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The Blarsted Furriners

Frank Kitz

May 1888

The growth of Socialism and the gradual breaking up of the competitive system, evidenced by masses of poverty-stricken unemployed, is calling into light some curious men with curious ideas as to how Society based upon robbery can be saved, and its human waste and social wreckage bestowed away from sight.

These would-be saviours of Society plus a slight percentage on salvage, are in short a literary police, as useful to the propertied classes as is Scotland Yard. Their work is to start discussions in press and on platform upon various panaceas for admitted social grievances. Trotting out their own pet hobbies, which generally ends in their being called before a Committee of M.P.'s or outside rogues and faddists, to elaborate their brutal shallow schemes of emigration and repression, and their own installation in some official or semi-official position, where of course they discharge their duties without any connection with filthy lucre, but only to satisfy that yearning love for their fellows, especially landlords, which wells eternally in their virtuous hearts.

Having been met and foiled at every turn by the Socialists until it is not possible to hold a successful open meeting in

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favour of emigration, they are now trying their hand on the poor foreign immigrant. They seek the support of the propertied classes on one hand by asserting that revolutionary Socialism is due to foreign immigration, and of the worker on the other that his labour is badly remunerated on the same account. Thus two antagonistic forces are used as pawns in a reactionary game, which means the total obliteration of the right of asylum or what is left of it after Most's imprisonment in 1881. Conspicuous in urging restrictions on foreign labourers, stands Mr. Arnold White, of emigrationist fame, who thinks a Jew-hunt possible in the East End, and is fearful lest, as he told a Government official lately, the patience of certain Irish cockneys should be exhausted and they take the matter into their own hands.

Whether the convenient Irish cockney is kept in stock and fed like a writer of the three-deckers in the *Daily Telegraph* is supposed to be, on rum and beef, deponent sayeth not. Anyway, Mr. Arnold White being pre-eminently a religious man will, I think, admit that seeing how slack the emigration business has become the foreign pauper arrives as a god-send, and should be treated with gratitude accordingly.

With old prejudices breaking down amongst the really cultured few, and international congresses and societies abounding to deal with all matters pertaining to science and literature, in presence of international leagues and syndicates of exploiters, who rob without caring two straws about the locale or nationality of their prey, men of the "Stocker" stamp would have no audience were it not for what Emerson styled the "Man in the Street." He lends a ready ear to the wiles of those who wish to distract the attention of the workers from the real causes of their poverty. "We keep German Princes a lot, sir, whilst the poor man with hunger may rot, sir," sings he.

And the foreign refugee fleeing from the conscription of Continental despotisms or political persecution, shares in

the anathema which the “Man in the Street” hurls at those “blooming Germans,” who as serenities and royalties enable the grateful English public of snobs to preserve the Protestant succession as decreed on high. The “Man in the Street” is not a thinking man, at all events not on a large scale, he lets others think and write for him, and his favourite journal thinks to strengthen its attacks on monarchy by abuse directed against the whole German race, worker and prince alike, for the remote reason that when the English wanted a fresh master they had a brand new foreign one in the person of George I.

Now German Hans and English Jack as workers have had as little to do with the diplomatic and dynastic arrangements, which result in Germans occupying the English throne, as presumably the King of the Cannibal Islands has. But seeing that the nationality and not the status of royalty is objected to, there is nothing more likely than if that *rara avis*, a pure Englishman, could be found, and he could be prevailed upon to accept the English Crown, that the anti-royalist journal of to-day might become the Court journal of the future, as its chief grievance and *raison d'être* for present attitude would be removed.

The foreign working-man landing in a strange land, and speaking a foreign language, finds every man's hand against him on account of this illiberal teaching ; ignorant of the relative monetary values in relation to payment and purchasing power, and in nine cases out of ten desperately exigent, he accepts the first offer, and as this is generally made by some labour-robber or master he comes at once into collision with the English labourer. Expatriated by persecution he is worse off relatively than he would be at home were he left in peace. Even in the case of voluntary emigration to sell his labour in the best market, he is but carrying out the teachings of those economists whose ardent disciples a number of the English workmen are.

Where there is a breaking away from the rigid bloodless doctrines of political economy as taught by capitalist mouthpieces,

it is largely due to the influence and to the new light of Socialism shed around his English shopmates by the refugee workmen. Are we then to allow the issues at stake in the struggle between the robbers and the robbed to be obscured. by an anti-foreigner agitation?

The presence of foreign competitors in our midst is a complicating incident in what is admitted on the side of those who complain to be a battle of life in which the weakest go to the wall. If the foreigner is the weakest he takes the wall side. A mercantile Christian journal gloats over the fact that with the aid of a newly invented machine we shall shortly be able not only to produce our own bottles, but actually compete and perhaps take away the trade now almost exclusively in the hands of Belgians and Germans. What is to become of them our Christian friend says nothing about. A company is floated with the express purpose of competing with t and ruining if possible the foreign lapidaries diamond-polishers, who have now a monopoly of this kind of work. The English capitalist having made his monetary wealth out of over-worked factory hands at home, looks down the Stock and Share list wherein to invest, and hence some Peruvian miner or South African is enslaved with the earnings in first instance of the “freeborn” English worker.

The game goes merrily on, and workers of every clime fall under the curse of labour under Capitalism, each enslaving the other. Meanwhile the capitalist plays the game of patriot. Whilst egging on the English worker to a conflict with the foreign labourer, he would abase himself in the dust to a foreign prince or millionaire. England which according to him shall be for the English alone, strives for the world market. If a war is necessary to attain it, the patriot is prepared to supply the enemy with arms and ammunition to kill his own countrymen with, or he will cheerfully contract to supply them with rotten provisions and cardboard-soled boots. The system of beggary-neighbour knows no country or creed; only the working

whose noisy movements endangers the gang ; and hence the land-thieves will adjudicate upon the case of the labour-thief, and if necessary cast him over as a Jonah.

The cry against the foreigner serves to hide the doings of men who are depleting the fields of these islands of population, and seeking to expatriate them to South Africa. They desire to colonise the lands of the despoiled savage with the despoiled whites. A consistent line of conduct, truly, for those who cry out against foreign immigration here ! Read in this light, their eulogies of those Christian extirpaters of black men, Warren, Gordon, and Stanley, as their patron saints, are intelligible enough.

In this criticism I have shown that the enemy of the foreign immigrant is not consequently the friend of the native poor. If by penuriousness or fraud the once pauper immigrant becomes affluent, he would secure the fulsome flattery of those who abuse him now. His foreign blood would not bar him from even the mayoralty of London. If a Rothschild, a Bleichröder, a Goschen, or a Disraeli, he can govern the lives and destinies of myriads of human beings by the power of purse, which knows no country.

The foreign sweater, oftentimes sweated himself, simply takes advantage of commercial conditions as he finds them. With a commercial system which is nothing if not international, and her soldiers forcing her goods at the point of the bayonet into fresh markets, England's outcry against foreign competition is absurd. If she had sought the happiness of her people instead of the world's market, and colonised her own fields instead of strange lands, she would not now be afflicted with the same inconvenience which beset Rome before its downfall.

class are fools enough to listen to the patriotic cackle, and the notes are tuned accordingly. I am an Englishman, German, Frenchman, exclaims the individual, as the case may be. So also is the man who robs, says the Socialist onlooker. The capitalist reaps his dividend in every field. Where the research of the scientist or study of the inventor has added to labour-saving appliances, he simply appropriates without discussion as to the nationality of those who furnish him with his income. If Europeans or natives are not cheap enough, there is the Asiatic to fall back on, as see P. and O. Steamship Co.; and in Australia and America where this resource has been availed of there comes, singularly enough, the same obscurantist twaddle about the foreigner. I should like to hear the private opinion of some intelligent Australian aborigine or Maori as to the social wrecks we have poured upon their shores. Men too cowardly to wrest their native heaths and pastures from the domestic land-thief, yet despoil the black man of his native wilds. Truly, no foreigner who has landed here has attempted that. Equally interesting would it be to hear the opinion of a decent Red-skin as to the would-be American "haristocrat" and the dude who struts amidst the rotten civilisation, which must be purely American and undisturbed by "foreign" agitators.

It is an almost laughable proposition to suggest that a system which is based upon competition should be protected in some particular instance from competition, and is moreover a fine comment upon the consistency of the preachers of *laissez-faire*. As I write I have before me a work, 'Problems of a Great City' written I should say, after long perusal, to save the skins of the "classes" by the before-mentioned Arnold White ; and as a desperate defendant once saved his case by simply asking the judge to "look, only look" at the plaintiffs witnesses, so I will ask the readers to study the book of the pseudo working-man's

friend. After deploring the fecundity of the “lower orders,” especially criminals, he hungers for the surgical operation which shall effectually sterilise those whom he elects to judge “unfit.” In eastern countries this matter could be discussed with greater ease, he says; English convention forbids the discussion of detail, which would otherwise be desirable; but a Parliamentary vote to meet the cost of shutting up for life confirmed criminals, cannot bring a blush to any cheek.

This scheme of life-long segregation is hideously cruel. Society is to hide away its victims, in penal establishments where the bodily torture of the past is replaced by slow refined cruelty which presents us ever and anon with the corpse of a starved ill-treated prisoner. The criminal of the lower class is sinned against by Society. Born into evil surroundings and a system under which it is impossible for all to work honestly, he is punished by Society for the crime which Society has itself created.

A consensus of opinion could be quoted, even Arnold White against himself, to show that the lower class criminal is a product of the horrible conditions, for which the higher criminals, on whose behalf Arnold White holds a brief, are responsible.

In dealing with the question of the unemployed he says, “Fed and clothed into fitness and decency they quickly become as other men are,” The Socialist holds the same concerning the criminal. Spread the people over the land, clear your cities and towns of the slums and stews, erect the labourer from being a wage-slave into a member of a Co-operative Commonwealth, and your paltering rubbish about segregation and castration will read as nonsense. Crime is purely relative. At present the evictors of Glenbeigh and depleters of Skye claim the right to punish the foreign sweater and native pickpocket.

Perchance a Social Revolution may soon clear the atmosphere, and change the aspect of affairs. A different jury would then be installed before which the land robbers and doctrinaires of wholesale expatriation and sterilisation of the unfit would be arraigned, and what that would be “fit” for

would constitute, I think, one of the most difficult ‘Problems of a Great City.’

Both the book and this criticism of it were written before the institution of the House of Lord’s Committee anent the sweating and foreign pauper business, and therefore the quotation from page 9 is instructive : “Religion has become a thing of words and buildings. Religion endowed so that the carriage of the cross is oft-times the means to win high place and high comfort, has converted the Narrow Way into a path to the House of Lords as well as to the Place of a Skull. Were Christ the teacher to return to London (sic), how long would he remain aloof from an attack on the ‘Problems of a Great City’?” and may I as a Socialist be allowed to conjecture what he would say to Arnold White and his book, wherein cant about the “sweet lines of the Sermon on the Mount” is jostled with suggestions for the sterilisation, segregation, and expatriation of the unfortunate victims of land robbers and capitalists. On page 204, he says a great impulse would be given to the sterilization of the unfit if the idle man were allowed to die unpitied in the street, which seeing that thousands cannot get employment is an eminently humane utterance ; and he further quotes the Old Book, “If a man will not work neither shall he eat.” Our author would let poor idle men starve to death, but if the oft-mentioned Christ were to return and visit the House of Lords, he would go on a totally different errand [than that] for which Arnold White betakes himself before its “select” committee. Armed with the cords he used to drive the thieves from the Temple, he would apply the scriptural injunction to the idle rich thieves there assembled. He might with justice accuse the land-robbers, evictors, and rent-mongers with driving a disinherited people to herd in the cities and towns, and being native spoliators beside whom the sweater is an angel in comparison.

Let it be remembered that the petty depredators, by accentuating social misery, lay the seeds of social revolt and jeopardise the greater swindlers. They are like the clumsy burglar