HOW WE LIVE AND HOW WE MIGHT LIVE.

The word Revolution which we Socialists are so often forced to use, has a terrible sound in most people’s ears, even when we have explained to them that it does not necessarily mean a change accompanied by riot and all kinds of violence, and cannot mean a change that is forced upon us and in the teeth of opinion by a group of men who have somehow managed to seize on the executive power for the moment. Even when we explain that what we are fighting for is an in its alecological sense, and mean by it a change in the basis of society, people are accustomed to the idea of such a vast change, and beg that you will speak of reform and not revolution. As however we Socialists do not at all mean by our word revolution what these people mean by the word reform, I can’t help thinking that it would be a mistake to use it, whatever project we might conceivably harness its harmless envelope. So we will stick to our word, which means a change of the basis of society; it is a great change, but it will at least warn them that there is something to be frightened about, which will be no less dangerous for being ignored; and also it may encourage some people, and will mean to them at least not a fear but a hope. Fear and Hope—those are the two names of the two great passions which rule the race of men, and with which revolutionists have to deal; to give hope to the oppressed and fear to the few oppressors, that is our business; if we do the first and give hope to the many, the few must be frightened by their hope; otherwise we do not want to frighten them; it is not revenge we want for poor people, but happiness; indeed what revenge can be taken for all the thousands of years of the sufferings of the poor?

However, many of the oppressors of the poor, most of them, we will say, are not conscious of their being oppressors (we shall see why, presently) they live in an orderly quiet way, as far as possible removed from the feelings of a Roman slaveowner or a Legree; they know that the poor exist, but their sufferings do not present themselves to them in a tremendous and dramatic way; they themselves have troubles to bear, and they think doubtless that to bear trouble is the lot of humanity, nor have they any means of comparing the troubles of their lives with those of people lower in the social scale; and if ever they do, they have troubles of a different kind in mind upon them, that console themselves with the maxim that people do get used to the troubles they have to bear, whatever they may be.

But however far advanced individuals, at least, that is but too true, so that we have as supporters of the present state of things, however bad it may be, first those comfortable unconscious oppressors who think that they have everything to fear from any change which would involve more or less the most gradual reforms, and secondly those poor people who living hard and anxiously as they do, can hardly conceive of any change for the better happening to them, and dare not risk one tithe of their poor possessions in taking any action towards a possible bettering of their condition; as it is the case we can do little with the rich save inspire them with fear, it is hard indeed to give the poor any hope. It is then, no less than reasonable that those whom we call the working people, in our present attempts to improve life, and who might be a great help to us, should be enlightened on the point of whether or not it would be a good thing, and stimulates the progress of the race; but the people who tell you this should call competition by its shorter name of war if they wish to be honest, and you would then be free to consider whether any war stimulates progress, otherwise than as a mad bull churning you over your own garden may do. War or competition, whichever you please to call it, means at the best pursuing your own advantage at the expense of some other, and has in itself a frightful quality; there is no being of destruction even of your own possessions, or you will certainly come by the worse in the struggle. You understand that perfectly as to the kind of war in which people go out to kill and be killed; that sort of war which slips in and which seeks to make you believe in some instance “to sink, burn, and destroy”; but it appears that you are not so conscious of this waste of goods when you are only carrying on that other kind of competition; observe, however, that the waste is there all the same.

Now let us look at this kind of war a little closer, run through some of the forms of it, that we may see how the “burn, sink, and destroy” is carried on in it. First, you have that form it called national rivalry, which in good truth is now-a-days the cause of all gunpowder and bayonet wars which civilized nations wage. For we have Engaged in this business, and we do it because we have not the lion’s share of the world-market; we didn’t want to fight it as a nation, for we had it; but now this is changing in a most significant, and to a Socialist, a most cheering way; we are doing our best to lose it; we are fighting our “competition” between the great nations of civilisation for the world-market, and to-morrow it may be a desperate war for that end. As a result, the furthering of war (if it be not too large a scale) is no longer confined to the honour-and-glory kind of old Tories, who if they meant anything at all by it meant that a Tory war would be a good occasion for damping down democracy; we have changed all that, and all now are quite ready, the kind of patriotism which is most likely to produce “patriotism” &c as it’s called. The leaders of the Progressive Radicals they would call themselves, long-headed people who know well enough that social movements are going on, who cannot tell for the instant whether or not the world will move with their help or without it; these are the jingo’s of to-day. I don’t mean to say they know what they are doing; politicians, as you well know, take good care to shut their eyes to everything that may matter. But we have lost that command of them which we once had. Despair is not too strong a word. We shall let this impulse to snatch markets carry us whither it will, whither it must. To-day it is successful burlage and dispute, to-morrow it may be the root of the great war. Now this is not a digression, although in saying this I am nearer to what is generally called politics than I shall be again. I only want to show you what commercial wars come to when it has to do with foreign nations, for what eventually we want must go with it. That is how we live now with foreign nations, prepared to ruin them without war if possible, with it if necessary, let alone massacres the disgraceful expediency of savage tribes ravishing peoples, on whom we force at once our shoddy wares and our hypocrisy at the cannon’s mouth.

Well, surely Socialism can offer you something in the place of all that; it can offer you peace and freedom instead of war. We might live utterly without national rivalries, acknowledging that while it is best for those who feel that they naturally form a community under one name to govern themselves, yet that no community in existence should feel that it had interests opposed to any other, their economical condition being at any rate similar; so that any citizen of one community could fall to work and live without disturbance of his life when he was in a foreign country, and would fit into his place quite naturally, so that all civilised nations would form one great community agreeing together as to the kind and amount of production and distribution needed, working at such and such production where it could be best produced; avoiding waste by all means. Please to think of this amount

3This paper has been delivered as a lecture on several occasions; and I have been often asked to repeat it. Hence its appearance in "Communist Mechanics."
CO-OPERATIVE PRACTICE IN AID OF SOCIALISM.

CO-OPERATION, the offspring and natural handmaid of Socialism, having been seduced and perverted by the sons of Capitalism, has too long been treated as a stranger by us. Signs are not wanting, however, of a permanent and mutually-beneficial reapprochement between those closely-related movements. Co-operators are beginning to learn that the self-interest, apart from higher motives, must draw them on to Socialism. Socialists are recognising that, although true social co-operation is impossible without the previous destruction or automatic collapse (as the case may be) of the present social structure, they as a party, or in private groups, may profitably employ for the advancement of their cause the services of such co-operation as is now available. The co-operative movement has some roots in the past, and the present and future co-operative enterprises, the Social-Democratic bakeries in London, and the recently established grocery stores of the Socialist League, are so many indications of the way towards cooperation.

Let us, then, review the field which lies before us, with a view to the intelligent and therefore successful organisation of this co-operative campaign.

In the first place, what are the objects to be gained by it? Let me commence by anticipating any change of utopianism—I adopt the vulgar spelling along with the vulgar meaning of the word—by discounting any hope of creating at present the framework of the co-operative commonwealths of the future. Such co-operative or even communistic experiments as we may now inaugurate can only be regarded as means and not as ends. We shall be constructing on a foundation of private property, just as we did before. We shall be the architects of the new structures, but not (unless accidentally and incidentally) laying any part of its foundations. For the same reason we shall neither create new industries, nor separate the inhabitants of the world; on the contrary, we shall aid each other to live and work to the best purpose in it.

The chief objects, I think, of such efforts as I refer to are, or should be the following: (1) Mutual benefit and insurance: making the provision of Socialism less dangerous to its actual disciples, less deterrent, if not entirely attractive, to its potential or would-be disciples by increasing their material support, and making the life of the labourer less desperate than it now is. We shall be aiding the working-man by providing a means of avoiding the expense of hospitalisation and nursing, and in aiding the new trade unions by providing a means of avoiding the expense of itinerant hospitalisation and nursing. (2) The object of the trade union is, as has been explained, to organise the wage-earner for the purpose of making effective his demand for higher wages. It is to enable him to strike his employer in a more effective way, by centralising his funds, and then using these funds to carry on the strike by means of which a more conscious and therefore more rapid evolution of the New Order may be furthered, the aim and operations of the revolution rendered more scientific, and its immediate results multiplied and abiding. To create meanwhile models and precedents for the imitation of municipalities, trades' unions, and other public bodies. (3) To provide a training in co-operative industries or services, and to bring the model social enterprises of the past into contact with a new sphere for many desirous of aiding the Socialist movement but unsuited or dissuaded from agitation or other work connected with the direct propaganda. (4) Applying to communities only, and not to purely industrial co-operative enterprises: To provide as complete practical training as possible for the work of the day after the revolution, while adjusting to contemporary workers in the cause of recreative and social centres using as model for their new feudalism the Catholic monastic centres for country districts, and, last but not least, educational centres for the young.

CO-OPERATIVE PRACTICE IN AID OF SOCIALISM.

(To be continued.)

WILLIAM MORRIS.