

THE CO-OPERATIVE CONGRESS AT CARLISLE.

THE nineteenth Annual Co-operative Congress was inaugurated on May 28 by a reception concert to the delegates in the County Hall, Carlisle. Speeches were afterwards delivered by George Howard, Sir Wilfred Lawson, and Sedley Taylor of Cambridge. The latter stated that "Co-operation has a great goal, and it is no other than what is now called the emancipation of labour, the freeing of the working man from the kind of industrial bondage in which he now stands towards his private employer and labour."

On the same day an exhibition of co-operative manufactures was opened in the Drill Hall by Judge Hughes. The products shown embraced boots and shoes, cotton and woollen goods, cutlery, printing specimens, and furniture and household requisites. The latter goods were from the Strawberry Works, Newcastle, which was represented at the exhibition by Edward Pease (Fabian Society). The whole of the goods shown were of first-class character: just such as we may expect to see when production for use takes the place of production for profit only.

On Sunday 29th two Congress sermons were listened to by the delegates. The Rev. W. Labrum, Wesleyan, preaching on "Filthy Lucre," severely denounced various unclean modes of getting a living, such as by stock-jobbing, jerry-building, bread-adulterating, etc. At the cathedral, in the afternoon, the Bishop of Carlisle preached from Acts ii. 44, 45. As became a Galilean in receipt of £4500 a-year, he, of course, totally ignored his text, and said he felt quite sure that equality amongst men could never be brought about by an alteration of "the social basis of mankind." He finally recommended the co-operators present (Holyoake and Co.) to receive the Holy Ghost, as "co-operation would be dangerous unless inspired by" that shadowy particle. By the way, the "Holy Ghost" is a long time in moving the rev. bishop to part with his substance as his predecessors did.

On Monday morning the inaugural address was delivered by G. J. Holyoake in the Victoria Theatre. The pit was occupied by over 500 delegates from co-operative distributive and productive societies. The president in his opening remarks pointed out that "over the whole plain of labour you saw society in conflict. No arms were used, and yet men were struck down; no blood was spilt, and yet men died. Neither giant nor feudal lord was any longer there; a new tyrant reigned in their stead—more omnipresent and pitiless than they—whose name was Capital. It held in its hand the food of the people and the means of labour. In a population of thirty million persons equally invited to Nature's table, one million of fortunate persons commanded all the seats and thirty millions sat wistfully looking on, and the waiters never came their way. All that fell to them were crumbs from the trenchers of Dives."

This was a promising beginning, but when he wound up with the usual clap-trap glorification of "divi."—"oh, what a falling off was there!"

An agreeable change awaited us in the next speaker—Mrs. Failes, president of the Sociologic Society of America. In a paper on "the condition of the industrial classes of America," she remarked that "the competition which had produced good in the past was now reversing its action and militating directly against the progress of society, and its nature, as it worked itself out through advancing civilisation, was to break down and destroy weaker industries, and finally to concentrate wealth to such an extent as to injuriously affect the entire industrial and social system, and necessitate the re-organisation of society upon a co-operative basis."

M. de Boyve, of Nismes, a French delegate, followed next. His speech was somewhat reactionary after his fair predecessor. He remarked that "Revolutionary Socialism is increasing every day in the number of its disciples, gathered from all who were discontented and all who had nothing to do. To that they opposed the International Co-operative Union, which would be the enemy of disturbance," etc., etc.

The second day's sitting was presided over by Sir W. Lawson, who considered himself unfitted to preside at a working-men's gathering such as this one. Firstly, because he was a "country gentleman"—i.e., one who never did any work—and secondly, because he was a landlord, "and landlords at present were looked upon with distaste and suspicion throughout the whole civilised world."

In a discussion which followed on "Co-operative Production," a Leeds delegate gave some interesting particulars as to how about 200 Jewish tailors in Leeds had tried to start a co-operative workshop in order to free themselves from the yoke of the sweaters, but had failed through lack of funds. The Productive Committee intends to advance to them the requisite sum as a loan, so it is to be hoped they will have better success next time.

On the last day of the Congress "Co-operation and Agriculture" came in for a good share of discussion. A Darlington delegate declared himself strongly opposed to the principle of buying land for co-operative purposes. He advocated the principle that the land belonged to the people, and that private property in land was an injustice. Some reactionists tried to stop him here, but the chairman interposed in his behalf, so he had his say. Another delegate stated that landlords always asked an exorbitant price when co-operators wanted land.

The proceedings throughout were fairly harmonious. This might be due to a strong protest which was uttered early on. From it I gathered that a split was feared. That struggle I believe will be fought out sooner or later. It will be between the "butter and cheese" co-operator who would be content with distribution merely, and the "co-operator of ideas" who advocates profit-sharing production as a means, and the emancipation of labour as the end.

T. MUSE.

A section of the Indian native press is against the extension of railways, on the ground that they only benefit British capitalists. The *Bangabasi* says:—"The English merchants wish the Government to extend railways on its own responsibility, and borrow money from British capitalists. Their desire would be satisfied if the Government would borrow forty crores of rupees. They have raised the question of the welfare of both England and India. They wish to prove that the natives of India will be benefited by the extension of railways, and that the English people will also be benefited by it. We have already shown that the English people only will be benefited. We wonder at the argument set forth with a view to betray the natives of India and the Indian Government. The extension of railways will increase the sale of English goods. There is no necessity for raising the question of the welfare of the natives of India. Our Government will not do any good to the natives, even if it has the desire to do so. It must undertake work which will do good to the English people. So the railways will be extended. It is idle to talk of the welfare of the natives of India."—*Engineer*.—True, doubtless, but for one correction; it is not for the benefit of the people of England, but for the governing classes of England that all this is done.—W. M.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"THE IMMORALITY OF INTEREST."

SIR,—It is hardly necessary to say anything in reply to the letter from "A Professor of Science," after G. B. S.'s admirably lucid note; but as I am asked a direct question, I should like to answer it.

It could be neither through inadvertence nor design that I omitted to notice the defence of usury referred to, simply because I was unaware before reading the professor's letter that there was such a defence. Even yet, I am unable to see that it is worthy of serious consideration. His argument is, in effect, this: Usury of commodities is reasonable and right (the very proposition he ought to prove); money is a commodity; therefore, usury of money (I notice the professor uses "money" and "capital" as identical terms) is reasonable and right. Now I did not single out usury of money as specially deserving of disapprobation, but condemned usury of every kind as being morally indefensible, and criticised the stock arguments in its favour—the absurdity of which I am glad the professor recognises and admits. The matter standing thus, there is no call to discuss the laws of the variation of the rate of interest, or any minor point on which I may differ with him.

J. HALDANE SMITH.

MARX'S THEORY OF VALUE.

SIR,—Mr. Mallock in the current number of the *Fortnightly Review* attempts to disprove the theory of Marx and Ricardo, that the exchange-value of all commodities is measured by the amount of average human labour embodied in them. His strongest argument is derived from the statement of Mr. Laurence Gronlund (*The Co-operative Commonwealth*, p. 35) that "the whole agricultural class in the United States, consisting of 7,600,000 persons, did not create more wealth in 1880 than our manufacturing operatives alone, 2,700,000 in number." Here, says Mr. Mallock, we have two aggregates of "common human labour measured by time," each embodying itself in a corresponding aggregate of commodities; and yet, though the labour embodied in one set is nearly three times as great as that embodied in the other set, the two sets of commodities are in value nearly equal. The Socialists, therefore, are evidently mistaken as to that primary fact of existing industrial life, on the analysis of which their whole system is founded.

I am myself a believer in the theory of Marx and Ricardo, but I must confess that the above appears to be a strong argument against it. Can you or any of your contributors show its fallacy?—I am, your obedient servant,

May 31.

E. PETERS.

"THE WESTERN AVERNUS."

SIR,—A book just published, entitled, "The Western Avernus; or, Toil and Travel in Further North America," constitutes a very clear exposure of the emigration fraud. The author—a man of education and culture, and of physical strength and pluck withal—tired of the soul-choking atmosphere of London life, resolved to seek for a freer, wider, and manlier one in America. He became a shepherd on the plains of Texas, farm labourer, contractor's labourer, and railroad navy in Iowa and Minnesota, glad when by the hardest work he could gain a bare living, and quite elated when he had a dollar to share with a companion. In St. Paul, Minnesota, he got hired with about 100 more to go to the Rocky Mountain Section of the Canadian Pacific Railroad as a navy. Amongst the magnificent scenery of the Rockies he worked for two months and then left, partly because he wanted to get further West and partly because of the domineering spirit of one of the "bosses." With a companion named Fritz he tramped across the Selkirk range of the Rockies to Kamloops, in British Columbia. For nearly two years he lived in British Columbia, Oregon, and California, working with farmers, in saw-mills, on railroads, in vineyards when he could find work, and half starving when he could get none. In the famous city of San Francisco he met with his bitterest experiences, loafing about with 20,000 other unemployed men vainly seeking for leave to toil. Then an avenue opened for him to get back to England and civilisation, and the companionship of uneducated men became intolerable to him. And so he swiftly returned to England, satisfied, I presume, that the commercial spirit rules as completely in America as in England, and that it is as difficult to live nobly there as here. The author is evidently a just and noble-minded man, whose right post is in the camp of the Socialists helping to establish an industrial and economic system in which honest men can lead honest lives. Young Socialists who have an eye towards America or the Colonies as a refuge from the depressing conditions of life here, should read "The Western Avernus," it may save them much pain and disappointment.

Carlisle, May 21, 1887.

G. D. LAWIE.

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

OFFICES: 13 FARRINGTON ROAD, E.C.

London Members.—The first meeting of London Members will be held on Monday the 4th of July.

Resolution of Council.

At the meeting of the Executive Council on Monday evening the following resolution was passed:—"That all monies collected at open-air meetings must be duly handed to the treasurer of the League, and the receipt of same acknowledged in *Commonweal*."

BRANCH SUBSCRIPTIONS PAID.

Birmingham, to August 31. Manchester, to October 31. Leicester, South London, to December 31, 1886. Bradford, Croydon, Edinburgh, Hackney, Hammersmith, Hoxton (Labour Emancipation League), Hull, Ipswich, Lancaster, Leeds, Marylebone, Merton, Norwich, Shields, to March 31. Bloomsbury, Glasgow, North London, Oxford, to April 30. Clerkenwell, Walsall, to May 31.

"COMMONWEAL" PRINTING FUND.

Hammersmith Branch (weekly), 10s. W. B. (two weeks), 1s.

FOR PROPAGANDA.

Collected at Walham Green, June 5, 3s. 9½d. Collected in Regent's Park, June 5, 10s. 3½d. Ph. W., Treasurer, June 7.

THE NORWICH PRISONERS' AID FUND.

Salford Branch S.D.F., 3s. 6d. Pakenham Beatty, 2s. (£2 2s. instead of £2 should have been acknowledged last week). For Mrs. Mowbray—A Few Fabians, per Annie Bessant (weekly), 10s.—Total, 15s. 6d. J. LANE, Treasurer.