The Commonwealth, December 7, 1889.

OFFICES: 24 GREAT QUEEN STREET, LONDON, W.C.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. K. B. (Sherborne).—Thanks; will be used.

C. B. (Newcastle).—Your letter is much too long for publication in our overcrowded columns.

J. F. (Norwich).—We have written for information, as you ask us to keep the matter quiet.

CONTENTS.

Note on News.............. PAGE
The Men of the Revolution: Duton and Trosor.................. 280
In the United States................. 281
Advertisements written on the Labour Question.................. 283
Monopoly....................... 283
Correspondence.................. 283
Other Home House.................. 284
Revolutionary Calendar.............. 285
The Labour Struggle................ 285
Executive Announcements, Reports, Lecture Diary, and Notices of Meetings........ 287
Advertisements, New Publications, etc., etc.................. 287

Periodicals received during the week ending Wednesday December 4.

England
Brotherhood
Challoner (T. T. S.)-Socialism in Religion.................. 280
Christian Socialism
Cockshut
Lectures, December 1889.................. 280
Labour
Labour Review
Lecture, January 1889.................. 280
Leaflet
Lectures, February 1889.................. 280
Worker’s Friend
Annual Number.................. 280
India
Judd
Lectures, January 1889.................. 280
Bahamas
Backhouse in the Bahamas.................. 280
Madras—People’s Friend
Other Home House
Franco-Prussian War
France
Paris—The Revolution
Italian
Arbeiterstimme
Lectures, December 1889.................. 280
German
Arbeiterstimme
Lectures, December 1889.................. 280
Deutschland
Berliner Volksblatt
Lectures, December 1889.................. 280
Danish
Christiania-Forbund
Lectures, December 1889.................. 280
Dutch
Arbeiterstimme
Lectures, December 1889.................. 280
Switzerland
ArbeiterZeitung
Turin—The Revolutions of 1848
Lectures, December 1889.................. 280
Wallachia
Arbeiterstimme
Lectures, December 1889.................. 280

MONOPOLY.

I want you to consider the position of the working-classes generally at this present day: not to dwell on the progress that they (or may not have) made within the last five hundred or the last fifty years, but to consider what their position is relatively to the other classes of our society which is composed: and in doing so I go to guard against the idea which is so prevalent amongst the members of the upper and middle-classes on one side and the disadvantages of the working-classes on the other side; for in truth there is no need for exaggeration; the contrast between the two positions is sufficiently startling when all admissions have been made that can be made. After all, one ought not to go further than the simple statement of these few words: The workers are in an inferior position to that of the rich.

When we come to consider that everyone nowadays admits that labour is the source of wealth—or, to put it in another way, that it is a law of nature for man generally that he must labour in order to live—then we must all of us come to the conclusion that this fact, that the workers’ standard of livelihood is lower than that of the non-workers, is a startling fact. But startling as it is, it may perhaps help out the originators of some of us—eloquent as all the events of the present day have been to make the people in general as well as the workers themselves, to feel—and all the nonsense about popular opinion is of no use—true of the whole class: but a great portion of it are so ill-fed that they not only live on coarser or nastier victuals than the non-producers, but have not enough even of these to keep up their vitality; so that they sicken rather from the excesses of the early days than the early death which comes of semi-starvation: or why say semi-starvation? let us say plainly most of the workers are starved to death. As to their clothes, they are so ill made, that they are not fit for their dirty and foul-smelling clothes for their dignity and usefulness. As to their food, they live on a diet of mere bare existence, and in the early days of their life they are not only not fit for the duties of their strength, but are not fit to keep them. As to their lodging, the housing of the workers is proportionately far worse, as far as the better-off of them go, than their food or clothing. The best of their houses or apartments are not fit for human beings to live in, as they are: they are not even, even if one could keep off their doors into gardens or pleasant country or handsome squares; but when one thinks of the wretched sordidness and closeness of the streets and alleys that they actually do form, one is almost forced to try to bluff one’s sense of fitness and propriety, so miserable they are. As to the lodgings of our poor-town workers, I must confess that I only know of them by rumour, and that I dare not face them; but I think I think I have some idea of the horror one can face in picturing them to me. One thing, again, has always struck me much in passing through poor quarters of the town, and that is the noise and unrest of them, so confusing to all one’s ideas and thoughts, that one cannot think a moment’s thought to the digested calm of the quarters of those who can afford such luxuries.

Well! food, clothes, and housing—are these the three important items in the material condition of the working-classes, and I say may I think there are extremely few who would not say that the condition of those of the non-producers and those of the producers is horrible, and that the word is no exaggeration. But is there a contrast in nothing else—education, now? Some of us are in the habit of being so lazy about our elementary education; perhaps it is good as far as it goes (and perhaps it isn’t), but why does it go further? In ordinary parlance, elementary is contrasted with liberal education. You know, however, to which I belong, the personal or private class. If a man cannot make some pretense to read a Latin book, and doesn’t know a little French or German, he is very apt to keep it dark as something to be ashamed of, unless he has some real turn towards languages, has a natural love to the physical sciences, and is, after all, a sort of ignorance; whereas if a working man were to know a little Latin and a little French, he would be looked on as a very superior person, a kind of genius—such, considering the difficulty with which he could do it. One gets ideas again, you see, that are clear and clean.

But after all, it is not such scraps of ill-digested knowledge as this that give us the real test of the contrast; this lies rather in the taste of refined thought and the expression of it, which the more expensive class really has (in spite of the disgraceful sloppiness of its education), and which unhappily the working class has no taste, has no love, has no interest, and which result to much of the leisure and elbow-room the working class lacks, and even “social reformers” expect him to be contented with that. Of course you understand that in speaking of this item I am thinking of the middle- and working-classes, and the eternally-hungry and hopelessly wretched of the fringe of labour—i.e., the greater part of labour.

Just consider the contrast in the more noble matters of history, for instance. If a professional man (like myself, for instance) does a little more than his due daily grind—dear me, the fuss his friends make of him! how they are always urging him not to overdo it, and to consider his precious health, and the necessity of rest and so forth! and you know the very same persons, if they find some artisan in their employment looking towards a holiday, how sorely they would treat his longings for rest, how they would call him (perhaps not to his face) a swindler and the like; and if he has it, he is to be fought against both his purse and his conscience; whereas in the professional class the yearly holiday is part of the payment for services. Once more, look at the different standard for the worker and the non-worker! it is a law of nature that you cannot imagine what it is that a man will do for anything; and I wonder to think that you that would refuse to listen to me! Well, I must say something at any cost—yes, that few things sadden me so much as the amount of killing that is going on; I mean a kind of terrible killing—yes, murder—of the little scraps of their scanty leisure time as they are. Though, indeed, if you say that there is not so much contrast here between the workers’ public amusements and the present, that is not the case. For this is the end of the whole planation, that owing to the nature of the case, the necessarily social or co-operative method of the getting up and reception of such amusements, the lower standing of the workers’ amusements has, for instance, our theatrical entertainments the very lowest expression of the art of acting which the world has yet seen.

Or again, a cognate subject, the condition of the English language at present. How often I have it said to me, You must not write in a literary style, if you wish the working classes to understand you.
OUT OF THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE.

How say ye, friends, are they in fun
Who boast that slavery's day is done?
Then tell the lives of luxury,
Or say if slavery yet abides, or say.
Or think ye then the fates decree
The few to lives of luxury,
The man to poverty and pain?
Slaves ye are, and shall remain.
Or in another world than this
Hope ye for homes of busy bliss,
Where earthly lieins of slavery
Ye are, and shall remain.
Or bide ye till your masters yield
Of their free grace the powers they wield?
Shall they be loyal to your chain?
Shall ye be, and shall remain?
Or strive ye each for self alone?
Not thus can Manners be overthrown,
Who fights but singly, fights in vain.
Slaves ye are, and shall remain.
Then cast off sloth and slothful care,
Maye, heaven a thing of now and hence?
Nor wait upon your lords' good-will,
Or, sooth, ye may be waiting still,
But marshal you in order fair,
And, I desire, let your banner bear
The flag that, fluttering in the van,
Claims equal rights for every man,
Lo, at the shout of Liberty,
You bravest heroes, stand and fight and flee!
Your day doth dawn, their star doth wane;
Free shall ye be, and shall remain.
C. W. BECKETT.

REVOLUTIONARY CALENDAR.
WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 14, 1889.

8 Sun. 1843. John Fynn died. 1808. Trial of Thomas Kilmartin and John Killareo, "Thrashers," at Sligo, acquitted; and of Patrick Fegan, dinner, 1837. Trial of General Hall for murder and assassination; Wendell Phillips' first speech. 1891. Trial of General Cameron, for having overthrown his mine laid under the street (M. Sadovuye) where the Coa had to pass. The session of the Senate was held on this occasion in a tent.

9 Mon. 1786. John Stockdale tried for libel on the House of Commons. 1793. Trial of John Lambert, printer, and James Perry and James Grant, proprietors, of the Morning Chronicle, for "sedition libel" in publishing an address of a meeting of the Society for Political Information held at Docky, addressed to the friends of Free Inquiry and the General Government. 1816. Trial of John Fynn, for being overthrown his mine laid under the street (M. Sadovuye) where the Coa had to pass. The session of the Senate was held on this occasion in a tent.

10 Tues. 1805. L.Garrison was acquitted for his political songs. 1859. Special Assize opened at Monmouth for the trial of Charlotte Corday in the late rising. 1840. The Hon. R. Burke born. 1855. August Spies born.

11 Wed. 1792. Trial of the French king; lasts till 15th.


14 Sat. 1799. George Washington died. 1811. Affray at Carrickshock between police and people, caused by the attempt of the latter to get a press server who was serving libels for tithe; killed, two countrymen, eleven constables, and the chief of police; many wounded. 1793. Agassiz died. 1893. Herr Huldeck, police superintendent of Fiesloir, a suburb of Vienna, killed after leaving a Socialist meeting.

We are not disputing the theory that emigration from "countries where population is congested" is in the first place wise selection of the emigrants, we readily admit that the remedy is not only a remedy but a good one. Let the idle rich, the wasteful aristocrats and plutocrats, and the industrious emigrants—let the industrious emigrants, and the useful classes—the industrious wealth producers—be at once relieved. Will great statesmen never learn that it is not the number of competent seamen that endanger the fate of the ship's crew? If there are leaks in the hold the wreck will not be averted by compelling the workers among the leaks to work, but by letting go the seas and compelling the idlers to man the pumps.—Journal of Labour United.

A correspondent closes his letter thus: "I admire your work and appreciate the toil of all others, though, I am so not so much at the present time to openly avow myself before the community. But I am growing a good hater. How do you manage to look yourself in the face? When do you expect that you love the right and do it not? What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" These questions are put to us, and to rebuke you, because I know that it does require iron courage to do right. But did you ever think how much better it is to thoroughly respect yourself than to have gold or power that you would not have if you did not exchange your self-respect for it?—Twentieth Century.