

FREEDOM

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BURYING THE DEAD.

THE original free, unconsciously Anarchist, institutions of our country, which Kemble describes as during the Saxon period "supplying a mutual guarantee of peace, security, and freedom for the inhabitants of a district," have constituted down to the present day the boast of Englishmen. But how changed they are: *oh! quantum mutabilis!*

These originally free institutions of the English people have been attacked on both sides; by the over-growth of central government, and by the usurpations of that class whose fortune has been the misery of the people.

The process of such political "enclosures," as it were, was extremely varied. Now the committee of the people's assembly was substituted for the assembly itself; now the function of moderator or executor in such assemblies was invested in a permanent and authoritative official. Again, the oppressive centralised system of criminal justice has gradually grown out of the original "sworn inquest"; just as the police organisation has grown out of the "frank pledge" and "hue and cry," and superseded the old methods of mutual responsibility.

As property became more and more of a monopoly, property qualifications were more rigorously exacted as the basis of all claim to a right to fulfil public functions, and popular franchises gradually disappeared under a network of self-appointed rulers. Briefly, justice, administration, education, sanitation, roads—even charity—fell into the hands of the propertied class, and became their privilege. A part of the nation ceased to exist, or to appear in public life. The poor were eaten up or condensed in, or, as the language now runs, *represented* by the rich.

The process, however, having been brought about by successive encroachments on popular rights and slow alteration of early institutions, has at length become so cumbrous, so hampering, that it is thought fit to introduce in it a little order and uniformity. The Local Government Bill now under the consideration of our legislators, proposes to sink all the irregularities and anomalies of the present system in the more centralised one of "County Councils."

Shall we therefore be better off? Not a wit. To the rule of country gentlemen is to succeed the rule of the trading bourgeoisie, the rule of political parties or big electors. This means the end of one illusion, the beginning of another. This means the political Continentalisation of England following on the economical Anglisation of the Continent. This means, however, also that we approach the end, and therefore revert to the beginning—to the free organisation, which was at the bottom of the early English institutions.

COMMUNIST-ANARCHISM.

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY P. KROPOTKINE AT THE
FREEDOM GROUP MEETING, MARCH 15TH.

THE teachings of Proudhon are taken as a basis for individualistic Anarchism by a number of English-speaking Anarchists. Proudhon is undoubtedly one of the greatest writers who have ever dealt with economical questions; and for one who does not attach importance to his dialectical methods, and looks more at the ideas than at the methods of expressing them, he is one of the most suggestive—may be the most suggestive—amongst those writers who lead men to think for themselves. He has covered in his works nearly the whole field of human enterprise: economics, politics, art, war; and everywhere he has dealt with the subject in the most suggestive way.

As a critic he is great, as a constructor weak. And when, in 1848, he was forced from the sphere of thought to that of action, compelled by his friends (as he writes) "to write the programme of a revolution by law and decree paragraph after paragraph," he obviously made a failure. Revolutions are not made by decrees; still less an Anarchist revolution.

As in the case of so many born thinkers—Lassalle, Louis Blanc, Auguste Comte—there is a wide difference between Proudhon the philosopher and Proudhon the practical politician. His scheme of Mutual Banking was an evident compromise between the middle-class and working-class interests. It even seems probable that he did not believe in it himself, and only hoped that it might stir the workers to act on their own behalf.

Down to 1869 a large number of French members of the International Working Men's Association were Proudhonians. The now *bourgeois* senator Tolain, and Fribourg, who represented the French Socialists in the early years of the International, were Proudhonian Mutualists. But since the Commune, Mutualism has virtually disappeared amongst French workmen.

The modern Individualism initiated by Herbert Spencer is, like the critical theory of Proudhon, a powerful indictment against the dangers and wrongs of government, but its practical solution of the social problem is miserable—so miserable as to lead us to enquire if the talk of "No force" be merely an excuse for supporting landlord and capitalist domination.

Turning now to Communism, we find that forty years ago, before and in 1848, the theory was put forward in such a shape as to fully account for Proudhon's distrust as to its effect upon liberty. The old idea of Communism was the idea of monastic communities under the severe rule of elders or of men of science for the directing priests. The last vestiges of liberty and of individual energy would be destroyed, if humanity ever had to go through such a Communism, especially under the rule of *savants*.¹ But this old idea has completely faded before the practical experience of the revolutionary movement.

The Commune showed the people how a seemingly powerful government can be blown away in twenty-four hours. And though the foe at the gates prevented the development of the social revolution in Paris, enough initiative in social reorganisation was shown by the Parisian workers to mark the immense progress in their ideas since 1848.

During the last seventeen years that progress has been enormously quickened. The idea of expropriation, of the producers taking possession of the means of production, has sunk deep into the hearts of the people all over Europe, and even, during the last six or seven years, into those of Englishmen. The conditions in which a new 1848 will find Europe are thus completely different from what they were when Proudhon wrote. And these new conditions of mind must be taken into account.

Forty years ago, when the Paris workmen overthrew the Government, they timidly asked for universal suffrage as a means for bringing into life social reforms. They timidly asked State help for productive associations, for experiments in Communism.

Seventeen years ago, when the Paris workmen proclaimed their Commune, they asked the autonomy of the Commune as a means for permitting social reforms in the autonomic city. But as to those reforms their minds were not settled at all. The word expropriation frightened them. Their respect for bourgeois property was great, especially among the Mutualists. And therefore we saw their elected leaders in the Council of the Commune discussing such matters as divorce between Church and State, communal autonomy, and reduced rents for apartments.

Quite different will be the condition of men's minds if to-morrow the Commune is proclaimed in several cities of France. The respect for *bourgeois* property has gone amidst the workers, and even the lower middle class. The Bank of France would be considered as belonging to the nation; the houses as belonging to all inhabitants, and not to their legal owners; the stores of food, clothing, and so on, as the stock of the nation, not as the property of the few. And, so far as we can judge from indications already observable in the last Communal revolution, the workers will consider that nothing has been done as long as each man, woman, and child in the city has not been provided with food, decent lodgings, and clothes.

Let us look at this question practically; abstractions which lead to no practical conclusion are hateful. They are good to show us the way, but they are worth nothing if they cannot be brought to a practical issue.

Our experience of the effect of wars and such minor disturbances as have lately occurred in the trade of the world has shown how easily international trade is disorganised by the disorganisation of any branch of it. In last month's *Freedom* we gave the instance of the increase of distress in Lancashire occasioned by the Franco-Tonquinese war, and its disastrous influence on the export of Indian cotton goods to China, and so on the Indian demand for English manufactured cottons.

The first effect then of any serious revolutionary disturbances in any part of Europe will be the decline of the export trade. Those workers

¹ Bakounin, in 'God and the State,' has beautiful pages on that kind of government. It would be worse than the present.

especially who are employed in making luxuries for the rich—and we know how numerous they are now—will be thrown out of employment. The means of expenditure of the rich will be curtailed, and they themselves will flee from the disturbed districts; moreover, the raw material required in such costly manufacture will not be forthcoming.

But these raw materials are not the only imports that will fail. Do you think that Russian or Indian peasants, for instance, will send to England wheat which they need themselves, selling the food of their children to pay the taxes? Do you not think that they will rather prefer to pay no taxes, and keep their supplies of corn that they may not starve next spring? Do you think also that the railway servants of America will continue to transport corn for nothing from Illinois, merely to increase the rent value of the lands of the railway companies?

The supplies of food will be shortened, and the profits derived from the export trade will be curtailed. Will the workers patiently starve in such conditions? Or, will they rather try to begin the great social re-organisation of which they are thinking now all over Europe?

In 1848, the Paris workers gave three months to their bourgeois rulers for making a new start in economical life, and the rulers took advantage of the delay for massing troops, for arming the middle-classes, and for disorganising the workers, so as to crush their first attempt at revolt at the end of the three months. Grape-shot and bullets were the middle-class answer to their claims, when they raised in June their black flag of "Bread or Labour." So that, despairing of the Republic and their Radical leaders, they accepted the Second Empire, saying, "We know that Napoleon with his fine promises is a scoundrel, but all these Radicals and pseudo-Socialists are no better than he."

Just so the coming revolution will be crushed in the despair of the workers if we are not prepared to meet the crisis. Prepared by the full acceptance of Communism.

In 1848, it was all right to devise schemes for the gradual extinction of house-rent by mutual banking. But the workmen of our times—the French workers, at least—do not recognise at all the rights of property in houses claimed by their present owners. They will proceed by expropriation, and see in it no injustice.

In our great cities, for instance, can the houses be fairly described as in any real sense belonging to the present landlords? The value of those houses is created, not by any isolated individuals, but by the presence of the whole community. What would be the value of the handsomest London mansion in the wilds of Siberia? It would not be worth the expense of warming! All the inhabitants of the city contribute to the value of each dwelling-place, and all these houses belong therefore in whole justice to the whole community. This is how the workers reason now.

To maintain the private ownership of houses will become impossible; and therefore the first task of the Revolution will be to arrange things so as to share the accommodation of available houses according to the needs of the inhabitants of the city, to clear out the slums and fully occupy the villas and mansions. But sixty elected persons sitting round a table and calling themselves a Municipal Council, cannot arrange the matter on paper. It must be arranged by the people themselves, freely meeting to settle the question for each block of houses, each street, and proceeding by agreement from the single to the compound, from the parts to the whole; all having their voice in the arrangements, and putting in their claims with those of their fellow citizens; just as the Russian peasants settle the periodical re-partition of the communal lands.

Equally pressing will be the great question of food. During previous revolutionary periods social wealth has been doled out by the authorities in unequal portions. Even during the Commune, which proclaimed that none of its officials would get more than 12s. 6d. a day, whilst the combatants of the National Guards had only 1s. 3d. But in the next Revolution even equal money wages will not do. The question of food will become as pressing as it is in a besieged city, and the workmen will demand that the food supply be placed at once at the public disposal for the common consumption. Most great cities have food for several months stored within reach. Paris was besieged for six months and not reduced to absolute starvation.

But the general food supply cannot be seized and administered by an elected municipal council; it must be distributed according to the needs of each family by volunteers, who will surely be found in each street and each quarter, to organise just distribution under the eyes of all the people concerned; and a system of distribution of food, organised again by the people themselves, will necessarily spring out of the revolution.

Again, in the matter of clothing. When the workers are not labouring, and whilst nothing new can be made, the people must depend for their supply on the things already stored in the shops. Thus from the very beginning the idea of private property necessarily will be shattered, and practical Communism introduced into the daily life of the masses.

The like will occur in the re-organisation of production. The first, the most obvious necessity, will be to raise from the soil the food required by the community. The fields round London are left uncultivated now because of the heaviness of the clay, we are told. Rather because of the heaviness of the social conditions! The oxen have little interest in the crop, whilst the dogs lie on the hay! But when the dogs are driven off, when the land is free of monopolists demanding an impossible rent, the fields will very quickly be cultivated with hearty goodwill by free associations of labourers, driven by the neces-

sities of the population to raise produce to supply the common needs. The need will plainly be common, and common labour the speediest way to supply it.

The same with industry. The manufacture of plush for West End ladies and silks for Russian courtiers will not be revived, but the needs of the people will force the artisans into co-operation to make warm woollen cloth for the workmen who are now sleeping between two newspapers in the neighbourhood of Trafalgar Square.

As soon as the respect for private property has been shaken, and the very necessities of maintaining life have driven the workers towards Communism, the production must become communal. The workers cannot be persuaded any longer that the millions of horse-power of our steam-engines are the just property of those who possess them now. They will consider them as a common legacy from past generations, and use them for supplying the needs of the community.

Free workers, on free land, with free machinery, and freely using all the powers given to man by science, could with the greatest easiness grow the necessary food for the whole of the population of the country, even if it should soon be doubled, and supply all the necessities for a comfortable living for all members of the community.

The two great movements of our century—towards Liberty of the individual and Social co-operation of the whole community—are summed up in Anarchist-Communism.

NOTES.

THE Father of rulers, property and lies, has lately inspired his children with some skill in playing to the gallery and creating the delusions by which the victims of oppression are diverted from their wrongs. On the one side, Mr. Goschen conjures so cleverly with his items of finance that the admiring crowd are ready to forget that all taxes, however distributed, are a tribute wrung by force from the workers to support the Government that guarantees property and poverty. On the other hand, Mr. Ritchie produces such dazzling effects of democratic local administration that we are inclined to forget that, in the first place, the Local Government Bill will never be carried out in its present imposing form; and in the second, that if it were, it would only shift authority from one set of men to another, leaving the propertiless workers slaves as before. The object of the whole farce is to smother the social question in a fog of politics. The old, stale trick. Will it succeed once more?

Mr. Justice Day's remarks about the harmful effects of long imprisonment on the criminal, and through him on others, have just received terrible confirmation in Hungary. An unhappy man suffered seventeen years of penal servitude for the murder of his mother. He was looked on by the prison authorities as entirely "reformed," but on his release his first act was an attempt to kill the judge who had condemned him. Failing to find the judge, he revenged himself by murdering the judge's wife, a passer-by in the street, and his own wife and child, and severely wounding a lawyer's clerk and a gardener who tried to stop him. During these seventeen years of "reform" the miserable man's whole mental energy had been concentrated in a growing monomania of revenge upon society for the suffering inflicted on himself.

This year's commemoration of the Paris Commune was the largest and most enthusiastic which has yet taken place in London. For that reason, no doubt, it was boycotted by the whole daily press except the three evening half-pennies. The speakers were—Social Democratic Federation: H. M. Hyndman (in the chair), John Burns, Mrs. Hicks; Socialist League: William Morris, Mrs. Marx-Aveling, F. Kitz, H. H. Sparling; Fabian Society: Mrs. Besant; Freedom Group: P. Kropotkin, Dr. Merlino, and C. M. Wilson. Karl Kautsky expressed the sympathy of German workers, and La Vache sang "La Carmagnole." The whole character of the speeches was revolutionary, and their tone more decided than in any previous year; and the more thorough-going the Socialism, the more enthusiastically it was received.

This is the first time that English Socialists of all shades of opinion have united to honour the heroes of the vanguard of Social Revolution. As the great struggle approaches, the army of freedom draws its ranks closer. Note too the increasing number of women taking active part in the movement. Two years ago one woman spoke; last year two addressed the meeting; this year four women were included amongst the speakers, one representing each shade of Socialist opinion.

Most English and French workmen are less favorably impressed with existing profit-sharing and co-operative enterprises than our correspondent, the well-known American Mutualist-Anarchist who signs himself Edgeworth. Probably distance, in his case, lends enchantment to the view. But we would draw our readers' attention to his admission that the "constructive idea" of Proudhon, the solution of the social problem by Mutual Banking, is inapplicable in present conditions. Mutualist "co-operative unions are feasible only when the means of production are owned by the producers." Certainly the producers do not own the means of production to-day, and have no prospect under our present economic system of owning them. We fully agree with Edgeworth that "nothing less than expropriation will meet the exigencies of the case."

Revolutionary Anarchism and the expropriation of property mono-

polists are preached by the *Chicago Alarm*; but the other American Mutualist papers zealously repudiate all but passive resistance to oppression, and cling to the peace-at-all costs doctrine of George Fox, Godwin, Shelley, Proudhon, Leo Tolstoi, and many another spirit touched to fine issues, but blind to the fact that domination is still an aggressive force in society, only to be destroyed by an outburst of energy more active and powerful than itself.

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Can one do a greater wrong to any human being than consciously to allow him to domineer over oneself or any one else without offering the most vigorous protest within one's power?

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We Revolutionary Communist-Anarchists differ from our Revolutionary Mutualist comrades in their theory that after the workers have destroyed the existing monopoly of property they will set about creating it afresh—by attempting to secure to every individual neither more nor less than the exact amount of wealth resulting from the exercise of his own capacities. Are not the scandalous inequalities in the distribution of wealth to-day merely the culminative effect of the principle that every man is justified in securing to himself everything that his chances and capacities enable him to lay hands on?

* * *

If the social revolution amidst which we are living means anything, it means the destruction of this detestable economic principle, which delivers over the more social members of the community to the domination of the most unsocial and self-interested.

* * *

Jus died last month, singing the swan-song of English Individualism. The hopes of the people are set on Socialism, and the privileged classes have no heart to defy them—so moans the expiring organ of the Liberty and Property Defence League. The whole attention of the propertied classes and their government is strained towards evading social revolution by skilful conjuring with timely concessions. The L. P. D. L. contains fewer conscientious Individualists than could be accommodated in a four-wheeled cab; in fact, it is merely "The Harassed Interests Defence League." It "is extremely unpopular amongst working class audiences." It "is credited, justly or unjustly, with a lively respect for the liberty of the wolf to devour the lamb, and a cynical admission of the equal right of the lamb to devour the wolf." A just charge, apparently, to the minds of the aforesaid single-minded Individualists of the staff of *Jus*, who have thus publicly shaken the dust of the League from their feet.

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It is reported that they are preparing to revive the paper as an Exponent of Individualist Anarchism. As comrade Hicks says, "We are all Anarchists now," and the defenders of "Liberty and Property," like many State Socialists, believe "that the society of the remote future will be held together on the principle of absolute philosophical anarchy." But—also like State Socialists—they are perfectly prepared to pursue a policy in utter contradiction with their profession of faith—*vide* Mr. Auberon Herbert's "Right and Wrong of Compulsion by the State," and Mr. W. Donnithorpe's criticism thereon in the last two numbers of *Jus*.

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Surely an Anarchist is one who adopts Anarchism as the guiding principle of his life, who takes the moral attitude of an Anarchist towards his fellows here and now—not one who believes in a possible Anarchist Millennium in the dim future.

THE WOMEN OF THE COMMUNE.

WE have all been so drilled from our youth up in the prejudices of property and authority that even the workers, for whom property and authority have done so little, are not free from superstitious belief in their necessity. Especially we are all too much inclined to believe that mere confusion must follow on a popular revolt, unless some central or local authority be immediately set up to control social life and reorganise the people.

During the Commune of 1871, the newly-elected Municipal Government was too deeply engaged by the enemy at the gates to make many attempts at social reconstruction. Was the city, in which so much of the old order had been overthrown, given up to disorder or to merely aimless individual effort? Did its social life run down, like a watch with a broken spring?

Historians—friend and foe—have been almost wholly occupied with the official doings of the Communal Council, and have left unchronicled the spontaneous action of the people. And yet that authoritative Communal organisation was a mere compromise between the ideas of the past and the new spirit of social revolution stirring in the masses, and it is to the free initiative of the people themselves that we must look for the indications of the real meaning and scope of the insurrection.

Little as we know of the social life of the workers during those few brief weeks of partial freedom from property rule, that little is of a kind to raise high our hopes for the future.

Take, for instance, the conduct of that part of the people who are generally supposed to have least spontaneous initiative, to be most completely creatures of habit and routine, least strong and courageous, least fit to act for themselves—the women.

When the treachery or faint-heartedness of the men entrusted with authority by the people allowed the cannon, over which the federated

battalions of the National Guard were keeping watch in the name of the city, to be surprised by the troops of the middle-class Government, and the Central Committee knew nothing of the treachery or the danger, the working women of Montmartre waited for no centralised organisation, no word of command, but marched up the open streets against the levelled muskets of the soldiers, and by their heroic daring won over the wavering hirelings of Thiers to be the allies of the people. Those women seized the critical moment for action, and acted boldly; and Paris was won for the Commune.

But the working women showed not merely courage and cool promptitude in the face of danger, but, when the fighting was over, bestowed equal energy upon such reorganisation of social life as the terrible conditions of the siege rendered possible. An active official of the Commune writes as follows:—

"The Commune being obliged to fight against Versailles from the very beginning, there was scarcely any room left to women for an official part to take in the movement. However, in my *arrondissement*, and, I am sure, in several others, some rudimentary steps were taken. For instance, I took possession of the different schools conducted by *nuns*, and replaced them by lay female teachers. I did the same with the *salles d'asile*, that is, the buildings where very little children, too young to go to school, are kept. All ambulances were likewise kept by women. So were the *cantines*, or eating houses, which had been founded during the first siege.

"But in an unofficial capacity their conduct was truly beyond praise. So far as my district is concerned, they had formed committees to inquire into the wants of every family, especially of girls; to organise labour for women as far as the stormy events through which we had to pass would allow, cutting and making flannel shirts for the men who had to fight *extra muros*; attending at houses where wounded men or patients lay, etc. At night they crowded public meetings, took part in the proceedings, encouraged men to resist, proposed motions interesting their sex, which were afterwards transmitted to the Commune, etc.

"Lastly, during the hot days, when the fight was raging in the streets, they were seen everywhere, assisting in erecting barricades, bringing refreshments and food to the combatants, nursing the wounded, shrouding the dead after washing them, risking their life every minute to protect and screen the escape of the defeated men after the taking of a barricade, bearing with the most stoic courage affronts, ill-treatment, and even death, to which they were subjected by infuriated, stupid soldiers. If so many of us could escape immediate death, and even manage to escape to a foreign land, nine out of every ten at least have to be thankful to one or more women. That influence of women, as well as their energy, was so well felt by Versailles that they charged them with every kind of atrocious crime, which, however, all their courts-martial could never succeed in bringing home. The greatest of all, Louise Michel, is for me just an enlarged personification of what an immense number of women have been at that time.

Lefrançais tells in his memoirs how, on that terrible morning when the bloodhounds of Versailles had Paris by the throat and the scattered remnants of the National Guard retreated within the city, they found barricades ready erected in the most defensible streets by the women of the various quarters. And he mentions that on that morning of despair the first organised contingent of defenders whom he met was a troop of women, fully armed, marching down to garrison one of these barricades.

If such was the energy, the capacity for action and for free self-organisation in new and terrible social conditions, shown by the working women of Paris during a few short weeks of comparative freedom, seventeen years ago, what may we not expect from the spontaneous initiative of the mass of workers—men and women both—when at length they take courage to rise in their strength and destroy for ever the tyranny of property and authority throughout the civilised world?

Labour and Produce Exchange Banks.

TO THE EDITOR OF "FREEDOM."

A disparaging remark in *Freedom* treating this constructive idea, in which Proudhon finds the lever of a pacific revolution in economics, as superficial, not radical, seems to me less than justly appreciative. Referring for Proudhon's elaboration of the plan to his '*Idée Générale de la Révolution*' and his '*Solution du Problème Social*.' I would here present it as the natural evolution and complement of the co-operation institution which has achieved great success in England, the Protective Union Store. If my impressions are correct, your first at Rochdale was developed along with other good things from an original co-operative factory. Co-operative production, besides the cost of its plans, presents social problems more complex than the Protective Union Store: hence the great and rapid development of the commercial integrant, while Integral Co-operation is still infant. Still besides your English enterprises in co-operative production, those of Godin at Guise sur Aisne, and of the Leclaire and Robert works, of the wheat mills and cooper works at Minneapolis, etc., are decisive successes of mature reputation.

The correlation of these two classes of industrial facts, at which Josiah Warren aimed, is simple and fruitful. Given the necessary prohibitions, capacities and capitals—quite a moderate demand—place a Protective Union Store in the centre of a township or parish, let its stock be owned by the farmers and other producers or useful persons, all contracting to buy and sell exclusively from and to each other, the store affording a convenient entrepot.

The banking feature comes in when the store gives its warehouse certificate of goods deposited for exchange, adding its appraisal of these. With or without assumption of responsibility, the store may likewise certify goods deliverable by their respective proprietors in person. It may also certify to the reliability of workmen in divers specialties. Such certificates will be labor credit notes. You see the constitution of a local currency, by means of which, except for taxation, labour may exchange with labour most directly, while boycotting exploiting capitalists.

You wish to educate labour economically. You know that is not an affair of fine writing. You know that the labourers must work out their own salvation, and that it is by our actual system of intermediary profits that they are beggared. The present co-operative stores are good in proportion to purchasing power, but of little use to those who are fleeced of the profits of their work, outside of it.

Proudhon conceived that farmers might pool their credits by mortgages with his People's Bank, with a view to reduce interest and extricate themselves by instalments of liquidation during terms of perhaps twenty years.

Since he wrote capitalism has been carrying matters with a high hand, and probably nothing less than expropriation will meet the exigencies of the case. The co-operative unions I have mentioned are feasible only when the means of production are owned by the producers, and this in a variety of works forming circuits of production with consumption that shall dispense with outside trade. This completeness of circuit does not exclude the exchange of surplus products outside, and this, so long as Governments exist, will be necessary to provide for taxes; but otherwise, emancipation from the serfdom to capitalism depends in great measure on a currency different from the Government's legal tender. To withstand the privileged monopoly of money, labour only should buy labour. EDGEWORTH.

FREEDOM DISCUSSION MEETINGS.

OVER 200 people crowded the little hall at 13, Farringdon Road, at our second meeting, on March 15th. The debate was to have been on Individualist and Communist Anarchism; but as no Individualists or Mutualists appeared to state their side of the question, the discussion turned chiefly on Free Communism.

Comrade Kropotkin opened the proceedings with an hour's speech, which we print elsewhere. When he resumed his seat, the audience showed their interest in the subject by a brisk fire of questions, and then engaged in a somewhat desultory debate.

The chief result of the discussion was to show that we Socialists of all shades of opinion are a long way yet from a thorough common understanding. "Nature is not slow to equip us in the prison uniform of the party to which we adhere," says Emerson, and we are no exceptions to that rule. Like all parties, we have our party phrases and modes of expression, and are too apt to use these as masks for ideas borrowed or half thought out. One consequence is a confusion as to the actual meaning of our commonest terms when we try in earnest to compare our thoughts. For instance, we Communist-Anarchists are evidently not agreed with our Social Democrat comrades as to what is really meant by Communism. That must be cleared up. But first we propose to have one more quite general discussion.

The next meeting will be held at 13, Farringdon Road, E.C., on April 12th, at 8.30 p.m.

The discussion will be opened by Dr. Merlino. Subject: "Is Communist-Anarchism the Logical Outcome of Socialism?"

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM.

IRELAND.

The gains and losses during the past four weeks in Ireland have been pretty equally balanced. For although there are fifty landlords making terms with their tenants to every five still holding out for their old spoils, it must be always remembered that the "good" landlords are simply the shrewder ones, who know that half a loaf is better than no bread. When Clanricarde's agent sends forth peremptory orders to pay up, and sits at the receipt of custom the whole of an appointed day, but goes home at evensong with an empty cash-box under his arm, his master, the usurer, can only vent his spleen by turning out on the bleak road-side some miserable fellow-creature, but that puts nothing in his pockets. Ponsonby when he cannot get his plunder, gains little by incurring heavy liabilities for law costs, gangs of bailiffs and a battering-ram. What did it profit Dr. Roberts of Carnarvon, that dragging-out of a poor witless invalid, to lie naked, save for a sheet, in the keen March wind, whilst the walls that had sheltered him for many years were being levelled to the ground? Ross Mahon, of Ballinasloe, refused to take 16s. in the pound in '86, but now he makes haste to secure the 10s. 8d. allowed by the Commissioners who have judged between him and his oppressed tenantry. Sir Henry Burke, wise too in his generation, finds it to his advantage not only to take what is offered him, but to also pay all law-costs and £160 down toward defraying the cost of maintenance of those whom he wrongfully and stupidly evicted some months ago.

The Ulster Protestant farmers, having vainly trusted themselves to the tender mercies of their landleeches, now decide that there is no other salvation than the Plan of Campaign. At a recent meeting in Armagh held in anticipation of a visit from the Sheriff and his merry men, a large number pledged themselves to sell everything as fast as they could and to put the proceeds into their own pockets.

At most of the County Sessions the judges have been presented with white gloves to betoken absence of grave crime, but the Patent Convictors have despatched 141 criminals to jail. Of these 47 were convicted of unlawful assembly (a convenient charge covering a multitude of doings: it applied, for instance, to the procession of generous peasants who collected 250 cart loads of food and fuel for the starving families of the Miltown-Malbay prisoners.) For declining business transactions with the police 22 got terms of from two to four months with hard labour. For boycotting and inciting to resistance, 23 came within reach of the law; for speech-making, 22; carrying arms, 6; lighting bonfires and shouting "Down with Salisbury and Balfour!" 6; granting out-door relief to evicted tenants, 3 (Poor Law Guardians sentenced to refund sums expended or go to jail); laughing at the police, 5 (this crime seems on the increase); selling *United Ireland*, only 1 (but he got three months for it); for conduct not approved by a Head Constable, 2; alleged assault, 1; intimidation, 3; taking repossession, 1; refusing to report or misreport a priest's speech, 1 (a constable).

The Miltown-Malbay prisoners, thirteen in number, have been put to a severe

test in Limerick jail. They were separately tempted to sign a promise to supply the wants of the police (a refusal to do so had been their offence) instant liberation to be the reward of this denial of their cause. But these poor tradesmen one and all stontly declined to so purchase freedom, holding firm when taken into the presence of Colonel Turner, who rated them soundly for their obstinacy.

Chief Baron Pilles persists in administering justice. He has quashed the sentence of two months on Edward Walsh, editor of *Wexford People*, pronouncing it to be utterly illegal and ruling that the Crown should pay all costs.

The scandalous attempts of the Government to back up the rack-renters in their desire to render the Land Act perfectly useless to the tenants is manifested in the prohibition of all meetings called by the leaders of the people. Balfour and Co. know full well that Wm. O'Brien and his confreres will do again what was done so successfully at Mitchelstown, i.e., advise the people to hold out against eviction, and to force their wrongs before the Land Commissioners. The prohibition at Youghal had for net results three meetings instead of one for the people, and a broken head for Captain Plunkett of "Don't-hesitate-to-shoot" notoriety.

ITALY.

The most important news of the month comes from Rome, where demonstrations of unemployed masons have taken place. Police and soldiers attacked them but the men stood firm, and could not be dispersed. The Italian Government caused reinforcements from the provinces to be sent to the already strong garrison of the capital. For almost a week the unemployed kept parading the streets with their hungry faces, and were almost unmolested in their raids upon bakers' carts and shops, which they emptied for the benefit of the hungriest amongst themselves. The temper of the men was shown in their reception of a peace manifesto issued by a trade union, and torn off the walls by the unionists themselves; and still more when a number of men refused the work offered by the municipality, saying that they would stand by each other, and not allow themselves to be bribed into division. It was not until 4000 of them had been arrested, by daily or rather nightly police raids upon their dwelling houses, and work was provided for the others, that the agitation temporarily subsided. Of the arrested men, the larger part have been conveyed to their native places in the provinces; others are being prosecuted, amongst them many Socialists and Anarchists, who have in the whole course of the affair promptly and bravely acted up to their duty as sentries of Revolution. They issued and placarded manifesto after manifesto to keep up the spirit of the strikers, and were themselves in the midst of the affray. Radical and labour representatives, on the contrary, made themselves conspicuous by their absence.

Similar agitations are reported from Catania and Caltagirone in Sicily; whilst in Aquila the people have marched to the cry "We want land," to take possession of a large tenement of a local landlord, and in Sardinia they have attacked the directors of the National Bank.

From Reggio, Calabria, we receive the *Operaio*, the first Anarchist or Socialist paper ever published in that very important part of Italy. We have received also the Naples *Humanitas*, appearing now as a clandestine paper.

A most ominous sign is the recent change in the attitude of that fraction of Anarchists who some time back seceded from the bulk of the party to try parliamentary tactics. The organ of this fraction, the Forlì *Rivendicazione*, now calls on the Socialist deputies to withdraw, as those methods do not lead to Revolution. Indeed they do not!

The solidarity and energy of our Venice comrades have been strengthened by Government prosecutions, and they have continued the publication of the *Ottantunove* in the forced absence of its editor. The March number appeared on red paper, containing a vindication of the Paris Commune, together with documents relating to it. The paper of course has been seized; and the next one has appeared blank as a testimonial of the Italian freedom of the press. The reactionary Government has even gone the length of prohibiting at Milan the celebration of the anniversary of the Commune. March 18th is usually a day on which Italian policemen are very busy in hunting down our comrades who meet in secret, tearing revolutionary manifestoes off the walls, pulling down red and black banners ingeniously planted on public monuments by demonstrating Socialists, and making arrests. But in spite of all their exertions—which, we are glad to see, increase with every year both in intensity and extent—and perhaps a little thanks to those exertions—Revolutionary Socialism is making wondrous progress in Italy. It has its devoted expounders and finds eager listeners not only in the limited area of one or two provinces, as was the case a few years ago, but from the Venetian marshes to the half civilised country places of Calabria and Sicily.

PAMPHLETS.

Our Jewish comrades in East London have published as the first of a series of propagandist pamphlets in Yedish, a translation from the French version of Malatesta's 'Conversation between Peasants.' (Price 1d., *Workers' Friend* Office, 40, Berner Street, Commercial Road, E.)

The Autonomie Club, 6, Windmill Street, Tottenham Court Road, W., have begun a like useful work by issuing a German rendering of the essay on 'Revolutionary Government' from P. Kropotkin's 'Paroles d'un Révolté,' as No. 1 of a German propagandist series.

'The Place of Anarchism in Socialist Evolution.' By P. Kropotkin. (New issue; W. Reeves, 185, Fleet Street, E.C. Price 1d.) We draw our reader's special attention to this plain and popular statement of the principles of Communist-Anarchism. The pamphlet contains the subject matter of a lecture delivered by P. Kropotkin in Paris immediately after his release from Clairvaux. It has been translated by our comrade Henry Glasse, and revised and corrected by the author. The first part has been for some time before the public, but the second and third parts, dealing with the economic and moral aspects of the question, are now published for the first time in England.

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