FREEDOM

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EDUCATION BY FORCE.

THE London School Board have for years past been making themselves generally odious to the people whom they nominally exist to serve—*i.e.*, the working classes. When a family can barely scrape together enough to buy food and clothes, and too little of those, it seems hard that the bigger children should be carried off forcibly to school just when they could be earning a shilling or two and so getting something better than bread and tea every day for dinner, something more to nourish their bodies. For after all, in these days of machinery and unskilled labour, it is bodies that count more than minds in getting a job—bodily strength, and that sort of sharpness which does not come from book-learning so much as from knocking about at home and in the streets, from having to shift for one's self and go early to work. This is what the poor learn from their experience, and it is hard on them when they are forced not only to act in contradiction to it—to lose the children's earnings and the chance of starting them betimes in life—but to pay school fees as well. It is very hard on them, for, like all compulsion, it outrages their sense of justice.

"Hard on individuals," admits your social reformer (one of those excellent persons who are always doing other people good against their will), "hard, perhaps; but every one must be educated, and as no other means avail, we must educate them by force."

Where is the necessity? Knowledge must be free. Yes; who has a right to conceal or forbid it? To know, to understand, is one of the deepest and most universal of human cravings; hardly a child is born without it, and in each and all it must be satisfied. Yes; who has a right to thwart the desire? Large numbers of thinkers are filled with an eager longing to impart their ideas, to explain the facts they have understood, and enjoy the intense pleasure of feeding growing human minds with the great world treasure of the generalised results of human experience; such men and women must be unshackled in their self-chosen social labour. Yes; what better could their fellows demand of their energies? The "must" of all this appeals to no external force; it justifies itself by the immediate response of the inmost sense of what is just and fitting within each one of us In this sense we must have education; and in the future we shall have it, because it is a pressing need of human nature, a need which we have the means to satisfy when we so choose. We shall necessarily have free education when we choose to be free.

But what of the "must" of education by force? It is immediately expedient, says the practical man. Parents are too degraded to see that their children ought to be fed with knowledge as well as bread. Employers are too brutal in their chase of cheap labour to withstand the temptation to increase profits by preying upon the life energy of little children. Parents are too selfish and too desperate in their misery not to yield to the capitalists' offers. And so, says our practical man, the great, good, wise government must step in and coerce all these foolish people for their good; must force the capitalists to employ older hands, the parents to send the children to school, the children to go, and everybody who has money to pay for the whole process, education and coercion both.

So the great, good, wise government, which knows what every one really needs before he knows himself, and can give it like the fairy godmother in the stories, has interfered. It has interfered, through its local agent the London School Board, a little too much during the last few weeks; and the spirit of the workmen who have any spirit left, has rebelled, and the wire-pullers are beginning to talk about "free" education. Now this talk is at bottom simply a wrangle as to who shall pay the piper, the middle-class people whose representatives passed the Education Act, or that other set of people who are theoretically supposed to benefit by it. As the coercers have some money and the coerced have next to none, the first will probably have to pay the cost of their experiment, and quite right too. But in fact the very poor do not pay school fees as it is, and to the well-to-do workman they are the lightest of his many burdens. So what this sort of "Socialism" and-water has to do with freedom may be left to social reformers to determine.

Turn we to enquire what it is that stands in the way of the really free education we have spoken of above. What but the great, good, wise government itself, the government whose interference is supposed so necessary!

The government after all is merely a collection of more or less dunderheaded individuals, guilty of the supreme impertinence of trying to manage other people's business. It is not wholly their own fault, but we will not here say anything of the wisdom of those who helped to put them in such a position. Well, the government's idea of managing this business is to strictly maintain the right of lucky and clever people to keep for themselves all the social wealth they can extract from other men's labour, so long as they extract it according to rule, and pay the government for making the rules and protecting the right. One of these payments is the education rate.

The government, representing the interests of property, is forced by the growth of human feeling in society to do something for the children of the poor, or conscientious people would be discontented, and all discontent is dangerous to property. Of course ceasing to protect the monopoly of the few, which is the cause of the misery and degradation of the many, is not to be thought of, though that alone could set the people free with regard to education as well as everything else. No, the monopoly of property must be protected at all costs, even that of levying a tax on the monopolists. And then the money can be used to instruct the children carefully in the sacredness of property and the goodness, wisdom, and might of governments. Fortunately life is educating them energetically in another direction, or our children might grow up more abject than their fathers. As it is, they are crammed in flocks like geese, without any regard to individual capacity, with a mass of useless, isolated facts, which stultify the brains of as many as they develop. Further, children are encouraged to compete with one another until the weak and stupid are overstrained, or crushed mind and body, and the strong and intelligent are made conceited and overbearing, ready to seize every opportunity of climbing to selfish prosperity on the shoulders of their fellows. As for the teachers, the very love of teaching is worried out of them with over-work, red-tape officialism, and inspections, and the children feel the natural consequences. They feel them in the hurried, impatient, perfunctory, dry or inappropriate teaching they get, and still more in the bright, loving, patient, interesting, individually appropriate teaching they lose.

All this is a heavy price to pay for an imperfect knowledge of the three R.s, which is all the valuable information most children pick up at a Board School. And after all, the vast majority would pick up so much if no Board Schools were in existence. The School Board has failed as yet in reaching the waifs and strays, and it has checked voluntary efforts to do so. No doubt a much larger number of children go to school now than ten years ago, but that cannot be entirely credited to forcible education. The Education Act was merely a concession to the growth of social feeling and the sense of the importance of knowledge. It was effect, not cause; and the same causes, if that outlet had not been found for them, would necessarily have found other and probably more effective channels of operation.

No; education by force is only a necessity in the eyes of those who consider private property and the economic slavery of the people also a necessity. The government in this matter is like a cruel cab-driver who reins in his horse and flogs him at the same time; it holds the people down in the condition of wage-slaves, and then attempts to whip them into the energy and virtue of free citizens.

And you, fellow countrymen, how long will you be contented to play the part of cab horse?

WHAT REVOLUTION MEANS.

WE said, in our preceding article, that a great revolution is growing up in Europe. We approach a time when the slow evolution which has been going on during the second part of our century, but is still prevented from finding its way into life, will break through the obstacles lying in its path and will try to remodel society according to the new needs and tendencies. Such has been, until now, the law of development in societies; and the present unwillingness of the privileged classes to recognise the justice of the claims of the unprivileged, sufficiently shows that the lessons of the past have not profited them. Evolution will assume its feverish shape—Revolution.

But what is a revolution?

If we ask our historians, we shall learn from them that it means much noise in the streets; wild speakers perorating in clubs; mobs breaking windows and wrecking houses; pillage, street warfare, and murders; exasperated struggle between parties; violent overthrow of existing governments, and nomination of new ones as unable to solve the great impendent problems as the former ones; and then, the general discontent, the growth of misery; reaction stepping in under the blood-stained flag of the White Terror; and finally, the reinstalation of

NORTH-WESTERN SPINDRIFT ON THE ETHICS (?) OF MAJORITY-RULE.

Scene: THE COAST OF AYR. *Persona:* CITIZEN and SEABORN.

Seaborn. So here you find me up before the sun, though you have fled from your City of Destruction northwards on the night bat's wings. Your penny-a-liner calls it the Flying Scotsman: but I, the modern version of the magic carpet, *with the seamy side up.* Oh for electric balloons, or the wings of the morning! But come, let us hasten to plunge into the sea, and to meet the rising sun with worship. See, Ben Gaoth is lifting his cloud-cap to greet his father.

Citizen. But I'm shivering. No foot-pans, and this late October!

Sea. What would you! Foot-pans and profits don't rhyme. The London and North-Western joint-stockers know better than that. Their guide to Parnassus is Jevons' 'Political Economy Primer' *q. v.* But come, no irreligion, pay homage promptly to sea and sun, and I'll warrant your heat. The sunny waves will wash the city-soil out of you, and charm the chill of its inhumanity out of your bones. Then home to breakfast.

Cit. Lead on, barbarian!

[*After.*]

Sea. Now you're clean, warm, fresh-clad, fed, and in your right mind—if that may yet be, after so long sojourning in the Pandemonium of commerce and fashion—let us lie down here on the grass, where it slopes seaward, light up, and talk over our endless differences, political, social, and economic. And first, your pet necessity of life-together, Majority-rule.

Cit. About that we cannot differ. It is Hobson's choice for us and all. There is no other way; and you have said it in one word, "necessity," answering the question in stating it, and in my sense too! Unlucky fellow, you need must when the devil drives.

Sea. Quite so; the devil drives, but slaves only, and never the free-born by the sea. We are not now choking in a London drawing-room or on 'Change. And then there are needs and needs. Your "must," is musty, let it into the fresh air and open anew. So, restated, let our topic be *the Ethics* of Majority-rule.

Cit. Shifty and slippery, as usual, you eel. What has Ethic—Morality—to do with practical expediency and need-be?

Sea. A conger, may be, and too much for you. So this sole and sufficient cure-all of yours, Majority-rule, *alias* government by palaver and dictation of representative autocrats, for that is what it comes to in every town council as well as at imperial Westminster, is immoral, and perhaps irreligious too; in a word, inhuman! How come you to admit that? 'Tis a fell jump out of your last year's skin.

Cit. Ah, in Snakeland we are always sloughing. But, seriously, in London we live fast, and quickest when listening only, as I have been for the past year; and there are all sorts of queer folks talking, Fabians, Anarchists, Social Leaguers, Social Democrats, and the like, besides odds and ends on the casual stump in street, park, parlour, or pamphlet, not to speak of the daily eruption of irresponsible papers, and the monthly flutter of dilettanti mags. These two last lots are the delf and china of middle-classdom, a fine clatter of brittle and broken dishes, truly. 'Tis a mad world scurrying to the edge of something—perdition, you will say. Yet in its madness I have discerned this much method at any rate, a general consent to found politics and economics upon force. As for morals and religions, the best even of the bourgeois are disposed, or constrained, to put them away (for safe keeping, I suppose!) in seen cabinet of their most precious china, or hidden wardrobe of Sunday clothes too good for use. Ornamental these, or even belonging to quite another sphere. But of this busy "practical" life, in mart, street, factory, workshop, courthouse, quay-side, Parliament, the base and "bed-rock" is force—in the last resort and at bottom, physical even, and coercive. Yes, the last issue always must fall to be decided without appeal by the blunt yes or no of the bulk of "the people"—for I am democratic enough now to throw over "the classes"—backed by the baton and the bayonet.

Sea. Add "brutal" to "blunt."

Cit. If you like. We have masked and "civilised" Darwin, yet still believe in struggle and survival of the fittest.

Sea. To survive under Majority-rule!

Cit. So be it, again. There is no other rule possible, as aforesaid.

Sea. What of unanimity, and humane unity of brothers and sisters in conjoint life?

Cit. Sheer utopia.

Sea. The only place of peace and gladness, of well-being and well-doing.

Cit. The place that never was and never will be. Your ideals and moralities and religions are of too fine and thin air for common breath. And the Anarchist ideal is remotest and most etherial of them all, unsubstantial and unattainable as the rainbow. Since we met, cousin, I have been almost persuaded to enter Collectivism. But when there, there I stay. There is no beyond reachable without wings, and we are men, not angels. This State Socialism is the youngest and fairest of the daughters of our good old English parliamentary father of free peoples and systems of social and political life free in consistence with "law and order;" yet it too founds on "*force majeure*" and majority-over-ruling. It can't help itself.

Sea. And so makes a virtue of necessity! Well, spin on, spin on, and you'll soon have rope enough to hang yourself with.

Cit. Never; for, all I've said notwithstanding, I admit nothing. Non-moral and non-religious, if you please, but not immoral and irreligious will be our new and stable social-state polity, while finding its stability in its establishment upon the one sure foundation the management, to wit, and government by the most heads in the commune, and the most communes in the state.

Sea. Think you, my loud-voiced light-fingered coz, to give me the slip with this play of negatives "im," "ir," "non," and "un"—upon a background of monotonous dogmatism? Let us return upon our conversation-track, and see.

Cit. By all means, return! Your argument ever moves in a false circle.

Sea. And Plato says the circular is the perfect movement. But, of your grace, call mine, spiral. So, to return and advance, tell me, when the devil drives, who drives the devil!

Cit. Himself.

Sea. And what is he?

Cit. Our nature and circumstance, of course.

Sea. And whence!

Cit. I don't know.

Sea. But free yourself to think, as one can think here in the open. Did man never make a circumstance! Did he never inherit a nature, and pass it down again with increments and variations? Picture the age-long almost beginningless procession of countless generations of men and women that have made and re-made and inherited and passed down, with ever-increasing difference and mass, natures, circumstances, customs, institutions, economical conditions, laws, and orders, and tell me, then, where you will draw the dividing line, in this making of the makers of mankind, between makers and made? Doesn't it rather look like perfect reciprocity and reaction of elements—say *wills* or powers—co-essential and at root even identical? The driver is driven, and the driven drives. The devil is *in* us; and if the devil—to keep up your figure—why not God too? And, if so, why not give him a turn! That is what Anarchism means. But how can we, while in our great lone Snakeland, as yourself styled London, we are stumbling and falling over the sloughs, devil-born and self-shed, that entangle and embarrass and even strangle us, and the stench of their slow corruption is so stifling that we have almost lost consciousness of these evils!

The spring and innostness of all at least that is human—to say nothing meantime of what is otherwise named—is Will,—ill-will and good-will. The Will is the perpetual source of both bitter and sweet. It is poison and antidote in one—self-wounding, self-healing, at will. Only will all together to open the fountains of sweet waters and good will.

Cit. Mysticism, your old game! Your speech outfigures my figure quite. What mean you by those dead and cast-off skins?

Sea. What but your laws, rules, overrules, institutes, cerements, orders, and your governments of classes and majorities? All the red-tape and hangman's rope of your existence in general.

Cit. I see; universal carapace or shell—dead, hard, and cramping; and you go for a burst-up all round! Effacement of civilisation!

Sea. For refacement, yes; and don't look in dismay; for anything with depth, everything but mere surface, is ineffaceable; and nothing is ever really lost, but loss.

Cit. There again you are ranting and shaking your fist at me; but you never show your hand.

Sea. I've surely opened a little finger at least; and your hand is open enough for both of us. Majority-rule, or Democracy, turns its back on whatever is ethical, religious, human, or (the same thing) passes it by on the other side. That's your hand. And here's my fist again: "Not for" is "against," and neglect of the higher needs and need-bes is opposition; and your democracy, an affair of majorities, materials and machinery, kicks against the pricks of real live necessity, and beats in vain against the adamantine fire that walls in the world. But more of this later on. For, see Ailsa and Arran have drawn up the Atlantic's veil of soft mist-like cloud over them, and have retired from view for *siesta.*

Cit. Just what we have been doing all morning without resting! In the clouds!

Sea. Say, above them!

Cit. Yes, astride the cloudlets tilting at the light airs!

Sea. Better that than inside them, fog-bound. I'll grant we've been above them trapping sunbeams!

Cit. In very misty meshes! And filching untimely bolts from the womb of the thunder!

Sea. Impossible in a sky so serene. A truce, however, and I promise you we shall come down to earthly concreteness and detail all in good time—to the prudential aspect of majority-rule, if it has any ever so transient and flimsy; to questions of immediacy, expediency, and utility; to particular instances. Oh, I'll sate your gorge for such things! But these others had first to be. And now let us, following Nature, retire, dine, and rest, to resume our friendly war in the afternoon.

THE INEVITABLENESS OF FREE GROWTH. The Anarchists believe that society and humanity grow and are not made. Growth, not manufacture is their word. Hence our controversy with our friends of the Collectivist social democracy, in so far as they appear to go for manufacture. As well talk of manufacturing oaks and elephants. It is a century too late for that; this is not the year 1789. Clear away the hindrances—properties, dominions, laws, governments—and all will go well. Only grow and let grow. The scientist philosophers like Spencer tell us that if there is a tendency evident in history towards the aggregation of greater and ever greater wholes of men and women, there is also and equally a tendency towards what they call segregation and differentiation. These are big words, but not empty. They mean local self-government, communal autonomy, individual freedom. The stars, then, in their courses are with us, and the great streams and trade winds of time. These will not be gainsaid. They are our fellow-workers. Let us, then, work with a good and brave will, and it'll work.