ever once wish from the church to stray.

Then the parson might preach and drink and sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at church,
Would not have bandy children nor fasting nor birch.

And God like a Father rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as He,
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the barrel,
But kiss him and give him both drink and apparel.

THE JUBILEE OF THE NORTHUMBERLAND MINERS.

"It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all men must die. But it is to live miserable we know not why; to work sore and yet gain nothing; to be heartworn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated."—CARLYLE.

ON Wednesday Jan. 26 the Northumberland miners resolved to strike against a reduction of 12½ per cent. The miners were asked to say "Yes" or "No" to the following: "Provided 12½ per cent. be conceded off the present wages of hard collieries and 7½ off soft coal collieries, the owners of Bedlington, Cramlington, and Seaton Delaval collieries consent to pay house-rent allowance under the arrangement of 1882, and the above apply to all to whom the house-rent allowances are paid at those collieries." The result of the ballot was declared on the 25th. The figures were: For accepting the masters' terms, 2167; strike, 9745. Altogether 24,000 men and boys are to come out. The owner of Walbottle Colliery, however, has withdrawn the notice of a reduction of wages, and the men accordingly return to work. The arrangement made is to the effect that no reduction take place during the next six months. The employers at Walker Colliery on Friday intimated to their men that as they did not desire the pits to be closed, as the cost of reopening them at the termination of a strike meant a great outlay, they wished them to continue work at the present rate of wages. The men sent a deputation asking the same conditions as those granted at the Walbottle Colliery. These were refused, and the strike commenced here also. Arrangements have been made for drawing the horses and ponies to bank, and there is every sign of a protracted struggle.

Many strikes have taken place among the Northumberland miners. In 1844 a strike for an advance took place, the men being defeated after several months' war. In 1839 at Seaton Delaval, in 1865 at the Cramlington Colliery, and many other minor strikes, all were gained by the employers. The last big strike was in May 1877, this time against a reduction of 10 and 15 per cent.; after arbitration, the men returned at the old wage. This lasted till November, when notice of a reduction of 12½ per cent. was made. After about three months' strike the employers obtained the full reduction demanded.

Efforts have been made by the miners' leaders to bring about an amicable arrangement with the employers, but have failed. It is said that overtures have been made to two M.P.'s to act as mediators. In an 'Address to Trades' Unions' published by the Socialist League appears the following: "The good-natured reformers would fain lull such antagonism to rest by palliatives, make of capital and labour a united happy family by smooth talk and practical measures. His efforts are vain. We tell you that these antagonisms will never sleep." Ever between wrong and right, capitalist and labourer, robber and robbed, must warfare exist; and it will only cease with the destruction of the present condition of things—the abolition of the individual ownership of capital. Determined warfare, then, is the only course open. In this conflict all workers ought to take part. The cause of the miners is equally the cause of all. The scenes of Charleroi may yet be repeated in England; but the lessons will be given by an organisation not quite so isolated, and the effect will be sooner seen. Public opinion is a strong force, and the sympathy of the workers will be with their more oppressed fellows.

The present is a fitting occasion for the celebration of the Jubilee by the workers. Subscription-sheets should be filled, and the proceeds ensure the first great victory of the miners. K.

FLUNKYISM REBUKED.—At a large and influential meeting of the members of the West End Branch of the Alliance Cabinet Makers' Association on Thursday, the 27th Jan., specially summoned for the purpose, it was resolved, with two dissentients, that "We withdraw our subscriptions from the London Trades Council, in consequence of the recent action of the self-elected deputation to Sandringham."