THE COMMONWEAL

June 18, 1887.

he is still to remain as manager. If he is right, the only hope for co-operative success is to bring pressure on the employers to voluntarily turn their places into co-operative concerns. Now this is hardly likely to happen, because the nature which as a rule makes a successful business man is not the nature which would give up for that reason.

For collective management to be successful 'there must be some system which can be followed and which only needs revising occasionally. All this confusion, existing in trade, must be managed by individual heads, either as owners or managers, who are not much hampered by a committee.

Take the grocery trade, and let us look at a few which form a part of it. There is a movement, the result of which is regulated a good deal by chance. Supposing there is a small fall in the wholesale price of sugar amounting to less than a halfpenny per pound. Now it is entirely a question of the strength of competition whether the savings are maintained and the additional profits go into the pockets of the grocers, or whether the retail price will come down a halfpenny and so leave perhaps a slight loss for the grocers. Anybody can bring down the price and do all the trade out of that extra amount of profit. We have only to remember that all the chief articles of commerce are constantly hanging in the balance, as it were, like the sugar, to reason into what a condition of confusion industry itself would be.

This instance shows us that the individual is not free under this system of competition, but that he is practically bound by the actions of his neighbours: if they adulterate an article, he is so compelled he must prevent it. And if we follow the details of working still further, we see such a display of evil motives, selfishness and meanness that it is fairly astonishing that any one in business should be ashamed of his situation. In the same way, a good business faculty, he will be constantly afraid lest this man should set up in opposition, Consequently he will give him fair wages to keep him in his place. But he will not stay many years; he saves up a little, he starts a shop, and then working with the assistance of his employer and his late employer are the greatest of enemies; he will use the meanest tricks in many cases to get customers away from the old man. The merchant has always, most naturally, he wants to attract them, and make it up on little things the values of which are not so well known to his customers. All this is justified as good business faculty—"all is fair in love and war," and this is war sure enough.

Let us take another instance of the freedom () which exists under this system. In many provincial towns of late years there has been a movement set on foot to close the shops for a half-day's holiday each week, but this movement has entirely fallen through, partly and naturally so. What is the result? Why, in most cases the movement fails because the shop-keepers who might be willing to close if every one would, when consequently they could lose no custom by it, are not willing to allow an afternoon's custom to go to their enemies. So we see that the freedom which exists is the freedom of two or three to force all the rest against their will.

Let us take another example of the spirit of competition, this time in the wholesale trade; here prices are more flexible, more beating down is done, the keen customer beats the merchant down, the less keen has to pay for it. In an iron merchant's business, say, he will supply at a quarter less than the local blacksmith, and the small blacksmiths, of course, have to find some way to beat him off, and the large blacksmiths in the country are not up to this, they deal always with one merchant and pay pretty much what he asks, always beating him down half a sovereign or so to satisfy their opinion of their own business faculty, the merchant of course putting the same amount on for that purpose. Thus the poorer man who gives the merchant credit for dealing honestly with him has to pay more than he, one who trades truer, and if on the principle of serving worst the one who gives him credit for most honesty! This and similar processes lead to what is called the survival of the fittest, which is often another word for the greatest crooked.

I think it will be pretty evident by this what the "business faculty" consists in, and also it will be clear that a lot of workers trying to start a productive concern and trying to buy and sell in this competitive way, and of course the "business faculty," which is the result of luck they happen to get hold of a manager with the aforesaid business faculty, who is willing to give them the benefit of it at a comparatively low figure. Therefore, it seems to me that it will be necessary to be to a large extent independent of the competitive market if co-operative production is to succeed.

I do not wish in any way to throw cold water on to such schemes as a cooperative store, and work we have been, and work I have seen with him that very much good, both in helping the propaganda and in general experience and education, will result from the practice of co-operation either in distribution or production, and if the attempts fail they will have two results. The first is that this system of competition must be put to stop, before any real good can be done. And now a word to those who always want to know how we are going to obtain and reward this business faculty in a state of Socialism.

The answer is simple enough, so simple that the business part of the community will be a long time before they take it in. We shall neither attain it nor reward it at all, for the very good reason that it will be perfectly useless; When competition shall have passed away the relative values of things will be established on a rational principle based on the amount of labour needed to produce them, these relative values will be fixed and only revised at intervals. The making of trade under this system will be so easy that there will be no scarcity of men able to do it, and so little to reward them.

I spoke of the kind of labour having an influence in the prices of articles. I meant the pleasant by it, or the workman is no more to produce. Hence the introduction of over-work in the production of any one article by itself, but I think we must all feel the decaying character of the whole business, and wish to see some better and more noble system established in its place.

RAYMOND UNWIN.

HOW WE LIVE AND HOW WE MIGHT LIVE

(Continued from p. 137.)

Well now, what Socialism offers you in place of these artificial foolish wages, this unendurable poverty, this menial rank, this miserable pay; the wants of the market, supply and demand set the cost of living and then you have to work and toil and to be an unprofitable slave.

For what I want you to understand is this: that in every civilised country at least, there is plenty for all,—is, or at any rate might be, if you would only work it up. Take a town, of any town, in the country, there is something which exists in the form of a product of the people. We have to learn how to take the distribution of the wealth we have made all people comparatively comfortable; but that is nothing to the wealth we might have if labour were not misdirected.

Observe in the last days of the history of man, he was the slave of his most immediate necessities; nature was mighty and he was feeble, and he had to wage constant war with her for his daily food and such shelter as he could get. His life was bound down and limited by the struggle against nature, or the struggle against nature with the aid of those things which nature has left him. Then the result is,—the outcome and the reflection of this ceaseless toil of earning his livelihood. Time passed, and little by little he grew stronger, every step serving him as a lever to mount the next, till now after all these ages he has almost completely conquered nature, and one would think should now have leisure to turn his thoughts towards higher things than procuring to-norrow's dinner. But, alas! his progress has been broken and hindered all the way; and he has been checked and his progress has been stopped by those forces under his control to do what he will, he is still to conquer, he still has to think how he will best use those forces which he has conquered. Some will be used for the benefit of the community, the rest will be used to enrich a few, driven by mere fate. It would almost seem as if some phantom of the ceaseless pursuit of food which was once the master of the savage was still hunting the civilised man; who toils in a dream, as it were, to keep the master of the beast. The same spirit of competition which has driven him to work and toil, and to turn his mind and his heart to the making of a fortune for himself alone, goes on the same way, to-day one man will mean, for instance, as much cloth in a week as will clothe a whole village for years; and the real question of civilisation has always been what are we to do with this extra produce of labour—what is it to the business which, fear of starvation, and its fellowship, desire of domination, drives us into inhuman cruelty and dastardly use of all kinds to force them to suffer and to learn and depend on them, to do away with competition and build up co-operation, is one our necessity.

Now, to get closer to details, you probably know that every man in civilization is worse off, so to say, more skimp his skin, than before. He must work, socially, he can produce more than will keep himself alive and in fair condition; and this has been so for many centuries, from the time, in fact, when the invention of the machine began to make his capacity of producing these extras has gone on increasing faster and faster, till to-day one man will mean, for instance, as much cloth in a week as will clothe a whole village for years; and the real question of civilisation has always been what are we to do with this extra produce of labour—a question which the phantom, fear of starvation, and its fellowship, desire of domination, has driven men to answer pretty badly in the past, and which we are pressed to answer pretty badly in the present.
SONNET.

What shall we live on in such a world as this?
Where gilded shame usurps the Throne of Truth;
Where work is robed in purple, and men his
Toil; where a man is wretched with the wealth
Which the world takes care to be defied, and
And Love's clear stream delt with most foul sport;
Where the multitude on selfish cloth:
And generous hearts bankrupt their owners quite;
Where Honesty, a beggar, hugs his rags,
Satisfied with the gold from their rich carriage wheels;
Where Law, the cunning harlot, daily brags
That crime can buy, if guile be better bargains;
What pride can handle that sawdow not dive.
To strive towards changing this dark night to day?

—Fred Henderson.

GRATE THE FATT SOW.

By THOMAS WHACKER.

(Reprinted from The Britolian, 1872.)

I've a poor higronnamus an' knows little or miffin,
Thanks to aquire an' parson, there an' tier skul.

Well, first of all I claim good health; and I say that a vast propor-
tion of people in civilisation scarcely even know what that means.
To feel one's life a pleasant one is the same as finding one
living one's bodily powers; to play, as it were, with sun and wind and
rain; to rejoice in satisfying the due bodily appetites of a human
animal without fear of degradation or sense of wrong-doing; yes, and
this is the most useful and least self-willish, soul-stirring, heart-stirring
source of countenance—be, in a word, beautiful,—that also I claim. If
we cannot have this claim satisfied we are but poor creatures after all;
and I claim, in the teeth of those terrible doctrines of asceticism,
which born of the very sadness of the human mind, to make use for
so many ages used as instruments for the continuance of that oppres-
sion and degradation.

And I believe that this claim for a healthy body for all of us carries
with it all other dues claims: for who knows where the seeds of disease
which even rich people suffer from were first sown? from the luxury
of an ancestor, perhaps; yet often, I suspect, from his poverty. And for
the poor as well as the rich, I claim a decent burial, and that the poor suffer
always from one disease—hunger; and at least I know that, if a
man is overworked in any degree he cannot enjoy the sort of health
I am speaking of; nor can he, if he is continually cheated to one dust
round of mechanical work, with no hope at the other end of it; nor
if he lives in continual sordid anxiety for his livelihood, nor if he is ill-
ness, nor if he is deprived of all enjoyment of the natural beauty of
the world, nor if he has no amusement to quicken the flow of his spirits
from time to time: all these things, which touch more or less directly
on his bodily condition, are born of the claim I make to live in good
health; indeed, I suspect that these good conditions must have been
in former ages more common before a population in numbers and in
health was really healthy, as I have hinted above; but also I doubt not that in
the course of time they would, joined to other conditions, of which
more or less, graduately so, has been such a population given rise to
of animal life at least, happy therefore, and beautiful according to the
beauty of their race; though you must remember that the very varia-
tions in the races of men are caused by the conditions under which they
are brought up and thought. Here is the demand of the advantages of the climate and surrounding, yet if we were working
for livelihood and not for profit we might easily neutralise many of
the disadvantages of our climate, at least enough to give due scope to the
fall development of our race.

—William Morris.

Lawyers, merchants and such folk, who properly and originally earn nothing
for the public, being only a kind of gamblers who play with one another for the
lives of the poor.—Sir Wm. Petre.

An economic foundation of riches through any country ever constitutes its hap-
piness. Great wealth in the possession of one stagnates, and extreme poverty
with a great mass of people, is a revelation of the conditions; it is the cause of
the superiority of the Western and the pauperism of the Eastern nations.

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—James Bryce.

While the past fifty years have been such an uncommonly happy time for the
rich, it is impossible to say so much for the poor. Out of the thirty-six millions,
or thereabouts, four and a half have been added to the population of the world,
seventeen, or thirty millions, have so narrow a margin between income and the neces-
sities of life, that the poor can't and the rich won't. To make matters worse
for the rich, the majority of the children's school
education, and are obliged to have it spread through all their lives by means of rates and
taxed.—J. A. Pigot.