

# THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

### NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

### AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. XVII. (*continued*).—HOW THE CHANGE CAME.

"WELL, the Sunday of the meeting came, and great crowds came to Trafalgar Square in procession, the greater part of the Committee amongst them, surrounded by their band of men armed somehow or other. The streets were quite peaceful and quiet, though there were many spectators to see the procession pass. Trafalgar Square had no body of police in it; the people took quiet possession of it, and the meeting began. The armed men stood round the principal platform, and there were a few others armed amidst the general crowd; but by far the greater part were unarmed.

"Most people thought the meeting would go off peaceably; but the members of the Committee had heard from various quarters that something would be attempted against them; but these rumours were vague, and they had no idea of what threatened. They soon found out.

"For before the streets about the Square were filled, a body of soldiers poured into it from the north-west corner and took up their places by the houses that stood on the west side. The people growled at the sight of the red-coats; the armed men of the Committee stood undecided, not knowing what to do; and indeed this new influx so jammed the crowd together that, unorganised as they were, they had little chance of working through it. They had scarcely grasped the fact of their enemies being there, when another column of soldiers, pouring out of the streets which led into the great southern road going down to the Parliament House (still existing, and called the Dung Market), and also from the embankment by the side of the Thames, marched up, pushing the crowd into a denser and denser mass, and formed along the south side of the Square. Then any of those who could see what was going on, could see at once that they were in a trap, and could only wonder what would be done with them.

"The closely-packed crowd would not or could not budge, except under the influence of the height of terror, which was soon to be supplied to them. A few of the armed men struggled to the front, or climbed up to the base of the monument which then stood there, that they might face the wall of hidden fire before them; and to most men (there were many women amongst them) it seemed as if the end of the world had come, and to-day seemed strangely different from yesterday. No sooner were the soldiers drawn up as aforesaid than, says an eye-witness, 'a glittering officer on horseback came prancing out from the ranks on the south, and read something from a paper which he held in his hand; which something very few heard; but I was told afterwards that it was an order for us to disperse, and a warning that he had legal right to fire on the crowd else, and that he would do so. The crowd took it as a challenge of some sort, and hoarse threatening roar went up from them; and after that there was comparative silence for a little, till the officer had got back into the ranks. I was near the edge of the crowd, toward the soldiers,' says this eye-witness, 'and I saw three little machines being wheeled out in front of the ranks, which I knew for mechanical guns. I cried out, "Throw yourselves down! they are going to fire!" But no one scarcely could throw himself down, so tight as the crowd were packed. I heard a sharp order given, and wondered where I should be the next minute; and then— It was as if the earth had opened, and hell had come up bodily amidst us. It is no use trying to describe the scene that followed. Deep lanes were mowed amidst the thick crowd; the dead and dying covered the ground, and the shrieks and wails and cries of horror filled all the air, till it seemed as if there were nothing else in the world but murder and death. Those of our men who were still unhurt cheered wildly and opened a scattered fire on the soldiers. One or two fell; and I saw the officers going up and down the ranks urging the men to fire again; but they received the orders in sullen silence, and let the butts of their guns fall. Only one sergeant ran to a machine-gun and began to set it going; but a tall young man, an officer too, ran out of the ranks and dragged him back by the collar; and the soldiers stood there motionless while the horror-stricken crowd,

nearly wholly unarmed (for most of the armed men had fallen in that first discharge), drifted out of the Square. I was told afterwards that the soldiers on the west side had fired also, and done their part of the slaughter. How I got out of the Square I scarcely know: I went, not feeling the ground under me, what with rage and terror and despair.'

"So says our eye-witness. The number of the slain on the side of the people in that shooting during a minute was prodigious; but it was not easy to come at the truth about it; it was probably between one and two thousand. Of the soldiers, six was killed outright, and a dozen wounded."

I listened, trembling with excitement. The old man's eyes glittered and his face flushed as he spoke, and told the tale of what I had often thought might happen. Yet I wondered that he should have got so elated about a mere massacre, and I said:

"How fearful! And I suppose that this massacre put an end to the whole revolution for that time?"

"No, no," cried old Hammond; "it began it!"

He filled his glass and mine, and stood up and cried out, "Drink this glass to the memory of those who died there, for indeed it would be a long tale to tell how much we owe them."

I drank, and he sat down again and went on.

"That massacre of Trafalgar Square began the civil war; though, like all such events, it gathered head slowly, and people scarcely knew what a crisis they were acting in.

"Terrible as the massacre was, and hideous and overpowering as the first terror had been, when the people had time to think about it, their feeling was one of anger rather than fear; although the military organisation of the state of siege was now carried out without shrinking by the clever young general. For though the ruling-classes when the news spread next morning felt one gasp of horror and even dread, yet the Government and their immediate backers felt that now the wine was drawn and must be drunk. However, even the most reactionary of the capitalist papers, with two exceptions, stunned by the tremendous news, simply gave an account of what had taken place, without making any comment upon it. The exceptions were one a so-called 'liberal' paper (the Government of the day was of that complexion), which, after a preamble in which it declared its undeviating sympathy with the cause of labour, proceeded to point out that in times of revolutionary disturbance it behoved the Government to be just but firm, and that by far the most merciful way of dealing with the poor madmen who were attacking the very foundations of society (which had made them mad and poor) was to shoot them at once, so as to stop others from drifting into a position in which they would run a chance of being shot. In short, it praised the determined action of the Government as the acmé of human wisdom and mercy, and exulted in the inauguration of an epoch of reasonable democracy free from the tyrannical fads of Socialism.

"The other exception was a paper thought to be one of the most violent opponents of democracy, and so it was; but the editor of it found his manhood, and spoke for himself and not for his paper. In a few simple, indignant words he asked people to consider what a society was worth which had to be defended by the massacre of unarmed citizens, and called on the Government to withdraw their state of siege and put the general and his officers who fired on the people on their trial for murder. He went further, and declared that whatever his opinion might be as to the doctrines of the Socialists, he for one should throw in his lot with the people, until the Government atoned for their atrocity by showing that they were prepared to listen to the demands of men who knew what they wanted and whom the decrepitude of society forced into pushing their demands.

"Of course, this editor was immediately arrested by the military power; but his bold words were already in the hands of the public and produced a great effect: so great an effect that the Government, after some vacillation, withdrew the state of siege, though at the same time it strengthened the military organisation and made it more stringent. Three of the Committee of Public Safety had been slain in Trafalgar Square: of the rest, the greater part went back to their old place of meeting and there awaited the event calmly. They were arrested there on the Monday morning, and would have been shot at once by the general, who was a mere military machine, if the Government had

not shrunk before the responsibility of killing men without any trial. There was at first a talk of trying them by a special commission of judges, as it was called—i.e., before a set of men bound to find them guilty, and whose business it was to do so. But with the Government the cold fit had succeeded to the hot one; and the prisoners were brought before a jury at the assizes. There a fresh blow awaited the Government; for in spite of the judge's charge, which distinctly instructed the jury to find the prisoners guilty, they were acquitted, and the jury added to their verdict a presentment, in which they condemned the action of the soldiery, in the queer phraseology of the day, as 'rash, unfortunate, and unnecessary.' The Committee of Public Safety renewed its sittings, and from thenceforth was a rallying-point in opposition to the Parliament. The Government now gave way on all sides, and yielded to the demands of the people; though there was a widespread plot for effecting a *coup d'état* set on foot between the leaders of the two so-called opposing parties. The well-meaning part of the public was overjoyed, and thought that all danger of a civil war was over. The victory of the people was celebrated by huge meetings held in the parks and elsewhere in memory of the victims of the great massacre."

WILLIAM MORRIS.

TO BE CONTINUED.]

## PRINCIPLES OF NATIONALISM.

WE have been several times asked to explain the principles and methods of American "Nationalism." Rather than run the risk of misrepresenting a movement, which is at all events a sign of the way in which things are progressing over there, we print the authoritative statement of the *California Nationalist*, the foremost Western representative, edited by W. C. Owen, at one time an active Socialist in San Francisco:

1. The Principles of Nationalism. Nationalists maintain that man's struggle should be with nature alone and not with his brother man; that the way to fight successfully with nature is to join hands, to co-operate. Nationalists say that the proper function of a railroad is to distribute goods and passengers as expeditiously and conveniently as possible, and not to run the distribution of the country for the sole purpose of putting big dividends into a few pockets. They say that the sole object of farming is to supply the hungry with food, of cloth-making to clothe the naked backs, and so forth. In short, Nationalism teaches that production should be for general use, not for individual profit. They say that under the present system labour is bought just as it was in slavery, save that the purchaser has not even the obligation to provide for his "hands." They say that not only is the wage system worse than slavery in this respect, but also because the wage-slave has to beg for the privilege of selling himself. They say that this condition arises directly from the reduction to private ownership of the means of production. These private owners then compete with one another, which results in the more powerful reducing the weaker to bankruptcy. The method by which the rich become richer is by taking what is known as the "surplus value" of the labourer's work; that is to say, a labourer is only hired on the understanding that he produces more than he gets back in the shape of wages. This results in what is known as "over-production," the producer obviously not being paid enough to enable him to buy back the goods made. Apart from this, over-production naturally results from the planlessness of all modern production, each manufacturer working in the dark and being ignorant of the amount of goods his competitors are turning out. The Trusts have formed to regulate this planlessness, but they are regulating it from a purely selfish standpoint; that is to say—they produce just as much as it will suit their pockets to, not as much as the public really wants. Nationalists propose to remedy this by so regulating industry as that it shall perform, with the greatest nicety of execution, its true work, viz., that of supplying human wants—the necessities without which people CANNOT live first, the luxuries afterwards. It being clearly proven that our means of production are a long way ahead of our capacities for consuming, it follows that the putting those means at the disposal of all who are willing to work is equivalent to the abolition of involuntary poverty.

2. How do we propose to introduce Nationalism? Simply by following the natural development of affairs, as we see them now passing, to its logical conclusion. It is certain that we have long since left the day of small undertakings behind, and that the tendency of all modern invention is to produce and distribute on a larger and larger scale. The railroads in particular have rendered this possible, and there is no fact more clearly proved than that the larger the aggregate of capital employed and the greater the number of men co-operating in production and distribution, the greater the results in proportion to the effort put forth. The common sense of the race forbids its going back to the days of small production; the tendency to vaster combinations is a natural force that cannot be checked, and, as the individual grew into the partnership, the partnerships into the corporation, and the various corporations into the Trust, so the various Trusts must sooner or later merge into the great National Trust in which all citizens will be equal partners. We propose to frankly acknowledge, instead of obstinately opposing this tendency, by getting the people to absorb one after the other the leading industries of the country. This is in entire harmony with the laws of progress as we see them now working; the great National Trust swallows up one by one the smaller individual Trusts, as they in their turn swallowed the corporations, and as the corporations swallowed the small individual producers. It is probable that the two great distributing agencies—the railroad and the telegraph—will be the first to be absorbed, for distribution is to-day the most important part of production.

3. What are the best books on Nationalism? The two best are, we think, unquestionably "Looking Backward" and Gronlund's "Co-operative Commonwealth." We hope, however, to prepare a list of books upon the subject.

The *Nationalist*, of Boston, a monthly magazine which may be regarded as the most important periodical of the movement, of which Edward Bellamy will henceforth be editor, and to which Laurence

Gronlund is a regular contributor, prints in every number the following "Declaration of Principles":

The principle of the Brotherhood of Humanity is one of the eternal truths that govern the world's progress on lines that distinguish human nature from brute nature. The principle of competition is simply the application of the brutal law of the survival of the strongest and most cunning. Therefore, so long as competition continues to be the ruling factor in our industrial system, the highest development of the individual cannot be reached, the loftiest aims of humanity cannot be realised. No truth can avail unless practically applied. Therefore, those who seek the welfare of man must endeavour to suppress the system founded on the brutal principle of competition, and put in its place another based on the nobler principle of association. But in striving to apply this nobler and wiser principle to the complex conditions of modern life, we advocate no sudden or ill-considered changes; we make no war upon individuals; we do not censure those who have accumulated immense fortunes simply by carrying to a logical end the false principle on which business is now based. The combinations, trusts, and syndicates, of which the people at present complain, demonstrate the practicability of our basic principle of association. We merely seek to push this principle a little further, and have all industries operated in the interest of all by the nation—the people organised—the organic unity of the whole people. The present industrial system proves itself wrong by the immense wrongs it produces; it proves itself absurd by the immense waste of energy and material which is admitted to be its concomitant. Against this system we raise our protest; for the abolition of the slavery it has wrought and would perpetuate, we pledge our best efforts.

All this reads very well; but, when examined, it only comes to a rather crude State Socialism after all, and there seems but little need for the new name, and none for the tremendous fuss that is being made about it. Dr. J. W. Moliere, speaking before the First Nationalist Club of San Francisco the other day, was careful to point out how very respectable they were, and how little they had to do with mere vulgar Socialism and Communism:

Communists, said he, would make all property common property; while Nationalists will place only the materials of production, land, machinery, raw materials, etc., under collective control. Communism compels every man to do his share of labour and allows him to consume as he needs. Nationalism allows every man the privilege of working as much or as little as he pleases, but "makes his consumption exactly commensurate with his performance." The motto of Communism is, "Every man according to his needs;" that of Nationalism, "Every man according to his deeds." We acknowledge that the Communist motto is a very generous one, but our motto is more just—taking human nature as it is to-day—and we claim it as our peculiar merit that we take society just as it is and endeavour to deal by it justly and without false sentiment.

After reading what the Nationalists have to say for themselves, English Socialists will most likely conclude to stick to their unrespectable name and work on in their old way. We welcome the aid of anybody who will render it, and don't object to his doing it his own way, but we can't help our unbelief in the efficacy of rose-water and half-way revolutions. S.

## WHO ARE "LABOURERS."

A COMMON objection of the hired apologists for capitalism to the labour movement is that the term "labour" is used in too restricted a sense. "We are all labourers," they tell us. "The man who works with his brain no less than the man who toils with his muscles—the editor, book-keeper, manufacturer, or merchant is just as much a labourer, works as hard and as long as the hod-carrier or blacksmith." This sounds very plausible, says the *Journal of the Knights of Labour*, and no doubt many are disposed to consider it valid reasoning. There is one sense, indeed, in which it is true. All who do needful and useful work can claim to be labourers, whether their work be that of superintendence or a subordinate order of brainwork. No one recognises this more fully, or wants to give it greater prominence, than the Order of the Knights of Labour. We wish, indeed, that the classes who live by brain labour would realise that they have a common interest and common rights with the manual workers. There is no bar which excludes them from co-operating as members in full standing with their brethren of the class more generally recognised as "labourers" in the noble work of emancipating toil from the clutches of the exploiting class. Our only regret is, that so few of them seem willing to sink caste distinctions and unite with the manual workers.

As to the other class, the brain workers, who are also employers or capitalists, they occupy a somewhat different position. Still, even against these we have no enmity, provided they are willing to unite with us in an honest effort to rectify the abuses of the industrial and economic system. We have no quarrel with them as workers; far from it. But most of them are in this position, that, although they do more or less work, perhaps a good deal of work, they draw most of their income, not from their work, but from the fact that they control the means and forces of production, and so are able to levy a tribute on the earnings of others. Obviously it is the shallowest sort of subterfuge to say that a millionaire landlord ought to be classed as a worker because he chooses to keep his own books and thereby saves perhaps what amounts to a cent on every dollar of his income, or that a bondholder can also claim to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow because he clips his own coupons and buys and sells securities personally.

But the singular part of the matter is, that in those comparatively rare instances in which brain workers of either class show their practical sympathy with their fellow-toilers of the forge and workshop, by taking part in the labour reform movement, these very same champions of capitalism turn round on them with the sneer that they do not represent the opinions of the honest toiler, with whom they have nothing in common. Then they are not "labourers"? Oh, dear, no. They are only demagogues and jaw-smiths!

It is really very hard to satisfy the literary hirelings and toadies of the moneybags. But fortunately there is no need of our trying to do so.

"Trade is always the harbinger of peace," says the prophet of San Francisco. Is it? retorts the *Bulletin*. Think again—what of Britain's little and big trading wars all over the world? With America, China, in Asia, in Africa, India, Egypt, Sumatra, everywhere.