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Fields, Factories, and Workshops. by Prince Kropotkin

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value" and of "the iron law" are no longer maintained by the straitest sect of Socialists in their absolute rigidity; but, if they are an incorrect analysis of the facts, it does not follow that they may not contain elements which must be incorporated in any truer and completer doctrine. Professor Noel apparently regards Socialism as a closed revelation: this may make the criticism of it easier, but it also makes it at the same time not a little arbitrary. There is no doubt a good deal of crudity in the current theory and propaganda of Socialism: but the phases of Socialism to which Professor Noel directs his attention and analysis are just those which are least significant and least "integral." Socialism, for instance, has no necessary connection with *le plus hideux matérialisme*. Professor Noel takes the accidents of Socialism to be its essence ("le socialisme est, par essence, la negation de toute croyance"), and generally represents it in a form that makes any detailed consideration of its claims a superfluous pastime. It would be unfair to deny that the Professor makes many observations that are both apposite and true, but the process as a whole is very much like breaking a fly upon a wheel. He has also his own ideas of social reform: they are such as become a disciple of Leon Say; but they are as doctrinaire in their way as the proposals of the enemy. At the same time the discussion throws some light upon legislative tendencies in France, and the appendices contain some interesting documents, relating for the most part to *conseils du travail*. Professor Noel is, indeed, most instructive when he is dealing not with Socialism, but with facts. It may be added that it is part of the method used to see Socialism wherever there is compulsion, and to heap together somewhat heterogeneous phenomena as "Socialistic." It might, however, be argued that State pensions for old age (with or without compulsory insurance) are a device of Individualism rather than a method of Socialism. A system of State pensions would be a logical part of a Socialistic organisation of industry, but by itself it is more like the last ditch of Individualism. It is certainly a form of *le Socialisme d'état*, which Professor Noel should have known is not necessarily synonymous with Socialism, any more than Socialism or Collectivism is synonymous with Communism. Professor Noel's conception of Socialism is not only very general, but also very antiquated. SIDNEY BALL.

*Fields, Factories, and Workshops.* By PRINCE KROPOTKIN. Second Edition. (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. 1901.)

ON the second edition of Prince Kropotkin's book we need not repeat the laudatory criticisms bestowed upon the first. It is unquestionably an interesting, and in some respects a useful offering towards the solution of a question which is growing in importance every day, and threatens in time to become an all-absorbing one.

Without sifting all the evidence in which the author's conclusions are based, a process to which it has already been subjected, we may come at once to the central point of his thesis. It is this, that the day of exports and imports is nearly over: that Britain must dream no more of being the workshop of the world, giving her manufactured commodities in exchange for food; that all nations now are learning to make their own goods; and that "to return to a state of affairs where corn is grown and manufactured goods are fabricated for the use of those very people who grow and produce them—such will be no doubt the problem to be solved during the next coming year of European Industry. Each region will become its own producer and its own consumer of manufactured goods." Technical education he says will not enable the British workman to command the market, because nowadays the skill which is the result of technical education can no longer be "kept within political boundaries," it at once becomes common property, and though it makes for the good of humanity at large can confer no special or permanent superiority on any one nation. These views are enough to make Mr. Cobden turn in his grave. They strike at the root of commerce the essential principle of which is barter, and if Britain has nothing to sell it is difficult to see what she can afford to buy. If other countries produce all they require for themselves, and want nothing from us, there is an end of traffic; an end to the profits which enable us to buy superfluities, and to pay the heavy taxes which support our navy and army; an end, in fact, so it would seem at least of the British Empire. But before we resign ourselves to so painful a conclusion we should remember that Prince Kropotkin takes no account of national character, or the superior aptitude for special forms of production, which has hitherto distinguished one race or one nation from another. Socialism has always aimed at the levelling of personal inequalities. Its present exponent would do the same for national. It is needless to say that unless this could be done, only high protective duties could prevent people from looking abroad for a better article than they could purchase at home. Without following up the train of thought thus suggested, which would lead us far beyond our limits, we may call attention to one branch of the subject which forms the staple material of Prince Kropotkin's volume, on which he generalises rather too freely without, we fear, adequate knowledge of its details, as far at least as it concerns Great Britain. Each region he says will become its own producer and consumer of manufactured goods, and this, he adds, "unavoidably implies that at the same time it will be its own consumer and producer of agricultural produce." In other words England is "to live within herself," a favourite phrase with the Tory country gentlemen of Queen Anne's time.

Of course it is necessary to Prince Kropotkin's theory that he should be able to show the ability of this country to grow corn enough and produce meat enough to feed the whole population. "The current

opinion is," says he, "that it by no means can." But a little investigation shows us that it has not the slightest foundation. He then proceeds as follows, and he will excuse us if we have failed to discover any allusion to circumstances which he may have noticed in any other part of the book. He has not certainly noticed them where they would have been most opportune. We must give the point from which he starts in his own words :

"Let us take, for instance, J. B. Lawes' estimates of crops which are published every year in the *Times*. In his estimate of the year 1887 he made the remark that during the eight harvest years 1853-1860 'nearly three-fourths of the aggregate amount of wheat consumed in the United Kingdom was of home growth and little more than one-fourth was derived from foreign sources;' but five and twenty years later the figures were almost reversed, that is, during the eight years 1879-1886, little more than one-third has been provided by home crops and nearly two-thirds by imports. But neither the increase of population by 8,000,000, nor the increase of consumption of wheat by six-tenths of a bushel per head could account for the change. In the years 1853-60 the soil of Britain nourished one inhabitant on every two acres cultivated: why did it require three acres in order to nourish the same inhabitant in 1887? The answer is plain; merely and simply because agriculture had fallen into neglect."

And after enlarging on this text for a page or two, he winds up with "the cause of this general downward movement is self-evident. It is the desertion, the abandonment of the land. Each crop requiring human labour has had its area reduced; and one-third of the agricultural labourers have been sent away since 1861 to reinforce the ranks of the unemployed in the cities." The reader should mark the words "sent away" and compare them with what the author says on p. 170 about Germany. "And it may safely be said with regard to Germany that if measures are not taken for driving the peasants from the land on the same scale as they have been taken in this country: if, on the contrary, the number of small landowners multiply, they will turn to various small trades, in addition to agriculture." As it is, Prince Kropotkin ought to have known that the small village tradesman—the butcher, the publican, the small shopkeeper—with his two or three acres of land is to be found in three-fourths of our English villages even now. In one respect, however, our author puts the cart before the horse; village industries were taken away from the peasants before the exodus began, nor would they be restored if the labourer returned. But of this presently. What we want to know is—*what* measures have been taken for the purpose of driving the peasant from the land in this country? Most people, we think, practically acquainted with English rural life will read these words with astonishment; unless they are to be taken in a non-natural sense they point plainly to some deliberate attempt on the part of some other class to remove the peasantry from the soil. Why, both landlords and tenants, would give

their ears to keep them there. And even supposing for a moment that so suicidal an idea as is here suggested could have occurred to either of the two nature had been beforehand with them. The mysterious visitation which began a quarter of a century ago, and reduced British agriculture to a pitch from which it has never since recovered, seems scarcely taken into account by Prince Kropotkin: nor is it correct to say that the reduction of the area devoted to wheat growing is due to the "neglect" of agriculture: unless our author means, which he clearly does not, compulsory neglect. The farmer could not afford to go on growing wheat at a loss: and it must be remembered that even Sir John Lawes at Rothamstead did not make his experimental farming with his exceptional rate of production remunerative. If there was not work on the land for the same number of labourers as before, it was not the farmer's fault, nor the landlord's either. Rents went down to the lowest possible point, and sometimes vanished altogether. But all in vain. The old conditions of rural life in England could not be restored: nor have any attempts to revive on a large scale still earlier forms of agricultural industry met as yet with any practical success. The schemes carried out by Lord Tollemache and Lord Wantage are exceptional instances, and will not, if examined, be found to meet the requirements of the case.

Perhaps we ought not to be surprised that our author is unaware of the extent to which village industries have within the last half century been pushed into the towns, and that the empty cottages to be seen in so many places are due partly to this cause, and by no means exclusively to the disappearance of the farm labourer. In the midland counties, for instance, in the middle of the last century the stocking industry was largely carried out in the villages. The frames were let out to the cottagers, who carried their work into the towns on Saturday, and resumed work again on Monday. Some of these frame work knitters, or "stockingers" as they were called, had a field or two for keeping a cow or a few sheep; if not they had an allotment. Then again there was the "seaming," which was done by women and little girls, the wives and daughters of the labourer, who worked at their task while he was busy in the field, and added something substantial to the weekly wage. *Sic fortis Etruria crevit.* But now the framework knitter who used to work in his own cottage has to go to the factory. Frames are no longer let out. Other cottage industries, such as straw-plaiting and lace-making, have, we believe, fared no better.

If the insufficiency of our home production to satisfy our home consumption is in this way attributable to the dearth of agricultural labour, this in turn has been brought about by causes for which neither landowner nor occupier is responsible. It is necessary to clear the ground of this prejudice if we would enter on the inquiry to which Prince Kropotkin invites us with any prospect of advantage. He knows enough to know this, that "three acres and a cow" are all moonshine. He admits that it is very doubtful whether small farmers with five acres

apiece could even as a rule prosper. But he thinks that a hundred such with five hundred acres between them would not only thrive, but would, if the system were generally adopted, make England as a corn-growing country self-supporting. At present this is only a conjecture though possibly not an ill-founded one. Differences of soil Prince Kropotkin makes light of. Abroad these small cultivators make their own soil. And there is no reason why we should not do the same in England. But if we could make our own soil we cannot make our own sun: and the want of it must always operate against England becoming a great fruit-growing country like some parts of the Continent. Pears, apricots, peaches, plums, greengages, how often do they fail to ripen out of doors even in the most favourable situations! Vegetables of course might be grown in many places where now we grow only grass. But we must have hay for our cattle, and grazing for our sheep. Prince Kropotkin writes as if he would like to cover every pasture field or meadow from the Tweed to the Solent with potatoes and cabbages.

Of course there is a political and social side to all this dissertation. How are we to get the land? How far the material gain to be expected from Prince Kropotkin's plan would compensate for the social detriment which any wholesale disturbance of the existing order in this country must necessarily involve are questions which our author does not ask and which we therefore are not called upon to answer. It will be understood of course that Prince Kropotkin's plan is not intended for Great Britain only. It is to be the future of all civilized countries, certainly of all civilized Europe: and necessarily extends far beyond the range of political economy. It would perhaps be of greater practical utility if he could show us any instance in which long established natural modes of agriculture have been supplanted by others imported from abroad, and have taken root and flourished in their adopted country. We find no fault with his book for being "academic"; for most practical improvements have been academic at one time, but we should like to see the co-operative experiment tried on a large scale somewhere else before we attempt it in this country. On a small scale it has been tried already, but not with results which have led to many repetitions of it.

T. E. KEBBEL.

*A Study of the Diet of the Labouring Classes in Edinburgh, carried out under the auspices of the Town Council.* By D. Noël Paton, M.D., J. Crauford Dunlop, M.D., and Elsie Maud Inglis, L.R.C.P.S.E. (Edinburgh: Maclehose. 1901).

THE food supplied to large classes of persons, such as soldiers, the inmates of workhouses, and others maintained at the public cost, has been analysed in almost every country, and its energy-value estimated. Attempts have also been made to determine a standard or "normal diet," *i.e.*, a diet which provides the body with sufficient energy to allow for the daily loss of heat and output of external work; which