



"HAVE YOU NOT HEARD HOW IT HAS GONE WITH MANY A CAUSE BEFORE NOW: FIRST, FEW MEN HEED IT; NEXT, MOST MEN CONTEMN IT; LASTLY, ALL MEN ACCEPT IT—AND THE CAUSE IS WON!"

Communications invited on Social Questions. They should be written on one side of the paper, addressed to the Editors, 13 Farringdon Rd., E.C., and accompanied by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication.

As all articles are signed, no special significance attaches to them because of their position in these pages. None to be taken as more than in a general manner expressing the views of the League as a body, except it be so explicitly declared by the Editors.

Rejected MSS. only returned if a stamped directed envelope is forwarded with them.

Subscriptions.—For Europe and United States, including postage, per year, 6s. six months, 3s.; three months, 1s. 6d.

Business communications to be addressed to Manager of the COMMONWEAL, 13 Farringdon Road, E.C. Remittances in Postal Orders or halfpenny stamps.

Periodicals received during the week ending Wednesday June 29.

ENGLAND		Fort Worth (Tex.)—South West	SWITZERLAND
Justice		Hampton (N.J.)—Credit Foncier	Zurich—Sozial Demokrat
Jus		Milwaukee (Wis.)—Volksblatt	Geneva—Bulletin Continental
Londoner Arbeiter-Zeitung		New Haven (Conn.)—Work-	
Norwich—Daylight		men's Advocate	HOLLAND
Die Autonomie		Albina (Oreg.)—Weekly Courier	Hague—Recht voor Allen
INDIA		SPAIN	
Bankipore—Behar Herald		Paris—Cri du Peuple (daily)	El Productor
UNITED STATES		Le Socialiste	Madrid—El Socialista
New York—Freiheit		Le Revolte	AUSTRIA
Truthseeker		Guise—Le Devoir	Brunn—Volksfreund
Der Sozialist		Lille—Le Travailleur	ROUMANIA
Volkszeitung		BELGIUM	
John Swinton's Paper		Liege—L'Avenir	Jassy—Lupta
Boston—Woman's Journal		DENMARK	
Chicago (Ill.)—Vorbote		Milan—Il Fascio Operaio	Social-Demokraten
Labor Enquirer		Marsala—La Nuova Eta	SWEDEN
Denver (Col.)—Labor Enquirer		Rome—L'Emancipazione	Stockholm—Social-Demokraten

NOTES.

The *Pall Mall* is sanguine enough to see a hope of Liberal reunion in Lord Hartington's speech; a less sanguine supporter of Liberalism would see in it the ordinary utterance of a Tory in Whig's clothing (which is the wolf and which the sheep?). But really to take any serious notice of such people as this lazy Whig-Tory lord would be beneath the part of the mere journalist even, if it were not for the worship of Parliament which is such a curious part of the modern Englishman's creed. Meanwhile there is one comfort, not all the Queen's horses (even with artificial tails and stuffed ears) and all the Queen's men can put the Liberal party together again. There is an end of that piece of humbug at any rate.

It is said in the daily papers: "An illuminated address of congratulation on the event of the Jubilee will be presented to her Majesty to-day by Sir James D. Linton and Mr. Alfred Everill on behalf of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours. It is bound in the form of an album in crimson plush," etc. Only by a printers' error, I suppose, the statement is omitted that the plush was cut from the seat of a pair of breeches of that material hitherto reserved for the wear of the President of the illustrious society—the loss will be supplied.

The amendment to the Mines Regulation Bill designed to put an end to the work of the pit-brow women was thrown out. This was a foregone conclusion, considering the amount of ignorance of economy shown on both sides of the question, mingled with the determination to do nothing likely to put a spoke in the wheel of capitalism, which is the natural atmosphere of the House of Commons. Mr. M'Laren, apparently quite innocently, gave the key-note to the whole debate when he said, "No objection had been urged against the employment of women on the pit-bank that could not be urged with as much force against the whole factory system of this country."

To Mr. M'Laren that seemed a conclusive argument;—and to us it seems so also. It would not be worth while attacking here and there a special abuse, a special horror of the present labour system, unless through it we were attacking the whole capitalistic system; we don't want to improve the system which Mr. M'Laren obviously thinks as necessary to the production of commodities as the sun is to the production of plants, but to sweep it away.

The case of the pit-brow women has been put more than once in the *Commonweal*, but as not everybody who may get hold of this number will be a subscriber to the paper, it may shortly be stated again thus:

that these women are employed on work unfit for women in order to reduce the wages of men in the coal industry. That is the whole matter in a nutshell.

W. M.

A letter on "The Labour Struggle," signed "Oswald Birchall," and dated "Buscot Rectory, Lechlade, Jubilee Day," appears in the *Co-operative News*, in the course of which the writer says, "I am glad to learn from the *News* that co-operation is to be started at Cradley Heath, but for such news I am generally obliged to turn to "The Labour Struggle" in the *Commonweal*, of which I send you the current number. I do not know how far the picture made up by the various items there may be accurate or not; but surely it is as dreadfully startling as ever, and ought to be looked into by all co-operative associations, with a view to productive experiments, without waiting for any other objects." I am sure I may venture to inform our friend that if there be any inaccuracy in the "dreadfully startling" account presented in the "Labour Struggle," it is certainly not in the direction of overstating the case.

T. B.

A FREE-TRADER'S VIEW OF THE LABOUR QUESTION.

II.

This, then, is the second proposition that presents itself in considering Mr. Atkinson's view of the relations of labour and capital: That the nationalisation of capital, attended as it would be by the division of the profits of the capitalists amongst the working classes, would give such slight additional advantage to the latter as to render it, even if just, not worth the trouble of doing.

As I have already pointed out, most capitalists get far more than 5½ per cent. of the total proceeds of their business; railway shareholders, for instance, taking more than one-half, or over 50 per cent. In such cases there can be no question whether it is worth while for the labourers to claim their rights. I must leave it to the men who live on £60 a-year to determine whether an extra £12 is worth striving for. All I know is, that it is *not* worth their while to work as they do for what they can buy with £60 a-year.

Let us, however, suppose, for the sake of argument, that Mr. Atkinson's figures represent truly the "present division of profits," and that, divided all round, the capitalists' share would not make five pounds a-year difference. Ought not the workers, then, to be satisfied, and Socialist agitators shut their mouths, and settle down in peace? Surely nothing more could be desired?

Well, as I said before, the labour question does not to my mind run on one line only; it is a figure of many sides, of which this of wages and the division of profits is perhaps the least important. We Socialists believe that the day will come when there will be no more profit-making, nor working for wages or money at all, but all will work for one common aim, as may sometimes be seen amongst the brothers and sisters of one family.

But before that blessed time arrives other things besides wages must be readjusted. For there are far more important relations between capital and labour than those which affect wages. Here, for instance, is something connected with another side of the question: "A general meeting of the cotton-spinners of Lancashire, Cheshire, and the neighbouring districts was held in Manchester yesterday, when it was resolved to run the mills upon half-time for eight weeks. This step is attributed to the adverse effect upon the spinners of the speculations of cotton-brokers at Liverpool" (*Standard*, May 28). I will not now go into the effect of this decision on the wages of the working people; but it is a fair example of "the service which capital does to labour in assisting it to economise time." The main thing, however, to be noticed in this extract is the proof it affords of the almost absolute power which the capitalist has over the labourers so long as he has control of the capital. It is possible for him to compel them to work themselves to death, or to stand idle and starve, according as it pays him best.

Still worse even than this is the misdirection and waste of labour which goes on when the working classes are at the mercy of the holders of capital; for the latter have absolute power to employ the labourers at whatever they may please—useful, useless, or absolutely harmful, as it suits their fancy. This it is which is the real, or at any rate by far the most fruitful cause of overwork. Every labourer who is taken away from the production of what he or his class needs, becomes a drag on those who are left. They have to produce the food he eats, the clothes he wears, and everything that he uses; and he does nothing for them in return, but is "employed" by some capitalist or master to do unnecessary work for him. And yet Mr. Atkinson tries to make believe that it is a blessing to the labourers to have a capitalist to "give further employment to labour," and thus prevent the working classes from enjoying that leisure which the introduction of machinery should have afforded them. If all the flunkies and domestic servants, all the makers of articles of luxury and builders of large mansions and churches, all the carriage-builders picture-painters, tailors, advertisers, and innumerable others whose work is now absolutely wasted on those who are utterly useless but whose possession of capital enables them as a class to compel the labour of all these producers,—if all these said producers or hangers-on were to leave off working for another class and merely toil for the needs of their own class, even without the help of modern inventions they would by working very short hours be able to produce all that they needed; and with "capital" in the form of