

# Free Com

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## NOTES.

### The Earthquake in Japan.

The world has supposed so full of horrors during the past few years that it has grown callous, but everyone has been shocked by the magnitude of the disaster which wiped out Yokohama, destroyed three-quarters of Tokyo, and killed and injured countless thousands of the inhabitants. In a few minutes the work of generations was levelled to the ground by earthquake, fire and flood adding to the horror of the calamity, which far exceeds anything recorded in modern history. We are often guilty of boasting of man's command of the forces of Nature, but when Mother Earth heaves her bosom for a moment or two we quickly realise the vanity of our boastings. The outburst of sympathy with Japan has been worldwide, and when we read of the many vessels, crammed with food and clothing, rushing to the rescue, we know that there are feelings in mankind which, if allowed free play, would rid the world of most of its misery. This disaster is bound to weaken Japan's influence in political affairs in the Far East, and voices in the press here are hinting that British and American capitalists will now have a free hand in the exploitation of China. The vultures scent the carcass from afar.

### Mussolini Defies the League.

The bombardment and seizure of Corfu by the Italian Government, to force the Greek Government to make reparation for the murder of an Italian general on the Greek frontier, was just one of those threats of war with which the League of Nations was supposed to deal. But Mussolini knew he was safe in defying the League, as neither the British nor the French Government would be in a hurry to offend him, both of them being anxious to get him on their side in the settlement of the Ruhr question. So, in spite of the heroics of Lord Robert Cecil, the League was ignored, and the delegates at Geneva sat and twiddled their thumbs while the Ambassadors Conference discussed the question. For our part, we have never expected that the Great Powers would allow the delegates of the small States to handle anything vital to their interests. We must say we were disgusted with the hypocrisy of those Labour politicians who flew to the support of Greece when British interests were endangered, but stood idly by during the War when the Allies did far worse things to Greece than Mussolini has done. Then the Allies seized the Greek fleet, held up Greek grain ships until people died of starvation in the streets of Athens, and landed large armies and took control of the country. And when Lloyd George incited the Greeks to attack the Turks in Asia Minor we heard very few voices raised here for the intervention of the League of Nations. These things make us doubt very much the honesty and disinterestedness of many Labour advocates of the League in this country.

### King George's Praise.

Whilst we are on the subject we would like to print the concluding passage of the speech delivered by King George in reply to an address of welcome from the Municipality of Rome on May 11 last:—

"Knowing, as I do, the traditional qualities of the Italian race, their loyalty, their valour, and their determination; recollecting, as I do, the crisis from which they have recently emerged under the wise leadership of a powerful statesman, I look forward with confidence not only to the future association of our two peoples in the cause of peace and progress, but to the continued triumph of the high intellectual and spiritual ideals which they jointly represent."

The Chief of the Black Shirts is beginning to lose his reputation among some of his British admirers. He is trying to act the part of

a powerful statesman, and is throwing firebrands about in the most explosive part of Europe. Unless he is soon checked, he may cause another catastrophe like that of 1914.

### The Trade Union Officials Congress.

The Congress held at Plymouth was one of the most uninteresting of recent years. The truth is that the political activity of the Labour movement has helped to cripple the industrial activity of the Unions. Every move on the board is carefully considered in relation to its effect on the middle-class voters, who would be scared away from supporting the Labour Party if it favoured a strike policy. Ramsay MacDonald and his friends, therefore, are always ready to counsel patience when the workers are inclined to kick over the traces, and it was this influence which prevented other workers taking sympathetic action in the recent dockers' strike. Discipline is now the watchword of official Labour. At Plymouth the rivalry of the Unions in the hunt for new members came to a head, officials of one organisation charging the officials of another with poaching on their preserves; and it seems that the great "Back to the Unions" campaign degenerated into a "Back to our Union" campaign. Whilst this sordid squabbling is taking place, the workers are faced with further cuts in their scanty wages; the railway companies in particular are concentrating their forces for an attack on all grades as soon as the harvest is over, for they look to the agricultural labourers to provide them with strike-breakers. As for the unemployed, the Congress did little to help. According to some speakers, they cannot hope to get work until France is out of the Ruhr, or Italy is out of Corfu, or Russia recovers her economic position. As though employment was dependent on these temporary happenings. The workers will suffer unemployment and semi-starvation so long as a small number of individuals are allowed to hold the land of Britain as their private property. The French may leave the Ruhr, Italy may leave Corfu, and Russia become prosperous again; but until the workers have free and equal access to the land their misery must continue. But they will not have learned this lesson from the Congress of Trade Union officials at Plymouth.

### Bishop of London Worried.

The Bishop of London is much disturbed about the immorality and indecency which he says prevail in the parks and open spaces in London, and he has written to the Press about it. He is the president of the London Council for the Promotion of Public Morality, which "has for some years employed men of great experience to make observations in these places," and they report most scandalous behaviour not only at night but even in the daytime. We would like to know more about these "men of great experience"—great experience in what?—before accepting their word; but if everything they say is true, we can only say how sorry we feel for the Bishop. To find that after all these years of compulsory education, controlled in great part by the clergy, these folk do not know how to behave themselves, must be a sad blow to the dear Bishop. Probably they have taken the Old Testament too literally, for it contains many incidents which, if copied nowadays, would bring a blush of shame to the cheek of a Sunday school teacher. But this book is still the "best seller" in this country, and although we read occasionally of booksellers being prosecuted for selling translations of indecent foreign novels, we never read of a prosecution for selling the Old Testament. It evidently has not occurred to the Bishop that the clergy may be at fault in their method of teaching morality, but that seems the logical deduction. Now we have drawn attention to it, perhaps he will inquire into the matter. Then the Council for the Promotion of Public Morality may be saved the expense of employing the Peeping Toms and Nosey Parkers whose reports have shocked him so much.

## IN RUSSIA'S PRISONS.

### TO ALL WORKERS—

Not for the first time do the Russian Revolutionists, of various schools, implore you to charge yourselves with the defence of the life and liberty of those who in Russia, giving no truce and allowing themselves no rest, are battling for the Social Revolution—for the liberation of Labour and of the individual. We know how powerfully reaction has fortified itself in all your countries, and how great are the energy and sacrifices the struggle against that reaction requires of you. Nevertheless, the latest news from Russia compels us, despite ourselves, to address you once more, and even more urgently, appealing to your sense of solidarity and asking your brotherly assistance.

For a long time past hundreds and thousands of revolutionists have been suffering in the prisons and penitentiaries of Russia. Since the beginning of this year the Bolshevik Government has strengthened once again the system by which it brutally persecutes those who think differently from itself—whether they be members of Socialist parties or working-men and revolutionary peasants belonging to no party.

The Government, which professes to be the personification of the Social Revolution, persecutes, mercilessly and with unprecedented energy, the revolutionists of the Left—the Revolutionary Socialists, Maximalists, Anarchists, and Anarchist-Syndicalists who played an active part in the Russian Revolution, and still continue to defend their position at the cost of countless sacrifices and with an idealism that cannot be denied.

For a long time past all independent publications have been suspended; all free activity within the workers' organisations has been crushed; arrests and repressions have followed fast. The situation is actually far worse than it was formerly. The Government aims at the physical extermination of Russian Revolutionists.

Marie Spiridonova, who under Tsarism trod the path to Calvary; who passed eleven years in prison, and three in Bolshevik gaols; Marie Spiridonova, though completely broken down in health, is once more in prison. The Left Social Revolutionist, Troulovsky, having waited vainly for liberation after a three years' imprisonment, tried to burn himself to death, but was saved by a comrade. Since then he has been deported to a wild and unhealthy district, Prjevalsk, on the border of Tibet. In Petrograd twelve Left Social Revolutionists, while awaiting deportation to various distant points, have found themselves forced to hunger-strike and the threatening of suicide *en masse*.

In the North, at the Pertencinsk concentration camp, near the White Sea, Anarchists and Anarchist-Syndicalists, having found deportation conditions insupportable, refused for eleven days to take any food. When the authorities tried to feed them by force, they barricaded themselves in, poured petrol over their mattresses, and set them on fire. Only the efforts of other prisoners saved their lives, and many of them, among whom is Aron Baron, have been severely burned. Such cases as these here cited threaten to become common, as a consequence of the methods to which the Government is resorting.

We cannot believe that Europe's toilers will assist, by their silence, in the systematic extermination of those who are struggling for the freedom of the Russian working man and peasant. Every worker, every group of workers, every revolutionary organisation—Syndicalist, political, or whatever it may be—ought to raise at once an indignant voice, and do everything possible to stay the hand that threatens the life of Russia's Revolutionists. Vote protest resolutions. Whenever at any meeting a Communist takes the platform, question him and insist that he answers. The Bolshevik Government's representatives in European and American towns are bound to hear of these angry protests. It is indispensable that committees for the defence of and assistance to Russian Revolutionists be formed everywhere. Always the demand must be made that all the imprisoned and deported be released, and that an end be put to the absurd system of terrorism now inflicted on the workers.

May the voice of your indignation be a warning to Russia's present rulers, and add new force and energy to those who, in the

countless prisons and amid the cold marshes of our country, are carrying the Revolution's cross!

Signed by—The Foreign Delegation of Left Social Revolutionists and of the Union of Maximalist Social Revolutionists; the Anarchist-Syndicalist Committee of Russian Defence, appointed by the International Working Men's Association; the group of Russian Anarchist refugees in Germany; and the representatives of the Moscow Committee for aid to Anarchists imprisoned in Russia.

All communications should be sent to FRITZ KATER, Kopernikusstr. 25, II., Berlin, O. 34. (On behalf of the Committee for aid to imprisoned Russian Revolutionists.)

## THE OLD PIRATE'S TEXT-BOOK.

"Aye, but 'twas me she loved, for I was younger then, and something kinder to the eye. So him they burned, her they buried alive, and me they tormented into the wrack ye see. But I escaped wi' my life, the Lord delivered me out o' their bloody hands, which was an ill thing for them, d'ye see, for though I lack my starboard blinker and am somewhat crank i' my spars aloft and aloft, I can yet ply whinger and pull trigger rare and apt enough for the rooting out of evil. And where a fairer field for the aforesaid rooting out o' Papishers, Portingales, and the like evil men than this good ship, the 'Happy Despatch'? Aha, messmate, there's many such as I've despatched, hot-foot to their master, Sathanas, 'twixt then and now. And so 'tis I'm a pirate, and so being so do I sing along o' David, 'Blessed be the Lord, my strength, that teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.' A rare gift o' words had Davy, and for curses none may compare." Hereupon, seating himself on the locker over against me, he thrust a hand into his great side-pocket and brought thence a hank of small-cord, a silver-mounted pistol, and lastly, a small, much-battered volume.

"Look-ee, comrade," says he, tapping the worn covers with bony finger, "the Bible is a mighty fine book to fight by, to stir up a man for battle, murder, or sudden death it hath no equal, and for keeping his hate again his enemies ever a-burning there is no book written or ever will be—"

"You talk blasphemy!" quoth I.

"Avast, avast!" cries he. "Here's no blasphemy, thought or word. I love this little Bible o' mine, 'tis meat and drink to me, the friend o' my solitude, my solace in pain, my joy for ever and always. Some men, being crossed in fortune, hopes, ambition, or love, take 'em to drink and the like vanities; I, that suffered all this, took to the Bible, and found all my needs betwixt the covers o' this little book. For where shall a wronged man find such a comfortable assurance as this? Hark ye what saith our Psalmist!" Turning over a page or so and lifting one knotted fist aloft, Resolution Day read this:

"I shall bathe my footsteps in the blood of mine enemies, and the tongues of the dogs shall be red with the same!" The which," says he, rolling his bright eye at me, "the which is a sweet, pretty fancy for the solace of one hath endured as much as I. Aye, a noble book is Psalms; I know it by heart. List ye to this now! 'The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord be as the fat of rams, as smoke shall they consume away.' Brother, I've watched 'em so consume many a time, and been the better for't. Hark'ee again: 'They shall be as chaff before the wind. As a snail that melteth they shall every one pass away. Break their teeth in their mouth, O God!' saith Davy, aye, and belike did it, too, and so have I ere now with a pistol-butt. I mind once when we stormed Santa Catalina, and the women and children a-screaming in the church which chanced to be afire, I took out my Bible here and read these comfortable words: 'The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance, he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, so that a man shall say: Verily there is a reward for the righteous.' Aha, brother, for filling a man wi' a gust of hate and battle there's nought like the Bible. And when a curse is wanted, give me Davy. Davy was a man of his hands, moreover, and so are you, friend. I watched ye fight on the sand-spit yonder; twelve to one is long enough odds for any man, and yet here's five o' the twelve wi' bones broke and never a one but wi' some mark of your handiwork to show, which is vastly well, comrade. Joanna's choice is heartily mine, messmate—"

"How d'ye mean?" I demanded, scowling; whereupon he beamed on me friendly-wise and blinked his solitary eye.

—From "Martin Conisby's Vengeance" (Farnol).

## LIBERTY FIRST.

(From *El Ombre*.)

What most moves and preoccupies those who call themselves Anarchists, what seems to them most important, is not the liberty of the individual or personal independence, but Communism; that is, an economic system, a régime of life, a certitude for the future.

In that, as we conceive it, they scarcely go beyond Socialism. The two idealisms are determined by a common opposition to Individualism; they have arisen as a social reaction to the dissolving action of Individualism, which little by little undermines the most solid institutions, weakens the cohesive forces of social conservation, ruins discipline, order, method, and system, and works for the autonomy of man.

Socialism chooses the road of politics, a road of comedy and of domination. Communism, on the contrary, believes in its power to harmonise the collective system of production and distribution with the liberty of the individual. At bottom both are based on the same utilitarian energy, the same conception of historic materialism, but the practical end of one is not equal to the end dreamt of by the other. What identifies Socialists and Communists is that they place the economic question above the moral, and labour problems above circumstances of liberty.

We understand that for Socialism the means of realising social harmony is to impose it. The society created for the benefit of all is above consideration for the right of each, for the right of action of individuals and minorities. With Communism it is not so. Communism aspires to guarantee liberty, total independence of the individual, thanks precisely to the economic organisation. The necessary and preliminary condition of arriving at this independence and autonomy is the organisation of labour.

The Communists are tired of repeating to us that there is no liberty possible without a solution beforehand of economic problems. From this we may deduce that the independence of the individual is accepted as the aim, but on condition that the latter finds the collective régime (Communism) logical and good.

They wish, then, the independence of man but on this side of certain conventions and social and economic rules which constitute what is called a system. They wish the liberty of man but under regulations: such is the paradox, the error of Communism.

The aspect of the problem changes with Individualism. The latter estimates that what is most important to man, what has most value for his life, is liberty to think and to act in accordance with his thought. The principal vital interest is liberty of movement: autonomy. The circumstances of Communism or temporary association with a view to labour, whether productive or distributive, flows from liberty; in all circumstances they ought to be the fruit of the will of man.

The primordial thing, then, is, even for the Communist, the liberty of the individual, his conscience, his wisdom, his capacity to govern himself.

Let the man act well or ill, the value of liberty is not diminished. His conduct is a personal matter; so also is his responsibility. Acting well, he will be esteemed; acting badly in relation to others, he will obtain in recompense a multiplied evil resulting from the reactions of others against him. The question of good and evil, from the Individualist point of view, is a matter of intelligence, of comprehension, of domination of the instinct and the will. One fights in order that the individual may arrive at liberty. Whether he do good or evil is his own business and depends on his conscience.

From this it results that the economic question is on a secondary plane; the primordial question is liberty. We shall obtain in one way or another what pleases us most, from the economic point of view, but liberty is the essential condition of being able to realise what we propose for ourselves.

Consequently to be or not to be a Communist may depend on our aptitude, our intellectual capacity, our aesthetic or ethical sense. In any case, being Anarchists, we must be Individualists; that is to say, we consider every man as having the right to act politically, economically, etc., in his own fashion.

To be just, sociable, sincere, good, and solidary we must be conscious of our acts and possess an elevated and dignified aim. We would direct the culture of men, we would guide their education towards building a superior ethics, towards the conception of a right and human conduct, for Individualism wills not only that man be

free in his movements and actions, but that he be highly evolved in good and human sentiments.

For us, Anarchist Individualism is an activity working for the liberty of man: an idea of progress, conscience, intelligence, and superior culture.—Translated from *La Mêle* by JAMES HAINING.

## A DANGEROUS MENTAL MALADY.

The progress of mankind has been in all ages greatly retarded and at times altogether prevented by a curious sort of disease of the mind technically known as neophobia. In a case of hydrophobia the mere sight of water is said to arouse disgust, fear, and even furious anger. In a case of neophobia the symptoms are similar but the cause is different. The neophobic patient shows marked aversion and resentment at the sight of anything new.

I came across a striking case of neophobia the other day in a letter written in March, 1825, by Thomas Creevey, when a Bill for the construction of the first railroad line was introduced into Parliament. This is what he felt about it:

"I have come to the conclusion that our Ferguson is insane. He quite foamed at the mouth with rage in our Railway Committee in support of this infernal nuisance—the locomotive monster, carrying 80 tons of goods and navigated by a tail of smoke and sulphur coming through every man's grounds between Manchester and Liverpool. . . . Well, this devil of a railway is strangled at last. To-day we had a clear majority in committee in our favour, and the promoters of the Bill withdrew it and took their leave of us."

This reminds us of the speech of Sir Charles Napier in the House of Commons when it was proposed to introduce steam power into the Navy: "Mr. Speaker, when we enter Her Majesty's naval service and face the chances of war, we go prepared to be hacked to pieces, to be riddled by bullets, or to be blown to bits by shot and shell; but, Mr. Speaker, we do not go to be boiled alive."

When it was proposed to use coal gas for lighting, Sir Walter Scott called it "a pestilential innovation," and Napoleon considered it "une grande folie," and Byron satirised it in his verse among the passing fads.

When bathtubs were first installed in the United States in the 40's the papers attacked them as extravagant and undemocratic, and the doctors denounced them as dangerous to health. As usual, government was called upon to restrict or suppress the novelty by special taxes and licenses. In 1843 Virginia put a tax of \$30 a year on bathtubs, and in 1845 a Boston municipal ordinance made bathing unlawful except on medical advice.

The first printed books had to be sold as manuscripts because of the prejudice against printing. The learned men of Italy sneered at the invention as a barbarous German innovation.

The first shiplod of saltpetre sent to England from Chile could not find a buyer and had to be thrown into the sea.

The first bananas shipped to London could not be sold at any price or given away in the slums, but were left to rot because nobody would eat them.

All this is history now, and so merely amusing. But it may make us stop a minute to consider if we are to-day opposing some similar innovation from unconscious neophobia.

True, every word of it. There is but one little difference. Discoveries in the physical field no longer excite antagonism. So many things which seemed impossible soon became realities, that both the powers that be and the people at large are no longer sceptical at the announcement of any new discovery; on the contrary, they are running to the other extreme and are apt to be a bit too credulous. But in the realm of ideas the antagonism remains unabated. As a matter of fact, the war seems to have intensified it. It is no longer a mere inert antagonism, but an active, militant, unscrupulous animosity. And it makes one smile a bitter smile to read in the same daily paper, sometimes on the same page, the announcement of some wonderful discovery, and in the next column the report of the vicious persecution of some liberal or advanced thinker because the idea he attempted to promulgate threatened some change in the political, economic, or social structure of our society.

In brief, neophobia in the material world is now practically non-existent. Neophobia in the domain of ideas is as virulent as in the Middle Ages.—*Scientific Monthly*.

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## The Blackest Hour.

Beyond all question we are now passing into this country's blackest hour. That thought is strangling everyone of us. We feel ourselves whipped by Monopoly; and, consciously or unconsciously, there creeps into our very bones the conviction that the whipping will continue indefinitely and with increasing anguish. Hope dies, and with it the power of resistance and the will to live. In reality, our entire Labour movement is throwing up its hands. The line breaks incessantly, and the leaders, having no confidence in themselves, their followers, or what they are pleased to call their principles, give way at every point. They have no principles. At present their sole policy is opportunism, compromise, making the best of a bad bargain.

You doubt it. Then perhaps you will condescend to look into the facts. For example, the Labour Party holds its annual Congress, and the president, a noted statistician, has to confess that in each of the last two years there has been a drop in wages of no less than £700,000,000. Membership is falling off, and will continue to fall off, both because times are getting worse, and because all big strikes are lost. Failure along that line is now accepted as inevitable, and the Labour movement's present strategy is merely to "hold its own." Even that it cannot do; and, if it could, the aim, in its petty timidity, would be contemptible. The gains won by organised Labour in the past are exaggerated enormously, and it may well be doubted whether, as a whole, it finds itself more comfortably situated than it was fifty years ago. Meanwhile, its productivity, and the consequent profits it pours into the pockets of its masters, grow by percentages that run up into the thousands.

Leaders cannot afford to admit defeat, so now the pot of gold at the end of the political rainbow is being chased. Another profound illusion. The Labour Party has no strength; and, as now constituted, cannot hope to have. Theoretically, its tactics are devised by an amalgam of so-called Socialists, some of whom, like the Fabians, are as conservative as any Tory, while others openly proclaim themselves revolutionists, to catch the mob. Practically, the Trade Union leaders rule the roost, for they furnish the funds. At their various congresses or conferences the block vote of the big Unions decides the course to be adopted, and that block vote the leaders cast.

The Unions furnish the funds, and the present position of the *Daily Herald* shows that there is little real confidence in the coming victory proclaimed so loudly. As is now well known, the sub-committee appointed by the Trade Unions and the Labour Party has recommended to the Trades Union Congress that the *Daily Herald* shall be discontinued at the end of this month. And it is the one daily this alleged great movement boasts! It is the one organ of the party that now, in the whirligig of politics, finds itself the "official Opposition." Can you imagine such a party becoming the Government of the British Empire, when it cannot even keep its one daily organ going? Frankly, and in all sincerity, we cannot.

The very excuses and explanations make the case worse. It is stated by the management, for example, that a 500,000 circulation would have sufficed; but that, despite vigorous advertising efforts, 800,000 was the most attained. A twopenny levy voted by the Trades Union Congress last year was expected to realise £120,000. It brought in only a little over £70,000. Great hopes were built on a scheme whereby Trade Unionists were to pledge themselves to take a Labour daily first. The management reports

that it sent out three million pledge-cards, that less than 100,000 have come back, and that "masses of the cards lie in branch offices all over the country," for "no one will take the trouble to try to get them signed." Yet the Trade Union movement boasts of some five million members! Never was any Labour movement organised so thoroughly. What is now happening is that the various Parliamentary minorities are trying to come together, that they may climb to power on some central question, round which, by a series of mutual compromises, they hope to be able to unite. The question selected is apparently the Land problem, and for good reasons. On that Mr. Lloyd George, who dominates the National Liberal Party, may have a chance of arousing the public once again, as in his Limehouse days. Mr. Asquith, who bosses the Liberal Party, has coquetted at intervals with the taxation of land values. Mr. Snowden, on behalf of the Labour Party, has brought forward a Bill for buying out the landlords, at a thirty-years' purchase price. These people, assisted more or less openly by organisations that make the land question their speciality, are trying to get together. They all repudiate even the thought of confiscation. One and all they are trying to square the circle by putting the masses in possession of the now-cornered source of all wealth while making them pay full value to the cornerers. Thus the principle of land-hogging will be sanctified by legislation, and it is calculated that the Duke of Westminster, for example, will receive the pleasing compensation of some £50,000,000 in gilt-edged bonds, which we eventually shall have to pay!

Evidently a supremely vital question—that of the ownership of our great tool-house—is emerging from all this chaos, and for that we may be thankful. Evidently also that carries with it our collective and individual right to free and equal access to the means of life, as an indispensable part of Life's equipment. And we note, with great delight, that all this became suddenly precipitated at the International Land Tax Conference, held recently at Oxford. Mr. Asquith had been invited, as an advocate of the step-at-a-time taxation method, and the Commonwealth League, backed by the vast majority of American delegates, protested so vehemently that he declined to speak.

The Commonwealth League is now, as a party, coming before the public with this one demand—"That on an appointed date the Land shall be declared to have been restored to the people, and thereafter its economic rents shall be collected by, and for, the people." If this is to be regarded as politics, it is certainly a wide and refreshing departure from the hitherto established type. If, on the other hand, it is to be viewed as a revolutionary war-cry, it has the merit of uttering the one note really worth the sounding. Until we overthrow the existing monopoly of natural resources, nothing substantial can be accomplished; and to this, which is merely the assertion of Life's basic needs, events finally will drive us. As things are, the outlook of the masses in this country is hopeless. In the face of failing markets and ever-increasing unemployment they stand as helpless as a new-born babe.

W. C. O.

## THE ERUPTION OF AETNA.

(July, 1923, *c.v.*)

"Have not I spoken, even I, Benito,  
The big, the brave, the mighty Mussolini,  
The ultra-modern Caesar, with my Veni,  
Vidi, Vici—let all the world agree too!  
Does a mere mountain think that it is free to  
Stir up sedition? Shall such teeny-weeny  
Volcanoes venture to display their spleeny  
And socialistic cant?—subside, mosquito!"

Inscrutable, the subterranean awe  
Of Aetna belched in lava its dread Law:—  
The Gods would quell the Titans; bury under  
Earth, Earthquake! In their panic tyrants heap  
Load upon load on Liberty asleep.  
She wakes, she stirs. Her tombstone? Tossed  
in thunder!

A. C.

## THE CAUSE OF THE TROUBLE.

To any one who can look on with unbiased mind, the cause of the present chaotic condition of the world is manifest.

We see a world full of people, abundantly able to provide themselves with food and with all the necessities and luxuries of life, and only too anxious to procure and exchange their products, yet held asunder by some obscure force, which they cannot as yet understand.

We see this same world full of people, desiring nothing more earnestly than to live at peace with each other, yet forced periodically to fight with each other and to kill each other.

The cause in this latter case is not so obscure. It is clearly the Governments of the different nations, into which the people of the earth are divided, that force them to fight when they don't want to. Without the power to force people to pay taxes, and without the power to force them to fight by conscription, no war could be waged.

But little thought will convince us that, in the first case, that of unwilling commercial separation, the cause is the same. It is the Governments of the world, by their custom houses and import duties, that force upon us commercial antagonism, just as they do military antagonism.

Every one knows that the only logical way to do away with a given result is to remove the cause: we have found that the cause is government: the problem is to do away with government. Such a proposition will seem baldly absurd to most people; as absurd as it seemed to a French nobleman of 1789, who laughed long and loud when he was told that in a far distant country across the seas, called America, there was no king.

All governments are based upon human respect for authority; and governmental authority is traceable back to paternal, and ultimately maternal authority. Enshrined in our hearts for so many thousand years, it is difficult indeed for us to break away from an institution that time has made so dear to us; nevertheless, changing conditions are forcing upon us conclusions, towards which our unintelligent emotions would never lead us.

These changing conditions, to which the world is struggling to adapt itself, lie in the astounding increase in productive power caused by the mechanical inventions of the past century. Our political and social systems are adapted to the primitive conditions of 1776: they are not adapted at all to present conditions. Authority, and the various institutions based upon authority, may have served a good purpose up to the beginning of the development of science; but they are now hopelessly antiquated, and as useless as an old-fashioned smoothbore would be in warfare.

When the people of the earth realise that they are able to produce everything superabundantly; when they realise that they are held back from production, and held back from exchanging their products, by their institutions, they will find that they must change these institutions, however reluctantly.

As soon as it is suggested that the cause lies in government, and it is proposed therefore to do away with government, it seems to almost everybody that the proposal is to do away with order, and to destroy the fruits of civilisation.

This is really not the case at all. Governments, as we have said, are based upon authority: the proposal is to establish order, not upon authority, but upon spontaneous consent.

Imagine a government which depended for its support, not upon compulsory taxes, but upon voluntary dues, as all clubs, churches and other organisations are supported. Just as long as the dues were moderate, and the services rendered worth while, things would go along smoothly enough; but when the dues were raised to an intolerable amount, and spent to build dreadnoughts and distil poison gases, people would refuse to pay their dues, and, if they deemed it necessary, would organise a new society for what they might regard as indispensable protection.

Thus we should have a social organisation founded upon spontaneity instead of upon force. Wars and custom houses would come to an end. The world-harmony of free commerce would unite the nations. Peace and prosperity would prevail.

A dream? No doubt; but all the great realities have been dreams before they became realities.

JOHN BEVERLEY ROBINSON.

## BUT THE RECORD STANDS.

We are much interested in Esperanto, because we believe that an International language is becoming a necessity. We read, therefore, the *Sennacieca Revuo* with much interest; the more so because, as we have understood, its purpose is to furnish revolutionists of various opinions with a common medium of expression. That seemed to us to be a function which it might well be the special mission of an Esperanto journal to perform. However, the dream has fled. The *Sennacieca Revuo's* editor, Mr. E. Lanty, has declared pronouncedly for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and now opposes Anarchism and all its works.

Mr. Lanty, who says he was for ten years an enthusiastic Anarchist, went to Russia for three weeks. He kept a diary in which he noted, apparently with great candour, his observations, and much information he had gathered at Moscow. This diary he published from month to month in his journal, and all we can say is that it formed as damning a record as we have ever read. As such we made a full digest of it, with copious extracts, which we sent to enquirers who seemed to be seeking for the truth. The editor of this paper even gave an address on Russia, which consisted almost entirely of this digest, and partisans of the Dictatorship denounced it furiously. Then, in his concluding number, Mr. Lanty declared himself all for the Lenin régime. We now give a brief epitome of our digest, greatly condensed for want of space.

After much delay caused by official red-tape, Lanty reached Petrograd on August 9, 1922. What he noted there was the great number of street-hawkers, prostitutes, and soldiers, and he describes his mental condition as "heart-wrung" (*korprenite*). In Moscow he found similar, but even worse, conditions, and he gave a terrible account of the conditions under which swarms of beggars, pedlars, and thieves were trying to exist. His concluding paragraph on this subject is that he found himself completely exhausted, "so strong sometimes are my impressions and the strain upon my spirit."

As delegate from a revolutionary organisation, he endeavoured to see the secretary of the Executive Committee of the Third International, but found himself blocked by soldiers at every step. Finally, through the favour of a fellow-Esperantist, he procured an interview, and was treated most rudely. However, he found in a Mr. Drezzen an enthusiastic Esperantist who happened also to be Vice-Director of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, and holder of other important offices. Drezzen entertained him sumptuously, for which he was profoundly grateful, and thenceforth his way was smooth. He was shown all the beauties of the Kremlin, and was thunderstruck by the magnificent surroundings amid which the leading officials and delegates conducted their business. He commented sadly that, although political power had been attained, the settlement of the economic question seemed a long way off. This note he struck again and again. The glaring contrasts between the luxury and power of the few, and the poverty and helplessness of the many, impressed him deeply.

Well, he talked with various high officials, and the gist of it all is given in his interview with one whose name he dare not give. That gentleman was not surprised at Lanty's disillusionment, but explained smoothly that the New Economic Policy had been introduced because State Socialism had proved impossible. Everyone had been compelled to take to private enterprise, although it was punishable severely under the law, and "the police closed their eyes." Why had this become necessary? Because "one cannot socialise a condition of having nothing. Socialism presupposes abundance." With this explanation Lanty seems to have been quite satisfied, and he thinks it so important that he puts it in italics. Does he expect the world's pauperised proletariat to be put off so easily?

So Editor Lanty devotes his last issue to an affirmation of his faith in a Dictatorship and an avowal of his disbelief in the capacity of the individual to take care of himself. He is converted, and we must leave him to his own congratulations. For our part, however, we trust that there are people in the revolutionary movement who are made of somewhat sterner stuff. At any rate he has given the world a record which, in its earlier pages, was honestly outspoken. That record cannot be obliterated, though doubtless the Dictatorship would only too gladly purge the world of it, with candle, bell, and book.

Push the sale of "Freedom."

## ANARCHIST LIBRARY.

(In the International Language Ido.)

The second series of the publications of *Libereso* will consist of pamphlets which will be issued alternately with the bulletin. The titles of the first pamphlets in preparation are as follows:—*Nettlau*: "La lukto kontre la Stato"; *Thonar*: "Komunista Anarkiismo"; *Tucker*: "Individualista Anarkiismo"; *Faure*: "Mea Komunismo (analizo est ekstrakturi)"; *Pierre Ramus*: "Moderna Anarkiismo (analizo est ekstrakturi)"; *Dr. M. N.*: "Kelka nejusta idej pri Anarkiismo"; *E. Armand*: "Letro a la rural laboristi."

The subscription for ten consecutive numbers (five bulletins and five pamphlets) is 5 francs for France. For other countries, the value of two hours' skilled labour.

Comrades who do not yet know Ido, but who would like a direct understanding of the writings of our comrades of every country, can learn this international language in ten lessons of two hours. Write to the address below.

Anarchist papers (in all languages) are asked to insert this appeal and to send a copy to Jules Vignes, Saint Genis-Laval, Rhône, France.

Translated from *Libereso* of July, 1923.

NOTE.—For English-speaking comrades, "An Elementary Grammar of Ido" is recommended. This can be obtained by sending 7d. to J. W. Baxter, 57 Limes Grove, London, S.E. 13.

## "Fooled into the War."

The war has led us into having been a conscript nation. Conscription is said to have been abolished. Has it? The militarist faction has tasted blood. They have become like man-eating tigers; they will never rest till they get it back. Like have eaten already a million of the blossom of the land. As for the huge war-debt hanging round our necks, it is incomprehensible that this debt should not be paid by those whom the war has made rich.

The nation was fooled into the war. The nation was fooled into conscription. The nation was fooled nigh into bankruptcy. What good has come of it compared with the millions massacred by it?—Lord John Fisher, First Sea Lord, in *London Magazine*.

## Power is Poison.

The late Lord Acton, who is quoted by the Dean of St. Paul's as characterising Nationalism to be as evil and futile as Socialism, could be as mordant as Dean Inge on occasion. In a letter to Bishop Creighton he delivered himself of the following truths:—"Nearly all great men are bad men. Power is poison. The first lesson of history is that liberty depends on division of power. The danger is not that a particular class is unfit to govern; every class is unfit to govern. Imagine a congress of celebrities such as More, Bacon, Grotius, Pascal, Cromwell, Bossuet, Montesquieu, Jefferson, Napoleon, Pitt. The result would be an encyclopaedia of error."

## An Unexpected Boom.

The sale, in Liverpool, of "England Monopolised or England Free?" by Wm. C. Owen, has astonished us, for it has reached 1,400 copies within the last few weeks. We now learn that it has had the advantage of being brought into Court, in connection with the prosecution of Councillor Neild and Phil McGuire, who had been circulating it. The Court had the good sense to acquit them, but the prosecution helped to advertise the pamphlet. Phil McGuire is now anxious that the author should lecture in Liverpool and the neighbourhood, and he is trying to form a group which will make the necessary arrangements. His address is 43 Great Richmond Street, Liverpool; and he would be glad to hear from any who may desire to co-operate.

## "Freedom" Guarantee Fund.

We are pleased to acknowledge the receipt of the following sums since our last issue:—T. S. 5s., E. Richmond 2s. 6d., H. G. Russell 12s. 6d., G. Marin 11s., G. Senior 2s. 6d., B. Williams 1s. 3d., A. Hendel 4s. 6d., J. Haining 1s., W. Morrison 2s., J. Petrovich 4s. 3d., G. P. 2s. 6d., A. Henri 1s., L. C. 2s. 6d., Workers' Liberty Group (Boston, Mass.) 11s. 5s. 6d., J. A. Osborne 11s., A. Moore 2s., Norwich Comrades 3s., L. G. Wolfe 11s.

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(July 12 to September 11.)

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