

"Well, these men, though conscious of this feeling, had no faith in it. Nor was that wonderful: for looking around them they saw the huge mass of the oppressed classes too much burdened with the misery of their lives, and too much overwhelmed by the selfishness of misery, to be able to form a conception of any escape from it except by the ordinary way prescribed by the system of slavery under which they lived; which was nothing more than a remote chance of climbing out of the oppressed into the oppressing classes.

"Therefore, though they knew that the only reasonable aim for those who would better the world was a condition of equality, in their impatience and despair they managed to convince themselves that if they could by hook or by crook get the machinery of production and the management of property so altered that the 'lower classes' (so the horrible word ran) might have their slavery somewhat ameliorated, they would be ready to fit into this machinery, and would use it for bettering their condition still more and still more, until at last the result would be a practical equality (they were very fond of using the word 'practical'), because 'the rich' would be forced to pay so much for keeping 'the poor' in a tolerable condition that the condition of riches would become no longer valuable and would gradually die out. Do you follow me?"

"Partly," said I. "Go on."

Said old Hammond: "Well, since you follow me, you will see that as a theory this was not altogether unreasonable; but 'practically,' it turned out a failure."

"How so?" said I.

"Well, don't you see," said he, "because it involves the making of a machinery by those who didn't know what they wanted the machines to do. So far as the masses of the oppressed class furthered this scheme of improvement, they did it to get themselves improved slave-rations—as many of them as could. And if those classes had really been incapable of being touched by that instinct which produced the passion for freedom and equality aforesaid, what would have happened, I think, would have been this: that a certain part of the working classes would have been so far improved in condition that they would have approached the condition of the middling rich men; but below them would have been a great class of most miserable slaves, whose slavery would have been far more hopeless than the older class slavery had been."

WILLIAM MORRIS.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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DEGREES IN CRIME.

If you should steal a million golden dollars in a lump,
The people would regard you as a genius and a trump.

If you secure but half the pile, a "shortage" that would be;
Whereas a somewhat less amount would be "insolvency."

To steal a tiny, paltry sum would give them the belief
That you were a dishonest man—a robber, and a thief.

But if you steal a loaf of bread whereby your life is saved,
They'll put you into prison with the "totally depraved."

IN FRANCE.

TERRORISM has ruled for the last three weeks in France. M. Constans, Minister of the Interior, who is certainly not a man of genius, but still is a very clever rascal, has quite well understood how to support the bourgeoisie in these difficult moments. The party indeed being composed of men, and some men having through their talent and education a certain influence over their friends and the mass of the workers, M. Constans saw that depriving the party of these men the movement would, if not fail, at least be a little softened. And so he proceeded on this plan. It is true that the agitation of the last week was remarkable, but far from the importance it was expected to be. The reactionary papers were certainly very frightened, if it is to be judged from the exaggeration they made of every little circumstance. So the best informed Tory papers, as *Le Matin*, *La France*, etc., stated that a clandestine printing office had been seized, and all printers arrested, including the manager of the Anarchist paper *La Révolte*. In fact, the printing office was not clandestine at all, and it was the printing office of the united Anarchists, which had been removed lately from the *Rue du Marais*. The head printer, Cabot, was arrested; Grave, the manager of the *Révolte*, was not. The *Révolte* starts this week with a day of delay, and will be printed in a bourgeois printing office. It is true that Malato, Martinet, Gégout, Merlino, Petraroya, Prodi, and other Anarchists were arrested, and will be sent to hard labour for having distributed pamphlets and manifestoes to students and to the soldiers. Comrade Stoianoff, a Bulgarian student, was also arrested. There was a perquisition made upon the apartment of comrade Molinari, an Italian Anarchist, and there were found some manifestoes, but the comrade was successful in escaping. It is to be feared that the foreign Socialists arrested will be handed over to their respective governments after serving their sentences. Louise Michel and Rhénavin were also arrested, and some other arrests made will be kept secret. Tramps frequenting the Halles (Market) have been put in custody, but this had begun a long time ago, in November, when the crisis and starvation were growing threatening against the possessing classes. B.

Goods are theirs who enjoy them.—*Italian*.

With sublime condescension, millionaires' daughters have been visiting the working-women's convention this week, and informing poor girls, who work for three and five dollars a-week, what wonders economy might be made to accomplish with their incomes. For pure heartlessness and cheek combined, this "takes the biscuit."—*Boston Daily Globe*, April 18.

NOTES.

THE Commission on the ill-treatment of the so-called dynamiters in Chatham prison has reported on the subject in the way that might have been expected from a Commission sitting on a very bad case; that is to say, that while practically admitting the charges, it said—"Well, it doesn't matter." The case seems to have been so plain that even the respectable *Daily News* has had its stomach turned by it, and a man of sense and humanity writing in its columns has condemned the finding of the Commission in cautious words, but very clearly. Let us say a few plain words on the subject.

The prison system of this country is, and is meant to be, a system of torture applied by Society to those whom it considers its enemies; but this fact is kept in the dark as much as possible, lest ordinary good-natured people, who do not want to torture persons unless fear drives them to it, should be shocked, and the system should be swept away—or at least altered. The ordinary middle-class man, till within the last few years, had no idea of what went on in a prison; and even now, after some light has been thrown on it by the imprisonment of "gentlemen" both in Ireland and England, he shuts his eyes to it as much as he can. Keeping things dark is the necessary rule in a prison.

Now it is clear that no one could accept the office of habitually torturing his fellow-creatures unless he were a specially callous and degraded man, and were probably also driven to it by hard need; it follows as a matter of course that the officials of a prison must be chosen from the off-scourings of the earth. Surely the evidence of such people should be taken with great reserve by men not interested in suppressing anything.

But the ruling classes are, as we have seen, deeply interested in proving that our prison-system is reasonable and humane; and any knowledge of the real facts will dispel that idea, and show that it is a system of hideous and wanton cruelty. Can we expect, therefore, that any enquiry into the treatment of men considered as the special enemies of Society will be a fair one? It is clearly impossible that it should be, as that highly respectable paper, the *Daily News*, has found out.

I appeal to all honest and generous-minded men, whatever their opinions may be, to consider what this extra torment and insult means applied to men already tortured by the mere cast-iron system up to the limits of endurance. Surely the insulting or tormenting of a prisoner so over-burdened with misery already, so helpless as he is, is such a dastardly and abominable crime, that any crime committed by the prisoners in a jail sinks by comparison into insignificance. You men of the comfortable middle-classes, so kind and unselfish in family life, so scrupulous in business—so respectable, in a word—think of what you are doing vicariously by means of the dreadful tools you have made necessary to you! Think of it—if you dare!

Amongst this Commission of Evasion we read the names of Mr. Drummond and Mr. George Shipton. These gentlemen were, no doubt, put there because our rulers thought, or pretended to think, that they represent the working-classes. I appeal, not to Socialists, but to the working-men in general to say whether it is not about time to let the said rulers understand clearly that this humbug can be stood no longer, and that these gentlemen and others like them do not represent the working-classes, or any section of them. W. M.

Hunger pierceth stone walls.

Eighty destitute men are receiving food and shelter at the old Immigration Depot, Brisbane (March 15).

Henry George says he "believes in nothing half-way." Then why, asks the *Bulletin*, is he not a land-nationalisationist or a Socialist.

The boy question is not yet (March 15) settled among the Charters Towers unions. At the mine where men were working for boy's pay, the management, out of pitiful spite, discharged all the lads employed, and a small minority of the miners, fathers of the lads, are attacking the executive and president of the union for their action, the president, who appears to a "white" man, coming in for plenty of abuse. The large majority recognise that the union only did its duty when it shut down on men receiving boy's wages.

ALL WE LIKE SHEEP.—*Tobacco*, a newspaper published in the interests of the cigar and tobacco manufacturers, gives in a recent issue the circulars sent out to manufacturers in this line of industry by a committee who are opposing the clauses in the Tariff Bill affecting tobacco imports. The circulars include a form of petition against the bill, and the recommendation to employers in the trade is as follows: "We would advise that you copy the following in duplicate, have the petition signed by every employé in your shop and forward," etc. Just notice, says the *Journal of the Knights of Labour*, the cool assumption in the passage we have italicised, that the employer, as a matter of course, controls the political action of his workmen and can dictate to them what petitions they shall sign. Unfortunately, the despotic language of the circular only reflects the actual conditions of matters in many establishments where workmen are completely subservient to the dictates of their masters in their political movements. But we cannot help thinking that the framers of this circular might at least have had the decency to pretend that the employés were to be appealed to on some other ground than the mere will of the employer. It would have looked better and been more politic. We commend this instance to those who are so terribly solicitous that the "individuality" of the citizen will be sacrificed by labour reform.