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Propagandist Literature [May, 1888]

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'Chants of Labor: a Song Book of the People, with Music,' edited by Edward Carpenter, with a title-page drawn by Walter Crane, published by Swan Sonnenschien and Co., is a most useful addition to Socialist literature. There is a growing sense among energetic propagandists that the Cause suffers seriously from lack of the emotional element, of some efficient means of appeal to the feelings of the people. Several attempts have lately been made to introduce singing at Socialist meetings ; but one great obstacle has always been the want of a suitable song-book. Comrade Carpenter, therefore, has rendered signal service by devoting his knowledge, taste, and poetic feeling to the collection of socialist anti revolutionary verses and stirring or pathetic popular airs. Many fine old tunes have long been wedded to some ancient form of words, which nowadays has lost all gist and meaning. Several beautiful new lyrics and many rougher verses containing genuine poetic fervor have hitherto found no worthy or appropriate musical setting. Comrade Carpenter has set himself to supply both deficiencies, and with commendable success. " The book," as he writes in his preface,

” is in no sense a merely ’ literary ’ production-but emanates rather from the heart of the people.” We warmly echo its editor’s wish, ” May it help to give voice to those who have so long been dumb! ”

The Paris Communist.-Anarchists have lately undertaken a propagandist campaign among the peasants of the country districts. The), have just issued ail earnest appeal ’ From the Workers of the Towns to the Workers of the Country , (Les Travailleurs des Villes aux Travailleurs des Campagnes), pointing in the simplest terms to social revolution as the one means of deliverance alike for the half starved peasant proprietor, weighed down by mortgages and debts, and the propertyless artisan or factory hand, each being equally a victim of capitalist monopoly.

Comrade J. Sketchley, 8, Arthur Place, Birmingham, sends us two useful tracts written and published by himself. Prim 3d. each. ’The Workman’s Question’ and ’The Irish Question’ (2nd edition). Both supply many telling facts and figures illustrating the robbery and oppression of the workers by the ruling classes of landlords and capitalists in England and Ireland.

’The Chicago Martyrs: their Speeches in Court, with a Preface and ail Extract from the Record prepared for the Supreme Court of Illinois.” (International Socialist Societies of London. Price 6d. Apply for copies to H. Reuter, 101, Albert Street, Camden Town, N.W.) The preface gives a brief and clear account of the circumstances connected with the famous Chicago trial. The extracts from official documents relating to tire judicial proceedings are well selected to illustrate the prejudices of the jury, the perjury of the police and suborned witnesses, and the gross injustice of the verdict. The speeches of our murdered and imprisoned comrades are an admirable exposition of the economic and political beliefs of revolutionary Communist Anarchists.

’Was it a Fair Trial? An Appeal to the Governor of Illinois from General Trumbull on behalf of the condemned Anarchists,’ is now published in pamphlet form, and can be obtained from Mrs. Lucy Parsons, Room 35, 169, Washington Street, Chicago. Price 6d. It

deals in detail with the legal aspects of the Chicago judicial murders, and demonstrates the utter failure of the State prosecution to prove the existence of the imaginary conspiracy for which the eight men were condemned.

Any of our readers who want printing well and honestly done may safely go to the Justice Printery, 181, Queen Victoria Street, E.C., where or three members of the S.D.F., working for an eight hours' day at trades' union rates, undertake as much extra work as the weekly issue of Justice permits. They have lately published the two following penny pamphlets:

'John Burns' Defense at the Old Bailey, January, 1888 when he was tried in company with Cunninghame Graham for riot, etc., in Trafalgar Square on Bloody Sunday, In his usual bold and manly style, Burns claims the right of free speech and sets forth the demands of Social Democracy ; a style which gains much force in our comrade's spoken utterances from his giant voice and powerful personality.

'A Commune for London.' By H. M. Hyndman. A summary of the shameful and manifold abuses of metropolitan local government, drawn up in Mr. Hyndman's lucid and readable style, with intent to demonstrate the necessity of municipal reform on a broadly democratic basis. We utterly disbelieve that a representative Central Council elected by universal suffrage will make London much less of a hell for the mass of its inhabitants, unless its appointment is accompanied by wholesale expropriation of the appropriators of land and houses, and all other forms of social wealth; and then the relief will result from the expropriation not the Council. The real value of this contribution to revolutionary literature lies not in the contents but in the title. Widely advertised, and noted by numbers who will never read another line of it, 'A Commune for London' supplies the English Socialist movement with a new watchword and a rousing battle-cry.

'The Deistic Pestilence,' price 1d., a somewhat halting English translation from the German of John Most. We doubt if the repro-

duction of this bitter tirade against Christian dogma, written many years ago, is likely to be of much service in freeing its readers' minds from the tyranny of the superstitions of today. The Secularist party and Freethinkers in general have carried on such an energetic war against the most crude and absurd dogmatic beliefs, and the results of scientific investigation have been so widely spread abroad, that the grosser forms of superstition have little hold upon the mass of English workers. The emotional element among them, now captivated by such agencies as the Salvation Army, cannot be satisfied by mere destructive criticism. The human craving for development and joy needs the appeal of a new social ideal of happy life to be attained upon earth to turn it from the old baseless dreams of heaven, which have always afforded so tempting an opportunity for the selfishness of despot and priest. The preaching of Anarchist Socialism is the best antidote to superstition.