

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

VOL. IX.—No. 100.

DECEMBER, 1895.

MONTHLY; ONE PENNY.

ORDER—TRUE AND FALSE.

Without government, we are told, order would be impossible; and those who believe this statement assert, at any rate by implication, that under Anarchy disorder would necessarily be (if we may apply the expression) the *status quo*. Both these statements are equally absurd. Let us glance round for a moment and see how far actual facts and present conditions tend to verify them.

Formidable social problems are demanding solution—everybody knows that, from the Prime Minister to the boy in the street, though probably the boy in the street knows how urgent is the necessity for their solution far better than the Prime Minister, who has been born and bred in the principles of "How not to do it."

But these problems in their various forms are constantly before the world—to-day bewildering a semi-barbarous Sultan, to-morrow disturbing the land of "Triumphant Democracy"; and we all know that the "order" which reigns in Chicago will be maintained with as much ruthlessness by the millionaires and their hirelings as is the "order" which reigns in Turkey.

Now in what does this "order" consist of which kings and governments boast so much, and without which we are assured that social life would be impossible? One would imagine it to be a matter very vital for the welfare of humanity, since it costs this nation alone tens of millions sterling annually to maintain it. And in the end what does it result in? Simply in the state of things we see around us.

Now-a-days there are very few people who do not know what that means. But, unfortunately, there are still many persons who are ignorant of the real causes of the evils they see around them and, consequently, fall easy victims to the lies and slanders of that interested class in the community who wish things to remain as they are, and denounce as criminals those who seek to bring about a radical change in the basis of society.

The impeachment of the present system with its brazen boasts of "law and order" can be heard on every hand: it is no longer necessary for the Anarchists to devote all their energies to its denunciation. That is being done by others who certainly find no difficulty in laying bare some of the evils which are dead-sea fruit of our present social order. The *Weekly Times & Echo* in a leading article of November 24th, referring to the suicides which are now so numerous, says:—

"Everybody knows there is no insanity about it, but everybody shrinks from the real truth, which is, that so devilish is the struggle for existence in this nineteenth century of Christianity that ninety-nine out of every hundred of us believe solely in the gospel of 'the weakest to the wall,' whatever other profession we make with our lips. That we are ground daily into things harder than the nether millstone, devoid of pity or compassion. We spare neither ourselves nor others. We exact the pound of flesh from those who serve us with the rigidity of a Shylock, and we pass the stricken victims of competition with the indifference of Attila or Napoleon on the battlefield. . . . And we all know in our hearts that there is no remedy for it all but a return to the simpler life that is denied to most of us by the present system. We are parts of a machine that creaks heavily in every wheel, units of a total that grows in complex vastness daily. If we are ignoble we strive for the ease and wealth which seem to render the fortunate few secure; if we are not quite case-hardened we endeavour to palliate the misery around us: in the one case we find disappointment and in the other failure. And beneath all our superficially advancing civilization the graves multiply of the nameless ones who gave it all up in the despair that is the shame and reproach of us who call ourselves men, and yet we let the Devil run the world still for the benefit of his children."

All which might be added to tenfold and still be within the truth; for surely no one, knowing our social life in all its details, has yet succeeded in adequately describing half the misery which can be found in any one of the principal cities of this happy kingdom. And this pandemonium with its starving workers, its outcast women, its strikes, its daily list of killed and maimed, its prisons, its workhouses—this ocean of misery with iniquitous financiers floating on the top they call "order"!

Order, indeed! It is Chaos legalized.

Since no honest person can gainsay all this, and since we now understand in what the "order" of the governing and exploiting classes consists, let us consider what might truly be regarded as order by just and reasonable persons. To attain true order we *must* have Freedom; and that freedom must be an actual, an *experienced* fact, so to speak, in our daily life. For this to be so it is necessary for our freedom to be economic as well as political: indeed, we will never really have one without the other. We all know that the exploiters rob the workers

of their wealth with one hand and their freedom with the other; and this leads to the most frightful disorder, as we saw in the lock-out of the miners, and as we can see to-day in the struggle between the engineers and their employers. But, for these things to cease, the injustice which breeds them must cease; and, therefore, if we are in earnest we are compelled to seek for true order in a new form of society a society which has justice for its basis. We shall then see that we cannot help attacking the present "order" and that, in so doing, far from being impelled by any anti-social motives, we are really actuated by the highest desire to procure for humanity the best possible conditions of existence.

We maintain that the best possible conditions are to be found in Anarchist Communism.—Anarchism, the equal liberty of all; Communism, the best means of supplying our manifold necessities and of aiding the weak and incapable.

From such conditions order, true order, must necessarily follow; not by virtue of any sudden and miraculous change in that complex abstraction which we call "human nature." The Anarchist, if anyone, knows something of the springs of human action, knows how deeply involved in the human ego are those latent attributes which result in such multifarious manifestations. He takes man as he finds him, as indeed we all must; but he knows how profoundly man's actions are modified by his surroundings. Free and well-conditioned he needs no government, no police, no legal fiction to control his relations with his fellow-man. But starved and kicked and coerced he naturally turns to the brutal pleasures which the present "order" delights to offer him; or, if not, to despair and revenge. The logical outcome is clear: Humanity cannot live by the false order of a rotten society. It needs a complete change, a revolution, to establish an order worthy of the name.

BOURGEOIS BRUTALITY IN SWITZERLAND.

At Davos, a renowned sanatorium in the canton of Grisons, Switzerland, the journeymen tailors in two workshops came out on strike on Wednesday, November 6, and invited their employers to attend a public meeting in the evening to discuss the matter. At this meeting a number of tradesmen and others attempted to create a disturbance; conspicuous among these was a butcher, a well-known ruffian, named Buol, who cried provocatively, "You miserable tailors should be contented if you get something to eat." This first meeting closed without result and another was called for the following Saturday; in the meantime the before-mentioned disturbing elements let no opportunity of stirring up hatred against the organised workers pass by. In the Tobelmühle, a much frequented restaurant, several strikers were menaced, and mostly by a Mr Yost, who threatened to knock out the brains of anyone who dared to resent this behaviour with a chair, being supported in his conduct by the landlord, Mr Vetsch.

On Saturday when the strikers arrived at the Restaurant Löwen to hold their meeting they found the ruffians who disturbed their previous meeting were there in greater force, and in consequence of their riotous behaviour the workers went to the Restaurant Rosenheugel, a place they frequented but which was too small for public meetings; but they had been there scarcely ten minutes when these ruffians invaded the place, turned off the electric light and commenced to run amuck through the restaurant, attacking all who failed to escape with clubs, glasses, chairs and even knives; the aforementioned Vetsch assisted by a driver named Fopps kicked the host while one Mavavetscher, a cattle-merchant, punched the hostess. Having wrecked the restaurant, they broke into the rooms above and maltreated the inmates and then departed molesting the peaceable passers-by and leaving the butcher, Buol, bleeding on the floor, half-killed by a heavy missile thrown by one of his comrades after he extinguished the light. This was made the excuse for a raid on the Rosenheugel and the Veltlinerhalle, the headquarters of the workers society Frohsinn. In the latter place a tailor was arrested and while some of them held him others clubbed him (just like our own "guardians of the peace" in Trafalgar Square); and workers of all kinds were attacked and maltreated indiscriminately by the brutal police and bourgeois.

And what say the authorities, the Landamman (chief magistrate), to these facts? They did not interfere in any way with the bourgeois ruffians, but eight workmen were arrested after being severely batoned, and one is still in jail (Monday 11th).

[Our correspondent has promised us further particulars which will appear in our next with some items for which we have no space this issue.]

Who can compute what the world loses in the multitude of promising intellects combined with timid characters who dare not follow out any bold, vigorous, independent train of thought, lest it should land them in something which would admit of being considered irreligious or immoral.

J. S. MILL.

Things are done with impunity every day which are morally indistinguishable from the operations for which Balfour has been sentenced.—*The Times*.

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

Monthly, One Penny; post free, 1½d.; U.S.A., 3 Cents; France, 15 Centimes.

Annual Subscription, post free, 1s. 6d.; U.S.A., 36 Cents; France, 1fr. 80c.
Foreign subscriptions should be sent by International Money Order,
payable to C. M. Wilson.

Wholesale Price, 1s. 4d. per quire of 27, carriage free to all parts.

All communications, exchanges, &c., for "FREEDOM" to be addressed to
THE EDITOR, 7, LAMBS CONDUIT STREET, LONDON, W. C.

Notice to Subscribers.—If there is a blue mark against this notice your subscription is due, and must be sent before next month if you wish to go on receiving the paper.

Back Numbers.—Vol. I., October 1886 to September 1887 (No. 2 sold out), price 2s. Vol. II., October 1887 to September 1888 (Nos. 16, 17, 18, 19 sold out), price 1s. 6d. Vol. III., October 1888 to December 1889, price 1s. 6d. Vol. IV., January to December 1890, price 1s. Vol. V., January to December 1891, price 1s. Carriage: single volumes, 2d., five volumes, 6d., throughout the United Kingdom.

NOTES.

DEATH OF COMRADE L. S. BEVINGTON.

Every comrade who knew L. S. Bevington will deeply regret to hear that she died after a long and trying illness on Wednesday November 27th, and was buried at Finchley on December 3rd. A wreath was sent by the London Anarchists as the only possible outward token of sorrow and respect; but inwardly each of us must feel that neither wreaths nor ceremony can express the loss we have sustained now that she has laid down her helpful pen for ever. Her kindness of heart and enthusiasm for the Cause were only equalled by her intelligent grasp of Anarchist Communist principles, which principles she affirmed to the last. About two months before her death she wrote to Cantwell saying all hope of recovery was gone, and desiring that no cleric should profane the occasion of her burial, and within a few days of her decease she expressed the same desire to comrade Laurence.

AN ANSWER TO Justice.

"Justice" (Nov. 23) informs us that the points we raised with regard to Miss Lanchester's action "have been met over and over again." We are sorry we were not aware of this, as we should like to see the Social Democrats fairly "meet" the principles of Anarchist Communism.

Those principles have not been met by Plechanoff. We have read enough of him to estimate how far he can be taken seriously; we prefer to think for ourselves, and advise all others to do likewise. But that is the first step towards Anarchism; for, once admit the right to THINK freely, and the right to ACT in accordance with those thoughts must and will be claimed sooner or later. What little liberty we have to-day has been won by virtue of such acts. And let it be remembered that all those martyrs in the cause of human freedom—the Brunos, the Galileos, the Mazzinis and the John Browns—were all denounced as harebrained fanatics in their time as "Justice" denounces the Anarchists to-day. We regret that "Justice" should be so hopelessly confused over individual liberty; but, taking Miss Lanchester's case as an instance, we should like to know in what respect her action can be considered as "incompatible with the existence of society," unless by society is meant the present rotten system? But "Justice" surely does not wish to prop up bourgeois morality?

No, comrades of the S.D.F., there will be no evils arising from the fullest possible exercise of individual liberty; the evils will arise in the attempt to suppress that liberty. Nothing but good can come of Miss Lanchester's brave action, and we say again that if you really have the Social Revolution at heart you will not censure those who have the courage to lead the attack on the unjust system under which we exist. Rather give them your fullest sympathy and support; for without the spirit which animates such people to-day and has animated them in the past, it is more than probable that neither "Justice" nor "Freedom" would be in existence now to discuss the best means to be taken to arrive at a really free and happy state of society.

PUNISHMENT OR REFORM.

Just recently Oscar Wilde was brought into court to testify to some matters connected with his financial affairs. Those who saw him must have had a vivid object lesson as to the effect punishment, i.e. prison life with all its physically and morally degrading "discipline," has upon the wretched victims of society.

The wreck which once was Oscar Wilde brings home to us more keenly, because it is more acutely marked in his case, the ravages the law is committing on hundreds and thousands of other unfortunate human beings who in the name of Justice are having crushed out of them every spark of human dignity, and with it every hope of ever becoming anything better than what the law has made them. Humane people may well cry aloud for "prison reform," but we assert there is no reforming a system which produces such results. We can only hope that "humane people" will eventually come to see that our methods of punishment are only part and parcel of a system which is founded upon fraud and force.

THE "LIBERATOR" FRAUDS.

Balfour having been tried and found guilty, the law has decreed that he shall be imprisoned for fourteen years. There is no denying he is a great scoundrel. There is no denying the ruin he has brought upon thousands of persons, albeit these persons were no doubt very greedy for their five per cent, and would not have been over-scrupulous as to how it was earned. But the fact remains that Balfour was punished because he did not study the law with sufficient care, else how comes it that people who are revelling in wealth obtained by frauds more villainous even than those of Balfour are disporting themselves in "high" society without fear of punishment? Poor, stupid Balfour did not recognize vividly enough the very nice distinctions society makes between legal and illegal robbery, or he might be at liberty to-day with the Bottomleys and the Barnatos. In fact, if strict probity in business matters were insisted upon by the law we wonder how many "business men" there are who would not be doing their fourteen years.

But as the present system breeds Balfours and the like, what good is there in passing barbarous sentences of fourteen years—whether on Balfour or Bill Sykes. The only honest thing to do is to pass sentence on the capitalist system; and that we may rest assured is what is being quietly done by those who wish for a better state of society.

GOOD NEWS FOR STARVING BRITONS.

After all, perhaps we are sometimes too sweeping in our denunciations of the present system. It is not quite an absolute failure; it is successful in one direction, and that is the manufacture of explosives. Yes, dear friends, England "the land of the free," if the "Chronicle" is right, "in the matter of ammunition at all events is at the head of other powers."

What a solace amidst all our poverty and wretchedness to know that in the matter of destroying human life, in devastating whole countries, in spreading ruin and desolation we are a few points ahead of the other bands of brigands called governments. The free-born Briton who is so fond of ruling everything (including the waves) will no doubt appreciate the proud position we have attained by our possession of this cordite, etc., this agent of Christianity and civilization. By virtue of this blessing in disguise we are preparing to blow up a few hundred Ashantis just to teach them, good people that we are, that they must not indulge their love of human sacrifice. Poor Ashantis and poor British workmen! they are equally the victims, if they but knew it, of that set of people who must and will have the best of everything without working for it, and who rule us (with the help of cordite, if necessary) to gain their ends.

WHAT IS THE STATE?

The State!—what is it? where is it to be found? what does it do; and what should it do? All that we know about it is, that it is a most mysterious personage, and one the most appealed to, the most bothered, the most busy, the most advised, the most accused, the most invoked, the most provoked of any other in the world. For, my dear sir, I have not the honor of your acquaintance; but I wager 10 to 1 that for six months past you have occupied yourself in manufacturing Utopias; and if you have succeeded, I wager 10 to 1 that you have imposed on the State the task of their realisation.—I reply to you, I am sure that at the bottom of your heart there is the wish to find a cure for all the ills that afflict our poor humanity, and that you would feel no hesitation or embarrassment if only the State would undertake the task. But, to set about it, the unhappy State knows not whom to give ear to, or on which side to turn. The hydra-headed press and public platform appeal to it all at once with their projects of reform. "Ah! my friends," says the State, with a worried air, "have a little patience. I will try and satisfy you; but I must have the wherewithal. I am prepared with proposals for five or six quite new taxes, the lightest in the world. You will see the pleasure you will have in paying them."

But lo! a great cry is raised: "There is much merit, truly, in doing things with such resources at your command! Instead of afflicting us with new taxes, we appeal to you to repeal the old ones." In the midst of all the hubbub, I cry out that the demands were contradictory. Unhappy me! for making such remark. I am discredited for evermore; and it is given out that I am a heartless one, without bowels of mercy, a withered philosopher, an economist of the Scotch or American school. Forgive me; nothing shall stand in my way—not even contradictions. I am doubtless in error; and I retract from the bottom of my heart. Be sure that I wish for nothing better than the discovery, apart from us, of a beneficent and exhaustless being whose name is the State, who has bread for the hungry and work for all to do, capital for every project, salve for every sore, balm for every anguish, advice for every difficulty, solutions for all doubts, truths fit for all comprehensions, relief for all weariness, milk for babes and some for the aged and infirm; which provides for all our wants, anticipates all our wishes, satisfies every one's curiosity, sets right all our errors and faults, and, for the future, dispenses with all foresight, judgment and prudence, sagacity, order and experience, economy, temperance and activity!

And what cause have I not to desire so great a consummation? God forgive me! The more I reflect on it, the more I find the thing convenient, and the greater is my anxiety to have at my fingers' ends this inexhaustible source of riches and enlightenment, this universal physician, this treasure without end, this infallible counsellor whom you call the State. Therefore I ask you to show him, and to define him; and for this reason I offer a grand prize to the first who shall discover for us this rare bird. For truly all will agree with me that the invaluable discovery is yet to be made; for, up till now, the thing brought before us under the name of the State has been at once upset by the people precisely because it does not fulfil the somewhat contradictory conditions laid down in the program.

Sooth to say, I am fain to believe that in this regard we have been the dupes of one of the strangest illusions that have entered the mind of man. Pain and suffering are repellent to man. Yet he is condemned by Nature to privation and suffering if he does not undertake the necessary labor. There is only left him the choice of two evils: how is he to avoid them both? Up to the present only one way has been found: to avail himself of other people's labor—so to act that pain and happiness do not fall in natural proportion, but that all the pain falls on some, and all the enjoyment on others. Hence slavery, hence spoliation, whatever shape it take; hence wars, impostures, violence, restraints, frauds, monstrous abuses consequential on the designs that gave them birth. We must hate the oppressor, and withstand his attempts, though we cannot always see the absurdity of his actions. Thanks to heaven, slavery is dying out: for one thing, the determination we are in to defend our right makes spoliation difficult. One thing, however, still remains: the unfortunate primitive disposition

possessed by all men to divide the complex lot of our life into two portions, throwing the pain and labor upon others, and keeping to ourselves the enjoyment: we are about to see under what new form this bad tendency shows itself.

The oppressor no longer bears down on the oppressed with the weight of his personal power. Oh no! our conscience has got too sensitive for that. But there is still the tyrant and his victim, but between the two an intermediary is placed, namely, the STATE—that is, the Law itself. What could be more proper to quiet our scruples, or, which is still better, overcome all resistance? Therefore all of us, whatever our demands, under one pretence or another, apply to the State: we say to him, "I do not find, between my enjoyment and my labor, a satisfactory proportion; I would like to establish the wished-for balance and take a little of others' goods. But that is a dangerous operation: can't you assist me in this? Can't you give me a good place; or else entangle the operations of my rivals; or, better still, lend me gratis the capital you have taken from those who owned it; or perhaps you will bring up my children at the expence of the public, or grant me a bounty on my work, or assure me a competence when I am fifty years of age? By these means I shall arrive safe at my aim with a clear conscience; for the law itself will work for me, and I shall have all the advantages of spoliation without encountering any of its risks or the odium attaching to it."

As it is certain, on the one hand, that we address some such request as this to the State, and, on the other hand, it is certain that the State can only procure satisfaction to some at the expense of the labor of others, for want of a better definition of the State, I think myself at liberty to give my own. Who knows but that it will carry away the prize? Here it is:—"The State is a great fiction, by means of which everybody is trying to live at everybody's expense." For, now as aforetime, each one more or less seeks his profit in others' labor. This design they dare not avow, and so they dissimulate; and how do they set about it? They imagine to themselves an intermediary; they address themselves to the State and say to him: "You who can take loyally, honestly, take from the public, and we will divide the spoils." Alas! the State is but too well inclined to follow this diabolical advice; for it consists of ministers and functionaries, of men, in fine, who, like the rest of men, have in their hearts the desire, as they eagerly seize the opportunity, of increasing their influence and their wealth. Thus the State quickly perceives the advantage it can draw from the rôle confided to it by the people: it will be the arbitrator and the master of all our prospects in life: it will take from us much, so that much will be left for itself: it will increase the number of its agents, and enlarge the scope of its attributes; it will end by attaining the most fearful proportions.

But the thing we have well to remark, is the astonishing blindness of the people to all this. When, aforetime, lucky soldiers succeeded in reducing a conquered people to a state of slavery, they were, though barbarous, not absurd: their aim, like our own, was to live at the expense of others. but they did not make the mistakes that we make. What must be thought of a people who do not seem to consider that to rob one another is not the less a robbery because it is reciprocal? that it is not the less criminal because it is done orderly and legally—that it adds nothing to the public welfare, which, on the contrary, is diminished to the extent that this expensive personage, the State, costs to keep up?

Astonishing delusion which impels us to expect everything from an energy apart from our own! I contend, too, that this personification of the State has been in the past, and will be in the future, the most fruitful source of calamity and of revolutions. Here is the public on the one side, the State on the other, considered as two distinct entities—the one held to pour down blessings upon the other, the latter having a right to demand from the former the full stream of human enjoyment. What will happen?

In truth, the State is not a one-handed character, and cannot be. It has two hands—the one to receive, and the other to give; in other words, the rough hand and the soft one. The activity of the latter is necessarily dependent on that of the former. But, strictly, the State can take, but cannot give: this is explained by the porous and absorbent nature of its hands, which ever retain a portion and sometimes the whole of what it grabs. But what it never does, and what it has never been known to do, and the possibility of which cannot even be conceived, is that it should return to the public what it has not previously taken. It therefore displays the greatest insanity when we approach the State in the beggar's humble guise. It is radically impossible for it to confer an advantage on particular individuals in a community without inflicting a greater injury on the whole body. It is thus manifestly placed, by the claims made upon it, in a vicious circle. Should it reject the claims made upon it, it is accused of impotence, ill-will and incapacity; and if it attempt to satisfy them, it is reduced to the necessity of inflicting on the people a redoubled burden of taxes, inflicting more evil than it has done good and inducing general dissatisfaction. Thus in the public mind are two expectations: on the part of the government, two promises: many benefits; few imposts. The hopes and promises, being contradictory, can never be realized.

It is this which has given rise to our revolutions. For between the State so prodigal of its impossible promises, and the public, the subject of such unrealisable hopes, are interposed two classes of men—the ambitious and the utopists. It is only for those seekers after popularity to cry into the people's ears, "The legislators are deceiving you: if we were in their place, we would overwhelm you with benefits and free you from taxes." And the credulous people believe; they are full of hopes, and straightway make a revolution. The people's friends are

no sooner in power, than they are called on to fulfil their promises:—"Give us work! give us bread, assistance and credit!" say the people; "and do as you said, take off the taxes." The new State is not less embarrassed than the old one; for, in face of the impossible, it is easy to promise but not to fulfil. It seeks to gain time to mature its vast projects: first along it makes some timid attempts; on the one side it extends a little the scope of education; and on the other, it modifies a trifle the duty on drink. But the fatal contradiction raises its shade ever before it: if it would be philanthropic, it must impose taxes; if it repeal the taxes, it must renounce its philanthropy. Those two sets of promises, of necessity, always fall foul of one another. The resource of *credit*, that is to say, eating up the future, is a way of conciliation; a little present good is attempted, at the cost of much harm in the future. But this proceeding evokes the spectre of bankruptcy which drives away credit. What's to be done now? Well, the new State acts the bravo's part: it collects its forces for its support; it stifles public opinion; it adopts arbitrary methods; it ridicules its old maxims—it declares it is impossible to govern without being unpopular; in fine, it proclaims itself governmentalist.

And this is the moment the seekers after popularity are waiting for. They make use of the very same delusion, come in by the same vote, obtain the same success, and are quickly swallowed up in the same abyss.

FREDERICK BASTIAT.

THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY and the Land Question.

[FROM A CONTINENTAL CORRESPONDENT.]

This problem consisted in the question—*What should and can be done to win over the small peasant-proprietors?*

Three ways were open: First, to leave them alone until—unable to resist the landlords' competition, the usurers' exploitation, the plundering by the State in the form of taxes, military service, etc.—they lost their property and became wage-laborers when it would be an easy matter to make them vote for Social Democrats, who promised them protective legislation. Secondly, to tell them the truth on their desperate position and propose as a remedy to oppose the competition of large landowners by forming themselves into *agricultural associations*, a stepping-stone towards the future nationalisation of the land. Thirdly, to make them all sorts of proposals and promises of *State help*, at the cost of the general public, imitating thus the tactics of the Conservative, Clerical, Landlord and Anti-Semitic parties.

All three ways were often proposed, discussed and mutually refuted. Against the first it would be said that it drove the peasants in their struggle for self-preservation more than ever into the arms of reactionary quacks, when they were rejected by the People's Party. The second (which was upheld by the late F. Engels in his articles on the French Marxists' agricultural platform) is repugnant to those who in the old Lassallian controversy of "Self-help v. State-help," long since rejected and ridiculed self-help. The third, protective legislation, is considered as the beginning of the end of the party as a theoretically revolutionary party; why not the same protection, it is asked, for other decaying forms of production, the small manufacturing trades, etc., and if we really strengthen the economic position of the peasants, what else are we doing but fortifying private property in one of its firmest strongholds?

Thus we see the only "scientific Socialist" party is in a pretty fix and just at this critical moment the only man whose authority was universal, Frederick Engels, died. It now happens that all parties to this controversy claim to be the true interpreters of his views upon this question. Old Liebknecht let the cat out of the bag in saying (in his speech at the Conference) "with the writings of Engels it is as with the Bible: there are passages which might be interpreted in this way, and others which can be interpreted in another way." This is true; for Frederick Engels possessed to a rare extent the faculty of making all that he said look smooth and plausible, and whilst uttering at times fantastic prophecies to approve of the palest reform tactics, asserting with the same breath the revolutionary character of the whole thing. Now that he is dead, there are several of his disciples left who understand thoroughly the use of his juggling methods and tricks, only being persons of different aims, ambitions, temper, etc., and being face to face with practical problems they arrive at opposite conclusions. Thus Bebel is not a degree less Marxist and Engelsian than Kautsky, yet their views on the rural propaganda as set forth in their Conference speeches were in utter antagonism.

The *peasants' property defence policy* was upheld by the secretary of the committee, Dr. Ouarek, of Frankfurt, a lawyer and journalist, who asserted that by the adoption of the new program the party would become more prepared to fight and more revolutionary. His moderate speech was echoed in a vehement diatribe of Bebel against one of his opponents, Schippel of Berlin; he bitterly remarked that the same applause now followed Schippel that had last year been bestowed on Vollmar, forgetting that if those delegates had changed their attitude since, he had changed his own in the opposite sense, securing thus on both occasions a defeat for himself—something hard for a man of his passionate and domineering temper to bear, as he proved by frequent interruptions of opposition speeches.

He said, however, something very curious in the way he pictured *State Socialism* and the State. Dealing with the argument that the transformation of private mortgages into a unique mortgage system entirely in the hands of the State would unwarrantably strengthen the State and give new power to State oppression, he defined his general position towards such question in this way: "We are in favor of making railways, telegraphs, forests, mines, roads, etc., State-property; in Prussia the State railways give work to-day to 110,000 officials and 172,000 workmen,—we must force the State to undertake more and more of this kind; for in this way we dislocate the State power." "We say, even: Augment the number of soldiers; for, with the increasing number of soldiers, Social Democrats also enter the army."* He remembers the discontent in the post-office and other public offices, and concludes that the greater the State power is the more it is undermined by discontent and the sooner it will burst up.

This, then, is the final outgrowth of "scientific Socialism," proclaimed equally by Bebel and, in his speech, which was but a paraphrase of that of Bebel, by Liebknecht, for thirty years the two foremost leaders of the German Social Democracy:

* This sentence is quoted verbatim from the special report of the Vienna *Arbeiter Zeitung*, October 11; the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse*, a capitalist paper, reports: "For the same reasons we say, even if we do not vote for it, 'Go on increasing the number of soldiers, you increase by this the number of Social Democrats in the army and we know the final result.'" Only the *Vorwärts*, the official organ, suppresses this significant remark almost totally.

A silent joy in the increase of State power in the hands of reaction, based on a conflicting belief in an ultimate revolt of the tools of reaction—soldiers and officials! To these truly high ambitions the hopes of “scientific Socialism” are now reduced.

Is it necessary to refute this “theory”? And is it not by itself a refutation of State Socialism altogether? Bebel considers that the State does all this for the benefit of civilisation (*Culturtaufgaben*); we deny that the State does anything better than it could otherwise be done; on the contrary, having got monopolies maintained by law and the brute force at the back of law, it does things worse, with a mere interest for profit as all monopolists do who are sure of the continuance of their monopolies. The shabbiness and discourtesy one meets in dealing with the State as a monopolist are known to everybody, and when private companies are as a rule not much better it is because, by transactions with those in power, they have secured written or unwritten monopolies for themselves, and are in the same position of exclusive power as the State is. Whilst, thus, State-property or so-called nationalisation is of no public use—for the profits otherwise absorbed by shareholders only go to increase the number and salaries of officials and of the army (remember there are 110,000 officials *versus* 172,000 workers on the Prussian State-railways!),—it is detrimental in corrupting thousands of wage-workers. They are prohibited by draconic regulations from taking part in any progressive movement, even subscribing for advanced papers, and the consequences of being discharged, namely, to be locked out from all government workshops all over the country and the loss of all hope of rising in the hierarchic scale are serious enough not to be braved by many. On the other hand, this seclusion from any living movement and the knowledge that cringing servility to “superiors” and severe (brutal) treatment of “inferiors” are the only means of getting on in their careers—all this demoralises and corrupts most of them—ann if, in the case of elections, many of them vote for Social Democrats, this is done in most cases out of a spirit of petty revenge, to annoy their “superiors,” etc., and not for any humanitarian reason. Do we not often read that great numbers of the Berlin police vote (secretly) for Socialist candidates, but has ever an act of humanity been known to come from their ranks? Yet upon this basis Bebel and Liebknecht build up their keenest hopes!!!

And if we grant, for argument's sake, that their expectations were true, does it not mean that—besides the rest of the people—the State disgusts even those who immediately uphold it: that is, that it disgusts everybody and should be abolished? And, if so, who would be so foolish as to erect it afresh, marked with another label as the “Socialist State”?

Returning to the agrarian debate at the Breslau Conference, it was remarked by Liebknecht that in practical agitations all the palliatives of the program were already advocated—a perfectly true observation and not out of place; for the reform policy becomes the more visible the more we study the work of Social Democrats on minor elective bodies, in local papers, etc.; here the so-called “Stegmuellereien” abound, acts like those of the Socialist, Stegmüller, who, in the Baden Diet, bitterly complained that the government had not yet handed over the money for the construction of a certain church in his constituency, whilst his constituents anxiously waited for the church to be built! (1894).

The most marked opponents of the tactics of Bebel were Schippel and Kautsky. Schippel, an M.P., is a curious example of inconsistency. On several occasions, notably in 1887, he was the foremost critic of the reform policy of the party and might, though he never showed any leaning towards Anarchism, have been to the German party what Domela Nieuwenhuis was and is to the Dutch Socialists. Yet at the decisive moment he always held back and became silent. This year the weekly official paper which he edits, the *Sozialdemokrat* of Berlin, in opposition to the equally official daily *Vorwärts* strongly opposed the agrarian program to which Schippel as a member of the committee had himself agreed* and at the Conference he made a speech in opposition in which he said among other things, “The whole program is nothing but an adoption of planks from other platforms, partly of the worst Landlord's and Anti-Semitic platforms;”—yet, even if we adopt all that, we would not win over a single peasant and would be relegated to the society of Anti-Semites and what not. We must tell the peasants that their future is hopeless as proprietors, hopeful only with the propertyless proletarians fighting under one flag.

Schippel rejects all efforts towards Municipal Socialism, such as the granting of greater facilities for parishes to acquire land as communal property. This communal property, he says, keeps the inhabitants attached to the land, to their village, and forces them in this way to accept lower wages or reduced prices for their work or product as they have no choice of moving to other places, being interested in the common local property by their rights as citizens of the parish. He wishes every vestige of such communal rights abolished, in which he is opposed by Bebel with the argument that, if the villagers have no interest to remain in their village, they flock towards the large towns and help to keep down wages. True, indeed, are both arguments and hopeless is the lot of the laborer: if bound to his village he is the serf of the landlord, and if he breaks those bonds he has small chance of leaving the army of the unemployed to be anything but a blackleg.

K. Kautsky, of Stuttgart, an Austrian and perhaps the most rigid Marxist in existence, moved a resolution which, with the exception of the words printed in italics, was adopted by 158 against 63 votes; it says the program is rejected “because it promises to the peasants the bettering of their position, hence the strengthening of their private property, whereby it contributes to revive their *fanaticism for property*.” It (the program) declares that the proletariat has an interest in agriculture under the present system of society, whilst, under this system of private property in the means of production, agriculture as well as industry are interests only of the owners of those means of production, of the exploiters of the proletariat. The agrarian program further puts new power in the hands of the exploiting State, whereby it renders the class struggle of the proletariat more difficult. Finally, it demands things of the capitalist State which only a State in which the proletariat have conquered political power can carry out successfully.”

Kautsky, who in his speech distinctly said that positive action in favor of the peasants was only possible by State Socialism (in the German sense of the word, that is governmental, official-social reform) at the same time defends all protective labor legislation which, we think, elementary logic would require him to reject equally with the protection of peasants. He makes, in reply to this, the fine distinction between the protection of workmen *as persons* and the protection of peasants *as property-owners*. We consider this a sophism; for what concerns a revolutionary party is to create a revolutionary state of mind in as many persons as possible, and the bettering of the personal conditions of life is not considered a good means to bring about this state of mind. Whether workmen are made better off by all sorts of labor legislation (which we doubt very much; for there are few things more soaked in humbug than this famous labor legislation), or whether a peasant finds the chances of thriving on his plot of land becoming better, both things create the same feeling of a certain ease and content, and we have to accept both or reject both.

* The Conference at Breslau resolved that this paper should cease publication by December; the alleged reason being the annual deficit of £700 and the decrease of subscribers from 5,700 to 4,300. The paper was always passive, yet was supported; but the moment it takes a somewhat independent attitude it is—instead of being encouraged so that these questions should be thrashed out in full—suppressed. The decrease in the number of subscribers is no reason for this, but is a sign of hostility to the mere semblance of independence.

These were the chief theories and arguments used in those long debates; we have only mentioned well known speakers and yet we looked carefully over the remarks of the less known minor speakers, but cannot find that they have contributed anything original worth mentioning.

Comrades will ask, “What did the laborers and peasants say themselves?” Well, the party of two millions of followers did not scrape together one single laborer or peasant who would come forward and say what his fellow laborers or peasants wanted.

The result of the debate was the adoption of the recommendation of a fresh examination of the agrarian question by persons nominated by the General Council of the party who shall publish their observations in a series of tracts. Meanwhile their opinions remain divided; one side calls the other “charlatans,” and the other retaliates by calling them “fanatics” and “dogmatists,” while the Bavarians, who always insisted to a certain degree on their autonomy, have already declared in the Bavarian Diet and at Nuernberg that they will continue to agitate in the way they think best, regardless of the adverse vote of the Conference; and, at Mayence, the same was asserted by the Hessians.

We will now briefly comment on these facts from the Anarchist standpoint.

As long as the Social Democratic party limited its action to industrial workers the impossibility of its aims was not so apparent, because unification, centralisation, legislative interference, etc., seemed to a superficial observer at any rate possible with regard to industrial establishments, artificial creations of the present or the quite recent past. This is altered the moment they approach the rural population which lives under such absolutely different conditions, ranging from the landless laborer and the poor peasant, who differ very little from the serf of old, to the independent peasant of other parts. The only way out of these difficulties the land committee of the German party knew was the demand for legislation for *all*, by amalgamating into one program the demands for employers and workers, peasants and laborers, with the result of bringing forward a contradictory visible failure.

This is an example of the fundamental error of centralisation, and the result must be expected to consist in a slight awakening of a better understanding of the necessity of local autonomy. We see this already manifested by the Bavarians who refuse to be directed from Berlin, and insist that they are best able to judge upon the affairs of their own country. Of course, we know that the rival feeling of their local leaders and even the old national and political hatred between the South and the North have something to do with their attitude; but even at the base of this hatred there is the question of revolt against the Northern, Prussian, interference with Southern affairs, similar to the way the Provençals of Southern France repel the all-absorbing influence of Paris, or the Austrian nationalities reject the old centralised system of government.

When closer occupation with the land question has taught the Social Democrats that only by studying the *local* position of the rural population and finding alleged remedies for the *local* wrongs and evils can they hope to get a hearing from the country people,—they will learn, firstly, that *central* legislation is incapable of remedying local evils; secondly, that *all* legislation is unable to achieve this. All legislation, that is State force, can do is to rob some people of something in order to give it to other people, after having swallowed up the greater part itself. Thus, on the slightest practical question the interests of the town and country population turn out to be opposed. A peasant is delighted if the prices of corn and bread rise, and the agricultural laborer also profits by this—obtaining more secure employment and better wages because there is more demand for workers,—whilst the industrial worker starves; and *vice versa*. The same difference of interest occurs between large sections of industrial workers themselves* and, practically, between every two people whoever they be.

By this the fallacy of the standpoint of class-interest taken by the more dogmatic and would-be more revolutionary section of these Social Democrats becomes evident. They want the working classes to obtain political power in order to abolish classes, as they say or intend to do. If ever they should attain their aim of a dictatorship of the working classes—which we do not believe in the least,—classes and interests of classes, sections and factions, far from being abolished, would only be perpetuated. And the only way to abolish the everlasting struggle between man and man is to abolish the object of this struggle, private property in commodities of general use, and the most powerful weapon of this struggle, Authority and its outcome—the State. *Communism*, that is free disposal of the objects of common necessity by all, and *Anarchy*, that is absence of any domination of man over man, and new relations between mankind such as *freedom* will create and which, in our age of authority and selfishness, we cannot pretend to be able to fore-sketch,—these seem to us the only guarantees of a happier future and towards them the aspirations of humanity tend.

Social Democracy, in the particular case which we examined and in general, has to choose between two ways: either to go in for the local wants and demands of peasants, laborers and industrial workers, which makes it a party of petty reforms, antagonistic interests, paralysed by internecine struggles of these incompatible interests,—or to remain strictly limited to the industrial workers, which prevents its extension, is no safeguard against antagonistic interests arising also in this limited circle and fosters the feelings of domination and intolerance which are enemies of progress and humanity. We see no other prospect; for as a German proverb says: “Who touches mud, gets soiled,” every party that tries to patch up any of the countless evils of this accursed system of to-day gets by its contact corrupted and demoralised and is doomed to fail. Its success is not counted by the number of votes or the thousands (£000) of income which it gets, but by the degree in which it helps to free mankind from the mental and physical fetters of a rotten past, thousands of years of mental and physical enslavement in the bonds of authority and its creations—Property, Religion, the State.

In this work the State Socialist parties necessarily fail because they do not sever themselves from those first consequences of Authority, and the sterile wranglings of an immense party with the agrarian problem are one more proof of it.

* The interest of the miners in high prices of coal, and some noteworthy discussions at the last Miner's Congress, Paris, 1894.

NOTICES.

Reports are crowded out, plenty of space next issue. Send cash with orders for the new pamphlet “Speeches of Grave, etc.” as we want to repay loan for printing them.

“FREEDOM” PUBLICATION FUND: H. G. 10s.; Madame Guilbert 1s.; M. 3d. DEPTFORD ANARCHIST GROUP—Lectures every Sunday at 8, in Smith's Coffee Tavern, Deptford Bridge, near Broadway; admission free; discussion invited.

- No. 3. A TALK ABOUT ANARCHIST-COMMUNISM BETWEEN TWO WORKERS. By E. MALATESTA. 1d.
- No. 4. ANARCHIST-COMMUNISM: ITS BASIS AND PRINCIPLES. By PETER KROPOTKINE. 1d.
- No. 5. ANARCHY. By E. MALATESTA. 1d.
- No. 6. ANARCHIST MORALITY. By PETER KROPOTKINE. 1d.
- No. 7. EXPROPRIATION. By PETER KROPOTKINE. 1d.

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY J. TURNER at 7, LAMBS CONDUIT STREET, W. C.