SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

CHAPTER XXIII.—SOCIALISM TRIUMPHANT.

It is possible to succeed in a manner in picturing to ourselves the life of past times: that is, what our imaginations will show us a picture of which may include such accurate information as we may have of them. But though the picture may be vivid and the information just, yet it will be possible for the present time to be still in the shadow of the past. It will be agreeable to the present, and the past which our imagination, drawing from our experience, conceives of,—in short, it will be our picture of the past.1 If this be the case with the past, of which we have some concrete data, still more strongly may it be said of the future, of which we have none—not but mere abstract deductions from historic evolution, the logical sequence of which may be inferred with great certainty. But where are the moments which have made the present; and these are abstractions also which are but the skeleton of the full life which will go on in those time to come.

Furthermore, though we have no good reason for looking back to the development of modern civilisation into Socialism, yet we cannot foretell definitely what form the social life of the future will take, any more than a man living at the beginning of the commercial period—say Sir Thomas More or Lord Bacon—could foresee the development of that period in the capitalism of to-day.

Nevertheless, though we cannot realise positively the life of the future, when the principle of real society will be universally admitted and applied in practice as an everyday matter, yet the negative side of the question we can all see, and most of us cannot help trying to fill up the void made by the necessary termination of the merely malignant period of Socialism. The present society will be gone, with all its paraphernalia of checks and safeguards: that we know for certain. No less surely we know what the foundation of the new society will be. What will the new society build on that foundation of communism and cooperation—that is the problem on which we can do no more than speculate.

No doubt some transition, the nature of which will be determined by circumstances, will take place between the present state of things, in which the political unit is a nation, and the future, in which a system of federalised communities will take the place of rival nationalities; but as this chapter has to do with the ultimate realisation of the new society rather than with the transitional period, we need not speculate on this point.

We ask our readers to imagine the new society in its political aspect as an organised body of communities, each carrying on its own affairs, but united by a delegated federal body, whose function would be the government of the acknowledged federated principles. It may be added that we have not in mind the mere abolition of the exploitation of one kind or another whatever pretext, or to such forms of reaction as vindictive criminal laws. Such measures serve the purpose of making the working of the various social communities possible to condemn a part of the population to live under miserable conditions, conditions in any degree worse than that of others, in any country, in order to reduce the expenditure of labour for the community, which would have to pay for the giving the weavers and spinners, etc., as good a life as anywhere else, whatever that price might be.

As to the method of production necessary to the existence and welfare of the new society, we should have thought that it would of course be subordinate to the real welfare of society; i.e., the production of wares would not be looked upon as the end of society (as the production of profit-bearing wares now is), but it would be regarded as the means for the production of all necessary things and services. Of course, it would become necessary, if one is to be spared the exploitation of any kind under whatever pretext, or to such forms of reaction as vindictive criminal laws. Such measures serve the purpose of making the working of the various social communities possible to condemn a part of the population to live under miserable conditions, conditions in any degree worse than that of others, in any country, in order to reduce the expenditure of labour for the community, which would have to pay for the giving the weavers and spinners, etc., as good a life as anywhere else, whatever that price might be.

As to the conventional standard of comfort: we may hope our country a good definition of a luxury, as given by a friend, as a piece of goods that the consumer would not have if he had in his own person to produce the full value of the same, or if he could sell for or to sacrifice an amount of his own labour equivalent to the making of it. As, e.g., a lady of the present day would hardly consent to wear a Mechlin lace veil for herself, or to pay for the due and proper livelihood of those who do make it; in order that she may have it, numbers of women and girls at Ypres and the neighbourhood must work at starvation wages.

As to the matter of production under Communism cleaver let us consider the various kinds of work which the welfare of Communal Society would demand.

First, there would be a certain amount of necessary work to do which would be performed by the machine, and which is the consequence of this, probably the greater part of it, was to be performed by machinery. In the second place, it must be remembered that machinery would be improved and perfected, without hesitation, the exigencies of profit-making being removed. But probably a portion of this work at once necessary and repellant could not be done by machinery. For this portion volunteers would have to be relied upon; nor would there be any difficulty in obtaining them, considering that the habit of looking upon necessary labour from the point of view of social duty would be universal, and that now, as then, idleness would exist which would remove objections to work usually distasteful.

Again, the greater part of this work, though not agreeable, would not be exacting on mental capacity, and would entail the minimum of physical exertion. We regard this as compensatory of the disagreeable nature of the work in itself.

As examples of this necessary and usually repellant work, we may give scavenging, sewer-cleaning, coal-heaving, millwrighting, and mechanical clerk's work.

It might be remembered again that under our present system a great deal of this kind of work is artificially fostered for the sake of making it possible to the interest-bearing classes to be employed on it with its employment amongst the proletariat makes it possible to be so done; whereas in a Communal Society such work would be dispensed with as much as possible. Disagreeable work which a Communal Society might also fall in with as a survival from the conditions under which it found out not to be necessary, it would get rid of altogether.

Secondly, work in itself more or less disagreeable, and not absolutely necessary, but desirable if the sacrifice to be paid for was not too great; not necessary as easy by machinery, but not otherwise; it would not be worth while to call for volunteers for the purpose of doing it, since the citizens would then have to make the sacrifice in their own persons. Before we leave the subject of work not generally pleasant, but which is either necessary or desirable, we may again call attention to the existence of idiosyncrasies which
would make many people willing to undertake it, and still more to the variety of tastes which are so common that they could not be classed as idiosyncrasies, and which would help us out of many difficulties in this respect. In the second place, enough occupation involves a certain amount of hardship, which would be acceptable to many persons of overflowing health and strength, on account of the adventure and change which go with them, and the opportunities which they afford for meeting new people and adding to the circle of contemibles. In short, for the pleasurable exercise of special energies, such as sea-fishing, exploration of new countries, etc. Again, may people have so much to do that they cannot get about with animal spirits. The doing of this kind of work would not seem irksome to them. In short, we might go into great lengths on this subject, and every step we took on the road would show that the stimulus to exertion in production is much greater when the index is in the healthy condition of a period like our own, when everything is supposed to be measured by more cash payment.

Thirdly, we come to a kind of work which we may well hope will take a much higher position in communal life than it does at present; we mean work that has in it more or less of art; and we should here say that the very foundation of everything that can be called art is the pleasure of creation, which is, or should be felt in every handi- craft. That even as things is it very commonly felt, is proved by the craving that persons have for some occupation for their hands when they are debarred from their usual occupation, as very notably persons in prison. As to the matter of art as an occupation, we may divide it into incidental and substantive art. Incidental art is that which is subservient to some utilitarian function; as the designed form or added ornament to a machine. Substantive art is that which results from the drinking of those things. What is commonly called decorative art comes under this heading. Substantive art is that which produces matters of beauty and incident for their own sakes, as pictures or books, etc. It would be dangerous to make any unqualified statement. The Commercial Society has nearly destroyed it by divorcing its exercise and the reward for it from the products which it should beauty; it has destroyed the utilitarian art of the goldsmith and maker of the utilitarian article, the maker of the ornament for it, and the designer of the ornament, the two former being mere machines, and the latter being the producer of a marketable ware to be forced on the public in the same way that other wares are forced on them by commerce. In a Communal Society this division of labour will be recognised as impossible in a piece of goods of which the art of design forms but one part, and that art itself will be exercised, in answer to an undoubted and imperative demand of the public; there will be no occasion to force a demand for it.

As to the substantive art that must always be on the surface the production of the time, we shall demand a division of the present condition, interfered with by the incongruities of civilisation. Those of them will be the happiest who can hold civilisation aloof until civilisation itself melts into Socialism, when their own manner of thinking will positively lead them to absorption in the great ocean of universal social life.

E. BELFAST BAX AND WILLIAM MORRIS.

FREE SPEECH IN DANGER.

Some time since I informed our readers that the Bethnal Green Conservative Association were endeavoring, by underhand means, to suppress all meetings in Victorian Villas, by starting a humble petition, supposed to contain 20,000 signatures, proving that the meetings were in the highest degree a bad influence. It seems that the petition was inspired by the same hand that whipped up the action of the "uestoins and seditions language used," the real reason being that for some pecuniary ulterior end, the locality has always been a very great advantage. I recommended at the time that the East and Roko should combine to oppose the application of the law in this respect, and that all will themselves be exercised in answer to an undoubted and imperative demand of the public; there will be no occasion to force a demand for it.

The question of the remuneration of special ability, geniusies, etc., so often raised, is happily handled:

"If it be said that without the stimulus of more than ordinary reward men would not undertake responsible positions in the development of large establishments, would not invent machines, or paint pictures, or write good literature, the answer is twofold. First, the wildest Communist or Anarchist will not yet engender that faith which I call the arts. The income common stock and divided amongst everybody in equal shares, and therefore nothing can prevent men who perform responsible duties, or confer an advantage upon others in any other way than by the simple act of creating a new work for the world. "Quack Socialism," as such, never requires more than £30,000, because he is credited with that amount in the books of the Bank of England; but this is only the banker's way of stating the fact that he is entitled to draw £30,000 every half-year. "Upon what? The labour of the toiling millions.

The illusion that so many labour under that the rich do not tax labour is quite easily misapparent. Luxury and waste, rich and poor, are relative states, the luxur- y of the rich being dependent upon the misery of the poor.

The contention of the Socialist is that all material wealth is produced by the labour of the poor; and that the great and the rich are no more than men in form; and it therefore follows that those who do not labour must all necessarily live upon those who do.

Separate chapters are devoted to the consideration of "Current Events," "Socialist Propaganda," "Economic Argument," etc. This last-named deals with Religion, Materialism, Nationalisation of the Land, Co-operation, etc.; and "The Methods and Future of Socialism" brings to a conclusion the handiest, and, for its size, comprehending book yet written on the subject.

'THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALISM MADE PLAIN.'

(By Frank Fairman; with Preface by William Morris. W. Reeves, 188 Fleet Street, E.C. 1s.; cloth, 2s. 6d.)

The author of this plain and ably written little book has, in accordance with its title, supplied a considerable extent that which has been wanting in the plain statement of the principles of Socialism. His definition of Socialism "as a criticism of the present system of society" will be deservedly to those who think that to be of any value it should consist of a thoroughly mapped out in full detail system of society.

To us the most attractive part of the book is its treatment of the moral basis of Socialism; and this put shortly is that every human being has equal rights of life, the pursuit of happiness, and the utility, so long as he does not exercise them to the detriment of others. The impossibility of this in a society (as, for example, the present) which maintains the right of a section of it to possess itself wholly of the products of the labour of others—"the masses, the dispossessed—to a life of saviour's toil, is reasoned out in the most forcible manner. Dealing with the plea that is so often urged that priority of possession confers the right upon the possessor to hold and use as he pleases, it is concluded that there is nothing consistent with the principles of justice to warrant such an assumption. The author deals with this assumption as follows;

"Supposing a ship to be wrecked in mid-ocean, and the crew and passengers escape in boats; some are at sea, and others are on land. No one would object to the small boats for work upon them at mere subsistence wages, and that would follow. But it would be a very different case if, in the second or third year, that could not have any rights to the land of the island at all; or that could follow all the laws which are here equally held to have a right to the land of the island, and that cannot be lost. In reply to such an argument, I can only say that he who seeks to deceive the world as to what is the condition of society, and the fun the immediate consequences of the consequences; or, to be most exact, to the truly just man the only consequences which are pleasant are those which are only enjoyed upon justice, and that if priority alone gives the right of possession, the first boatload must be the only rightful owners of the island. A few minutes, or hours, or months, or years, in equipages, no division can be made in this solution of this problem which leaves no room for quibble or dispute is, that the globe belongs rightfully at any given moment to the whole of the in- habitants—a living perpetual common stock and divided amongst them, and the answer would probably be, 'The crew of a wreck the second or third year could not have any rights to the land of the island at all; or that could follow all the laws which are here equally held to have a right to the land of the island, and that cannot be lost. In reply to such an argument, I can only say that he who seeks to deceive the world as to what is the condition of society, and the fun the immediate consequences of the consequences; or, to be most exact, to the truly just man the only consequences which are pleasant are those which are only enjoyed upon justice, and that if priority alone gives the right of possession, the first boatload must be the only rightful owners of the island. A few minutes, or hours, or months, or years, in equipages, no division can be made in this solution of this problem which leaves no room for quibble or dispute is, that the globe belongs rightfully at any given moment to the whole of the in- habitants—a living perpetual common stock and divided amongst them, and the answer would probably be, 'The crew of a wreck the second or third year could not have any rights to the land of the island at all; or that could follow all the laws which are here equally held to have a right to the land of the island, and that cannot be lost. In reply to such an argument, I can only say that he who seeks to deceive the world as to what is the condition of society, and the fun the immediate consequences of the consequences; or, to be most exact, to the truly just man the only consequences which are pleasant are those which are only enjoyed upon justice, and that if priority alone gives the right of possession, the first boatload must be the only rightful owners of the island. A few minutes, or hours, or months, or years, in equipages, no division can be made in this solution of this problem which leaves no room for quibble or dispute is, that the globe belongs rightfully at any given moment to the whole of the in-