THIEVES.

"What's in a name?" asked Shakespeare, and we in these days can answer, "Everything is in the name.

"That which we call a thief
Call him but (a)arceller, and the world
Will bow before the fruit of his success."

In this age of unrelentings we worship mere names. Old formalisms, that have lost whatever life was once in them, constitute our religion and pervade our social life. The old virtues are flied, and all that we have now is the hollow echo of glories that once were, the pretence which is its reality. In nothing is this more apparent than in the hypocrisy of the present day seen more plainly than in this name-worship. The identical same vice that is strongly condemned under one name is as loudly praised under another. Especially is this so with that huge vice—the effort to live without working by getting hold of the result of other people's work, i.e., theft. Now it is the end and aim of the lives of our business classes to succeed in this action; our present system of society is built up on the foundation of the effort to carry it into effect. By theft I understand the taking of goods in the production of which the thief had not part, and for which he gives no equivalent to the producers; and this is precisely what is done by landlords and employers of labour every day; and yet when a thief arises who openly calls himself by his true name, he is instantly subjected to indignation and bad treatment from the void fellow-plunderers, who punish him for doing openly what they do under-handedly. So hypocritical is our society of thieves that it cannot endure that anything—not even robbery, its favourite amusement and sole support,—should be done except under a cloak. There is work for an Ithuriel amongst these thieves who try to hide their knavery even from themselves by taking such names as capitalist, employer of labour, and landlord. At the touch of truth the devil will stand exposed in them all.

I do not say that every idler is really conscious of being a thief. In most instances his training has dulled his intellect too greatly to allow him to see the evil they indicate in things; but the very fact of his idleness is there all the same. Born into a corrupt society, and educated on the orthodox plan of crushing out any tendency to independent thought, it is no wonder that he takes for granted the rightlessness of his position. As he grows up, the idea of others"s work is the source of his income, and the evil of robbery is the main principle in our class society, and it is not palliation of the evil to plead that the robbers call themselves by some other name, and blind even themselves to the real nature of their mode of living. The old robber baron who sent out his troops of mercenaries to pillage, was no more a thief than the modern landlord who, with his troops of mercenaries—rent collectors, bailiffs, and (witness Ireland to-day) armed soldiers as well,—on the blackened surface of the soil, attacks their homes with crown brigades or burns them with petroleum, and drives the wretched tenantry out, in many cases to die of exposure to the elements. Why, we have in our very midst the same system set up in the planter, slave-driver and cattleman. As he was in the old times, the recital of whose events fills us with a horror of their injustice !

It would be an interesting experiment to pass in review every one of those qualities that are the subject of adulation from our commercial of necessity consider those that we should be found to be vicious which, under other names, are as loudly condemned. The virtuous middle class woman, under the veiling name of "marriage," prostitutes herself by taking for a partner a man, not because she loves him, but because he can give her a good position in society, and hypocrisies enough (an unconscious one) as she is, looks with scorn upon her sister prostitute who openly proclaims what she is. The pious middle class woman will not refrain from lying for the sake of "holding out" as a "political opponent;" from murder, unless it is styled "maintaining the commerce of the country in foreign parts;" and from theft, unless you apply to it some such name as "business enterprise" or "social success.

Ward again that some Ithuriel would touch the horrid shams and deceiving shapes under which the fraud and degradation of our present system has hidden itself, and show the real devil's nature of the brute!

FRED. HENDERSON.
of this crisis did to a certain extent relieve this special and temporary misery. But apart from that, the condition of even the aristocracy of the old type has never been as bad as it was. What has really happened is just that increase in the number of profitably manufacturable goods spoken of. But this great and overwhelming prosperity of theirs is only temporarily threatened. The increasing severity of competition in the world of commerce and industry, and the increasing productivity of labour, are not only insufficient to check this process, but left alone will lead to its ultimate stagnation. And the once small capitalist will have to become a manager, a servant of his last one. This process is already far advanced, and is creating a mass of new employments in the commercial world, the commerce.

Under these conditions that very rise in the standard of middle-class comfort has become a snare to the class as a whole. The difficulty is that the ordinary well-to-do families in finding a "respectable" position for their children is now a sufficiently tried method; all the "new goods" ready to be enjoyed by a "refined" youth are overstocked; education is cheaper and common, and has lost its old market-value, and even in the ancient "aristocracy" there is a mass of commercial competition. The lower ranks of art and literature are crowded with persons drawn to these professions by the pleasantness of the pursuits in which they exemplify, who find out the very low market value of the ordinary educated intellect. Those, together with the commercial clerks, in whose occupation no special talent is required, form an intellectual proletariat, whose labour is "rewarded" on about the same scale as the manual worker, and as long as they are employed, but whose position is more precarious, and far less satisfactory.

Meanwhile, then, in spite of the rise in the standard of comfort of the middle-classes, it must be at the present given upon the one hand, rather power than well-being, and that they are now being threatened with a decrease of that power, their tenure of which, now that the working-class is a force, instead of being apathetically contented with a position at the best inferior to that of the bourgeoisie.

Elaborately arranged figures, therefore, by which is sought to show that the workmen in general are steadily improving their condition, where in themselves correct, which by no means always, and are only applicable to certain groups of workmen, and even then frequently do not prove what they are supposed to prove, the genuine wages will be stated at such and such, but it never happens in any trade that all the workmen receive the full amount of the wages stated after being in constant employment, even when trade is flourishing; the estimated full wages are always more and more, as the introduction of fresh machines and the skill of working, the necessity of skilled labour, makes it possible to substitute unskilled in the manufacture, of the product, that the workmen is too often in the position of his subscription by the benefit society, which from one point of view means that he helps his master to pay his poor-rate. Moreover it is doubtful if the unions are strong enough for this to hold out against a continued depression of trade.

However, the question of this doubtful improvement in the position of the better-off workmen is by the way. The real point is, first, that there are many indications that this improvement will be superficial, in the face of the continuous increase in the productivity of labour, and secondly, it is clear that this improvement is precarious and less and less undertaken by the so-called "aristocracy" of business, who have more becoming more financiers, or shareholders obviously living on the increase of taxing labour, both that of the "hand" and the manager.

All this has been gradually dawning on the workmen of the Continent, and especially of Germany (so much more intellectually advanced than the British workmen) since the bourgeois constitutional revolution of '48.

E. Belfort Bax and William Morris.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"PRACTICAL" SOCIALISTS.

SIR,—As comrade Binning has placed before the question before us, if I may be allowed to find room for a few of my views, I venture to say, that it is not historically obvious that progress in any society is measured by the extent of extension of the idea of the sanctity of private property in the activity of those in propagating their ideal views? We believe that by that we do not mean to exclude the moderate, but to exclude the narrow, and to call for an atmosphere of "revolutionary truth." If our view is correct, he could not only afford a new model of political theory, but far more than that, he could, in an opposition of his criticism lesson, from the "blundering efforts" of the "palliative anti-Socialist"

Such being the case, we cannot consent to alter our mode of procedure because of a misunderstanding—born of ignorance—as to our action in this respect. It seems to us that the union of our aims is very common action which comrade Binning wishes to unite with minor reformers that is so reactionary, by tending to obscure the ultimate ideal.

All "non-politicals" must have read comrade Binning's "counterblast" with an amount of mixed pleasure and regret. Morris's charge against "practical" Socialists was one of "want of perspective," or the too common party spirit, or not being willing to face the consequences, and comrade Binning has proven Morris's charge, if not wholly, partly, and so, the "booties of petty-whistles" have come to be thankful.

Comrade Binning says: "It is a bare and ugly present that I am concerned;" and again, "A true revolutionist is one who brings something new into the life of his generation." All "non-politicals" will see at once the grave admission. I agree decided, but do not stop, because it is impossible, although perhaps, to say clearly what that this generation is, and what is the "revolutionary" authority, or "victors," is with "generations of people" that a true revolutionary Socialist must be concerned. So our comrade Binning's "political" mind was dazed, or he would have reelected that which is the only road which the faults of past generations; and "political" programmes must intensify all the "minority force:" the arts of the "revolutionary" subsistence exists. Further on, those Socialists who do not believe in "political" methods are charged with "cowardly policy in standing aloof." This does not agree with the "revolutionary" purposes, nor "criticize" the efforts; effects, efforts, we are told, will result in "forecasts" of Socialism. What is this? It is the Social Democratic programme—viz., Adult Suffrage, Annual Elections, Propaganda, Propriety, etc., or "commercial" society. If these are our comrade Binning's "commercial" forebears, he surely can find a way for his "critique" without casting charges of cowardice amongst the ranks of those who do themselves "non-political;" we do not mean to be ruled by onlaid and pacific methods, and that is why I claim to be a revolutionary non-political Socialist.

The terms "impatient spirits" and "apostles of inaction" seem to me to be very contradictory. Again, the "revolutionary" spirit of the body of workers must be conserved with the spirit of the "revolutionary" action. Never, however, can I agree with the above others, that non-politicals, the so-called "apostles of inaction," have to set themselves to do "agreements with your methods, not aim.

And now comes the text of the "call of the revolutionaries"—"I hold that a truly Socialist Society can only be established and administrated by a revolutionaries; but prepared to take control. Surely this cannot be of the "forefathers"? prepared to take control. A centralized minority-forces of "Socialist" administrators, directly, instead of through the spirit of the principle, an evil, if not worse, than those Governments doubted Liberal and Tory. It is just not for the moment the moment the party spirit in all governments; and I guess, with some measure of truth, that this "intellectual minority would possess their share of party, to the detriment of the workers, and to the benefit of the bourgeoisie."

Our comrade Binning has his own way to do the same. But the benevolence duty to combat such crystallisation of the powers, by the way! Let us find out the answer out of Binning's own mouth. He charges non-political Socialists with being partisans of revolts, forgetting that the Socialist centralised administration (if ever becomes full-blown) is a cardinal principle which must not be lost sight of. Now, if my comrade Binning admits that a "Socialist" Administration such as he speaks of is to be brought into existence and must give it a name, he is not at a loss, it was the "minority force."" The "minority force" has been obtained—viz.; monopoly of all the means of subsistence abolished—must give it a name: that the Administration is not worth working for. For my part I am content to work for the attainment of this principle, and that alone, outside all centralised forces; at the same time, as far as I can understand, with the same "allow-forefathers". Will you, Sir, in what I may be allowed to feel a "revolutionary Non-Socialist"? After this latter admission, I feel our comrade Binning will feel must regret at having used the phrase "Apostles of Inaction." If not, I feel I am only to thank him for the "apology of the Impotent Spirits." W. BUNDELL.

The way to make a happy future is to make a happy present.—Ernest Jones.

Ignorance is a disease, not a deadly and dangerous disease. There are few things in the world more costly than an ignorant man.—Ernest Jones.

"The Union of the men in the vaat of men, resting the peril which frightens back all others; which, if be not vanquished, will die the crown of thorns.—Cardinal.