



HAVE YOU NOT HEARD HOW IT HAS GONE WITH MANY A CAUSE BEFORE NOW: FIRST, FEW MEN NEED IT; NEXT, MOST MEN CONTEMN IT; LASTLY, ALL MEN ACCEPT IT—AND THE CAUSE IS WON!

Communications invited on Social Questions. They should be written on one side of the paper, addressed to the Editors, 13 Farringdon Rd., E.C., and accompanied by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication.

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Church Reformer	Der Sozialist	Gazetta Operaia
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THIEVES.

"WHAT'S in a name?" asked Shakespeare, and we in these days can answer, "Everything's in a name."

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

In this age of unrealities 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 fled, and all that we have now is the hollow echo of glories that once were, the pretence where no possession is, a mockery of reality. In nothing is the miserable 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 taker had no 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 his veiled fellow-plunderers, who punish him for doing openly what they do underhandedly. 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, or 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 grasp the reality of things; but the reality of his robbery 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 rightfulness of his position. "Do you call me a thief, young man?" a middle-class man indignantly asked me at a meeting on one occasion; and the question seemed to imply that no harm could be done by an evil if he who performed it did so unthinkingly, or was unconscious of its wrongfulness. The evil of robbery is the main principle in our class society, and it is no 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 soldiery as well,—levies blackmail upon the tillers of the soil, attacks their homes with crowbar 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 old system of plunder, decked out in the same array of ruthless cruelty as we had in the old times, the recital of whose events fills us with a horror of their injustice!

"Ah," says the virtuous capitalist, "I am not as these are. Your attacks do not touch me. These landlord cruelties I do not practice." No? Your robbery is disguised under the garb and name of "commerce;" and if it be true that you do not practice these atrocities, what is the meaning of the burning villages of Burmah and other half-civilised countries? What do they mean if they are not the outcome of your greed, which sent your armed hirelings there to gain plunder for you? At home, too, are not the crowds of homeless unemployed a direct outcome of the robbery that your competitive system practises? Don't talk cheap sentiment about the "glory of the empire" and the "dignity of labour"; but if you are a man, be honest in your villainy, and confess that it is villainy.

It would be an interesting experiment to pass in review every one of those qualities that are the subject of adulation from our commercial classes: almost without exception they will be found to be vices 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 hypocrite (though often an unconscious one) as she is, looks with scorn upon her sister prostitute who openly proclaims what she is. The pious middle class will zealously refrain from lying, unless you call it "advertising" or "criticising 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 "commercial success."

Would 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.

SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

CHAPTER XXII.—SOCIALISM MILITANT.

We have now arrived at the most exciting part of our subject, since it has to do with what we may fairly call the practical politics of Socialism, with matters which all who call themselves Socialists must of necessity consider, unless they chose to relegate themselves to the position of theorists pure and simple. What lies in the scope of these chapters is the giving some idea of the relative position of the attack and defence in the passing time, when armies are definitely gathering for the battle, and it is beginning to be perceived that Socialism is the one serious question of the epoch, since it covers every interest of modern life.

Let us turn our attention first of all to the defence; and we use the word advisedly, since the present proprietary and dominant class has absorbed into itself its old enemy the feudal proprietary class, and, since it has now no longer anything to attack, has taken the position once occupied by the latter. This indeed has been the position of the victorious middle-class for some time, but it is now at last waking up to the fact, and can see the enemy which is advancing to the attack. The middle-class is speedily getting to be no longer democratic even in appearance: it once wore that guise because it was confounded with the working-classes, whose position was then entirely subordinate to it. This condition of things was the high-water mark of the French Revolution, though there were from time to time indications of the coming solidarity of labour; and it lasted through the revolutionary period of 1848. Up to that time the triumphant middle-class, trampling down the last embers of the feudal opposition, saw nothing before it but a continued career of success; although the principles on which that success was founded were not of the kind that would allow it to have a definite aim beyond the point which it had already reached.

The first distinctive movement in England betokening a separate and aggressive community of feeling in the working-class itself, was the Chartist agitation; but this, as we have pointed out in preceding chapters, was swept away by the great wave of British commercial prosperity indicated by the success of the Cobden-Bright, or as it is called on the Continent, the Manchester School. The main result of this wave of prosperity was the enormous increase in the number and power of the middle-classes, and the corresponding rise in their standard of comfort. It is often alleged that the working-classes are in a better position than they were fifty years ago, and that this is the main work of the nineteenth century; but the improvement is doubtful and the inference drawn from it is false. The fact is, that the country fifty years ago was passing through a severe commercial revolution, that of the great machine industries, which, as before stated, brought for the time unexampled misery upon the workers, and that the settling down

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 labour is little if any better than it was. What has really happened is just that increase in the numbers and prosperity of the *middle-classes* above spoken of. But this great and overwhelming prosperity of theirs is now seriously threatened. The increasing severity of competition in the world-market, accompanied by a ceaseless and rapid increase in the productivity of labour, acting and reacting on one another, are bringing about a fresh commercial revolution which will extinguish the small capitalist by reducing his profits to the vanishing-point; so that none but huge concerns, joint-stock or otherwise, will be able to survive, and the once small capitalist will have to become a manager, a servant of the great one. This process is already far advanced, and is creating a fresh lower middle-class entirely dependent on the commercial aristocracy. 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 of ordinary well-to-do families in finding a "respectable" position for their children is now a sufficiently trite subject; all occupations endurable by a "refined" youth are overstocked; education is cheap and common, and has lost its old market-value, and even at the ancient seats of learning it has grown to be a matter of commercial competition.¹ The lower ranks of art and literature are crowded with persons drawn to these professions by the pleasantness of the pursuits in themselves, who soon find out the very low market value of the ordinary educated intellect. These, 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 lower portion of manual labour, as long as they are employed, but whose position is more precarious, and far less satisfactory.

On the whole, then, in spite of the rise in the standard of comfort of the middle-classes, it must be said that they have rather gained power than well-being, and that they are now being threatened with a loss of that power, their tenure of which, now that the working-classes are beginning to learn their solidarity, depends on the latter being apathetically contented with a position at the best inferior to that of the bourgeoisie.

But the bourgeois ideal of what that position of the workers might be at the best, has never been realised, nor ever can be; nor as above-said have the working-classes any special reason for being "contented" at the present time. The class of unskilled labourers are still, as they always must be in a system which forces them to compete with their fellows, in the position of earning a bare subsistence wage; and this class tends to increase more and more, as the introduction of fresh machines increases the productivity of skilled labour, makes it possible to substitute unskilled in its place, and thus drives the skilled artisan from his position and compels him to accept that of the unskilled labourer.

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 is by no means always the case, are only applicable to certain groups of workmen, and even then frequently do not prove what they are intended to: e.g., the average 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 all deductions are made; few workmen indeed are in constant employment, even when trade is flourishing; the estimated prices are the full wage laid down by the trade unions, but most workers unprotected by a union, and in bad times even men inside the union, often work for less than the full wage; some, as in the building trades, are never employed for a large part of the year; and in all trades it would be impossible to keep up the standard of wages without occasional strikes and lock outs. It must be remembered, too, that the workman is often taxed in the form of his subscription to his trades union or 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 pecuniarily 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 cannot be sustained in the face of the continuous increase in the productivity of labour, and that the position of the skilled mechanic is a precarious one; and secondly, it is clear that however the workmen's position may have improved, they are growing discontented with it, since it is becoming manifest to them that it is one of inferiority, and quite unnecessarily so. And that especially since the management of *production* is less and less undertaken by the so-called manufacturers, who are more and more becoming mere financiers, or shareholders obviously living on the privilege of taxing labour, both that of the "hand" and of 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. BELFORD BAX and WILLIAM MORRIS.

¹ A very old friend, who has been for many years engaged in tuition at Oxford, has told me that the pressure there has enormously increased since I was an undergraduate; that for instance the kind of man whose attainments would once have ensured him a mastership at Rugby or Harrow has now to put up with a place at a third-rate grammar school, and that the competition for quite insignificant posts is most severe.—W. M.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"PRACTICAL" SOCIALISTS.

SIR.—As comrade Binning has placed his side of the question before us I trust you may be able to find room for a few brief criticisms.

Is it not historically obvious that progress in any society is measured by the number of extremists, idealists, or men who "go the whole hog," and the activity of these in propagating their ideal views? We believe that by directly propagating and "focussing our views on the far distant future" we indirectly urge forward minor reforms; and that the latter is accelerated or restrained by just so much as we accelerate or restrain our activity in propagating our *ideal Socialism*. Does comrade Binning deny this historical truth? If our view is correct, he could not only afford to isolate himself from parliamentarianism, but in devoting his time to propagating his ideal Socialism he could draw many a useful (not necessarily "carping or cavilling criticism") lesson from the "blundering efforts" of the "palliative anti-nointers."

Such being the case, we cannot consent to alter our mode of procedure because a misunderstanding—born of ignorance—as to our action in this respect seeming to oppose reform, takes place in the minds of some.

It is that very "common action" which comrade Binning wishes us to take with minor reformers that is so reactionary, by tending to obscure the ultimate ideal.

TIM BOBBIN.

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 fault of not being able to see beyond one's nose. T. Binning has proven Morris's charge, if not wholly, partly so, and the "tooters of penny whistles" have cause to be thankful.

Comrade Binning says: "It is with the bare and ugly present that I am concerned"; and again, "A true revolutionist is one who brings something to bear upon the ordinary everyday life of his own generation." All "non-politicals" will see at once the grave admission. I agree decidedly, but do not stop there, because it is impossible, although perhaps prophetic, to say right off that this is "the generation" which will benefit by Socialism. It is with "generations of peoples" that a true revolutionary Socialist must feel concerned. Surely our comrade Binning's "political" mind was dazed, or he would have recollected that this generation was severely suffering from the faults of past generations; and "political" programmes must intensify this evil for future generations while monopoly in the means of subsistence exists. Further on, those Socialists who do not believe in "practical" methods are charged with "a cowardly policy in standing aloof." This does not apply; it *could* be used by "non-politicals" in an opposite sense.

It is clearly the duty of revolutionary "non-politicals" not to "carp and cavil," but to "criticise" all "political" efforts; which efforts, we are told, will result in "foretastes" of Socialism. What are these foretastes? Are they part of the Social Democratic programme—viz., Adult Suffrage, Annual Parliaments, Proportional Representation, Payment of Members, etc., etc.? If these are what our comrade means by "foretastes," he surely can find a loop-hole for his efforts without casting charges of cowardice amongst the ranks of those who dub themselves "non-political." The new Society cannot be brought about by *legal 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 main body of the workers must be leavened with the spirit of Socialism." Exactly; and that is the one thing, above all others, that non-politicals, the so-called "apostles of inaction," have set themselves to do. I disagree with your methods, not aim.

And now comes the text of our comrade's "counterblast": "I hold that a truly Socialistic Society can only be established and administered by Socialists . . . a determined and intelligent minority prepared to take control." Surely this cannot be one of the foretastes? However, I cannot subscribe to the above text. A centralised minority-force of "Socialist" administrators, directors, or whatever name you may give them, will be as great an evil, if not worse, than those Governments dubbed Liberal and Tory. You must not forget for one moment the display of party spirit in all governments; and I guess, with some amount of certainty, that this "intelligent minority" would possess their share of party, to the detriment of the worker's interest; who, I suppose, our comrade imagines they would represent. It will be our bounden duty to combat such centralisation of minority-dictation.

And why? Let us find 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 it ever becomes full-blown) must of necessity be productive of revolts, and, says he, "revolts can achieve even at the utmost a mere change of governors." Just so, politically. He cannot mean socially. If he does, the charge does not stand. A mere change of party, of governors; and that is why we must criticise and combat the utility of such administration.

In conclusion, all Socialists, whether professing political or non-political methods, must assuredly agree that "monopoly in the means of subsistence" 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 carried on before this cardinal principle has been obtained—viz., monopoly of all the means of subsistence abolished—I must give it as my opinion 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 possible, educating my fellow-workers in the doctrines of International Revolutionary Non-Political Socialism. After this latter admission, I feel sure comrade Binning will feel much regret at having used the phrase "Apostles of Inaction." If not, I shall feel inclined to think he must be one of the "Impatient Spirits."

W. BLUNDELL.

The way to make a happy future is to make a happy present.—Ernest Jones.
Ignorance is a disease, and a deadly and dangerous disease. There are few things in the world more costly than an ignorant man.—Ernest Jones.

In a valiant suffering for others, not a slothful making others suffer for us, did nobleness ever lie. The chief of men is he who stands in the van of men, fronting the peril which frightens back all others; which, if it be not vanquished, will devour the others. Every noble crown is, and on earth will for ever be, a crown of thorns.—Carlyle.