

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## COMMUNISM AND ANARCHISM.

I HAVE to excuse myself for being so long in answering our comrades. My journey to the Paris Congress, and business necessary to be done before and after that event, accounts for the greater part of the delay. I will now do what I can to answer our friends who have written to the *Commonweal*. I must premise, by the way, that I have let a typographical error of importance pass unnoticed: for "moral conscience" our friends should read "social conscience."

And now I find that one difficulty in dealing with the friends who are discussing the matter is that, in all probability, I differ very little in theory from what they think, but considerably from what they write—e.g., comrade Armsden appears to meet my commonplace "that you have a right to do as you like so long as you don't interfere with your neighbour's right to do as he likes" with a negative; which he cannot mean to do. Anyhow, I assert it again, and also assert that the social conscience, which being social is common to every man, will forbid such individual interference, and use coercion if other means fail: and also that without that there can be no society; and further, that man without society is not only impossible, but inconceivable. I may say that I perceive here that the unlucky misprint of *moral* for *social* has turned our friend's arguments beside the question.

Comrade H. Davis misunderstands my use of the word Communist in supposing me to use it as the Owenites did, as implying life in separate communities, whether those communities were mere scattered accidents amidst a capitalistic society or not; whereas I use it as a more accurate term for Socialism as implying equality of condition and consequently abolition of private property. In this sense, of course, you could not live Communistically until the present society of capitalism or contract is at an end. Equally of course, the living in small communities is not in theory an essential of this great change, though I have little doubt that it would bring about such a way of living and abolish big cities, which, equally with comrade Davis, I think much to be desired.

In his reference to Philip drunk and sober, comrade Davis does not of course really mean that any obnoxious person shall be allowed to tyrannize over the rest of the citizens without restraint from them; but that is what his words mean.

As to the matter of majority-rule, let us look at the matter again. All rule must be, as comrade Davis sees, majority-rule—i.e., of the effective majority. If at any time the minority rules, it is because they are better organised, better armed, less stupid, more energetic than the mere nose-counted majority: this effective majority therefore coerces the minority; and as long as it can coerce it, it will. The time may come, and I hope it will, when the social conscience will be so highly developed that coercion will be impossible, even on the part of the community: but then in those days the community will be composed of men who so thoroughly realise Communism that there will be no chance of any of them attacking his neighbour in any way. All reasonable men, whatever they may call themselves, would rejoice at such a change; and it is because I know that this cannot be brought about as long as private property exists, that I desire the abolition of private property, and am a Communist.

But I do not consider myself a pessimist because I am driven to admit that such a condition of things is a long way ahead. And what can we do in the meantime? I remember that the great traveller Dr. Wolff, travelling in the eastern wastes, inhabited a tent alone with a stalwart Greek servant of his, who habitually got drunk on the feast-days of his church, and when drunk, habitually beat poor Wolff. The latter objected, and said to his servant (I quote his own words), "You must either not get drunk, or when you get drunk you must not beat me." But the servant said to Wolff, "I shall get drunk, and when I am drunk I shall certainly beat you." Wolff being the weakest physically, had to submit; but if there had been two Wolffs, I will answer for it that they would have had recourse to coercion, and if they had allowed the drinking, they would certainly have put a stop to the beating. And really I think we should all of us have done in likewise, and considered it pedantic to allow one man to beat two of us: and surely it will always be so, as long as the individual acts unsocially: in that case he has no right against the society, which he himself has cast off.

I must repeat practically also what I said in my first article: however much the unit of association may be divided, people will have to associate in administration, and sometimes there will be differences of opinion as to what should be done. E.g., a community discuss the building of a bridge; some say Ay and some No, and persist in that opinion after all possible arguments have been exhausted: what is to be done? which party is to give way? Our Anarchist friends say it must not be carried by a majority; in that case, then, it must be carried by a minority. And Why? Is there any divine right in a minority? I fail to see it, although I admit that the opinion is held by the absolutists.

Or again, passing to matters of principle again. Supposing that a commune decides to re-introduce wage-slavery within its bounds. Is that to be allowed by the majority of communes? Are we not to deliver slaves from their masters? If not, why are we revolutionary Socialists to-day?

A friend under the signature of "Anarchist" stumbles, I think, over voluntary and involuntary association. Where all men are equal, I believe "the give and take" would have such influence over men's minds, that "the authority of compulsory representative institutions," or whatever took their place, would be so completely at one with the Social Conscience that there would be no dispute about it as to principle, and in detail, as above, the few would have to give way to the many; I should hope without any rancour. This correspondent does not seem to be able to think himself out of the present state of things, and yet at the same time imagines a possibility of free association as things now are; a quite illusory hope, since those of us who are unprivileged are at the beck and call of the privileged.

Comrade Blackwell suggests that since the majority is no more likely to be right than the minority (which I admit) they might as well toss a copper for it. I don't object; but then there might be a difference of opinion on that method also, and how are we to settle that? It is curious that comrade Blackwell in suggesting that the larger of the two differing parties in a matter of administration should throw the matter over, cannot see that this would mean victory for the noes; or, in other words, that in any question which must be answered aye or nay, any one obstructive could always prevent any business being done, and could in such matters thereby establish the most complete minority rule conceivable.

The other side of comrade Blackwell's remedy is a system of perpetual

compromise, which would be disastrous if it were possible, for it would so hinder all reasonable work or progress that it could not be submitted to.

Comrade Blackwell objects to my calling the "Anarchist-Socialists" "vague," but he himself furnishes a specimen of their vagueness in the platform of the Pittsburg Congress in 1883. He adds, "Now I believe most members of the Socialist League agree to every one of these planks." Exactly, and every other Socialist also; there is nothing distinctively Anarchist in them. And this I find is often the case with "Communist-Anarchists"; they cannot differentiate themselves from the Communists. Their Anarchism consists in a somewhat exaggerated fear of a possible re-growth of some of the tyrannical methods of the destroyed Society, and a consequent distrust of the new Society having any definite form. On the other hand, I have met with Anarchists who were not at all vague, and who definitely opposed Communism. They had, indeed, this in common with militant Socialism, that they wished to abolish organised monopoly; but they supported unorganised monopoly, or the rule of the strongest individual, taking for their motto "To each one according to his deeds," which means the upholding of private property with no association to uphold it, a position impossible and inconceivable.

Our friends who have been discussing this subject do not, I know, agree with this view, but intend to be Communists though they find stumbling-blocks by the way. As for me, I can only say that whatever will give us equality, with whatever drawbacks, will content me, and I find that at bottom this is the ideal of all Socialists. So I think the fewer party-names and distinctions we can have the better, leaving plenty of scope for the inevitable differences between persons of different temperaments, so that various opinions may not make serious quarrels.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

## PARIS CONGRESS—A DISCLAIMER.

SIR,—In your number of the 10th of this month, Mr. F. Kitz pays me the compliment of having "carefully, very carefully translated into German Keir Hardie's speech." Mr. Kitz is right. I did it "carefully, very carefully," as I am always wont to do my duty. Since Mr. Kitz has omitted to mention it, I may add that I have translated Mr. Morris's speech with exactly the same care and love; and if Mr. Kitz had made a speech as interesting and as instructive as those of his two countrymen, I should have rendered him the same service.—Truly yours,

W. LIEBKNECHT.

Borsdorf, near Leipzig, August 11.

## SOCIALISM AT YARMOUTH.

OUR comrades at Yarmouth have been employing their time so profitably recently, that as their report went wrong last week we think it only fair to put it in now. "We began our campaign on Monday evening, July 29th, when Reynolds gave an address at Norton to a good audience. On Wednesday, July 31st, Reynolds and Barber took advantage of the fair to hold a meeting on the Green at Martham. We were quite a feature of the fair. The boxing men wanted to know what the devil the Socialists wanted here spoiling their audiences; and another big show boss tried to spoil our meeting, but Barber knew his character too well as a sweater of the worst type, and he had to make a hasty retreat. Then we got wrong with the toll-collector, because we told the stall men that the lord of the manor was a fraud and advised them not to pay the 1s. toll. We sold 1s. 3d. worth of literature. In Yarmouth, on Friday evening (2nd inst.), Mrs. Tochatti and Reynolds held a meeting near Colman's Granary. We opened and finished with singing, and little Tochatti, not yet 8, gave a neat little socialistic speech. On Saturday evening, Reynolds, Mrs. Tochatti, and A. Barker held a meeting in the Market Place. We pitched close to where the Blue Ribbonites stand, but when we placed our platform they were not there; but just before we began the captain and one other made their appearance, read our placard but said nothing. But as soon as we began they started to sing. Well, we let them, but as soon as they left off singing we began, and those godly people sent for their drum (which the authorities had forbid), and for more than an hour they shouted and banged, but Reynolds stood his ground, and took advantage of any lull to tell the people that the teetotallers were advertising the Socialist demonstration for the next day. The captain fetched a constable in uniform, who told Reynolds to desist, but we told him we should do nothing of the kind and he could carry out any instructions he had received. Then a detective came and tried to get us out of it by saying he had told the others to drop it, but it was no use, we held on. At last, from sheer exhaustion, the drum and Gospel-grinding water-drinkers had to go. Reynolds moved a vote of thanks to the captain for the advertisement and the collection we had gained through their efforts, and our comrade wanted to shake hands, but the captain indignantly declined. By this time there were several hundred people collected; Mrs. Tochatti sang, and Reynolds kept the meeting up till nearly 10 p.m. Well, wonders never cease, we were so clated over our meeting, that we adjourned to Reynolds's house and sang till three in the morning, when we went to meet Tochatti and Turner, who did not arrive by the train we expected. So we adjourned to South Town station to meet the next train, and we sang the *Marseillaise* from station to station. When we got to the station up came a detective and says, 'Now, then, don't you know better making this row?' He asked comrade Thomas (of Ipswich) his address, and before our comrade could scarcely answer him he took him to the station; but our comrade soon made his appearance again, his name and address being taken. On Sunday we had three splendid meetings, Turner giving a capital address in the morning; Tochatti followed with an earnest and telling address. Tochatti spoke again in the afternoon and evening. The speeches of our comrades have made a good impression; sold 54 *Commonweal* and collected 10s." C. R.

## Sailors' Strike.

The *Coast Seamen's Journal* (San Francisco) takes the Glasgow Socialists to task for interfering in the sailors' strike, and alleges that their action caused a split amongst the men. It appears that our Glasgow comrades went amongst the sailors distributing literature, and some of the union leaders abused them; that the men resented this and supported the Socialists, who held a successful meeting in consequence. To introduce, says the *Coast Seamen's Journal*, scientific theories, i.e., Socialism, "would defeat the object of the sailors, who are fighting for better wages and the principle of unionism." Socialism would abolish the system which breeds strikes and lock-outs, and replace it with free fraternal co-operation. Militant Socialists could not find a better field for operations than the scene of a strike; and whilst they neither desire to, or do, hinder trade union construction, they exercise both a right and a duty when they point to the object-lesson of strikes and lock-outs as showing the rottenness of wages-slavery. The same journal has also some pertinent comments upon the action of the *Commonweal*, re the printing of *Seafaring* (England) by non-unionists. Have not the leading officials of the Seamen's Union got over that yet? Is it sulks or press of business which prevents an answer being sent to a letter addressed to the General Secretary of the Seamen's Union anent the overworked men on the Channel steamers, and the opportunity for extending their union?—F. K.