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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, 12 Farringdon Road, E.C. Remittances in Postal Orders or half-penny stamps.

Periodicals issued during the week ending Wednesday June 8.

NOTES ON NEWS.

Speeches of Mr. Chamberlain; letter of Mr. Bright; Birmingham meeting, and solemn sermon by the Birmingham organ of Coercion Joe; Glasgow anti-coercion meeting; progress of Mr. Gladstone, now the Liberal King, now a kind of rebel leader, striving rather for a glorious end than for his last crost. These are the preparations for the Liberal reunion, the hope of which some persons cling to so fondly. It does not directly concern us Socialists much, as after all it only foretells the formal inauguration of the reactionary party which has been in working order some time already. But even if it only gives us one more hope, to add to the confusion and ineffectiveness of Parliament, and so to disgust the people, and at the last disgust them so much that there will be rebellion in it like the disunited States of a more dull and debasement, that sensible persons will give a wide berth to, till the happy day comes when one can squelch out its noisome existence.

"Over the whole plain of labour and trade you saw society in conflict. No arms were used, and yet men were struck down; no blood was spilled, and yet men died. Neither giant nor feudal lord was any longer there; a new tyrant reigned in their stead, more enigmatical and pitiless than they, whose name was Capital." So says Mr. G. J. Holyoake in his prose poem on co-operation; nor is the picture overdrawn. But will not his words serve to describe the present as well as the past? Surely our own Labour Struggle column is enough to answer that question. It is true that the rule of the "tyrant" is now questioned, but not longer by the co-operationists but by the Socialist. The former seem to take a veil over their eyes which makes them see their old tyrant in very different colours to what they used to: for they can scarcely deny that he is there still.

The fact is, the very success of co-operation shows how very far it is from being a solution of the labour question. Let us admit that they have exploded the superstition that workmen could not combine in production and distribution, that the autocratic one-man capitalist was a necessity for carrying on a business successfully; but with all their success, what else have they done? They have shown that co-operation is desirable; but they are not allowed to co-operate: they must borrow money and pay interest, they must hire premises and pay rent, and pay the employees who must buy the land that is theirs and the factories that they have made; they must pay a profit on everything they buy outside their own association, either to consume or to transform into other wares. In short, not being allowed to co-operate, they have acted as all people must do under our present system—pay tribute to the owners of property for being allowed to live. And meantime they have established a form of joint-stocks differing (slightly at all in most cases) from that already established; which to some of us cannot but seem a rather pitiful outcome of those poetically genuine hopes for a new form of society which they began with earlier in the century, and all the energy developed from those hopes. Let them now, without casting aside the individual advances that they have gained, turn their eyes to Socialism, the real movement of labour, which will make the workers the arbitors of their own destinies.

The Engineer says, apropos of the Belgian strikes:

"Capital does not receive the common interest of the country when laid out in the coal mines, the workmen and their families cannot possibly subsist on a pittance of 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. at most a day for ten hours' work in a mines. The chief cause of the rise in the price of coal is the price of coal in the coal regions. If economy in plant and working is no further possible, the lock-out is a dreary one to the working classes, and if "economy in plant and working" can be carried further than at present by squeezing the ingenuity of the capitalist and the terrible dull patience of the workman to the utmost, how will the new improvement in the prospects of the coal capitalist last?" The last as long as the increased competition which will immediately spring up will allow it. The look-out is dreary indeed—to the capitalist. But to the Socialist, even when viewed through all the suffering of low wages and strikes, and riots consequent on the tyranny of the last squeeze of despising capitalism, it is not so dreary—because he can see the end drawing near: the capitalist, finding his profits cut down by competition, while the workman, growing more and more enlightened, claims more and more.

Mr. Haigh, of Barnsley, in speaking to a large number of miners and the officials of the Yorkshire Miners' Association, complains bitterly of the bad effects of the Competition and Royalties Act on their royalties in Great Britain. He explains the depressed state of the coal trade by the depressed state of the iron trade, and he uses the following remarkable statement: "Whilst as a nation we were almost the sole makers of iron and steel, and had no foreign competitors, we could supply our home trade and other countries without feeling the effect of these royalties and charges quite so much. But now the foreigner is face to face with a market and in the markets of the world, which has very small rents and royalty charges to pay—and even these charges go into the national exchequer to assist in meeting the expenses of the country—the result—we are run out of the foreign markets, and even driven from our own."

The readers of the Commonweal are pretty familiar with this view of the working of the present system of general co-operation, and the part it has played in the business of the British Empire, but as an utterance from the capitalist side it is worth noticing. What is to be done, pray, Mr. Capitalist? For why should we take the profit from the poor land-owner, who is already moaning dejectedly in another corner of the field about the pining away of his rents? Some of our non-Socialist working-men friends will say and think that the British working-man will get some satisfaction of it. Yet there is no reform to bring about. Mr. Haigh's speech, The Engineer, it can see through the flimsiness of that hope: "The speaker did not explain how it was that in spite of all this, the Belgian workmen works for starvation wages." Yes, indeed, that is what it must come to in one way or other as long as we work for the profit of a master. At the best, one group of workmen thriving somewhat at the expense of another, that is what it is in this system of association. Who is to be the judge to tell the workman of Mr. Haigh's speech, The Engineer, that it is a species of Capitalism.

International Capitalism and the workman a hungry machine; International Socialism and the workman a free man and the master of his own destiny—it must be one or other of these two. All the feeble compromises that aim at checking the power of the capitalists, and yet hold them back in order to keep their position, will be the foundered on the rocks. After another, by the monster which the Age of Commerce has made by dint of such mighty effort and cleverness, and which it must now feed by anything that may be handy. Honour, justice, beauty, pleasure, and profit are to be cast into the red-hot crucible; and yet at last the end must come, and the sooner it comes the less of a desert the world will be after the storm which is inevitable.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

What the Word "Hire" Means.—"The labourer is worthy of his hire. Yes, but the word 'hire' means not what he usually gets for his labour, but what he can get for his labour. It is a word which has been substituted for that system of competition, which makes it impossible for any to demand the real value of their labour. Remember Christ's teaching. 'Take up the cross of the new crusade, and in a little while you will see that the old monks were right when they taught that "laborear esse orare"—to labour is to pray.'—Dr. H. H. Glass.