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SOCIALISM: AN ACTUAL EXPERIMENT

THE STORY OF A
SOUTH AMERICAN COLONY
BY STEWART GRAHAME

Price One Penny

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CHAPTER I.

"We shall have deserved well of it (Socialism) if we stir up hatred and contempt against all existing institutions. We make war against all prevailing ideas of the State, of Country, of Patriotism. The idea of God is the keystone of a perverted civilisation. It must be destroyed. The true root of liberty, equality and culture is Atheism."—KARL MARX.

At every period of the world's history there have been visionaries, obsessed with the idea that it is possible, by readjusting the established order of society, to provide a panacea for all sufferings and tribulations of mankind. Notwithstanding the repeated failures of all Utopias, however, there are still those who believe that life in a Communistic or Socialistic state would be a Paradise on earth.

There is no better example of a well-reasoned, carefully planned attempt to carry out the ideals of the leading modern Socialists than that of the "New Australia Co-operative Settlement Association," the members of which followed William Lane to Paraguay in 1893. The story of their enthusiasm, struggles, trials, and eventual abandonment of their original ideal, should serve as an object lesson and a warning to future generations.

William Lane was a journalist of brilliant powers and magnetic personality. Born in Canada, of English parentage, he migrated to Queensland, where he devoted himself to journalism in the interests of labour. He rapidly gained an extraordinary ascendancy over the minds of the intelligent artisans and mechanics of Brisbane, and disseminated among them, by means of tracts, free reading rooms and Socialistic debating societies, the fascinating fictions of Bellamy and the blasphemous doctrines of Karl Marx and Belfort Bax. His weekly paper, *The Boomerang*, met with instant success, and served as a medium for reaching the miners

and shearers in the back-blocks, who fell under the spell of his glamorous phrases as readily as the townsfolk had done. This much accomplished, he tackled the leaders of the various great Trade Unions and converted them to his theory that it would be possible, by concerted action, to overthrow capital and confiscate land and all means of production for the exclusive benefit of the manual worker. Then he established a new journal, entitled *The Worker*, which had for its war-cry the motto "Socialism in our Time." Personally, and through its columns, he advocated a policy of confiscation. His aims are well summed up in Blatchford's statement :

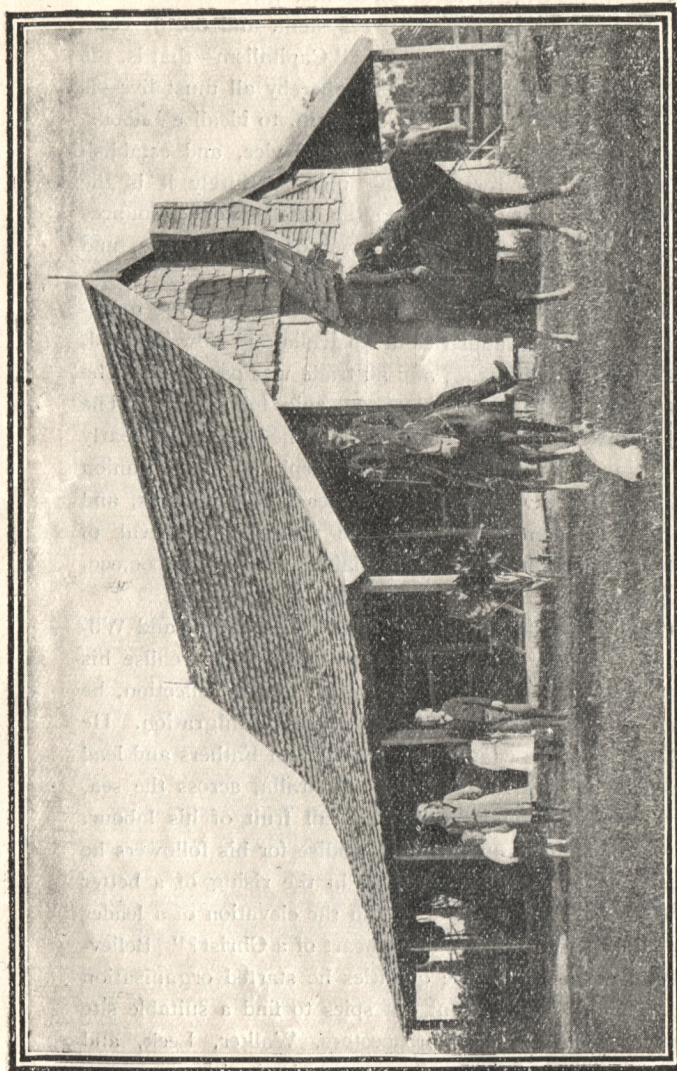
" Practical Socialism is so simple that a child may understand it. It is a kind of national scheme of co-operation managed by the State. Its programme consists essentially of one demand, that the land and other instruments of production shall be the common property of the people, and shall be used and governed by the people for the people."

Among the miners and shearers in the back-blocks of Australia, the fallacious theory that " the frugal workman only gets about one-third of his earnings, while under Socialism he, the worker, would get all his earnings," found ready acceptance.

Wherever working men were gathered together the vividly written columns of *The Worker* were scanned, and its burning phrases discussed with eager interest. Pens dipped in vitriol stirred up class hatred.

" Your Labour is a mere ' commodity,' your life-blood must be sold as so much wood or wool," Lane told the workers. " Yet Labour alone produces wealth. There can be no justice until Labour can work without asking leave of any and without paying profit to any. . . . This ownership, which causes misery and vice and poverty and wretchedness unspeakable, all the social evils from which you suffer and from which the world suffers, is a veritable sin. We have lived wickedly in taking part in a system which is wicked and sinful, which is brutish not human, selfish not loving."

Throughout Australia thousands of men were swayed by William Lane's agitation and the continent rang with cheers when the formidable Labour Federation, which he had set up by inducing



The Stimulus of Ownership.

This house was built after the "split" by one man, to house himself and family. The walls are fortified by stout planks of cedar and hard wood, felled in the forest and sawn with infinite labour. A double verandah protects the walls. There is an excellent cooking-range, and the interior is as comfortable as an English villa. By sheer hard work its owner has regained prosperity and owns many hundred head of cattle and horses.

all the great Trade Unions to amalgamate, gave battle to the Capitalists, "to attack the competitive system, and openly commence a campaign which will not cease till Capitalism—that is, the private holding by a few of the means whereby all must live—is no more . . . To overthrow the wages system, to idealise Labour, to conquer want, and hate, and greed, and vice, and establish peace on earth and good-will among men." Surely it is the height of absurdity when the would-be confiscator denounces greed, the stirrer up of class hatred inveighs against hate, and the creator of strife preaches peace and good-will!

In 1890 the shearers went on strike, and next year the movement was extended to all industries in Australia and New Zealand, including the overseas shipping, and all trade was paralysed. The battle was to the death, and widespread ruin followed it. The Trade Unions exhausted their funds, their members lost nearly two million pounds in wages* and were replaced by non-union men, the loss to trade was estimated at nearly five millions, and the indirect consequences hastened the financial upheaval of 1892-3, when Australian banks, with liabilities of £134,000,000, suspended payment.

Needless to say the strike entirely failed in its object, and William Lane saw that he must adopt other methods to realise his ideal of Socialism in our time. After much moody reflection, he decided on a stupendous programme of wholesale migration. He determined to follow the example of the Pilgrim Fathers and lead his downtrodden fellows to a "New" Australia, across the sea, where every worker should receive the full fruit of his labour. Of his power to establish an earthly Paradise for his followers he had no doubt. "Is not the only hope in the rising of a better Napoleon?" he demanded modestly, "in the elevation of a leader with the brain of a Jay Gould and the heart of a Christ?" Believing himself to possess all these qualities he started organisation forthwith, and, like Joshua, sent out spies to find a suitable site for his new Eden. These prospectors, Walker, Leck, and Saunders, all experienced bushmen, were received with open arms by Dr. V. V. Lopez, Foreign Minister, and General Gonzalez, President of Paraguay (in the centre of South America). Being

* The *Quarterly Review*, No. 411, April, 1907.

eagerly desirous of attracting a good class of immigrant to their fertile country, in the hope of making it boom, as the Argentine had done (and being heartily in sympathy with the communistic principle),* they made an astounding proposition.

"We will grant you, absolutely free of charge, 100 leagues (450,000 acres) of magnificent agricultural and grazing land,† allow you to import what you please free of any duty and relieve you of all taxation for a long period. We will grant you local autonomy with no responsibility to anyone save the Central Government. The only condition we make is that you shall establish 800 families on the land within four years." (It should be noted that the Government spent 450,000 dollars in buying out squatters so that the incomers might enjoy absolute proprietorship from boundary to boundary of their vast estate.)

When the prospectors returned to Australia they issued a glowing report. After declaring themselves satisfied on the score of the disposition of the Government, security of life and property, ease of access, climate and health, they added :

"It is the best watered country we have ever seen, being watered by running streams as clear as crystal, which run all the year round. It is heavily timbered, with enough clear land for pasturage. The forest land is very fertile. It is possible to raise crops of some kind during all seasons of the year. A great deal of the timber cleared would be useful and is saleable at once. We will thus be sure of a certain remuneration for the labour of clearing. We think that an acre cleared in Paraguay will produce as much as two in most other countries. We think it is unsurpassed for growing capabilities, as everything put in seems to thrive without any extra trouble. We have rail and water to our door. Foreigners are protected by their nationality from any military conscription. We feel confident that with enough capital to land, sufficient tools and food to keep us, say for 18 months, it will only be sheer laziness if we don't prosper, and starvation is impossible."

The sun-scorched denizens of drought-stricken back-blocks

* Until recent times Communism was the rule among the people of Paraguay.

† The quality of the land may be gauged from the fact that during the great Paraguayan War, Dictator Lopez demanded and obtained from the inhabitants of this particular area 50,000 head of cattle to feed his army.

“ exerting their labour for the benefit of the few,” living “ a peg lower than the black fellows, and existing all their lives on the very verge of destitution,” or “ sweating their lives out for the mortgagee,” jumped at Lane’s invitation to follow him to this land of plenty. With passionate eagerness thousands clamoured for a place in the great exodus, though many, like the rich young man in the Scriptures, “ went away sorrowful ” when they heard the financial conditions.* As communism was the very essence of Lane’s scheme it was ordained that every man who joined must put into the common treasury every penny he possessed. Businesses, houses, land, all must be sold and the proceeds handed over. As a mark of bona-fides every male member on joining the Association was required to pay down the sum of £10, which was non-returnable, and before he could set sail from Australia each man must make up his contribution to a minimum of £60. “ We only fix a minimum from a necessity, so that there may be no danger of failure, and all in the settlement must start on the same footing. If any man who wishes to join has more he must throw in all he has. We do not want anybody who does not feel ready to go ‘ mates ’ with everybody else that joins. Women are not required to pay anything.”

It might be thought that no considerable number of men could have been induced to sell up their homes and make themselves beggars before even setting foot in the Land of Promise, but Lane’s infectious enthusiasm worked miracles. He himself threw in the £1,000 which he had scraped together by arduous work for many years and several others contributed as much as £400. In an incredibly short space of time nearly £30,000 was paid into the Association’s coffers, and it was widely known that ten times as much could be expected to follow if definite news reached Australia that the movement was proving a success. As the full scheme of government is set out in the Appendix it is unnecessary to quote it here, except to call attention to four salient points :

(1) Ownership and conduct by the community of all land, tools, industries, production in exchange, and distribution. Saving by community of all capital needed by community; maintenance of

* See Appendix for Financial Clauses.

children by community; protection, education, and general well-being of each individual guaranteed by community. After all this has been done the balance of the wealth co-operatively produced shall be divided equally between every adult member, "*without regard to sex, age, office, or physical or mental capacity.*"

(2) Without prejudice to the liquor question members shall pledge themselves to teetotalism until the initial difficulties of settlement have passed and the Constitution established.

(3) Female suffrage and equality of the sexes in all matters.

(4) Religion not to be officially recognised by the community.

The final clause was inevitable in the programme of an admirer of Belfort Bax, who describes the Christian religion's chief sacrament as "the darker sides of savage ritual surviving in the Christian dogma of the Atonement."^{*} That William Lane agreed with his more outspoken preceptor is proved by his irreverent comment on a police court case when two children were found guilty of stealing a sacramental vessel and the wine which it contained from the altar of a church in Brisbane:

"Quite a flutter in the dovecote has been caused by the committal of the awful crime of sacrilege in South Brisbane," he wrote. "Yet it seems to me that if one of the children of the All-Father is hungry, he may make out a very good case as to why he is entitled to satisfy his hunger with the shewbread on his Father's table."[†]

With his whole soul he agreed with the statement[‡]: "According to Christianity regeneration must come from within. The ethics and religion of modern Socialism, on the contrary, look for regeneration from without, from material conditions and a higher social life." In his farewell "Last Word" before leaving Australia he sounded no uncertain note.

"We who go first trust our mates who remain to follow as soon as possible," wrote William Lane, "and meanwhile to do all they can for the common cause. We shall meet again free men and women on our own free land. Free because we can work as we wish, for ourselves and for one another, can care for each other, need neither wrong any nor be wronged ourselves.

^{*} Belfort Bax, "Ethics of Socialism."

[†] Quoted by A. St. Ledger in "Australian Socialism," published by Macmillan, 1909.

[‡] Belfort Bax, "Ethics of Socialism."

That is freedom worth living for and worth dying for. That, to me, is the religion of New Australia."

CHAPTER II.

"Socialism has been well-described as a new conception of the world presenting itself in industry as Co-operative Communism; in politics as International Republicanism; in religion as Atheistic Humanism, by which is meant the recognition of social progress as our being's highest end and aim. The establishment of society on a Socialistic basis would imply the definite abandonment of all theological cults."—BELFORT BAX.

THE extraordinary rapidity of Lane's recruiting gave rise to some consternation among thinking people in Australia. He was withdrawing scores of the best manual workers from the Queen's dominions to a foreign country, and the outlook, for his dupes at least, was serious. In reply to an appeal from various sources Lane scornfully repudiated any respect for "empty patriotism."

"What is one country more than another to the man whose whole life is one of toil and poverty, and what does Australia do more than England does or than any other countries do for the workers? The labour movement is 'world-wide,'" he declared. "It is not a local question, nor a national question, but a life question. If the workers have not yet learnt this they will simply suffer more until they learn it, perhaps too late. It is here as everywhere else the landless have no rights, the poor have no country, except in name."*

Disregarding protests from every quarter he issued his invitation broadcast, and many English, Scotch, and Irish joined his movement, for which all English-speaking whites were eligible. "Together you are all-powerful, workers of Queensland, workers of Australia, workers of the world. Together you can be free men and women, citizens of a free land, never needing to crave from a fellow-man permission to earn a bare living by making somebody else richer, never needing to feel the bitterness of unemployment, never needing to shrink at the thought that those you love may want." It was the same wild rhetoric which

* *New Australia Journal*, Vol. I., No. 8.

"The New Australia Journal."
William Lane's "War-Cry." (He signs himself "John Miller.")

The "Royal Tar," a wooden barque of 600 tons, was purchased to carry the first detachment of the enthusiasts to South America. In the month of July, 1893, they sailed, confident and full of faith, determined to vindicate their ideals and teach the

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William Lane's "War-Cry." (He signs himself "John Miller.")

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world a lesson. In their enthusiasm the communistic leaders refused to allow their followers to take with them any but the most essential personal possessions. The men were ordered to sell their saddles and the women their sewing-machines, things which would have been invaluable in their new homes. Everything was sacrificed for what it would fetch, and the money put into the common fund. The keynote of the movement was faith in one's fellow man, but, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, there were some who betrayed the trust reposed in them, and "kept back part of the price."

On her first trip the "Royal Tar" carried 241 persons, men, women, and children. All the crew, including the skipper, were members of the Association. At first all vied with one another in their eagerness to be true communists. They had got rid of social inequality now, one man was to be as good as another. Lane offered to take a hand with others at peeling potatoes in the galley. Soon, however, this feeling began to wear off. It was found absolutely necessary that there should be some to give and some to obey orders. It would not do, for instance, to navigate the ship by the vote of the majority!

There was one important particular in which William Lane defied the axioms laid down by his predecessors. In its famous platform the Socialistic Alliance of Geneva laid it down, "The Alliance declares itself atheist, it demands the abolition of marriage as far as it is a political, religious, juridical, or civil institution." While in sympathy with the first of these propositions Lane repudiated the second. He insisted on the sanctity of marriage in spite of Lamartine's* historic axiom, "Communism of goods leads as a necessary consequence to communism of wives, children, and parents." Communism of children Lane had provided for, but he took care that the promiscuous fraternal bond between the sexes in his ideal State should go no farther than platonics. The voyage had hardly commenced before he began to fear the same evil which broke up Brook Farm,† and he made a law that no woman should be allowed on deck after

* "History of Revolution of 1848."

† "They did not seek to interfere with marriage, nay, they guarded that holy state with reverence, yet the spirit of fraternal association was found to weave itself, with infinite subtleties, into the most tender relations of man and woman. Fear came into the common dwelling."—W. HERWORTH DIXON.

dark, that there might be no unseemly gallivanting on the "Royal Tar." The order aroused the ladies to a display of enthusiasm worthy of the Suffragettes. Moved to indignation by his suspicions they broke out into active rebellion and stormed the hatchway, reminding their leader that they had an equal vote in the conduct of affairs, and were not to be batted down without their own consent.

It should here be noted that William Lane had secured almost absolute power over the pioneers by getting the Constitution suspended and himself appointed as provisional director for two years, with power (in association with three staunch henchmen on whose support he could rely) to *dictate internal arrangements*. In theory it was possible to displace him by a two-thirds majority vote, but, as he was provided with proxies from all those still remaining in Australia, he would always constitute a majority in his own person. Until the arrival of the second contingent, therefore, he was monarch of all he surveyed.

After a wonderfully smooth and delightful voyage round the Horn the "Royal Tar" made towards Monte Video in the River Plate, and an incident occurred which created a great deal of ill-feeling. On sailing from Sydney Harbour a final collection had been taken of everyone's last halfpenny. Theoretically there was no money on the ship, except that in the possession of the leader. At Monte Video, however, it became evident that some had reserved a little private hoard in case of emergencies. While most had burnt their boats some few had merely moored them out of sight, so that they might be used for retreat if necessary. The visible evidence which the angry majority had of this perfidy was that of seeing some of their companions return to the boat at night in an enviable condition of inebriety. Mutual recriminations followed this revelation, and a very awkward split occurred in the ranks. Lane's authority was still paramount, however, and he succeeded in effecting a compromise.

At Monte Video the party transhipped to a river steamer for the thousand mile trip up river to Asuncion, where they entrained for Caballero. On arriving there they dumped all their possessions into bullock carts and set off over the mountains and through the picturesque forest towards their Land of Promise. Unfor-

tunately it was the rainy season when the pioneers arrived, and this made travelling more difficult. Halfway to the settlement the Rio Tebicuary was crossed, the women and children remaining in the bullock carts (which were floated by means of poles passed between the spokes of the wheels with projecting ends resting on canoes and dragged over by the swimming bullocks). Then an estero, or swamp, was safely negotiated, and the travellers found themselves on the boundary of their concession. Night was coming on, and there seemed every prospect of a down-pour, so a council was held to decide where to camp for the night. Some favoured a hill on one side of the track, others preferred that on the other. While they argued there came the sudden fall of night, and they were compelled to remain in the valley. Stores were unloaded and tents hurriedly put up, but, alas, for their fatal indecision, a storm of wind and rain descended and beat furiously upon them in their unsheltered position. One of the pioneers wrote to an Australian paper as follows :

"I was in the galley getting our evening meal when there came a squall of wind. We were in terror lest the tent should blow away altogether. Tea was forgotten, and we used all our efforts in trying to hold our tent down to the ground. The wind lulled a bit, and we went to bed. We got drenched as we lay there, but it was no use turning out. When I got out my pyjamas clung to me as though I had taken a swim in them. Fortunately the rain only lasted that day, and although we had to get into a wet bed the next night, the sun soon shone again."

Another night the single women, who occupied a tent by themselves, were terrified almost out of their wits by a terrifying, long-sustained cry, which they were convinced was that of a tiger lusting for their blood. The animal prowled quite close to their tent, and they expected every moment to be eaten up. For the rest of the night armed men patrolled the camp, and fires were kept burning brightly to scare away savage beasts. In the morning the animal whose awful note had so alarmed the sleepers was found to be a donkey. It seems that in parts of Australia that useful animal was little known, so that the ladies did not recognise his welcoming note.

Having had so bitter an experience of Paraguayan rain the

colonists turned all their energies at once to the task of building houses. No stone of any description could be found, so they were forced to adopt the native mode of construction. Rough corner posts were first put in and connected by means of withies and vines from the forest. On this light basket structure coat after coat of "pug" (made by mixing the red earth with water) was daubed. Half a dozen men would be employed in treading the pug, as Eastern people tread the winepress, to mix the water in well and bring it to the required consistency. Others would lift masses of the pug and throw it against the basket structure. When the whole side was unevenly covered it would be left to harden in the sun, and a second coating applied next day. After the application of several thick coats, within and without, the whole was carefully smoothed over and allowed to bake by the heat of the sun into a very substantial wall. Roofs were made either of thatch or of shingles (wooden tiles).

In the first instance the builders concentrated their attention upon a large hall, 144 ft. by 20 ft., divided into twelve compartments, each to house one family. This building was to be the centre of the township, which was already being laid out in quarter acre allotments, each with a frontage of 66 ft. and a depth of 165 ft. Those in authority strained every nerve to erect a weather-proof house as soon as possible to prevent the colony's possessions from spoiling, and to receive the Government officers in state when they came to pay an official visit to the new colony.

CHAPTER III.

"Under the pretence of destroying tyranny, to replace it by another tyranny."—LOUIS BLANC, "History of Ten Years."

A FEW days after the arrival of the communists the *Official Gazette* in Asuncion published a notice constituting New Australia as a separate district, not subject to the control of the local magistrates at Ajos or at San José. In order that they might have proper control over their land the colonists were allowed to nominate three of their members to hold official positions. To the principal office of Administrator (executive officer for en-

forcing law and registering births, deaths, and marriages) William Lane was appointed, with Tozer as deputy magistrate. Many of the communists had the strongest objection to the elevation of three of their number to positions of authority over the rest, but they submitted to the arrangement when told that it was the only way they could guard against outside interference. Gradually they hoped to educate the Government to an appreciation of the blessings of absolute equality. A date, October 11th, was assigned for the official constitution of the colony.

When the day came for the colony's official recognition the building was still unfinished; in fact, it was only partially thatched. A tarpaulin was thrown over the unfinished end of the place, a table was knocked together out of boxes, and a thirty foot flag pole was erected to receive the tricoloured flag of Paraguay. Alf Walker had been appointed to conduct the important Government officials to the colony. The party consisted of Dr. Lopez, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Secretary to the President, the Chief Magistrate, or Gefe Politico, of Ajos, and other notables, escorted by a military officer with four soldiers.

After breakfast, then, on the morning of the 11th October the sound of the horn proclaimed that the Government party were at hand. The little cavalcade advanced at the trot and halted, without dismounting, till Lane came forward to receive them. Then the Minister and his suite were conducted into the hall, while the soldiers tethered their horses in the orange grove. Señor Lopez, a good-humoured man, about thirty-eight years of age, with a round, red face, might have been taken for an English squire. When he had accepted what refreshment the colonists could offer the horn sounded again for all to assemble.

After the trustees and committee, consisting of the foreman of each department, had been introduced to the Minister he read a proclamation, which the President's secretary interpreted. The soldiers were drawn up and the Minister unfolded a Paraguayan flag. Each soldier took a corner and thus carried it fifty yards, the party following. Then, facing about, the officer took the flag, the Minister and Mr. Lane linked arms and advanced to the flagstaff, the party following them. The halyards were looped on, and the two hauled together.

As the flag with its stripes of red, white, and blue, its lion, and its cap of liberty fluttered in the breeze the colonists cheered and the soldiers fired their Winchesters. Second and third salutes were fired, and the enthusiastic Australians (or Utopians as they might now more properly style themselves) cheered themselves hoarse, standing bareheaded beneath the flag which was to guarantee them their "emancipation" from all the ills of the British yoke.

Most Socialist writers agree with August Bebel* in the ingenuous belief that Socialism would revolutionise not only material things but human nature also. "It is evident," he says, "that labour thus organised on principles of perfect freedom and democratic equality, in which one represents all, and all one, must awake the highest sense of solidarity and a spirit of cheerful activity, and call forth a degree of emulation such as is nowhere to be found in the present industrial system." It is upon such false promises as these that all Socialists build their fantastic hopes of universal bliss. The evidence of New Australia goes a long way towards establishing the exact converse of Bebel's proposition, for dissension, gloom and sloth were the order of the day.

In those early days the colonists were intoxicated with the magnificence of their project. There was no steady effort leading up to bigger things. Confident, and with some capital behind them, they commenced at once on the scale they hoped to be able to continue. A brass band of thirty-six instruments, on which £250 had been spent, practised assiduously in Colony time. On strict trade union principles none worked more than eight hours a day, and it was natural that the bandsmen should prefer blowing away at their instruments for some considerable proportion of their time to felling trees in the forest or tilling the fields beneath the burning rays of a tropical sun. A great deal of dissatisfaction was occasioned by the way labour was distributed. The man who worked arduously for eight hours in the vegetable garden envied the more fortunate fellow who spent his day riding about the camp, herding cattle. The cowboy, on the other hand, considered that the schoolmaster had a considerably easier job,

* "Die Frau."

and this last was moved to compare his allotted task with that of the colonist whose principal duty appeared to be to blow the dinner horn.

The colonists had to contend with numerous difficulties incidental to the country in which they had chosen to settle. One of the chief was that they found no stone, and were compelled to erect houses of timber and mud, the latter being used for floors and walls. They were unaccustomed to such a pest as the chigre, a small flea which gets under the toe nails and lays its eggs, causing the feet to fester. Mosquitoes gave great trouble, and poisonous snakes caused frequent alarms. Hornets built their nests under the rafters, and could only be taken down in wet weather, when it was easy to put a lighted rag on the end of a cane and burn them out, though the person performing the operation was pretty sure to be stung. Travelling ants also made periodic visits to each house, driving the occupants out, but these were something of a blessing in disguise, for they drove away all other pests, such as cockroaches, spiders, lizards, etc. Parrots, monkeys, and vultures are plentiful also in Paraguay, but they are unobjectionable, except when the former damage the crops, or the latter pick out the eyes of a sickly calf.

Such trials as these were as nothing, however, to the acrimonious disputes which broke out among the settlers within a few weeks of reaching New Australia. When William Lane initiated his great venture he was a convinced believer in the theory that, once removed from the pernicious influences of capitalism, they would all dwell together in brotherly love without the necessity of severe restrictions. He soon found out his mistake, however, for bitter charges of favouritism were continually levelled at his head and at the heads of the foremen in charge of every industry. When he found that envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness thrived in this "Paradise" as in a hot-bed he decided on a policy of benevolent despotism, which the fact of his holding proxies for all the members of his Association still in Australia enabled him to carry out. With a stern hand he put down revolt, and punished those who disputed his decisions by setting them the most distasteful tasks. No one was allowed to absent himself from the colony without his permission (seldom



Communitistic Labour.

A typical house co-operatively built "by all for all." Much of the wood was rotten and unsuitable for the work, but *easier to handle* than the hard woods. The rough walls of red "pug" were not even smoothed inside, and there was no verandah to keep the torrential rains from washing away the walls. No fireplace provided, and gaps between roof and walls made it impossible to keep a lamp alight when the wind blew.

accorded lest they should be tempted to get drink), and incessant grumbling became the order of the day.

"We have surrendered all civil rights and become mere cogs in a wheel. No longer active factors in the scheme of civilisation, but blind followers of an intriguing charlatan," wrote one of the pioneers. "In fact, a man is practically a slave. Lane has proved himself most unbusinesslike and incompetent. Scores of women and little children were exposed to the drenching rain, while Lane and his wife spent the first two months in Asuncion. Lane does the thinking and the colonists do the work. Result barbarism."

It is a peculiar characteristic of the stalwart Britisher that, when he is very miserable, he finds comfort in a "glass." Even this solace was denied to Lane's followers, for "King Billy" (as they called him) had decreed that the New Australian paradise should be a teetotal one. Three unfortunate men, who, in spite of Lane's regulations, visited the native village to seek solace in strong drink, received the hearty congratulations of their less courageous mates, but incurred the fierce wrath of their master. To the consternation of the culprits and their friends he decreed their instant expulsion from the community.

Apart from the question of abstract justice this action was so unlike William Lane's previous professions that his followers were absolutely staggered. In the old days when he preached brotherly love and mutual forbearance in the columns of *The Worker* he wrote thus of a Shearers' Union organiser, who had embezzled a considerable sum of money belonging to his mates: "I deeply regret that the Committee of the A.L.U. have decided to prosecute ——— for defalcation. I deny he is a criminal. He is a poor, drunken wretch, who should have been safeguarded against himself." How was it possible to harmonise so merciful a spirit with his present determination? The answer is simple. The man who rails most bitterly against the despotism of authority is himself a greater despot if ever he can grasp power. That is why all attempts at Socialistic government inevitably prove the most hateful form of grinding tyranny.

It would have been easy for Lane to punish the three offenders by docking their "credit" at the store in the manner provided

by the regulations, and practically the whole of the settlers begged him to adopt that course, but Lane was obdurate. They had broken his pet regulation, and they must go. In vain it was pointed out that an article of the "Constitution" said, "Dismissal from the community for persistent or unpardonable offence against the well-being of the community to be decreed only by a five-sixth majority of all adult members." He replied that the Constitution was not yet in operation and that if it were his sole vote (representing all those still in Australia) outweighed the others by the required majority. The fact that the unfortunate offenders would be marooned in an Indian country many thousands of miles from home did not move him, nor did the fact that they had contributed all their possessions to his wild-cat scheme. There was no room in New Australia for backsliders.

Observing rebellious looks on every side William Lane decided to establish his authority by a *coup d'état*. Forgetting all about brotherly love as soon as his absolutism was questioned he exerted his power as a Paraguayan magistrate, and sent for a posse of native soldiers.

With scarcely enough money to enable them to reach Asuncion and throw themselves upon the mercy of the British Consul the three were driven forth at the bayonet's point. Terror filled the hearts of those who remained. There was evidently no hope for those who opposed the "Dictator's" will. Was it for this that they had left Australia?

CHAPTER IV.

"We preach the gospel of hatred, because, in the circumstances, it seems the only righteous thing we can preach. To talk about the 'Gospel of Love' is simply solemn rubbish. . . . Those who talk of the 'Gospel of Love,' with Landlordism and Capitalism for its objects, want us to make our peace with iniquity."—"The Class War," by JAMES LEATHAM.

THE men and women who had left happy homes in a civilised country to teach the world a glorious lesson were sadly undeceived at New Australia. Lane's overbearing attitude, the suspension of the Constitution (of which the rank and file were not aware till they had sailed), and the expulsion of members caused the

bitterest animosity among the colonists. The dissatisfaction became so acute that a number of them decided to sacrifice all that they had put into this venture in order to make a fresh start elsewhere. Those who found themselves in any disagreement with their dictator realised that they were in danger of being expelled by twos and threes and decided to take concerted action; how eagerly they turned now towards the British flag which they had repudiated so cheerfully a little earlier! An authentic account of what actually occurred is to be found in the Foreign Office Report, "Miscellaneous Series" No. 358 (1895), which reads as follows:

"Things went from bad to worse, disputes arose and became so bitter that two parties were formed, one composed of those who followed and the other of those who opposed the directions of the manager, and a new source of quarrel sprang up when it was discovered that the association had been registered as a limited liability company,* without the members having ever been consulted on the subject, and that the manager would be able to exercise almost absolute power; moreover, the use of the police force created great excitement and a general uproar, until at length finding it impossible to agree 85 members seceded in a body, preferring to abandon all their shares in the colony and to receive a certain sum, the married about five pounds and the single three.†

"In a letter which one of the seceders wrote to the British Consul at Monte Video he stated that the manager had arrogated to himself absolute power, and was expelling those who dared to stand up for their rights by twos and threes. 'To prevent his taking us thus,' so he says, 'we have all decided to leave in the hope that something may be done for us in a body that would not be done for us individually.'

"They went to Villa Rica, and there they had a long list of grievances to pour forth, and tales to tell of how some had been expelled on trivial pretexts and others tyrannised. They said

* It was, of course, necessary to register the Association in Paraguay as a land company in order to secure its legal status. It was expressly stipulated that the shares should pay no dividend.—AUTHOR.

† In the Report the amount is stated in Paraguayan currency—200 dollars and 150 dollars respectively. The value of the paper dollar fluctuates from as low as 2½d. up to a maximum of 6d. (on which basis it is here calculated).—AUTHOR.

that no financial statement had ever appeared, that when they had asked for one they had been terrorised, that they could not go outside the settlement without leave; that if they did attempt to go, having given up everything they possessed for the good of the cause, they had no money to spend. Life under such conditions was intolerable, and it was clear that what with the absence of liberty, the isolation of existence, the suspicion with which one party regarded the other, the mutual fear, the boycotting, the constant disputes, and hundreds of little disagreeable events that went on the whole day long, whatever opinions they might hold on other subjects they were one and all disposed to agree that New Australia was anything but a working man's paradise."

Naturally the British Consul at Asuncion was at his wits' end to know what to do with this army of destitute fellow countrymen, and the Second Secretary of the Legation at Buenos Aires was sent to try and patch up a truce.

"I had been instructed to visit the colony to enquire into the cause of the expulsion of these members and the secession of about one-third of the colony," wrote Mr. M. de C. Findlay.* "They were given a few pounds apiece when they left, but when I saw them they were on the verge of destitution. I found Mr. Lane, the present chairman of the Association, prepared to give me all the information I asked for, but to him the articles of association and agreements signed are as the code of the Medes and Persians, and any infringement thereof must be summarily dealt with. He does not admit such things as extenuating circumstances, justice means to him the law according to the letter; a man is either 'straight' or he is 'not straight,' and in the latter case out he should go. . . . Another question which may cause differences is that of nationality. Mr. Lane told me he had 'no reason to be enthusiastically loyal,' and that a vote would be taken before long which would probably result in the adoption of a Paraguayan nationality."

In his introductory letter Mr. Findlay testifies to the good character of the colonists: "The colonists have started with everything in their favour—free land, immunity from taxation, a good climate, and a certain amount of capital. They are a fine

* Foreign Office Report, 1894, No. 1,357.

class of men, and if they were less disposed to stand on the letter of their rights and took a more reasonable view of the failings of their fellows they would be sure to succeed. As it is they came to found Utopia, and before I visited the colony had succeeded in creating (as they said) 'a hell upon earth.' I feel morally certain that if the colony had been started on an individualistic basis (each colonist receiving an allotment), and with no complicated regulations to fight over, not a man would have left the settlement."

With praiseworthy generosity the Government put a fresh slice of territory at the disposal of the seceders close to a settlement of Poles, Germans, and Italians, but it was heart-breaking to commence anew without the commonest necessities of life or the requisite money to buy proper implements. With grim determination they set to work, however, till enough money was earned to pay the passage of twenty-five persons down-river to Buenos Aires, where they were befriended by the Benevolent Society, who made an appeal to the British charities to aid in returning them and their destitute comrades to Australia. It is safe to prophesy that they will remain convinced individualists to the end of their days!

Meanwhile the "Royal Tar" had returned to Australia for the second contingent. In their enthusiasm a large number of members of the "New Australia Association" had sold their homes and were encamped together awaiting their turn to sail. A little before they were due to embark an official warning came from the Legation in Buenos Aires that dissension was rife at the settlement, and that wholesale secession had commenced already. In alarm and consternation those about to sail demanded further information, and a cable of enquiry was sent to William Lane. Then a remarkable misunderstanding arose:

"Through some strange error, not yet satisfactorily explained, the telegram received from Paraguay made out that only eight instead of eighty persons had left the colony. The emigrants stated that if they had known the exact state of affairs they would have remained at home, but so small a number as eight secessions was not sufficient to deter them from their purpose; so after passing a resolution expressing the greatest confidence in

their officials and in the object of the Association they elected to proceed in the ship, which sailed from Adelaide on December 31. When they arrived at Monte Video and there learned what had taken place three or four families resolved to return, but the rest continued their journey, though not without misgivings; at all events, on reaching Asuncion on March 7th one of them had no sooner landed than he went to the Consulate and claimed protection of the British flag. He said that the manager had met them, and at a meeting held on board the steamer had said that he would stigmatise as a blackleg everyone who should discuss matters connected with the Association. He claimed the protection of the British flag to get it (his property) back by all peaceable means. With this exception, however, the rest of the party, numbering about 190 in all, left Asuncion for New Australia, and were given settlements about ten miles distant from the original one.”*

This deliberate isolation of the newcomers was (according to Alfred Rogers) a part of Lane’s settled policy of keeping his followers ignorant of their position, financially and otherwise. “His treatment of those not in the swim with him was one of studied contempt. Lane confessed that he could work only with fanatics. He has seen God in *propria persona* and got special revelations from Him. He meant to make himself a benevolent despot in the community! There is also no doubt that Lane had decided upon separating with a chosen few from the main body before reaching Paraguay, and that he reserved the choicest ground in the concession, Codas, for this purpose. Everything he did, however unscrupulous it might appear to others, was justifiable in his own eyes.”†

These statements, whether well-founded or not, are instructive as showing the state of feeling which had arisen, and the suspicion with which William Lane was regarded. In the same report, by one in hearty sympathy with the movement, we find this interesting illustration of the magic change which power can produce in the attitude of a Socialist leader: “Lane as a high-

* Foreign Office Report, 1895, No. 358.

† “The New Australia Report,” by Alfred Rogers, presented to the British Board of the New Australia Association.

souled enthusiast in the cause of labour, and Lane as a despot—crafty, mendacious, almost afraid to meet men face to face—were two different men. As the first he roused the enthusiasm of thousands, as the second he was able to draw out all the worst passions and the most evil thoughts of those whom he had so far led. Hence the first split.”

Soon after the arrival of the second batch there came a crisis. Headed by Gilbert Casey the newcomers insisted on a plain state-



Communism means Adversity.

Those who seceded to Cosmé and continued to live as Communists, grew poorer year by year. Some slaved like niggers in the sugar-cane fields, others worked on the railway and remitted their wages to the common fund. Nevertheless it was found that, when “each” worked for “all,” everybody starved. The few who remain are pitifully poor and weighed down by debt. Lane has long since left them and gone back to Individualism.

ment, and found that the affairs of the settlement had been so woefully mismanaged that a change of officials was urgently necessary. Then it was Lane's turn to secede. As “a better Napoleon” it was obvious he could not submit with dignity to the orders of another. After telegraphing to Australia for per-

mission to enforce the Constitution (providing for the election of a Director and Board of Management) he resigned, and Frederick Kidd was elected to the chief executive office. Then Lane applied for permission to settle with his immediate adherents on the coveted Cudas land, but the Board of Management refused. They rightly told him that he must bear his share in the common toil, and work for the benefit of his fellow men in whatever capacity the properly elected authorities might order. The tables were turned with a vengeance! As soon as he was asked to practise the submission which he preached William Lane seceded, taking with him forty-five sympathisers and a fair proportion of the common stock of implements and cattle. Shaking the dust of New Australia off his feet he proceeded to found a selecter Paradise at Caazapa, which he christened the Cosmé Colony.

CHAPTER V.

“Well-meaning persons, with a great itch for managing things, and a great turn for bungling them . . . contrive in a Socialistic community to get appointed on the Council of Industry and play sad havoc with the common good.”—JOHN RAE, *Contemporary Review*, September, 1890.

AFTER the departure of William Lane from New Australia it was felt that the way was clear for a sane and practical carrying out of the co-operative principle. To guard against the possibility of any autocratic misgovernment in future general meetings were frequent, and the new Administrator could hardly sign his name without someone or other insisting upon a vote as to whether it was proper for him to do so. In place of the despotism of one man the colonists now suffered under the infliction of an inconstant public opinion, which displaced officials or made new regulations one day only to reverse its decisions the next. Under the new régime no subordinate foreman was entrusted with the smallest discretionary power. All applications for clothes, tools, leave of absence, etc., came before the Board of Management, which wasted its time in interminable arguments over petty details, with the result that important matters were hopelessly neglected.

Meanwhile organisation in Australia had ceased, and no money was coming in from outside, so that it was vitally necessary for all to co-operate in revenue-producing labour.

Although enormous energy had been expended in the work of clearing the forest to plant wheat the crop was unsuitable for the country and had proved a failure. It was therefore necessary to buy corn from the natives, and the little money remaining was expended in this manner. Why the pioneers had not already engaged in lumbering operations or dairy-farming for profit (they had 70 milch cows, and butter brings a very high price in Villa Rica), to say nothing of cattle-dealing, it would be hard to explain. Apparently the directors imagined, as our Socialist legislators do, that they could for ever live on capital. With a view to raising more capital (to be spent like the other—as income) Gilbert Casey was despatched to Australia with plenary powers, “to take over the books, documents, cash, ‘Royal Tar,’ and other securities, and to place the organisation upon a proper footing. On arrival in Sydney Casey took immediate steps to carry out his instructions. This part of the history of New Australia is very black, and reflects the greatest discredit on some of those concerned, and, in fact, leaves the way open for charges of the gravest character. Despite his very best endeavours Casey was unable either to get the books or the securities transferred, and the upshot of it all was that somehow the property was sold, including the ‘Royal Tar.’ It is therefore not known how much money was subscribed to the association, and how it was spent, save that amount which was remitted to Paraguay.”*

Naturally Casey was somewhat taken aback by this literal application of the principle “all for each,” and he was at his wits’ end to know what to do, especially as his footsteps were dogged by hundreds of unfortunates who had paid in all they possessed to the Association and were left stranded at Sydney. It would have been a kindness on his part to reveal the precise state of affairs at New Australia, and advise them to beg their bread rather than proceed thither, but so far from doing this he set to work to enrol fresh members for the sake of their monetary contributions. In due course he dispatched £300 and some 50 or

* Report presented to British Board of New Australia Association by Alfred Rogers.

60 colonists to Paraguay, leaving behind about 200 destitute dupes to accept charity from the much-abused capitalists and curse the day they had ever heard of Socialism. In the old days, when they so heartily endorsed the policy of confiscating the possessions of the well-to-do they had never expected to be hoist with their own petard!

While Casey was in Australia, hunting up fresh funds and re-establishing the recruiting base, his fellow directors in Paraguay were devising fresh schemes for frittering away each contribution as it came to hand. On all sides they were surrounded by magnificent forest, full of cedar, mahogany, teak, and other valuable woods, which only required to be chopped down, squared, and carted to Villa Rica or Caballero in order to fetch a very high price. Lumbering was the industry on which the prospectors had relied, in their report, for revenue, and it required no capital outlay to pursue it—nothing but hard work in fact—and this was a fatal qualification in the colonists' eyes. For their own benefit any of them would cheerfully have undertaken the work (at present, under individualism, it is a staple industry), but none could see why they should sweat in the forest while others followed less arduous occupations. So the timber took care of itself for awhile and the Board of Management found pleasing amusement in experimenting with the planting of ramie, and bought a costly but inefficient machine to prepare the product for the market. Ten acres were planted with the fibre (used in the production of imitation silk) and immense care lavished upon it in the hope of realising enormous profits. Needless to say this expectation was not realised and the whole thing proved a ghastly failure.

It might be argued that this result had nothing to do with the nature of Socialism, but was due to the stupidity of the Board of Management. Experience elsewhere justifies the conclusion, however, that such mad schemes have a fatal fascination for all "reformers." To quote the frank words of General Rossel, the infamous commander of the French Socialist Army during the Communist rising of 1871: "They study with good faith the works of those philosophical day-dreamers who promise them a paradise on earth; they are desirous of suddenly transforming

the organisation of labour . . . and three-fourths of their time they are the *mere dupes of their innovating experiments*. Incapable of managing their own affairs, they are still more incapable of managing public affairs."

Besides the timber industry there were many other avocations in which the colonists might have engaged with profit. They possessed 2,500 head of cattle in addition to 70 milch cows and 100 horses. Dairy-farming would have provided an excellent income, while the fattening up of cattle for market would have produced a splendid revenue. (At the present time a dozen or more of the colonists, working for *themselves*, make an excellent living at the trade, the Colony grazing land being unrivalled for this purpose.) By extraordinary perversity, however, energy was concentrated upon market gardening, though there was no possible market for the produce. So far from preserving the latter carefully for home use, a great part was destroyed out of sheer wantonness.

"There is absolutely no regard for common property," wrote "Colonist," in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. "Tools and implements are lost, mislaid or destroyed in the most disgraceful manner. At the Las Ovejas settlements last year the melon beds were trampled on by adults and children. Thousands were broken open and not one was allowed to come to maturity."

The wholesale loss or appropriation of tools was carried to such an extreme that when harvest time came there was nothing to reap with. "In the farming department, the sight of a number of men and boys working overtime, snipping off the ears of wheat into a bag with table knives, in a field which averaged one bushel to the acre, was no less admirable as indicating heroic pluck than the picture of a gang of men raking rows of cornstalks with their hoe handles."* The wheat, of course, was a failure, but the maize harvest was gloriously abundant, so much so in fact that the agricultural section were unable to garner it without help. Naturally enough they applied to the Board of Management for temporary assistance from other departments, but the strict Trade Unionists of the community were up in arms.

"What?" they cried. "Permit cattle drovers, or bottle washers, to lend a hand in the harvest field? Heaven forbid!"

* Letter from A. Macdonald, who advocated the abandonment of Communism in favour of Individualism. He was himself a "glutton for work."

"Well, if you take up that attitude, the farming section will insist on their eight-hour day and refuse to work a minute overtime. Then the rain will come and the harvest will be ruined. The welfare of the community is at stake!"

Naturally enough, this appeal conveyed nothing to them. Had it been their own corn they would have worked all night to bring it in, but as for the community—that was another story! As de Tocqueville remarks, "Individual interest is the indispensable incentive to labour and economy." Having no incentive but the *good of all*, not a soul would lift a finger to help, so the agriculturalists shrugged their shoulders and worked only their bare eight hours, with the result that much of Nature's bounty was smashed down by rain and abandoned to the pigs.

"For a long time sentiment was the ruling factor in New Australia, business being left in the background; now both sentiment and business are in the background. For the moment there seems to be nothing but mutual distrust, greed, jealousy, and unkindness," wrote Rogers in his Report. Then with truly Socialistic optimism, he adds, "But I do not think it is more than a passing distemper. Necessity will force attention to business and sentiment may then take its right place."*

It was not long indeed before the Board of Management took to business—with disastrous results. For some time the colonists had been living on short commons, but nevertheless there was a heavy debt and the supplies of clothing, stores, etc., were well-nigh exhausted. There was no remunerative occupation in progress, and the stream of subscriptions from England and Australia had dried up. The leaders were faced with two alternatives, either (1) they must absolutely set their people to some productive labour, such as lumbering, or (2) they must raise money from outside. With tender regard for the weary muscles of Labour they chose the latter alternative and actually gave away for a song their own people's chief means of livelihood. Characteristically, the contracts were rushed through by the business agent without the consent of the bulk of the colonists. A howl of dismay arose when the latter learned to what their trusted leaders had committed them.

* Report to the British Board of the New Australia Association.

As has been noted already, the colonists owned at one time 2,500 head of cattle. These were distributed on different grazing grounds, and the heads of the farming department had the haziest idea how many remained. There was an impression that there should still be about 2,000, without reckoning natural increase, and it was decided to dispose of half that number. "The contract was rushed through before the people had time to consider it, and as hurriedly carried out. The men of Loma Rugua had at once petitioned against it, but it was too late. The contract was for 1,000 head at 13s. 6d.* per head, calves up to two years being thrown in," states Rogers in his Report. "The cattle were mustered, when, to the surprise of everyone, not a thousand head could be found! There were 928 sold, and some 1,500† calves thrown in for nothing. Evidently there had been a huge blunder, and yet, owing to the disgraceful want of system, no one was responsible. The price at which they were sold was, I am told, ridiculous, as shortly afterwards the hides alone fetched that figure. The whole business reflects the greatest discredit upon the proposers of the contract and the officials who carried it through. Had the cattle been sold in small lots, it is reckoned that one-half of the number sold would have realised more than the contract."

"Raise money at any price," was the characteristic motto of the Socialist leaders, "and let questions of principle go hang." In violation of the spirit of their scheme the Board of Management entered into a "capitalistic" contract, giving a certain outsider the exclusive right of cutting timber on their territory for a period of three years for a ludicrously small consideration. Not till the contract was signed did they realise that the colonists were no longer entitled to conduct lumbering operations themselves. It seemed as if the Board were suicidally determined to cut themselves off from all possible sources of revenue. "After careful thought, in the light of previous contracts and schemes," says Rogers, darkly, "I am of the opinion that interests, other than those of the colony, were involved in the matter." By this he

* The Report states the price as 27 dollars. The value of the dollar was 6d. at that time. (It is now less.)

† The Report says that 4,500 calves were thrown in for nothing, but, as this would far exceed the natural increase, it is probably a printer's error.

implies that bribery and corruption from without had already got to work in Lane's co-operative Utopia; if so, it is only what must be expected in any such community, for the injustice of "equal division of unequal earnings" must inevitably breed discontent and prompt base self-interest to find secret ways of making profits.*

"Man is not by nature Socialistic," says Herbert Spencer.† "He, as a matter of fact, will long continue to love himself better than his neighbours, and to seek in the first place his own advantage."

That the promoters of these two contracts had some secret "axe to grind" in rushing them through became a matter of common opinion among the rank and file at New Australia, and there were some who came forward with a proposition something like this, "What's the good of pretending to be communists any longer? It only gives the cunningest ones the chance to feather their nests. Let's divide everything up while there is anything left to divide and turn individualists—'each for himself and the devil take the hindmost'!"

As will appear in the next chapter, brotherly love was now a byword. Envy, hatred, and malice had taken its place, and the noble resolve to bear one another's burdens had given place to a policy of grab.

CHAPTER VI.

"What is a Communist? One who has yearnings
For equal division of unequal earnings.
An idler or bungler, or both, he is willing
To fork out his *penny*—and pocket your *SHILLING*!"
—EBENEZER ELLIOTT

THE injustice of equal sharing between industrious and idle, skilful and good-for-nothing, did not obtrude itself particularly in New Australia's prosperous days, when fourteen bullocks were slain every week and money was abundant, but when increasing poverty made it necessary to revise the scale of living, and the

* If such corruption existed it must have been among minor officials, without the knowledge of Lane's successor, who was a man of sterling honesty and did more than anyone else to retrieve the fortunes of the colonists.—AUTHOR.

† "A Plea for Liberty."

lordly credit allowance was reduced to a meagre pittance, the glaring folly of such a scheme made itself apparent. There was a lean wiry giant named Macdonald, for instance, to whom hard labour was the breath of life. Axe on shoulder he would take himself off to the forest and bring tree after tree, with fibre hard as iron, toppling to the ground. Single-handed he made a bigger clearing in six weeks than half a dozen of the "born tired" variety could accomplish in six months. His earning capacity as a woodman, even in Paraguay, where wages are low, would be several pounds a week. On the other hand, take a lounging argumentative waster like X—, who was never much better than a "sundowner" in Australia, and whose scamped labour would be dearly paid for by his bare keep. Would any sane man argue that both were equally useful to the community? At New Australia no account was taken of physical or mental capacity, and consequently both types were served alike. As a result there was no incentive to industry, and the profit-earning power of the community was reduced accordingly.

It should be noted that members were at liberty to eat at the common table at a certain agreed upon mess-rate (paid for by deduction from the credit value of their labour checks), or to draw food from the stores at the price fixed by a committee, and make their own cooking arrangements. Theoretically, all articles grown on the settlement had to be sold through the store, so that if a gardener ate some of the produce over which he tended, or a child picked a banana from the thousands which grew wild they were robbing the community. In practice, therefore, though everything belonged to all, it was illegal for any individual to eat so much as a berry without first calculating its value and having it debited against him on his labour check. As money did not circulate, the endless complications attending all negotiations can be better imagined than described.

By a revised agreement dated May 21st, 1895, it was decided that all adult members were entitled to a reduced credit of 2s. 1½d. per week, to spend as they pleased (any who chose to buy motor cars, or priceless art treasures being at liberty to do so, of course!), with a supplement of 1s. per week, which must be spent solely on necessary clothing. As children were the care of the community

they also received an allowance, adjusted, not according to size or appetite, but according to age. All alike under the age of 15 were allowed 6d. weekly for clothing, and a graduated amount for food.* As children were maintained under the guardianship of parents it followed that those of the latter who were blessed with a "quiver full" drew very heavily on the communal stores, although they performed no more labour than the others. This fact naturally created many heart-burnings. Let us consider two concrete instances:

A man and wife with three daughters, aged 18, 16, and 2 respectively, and two sons aged 12 and 6, would draw 17s. 4d. worth of articles weekly from the common stock, and live comparatively in clover,† although only the man did any profit-making work. On the other hand, five bachelor adults of Macdonald's type and a hard-working boy of fifteen, with tremendous waste of tissue to be renewed and brawny frames to be covered with clothing, would get only 17s. 7½d. between them for a full week's arduous work. The family would naturally mess together; they could live well, be well clothed and have a comfortable unused credit on the community's books put by for a rainy day. The six hard-working bachelors, on the contrary, would be so perilously near to starvation that they would be in danger of eating one another! They would not have even the consolation of knowing that the well-fed man's wife and grown-up daughter were helping things along by doing their (the bachelors') washing. Bearing in mind the admonitions‡ of such brilliant Socialists as Mr. Bernard Shaw many ladies simply repudiated their obligations and refused to do any communal work, though the regulation was that all washing must be divided up amongst the women.

"There is not a person here who could honestly tell you that he has not degenerated under these conditions," wrote Mr. A.

	s.	d.
* Under 18	2	0
" 15	1	6
" 10	1	0½

	s.	d.
Under 5	0	10½
" 1	0	3

† It should be noted that living is extraordinarily cheap in Paraguay. Outside the towns £20 per annum is sufficient to feed and clothe any average-sized white family in comfort, provided that they grow their own vegetables.

‡ "Unless woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, and to everyone but *herself*, she cannot emancipate herself. Therefore woman has to repudiate duty altogether."—"Fabian Essays."

Macdonald, the "glutton for work" already referred to. "Communism certainly renders people more selfish. At the general dining table each has his private bottle of treacle, which he stows away between meals under his pillows or elsewhere as best he can; while quite a number carry their utensils to and from the table with them. Knives, forks, etc., have an amazing faculty for disappearing in a communistic settlement."

Another colonist, in a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, bore out this statement, and touched upon a still more serious matter. After describing the wholesale wastefulness already quoted (Chapter V.)



The Commune's Children.

At Cosmé the feeding, clothing and education of children were the care of the community. "Three times a day they ate corn meal, sweet potatoes, and mandioca, making variety by leaving one of them out." The destitution was lamentable.

he adds: "There is no probability of education for half the children, and they have been sadly neglected. Some of the little ones may be seen limping around with their feet in a terrible state from neglect. The atmosphere of gross materialism is most deplorable in its effects. There is no doubt that people professing some faith are the most pleasant to live among."

Dreadful as this picture of the Godless Eden is, the settlers had not yet plumbed the abysmal depths of misery which they were des-

tinged to experience. Although it was estimated that if every male adult could earn £7 a year the colony would thrive and pay its way, even this humble achievement was beyond their powers. The knowledge that even the laziest drones would share in the fruit of their industry paralysed the energies of the most industrious. Soon all money was exhausted, next the stores were entirely depleted of their stock and the commonest necessities of life were unobtainable. Simultaneously the same terrible conditions obtained at Cosmé (the second colony to which Lane and his followers had seceded). In each case the Communists grew gaunt-faced and hollow-eyed, and the following description of the Cosmé folks' privations applies equally to both :—

“ In the store supplies ran down day by day till women washed without soap, cooked without fat, and patched the outer garments with the inner. Flour was almost non-existent. Every article of value that anyone possessed sooner or later found its way to Asuncion to be sold and the proceeds spent in buying kerosene, beans, salt or maize. When things got very bad a tarpaulin muster brought in even wedding rings. Maize at last practically gave out. Light was available only in case of night nursing, and in a day or two there was no salt. . . . For two weeks the colony fed wholly on unsalted beans. Then the maize came in, . . immediately after mandioca followed, then sweet potatoes and beans.”*

Never was a harvest more eagerly awaited! Even when it came, however, the diet was almost entirely vegetarian, and such things as flour, tea, butter, etc., were, of course, unobtainable. All the food was of the same “ starchy ” variety. “ Being so starchy the amount of actual nourishment is small, while the varieties of indigestion they produce are severe and many. There is practically no fat. A housewife in my time thought herself lucky if she had a teaspoonful of fat in a month with which merely to grease the pan. And any man who got his food cooked with a taste of fat declared he felt stronger all day for it.”

It should be stated that these privations were much more philosophically endured at Cosmé than at New Australia *at first*, while William Lane's hopes were still high, and he was able to

* Mrs. Mary Jane Gilmore in *Sydney Daily Telegraph*.

imbue his devoted followers with optimistic spirit. He had sent an agent to Australia, moreover, to organise and raise funds, and no doubt believed that Cosmé would soon be able to pay its way. At New Australia nobody entertained such illusions any longer, and they endured their manifold miseries with a hopeless feeling that they would have to put up with the same manner of living for the remainder of their days. It was a black time, indeed, at New Australia, but the natural phenomenon that the darkest hour immediately precedes the dawn applied forcibly in their case. Now that there was no longer anything to be gained by Communism, even the drones were willing to suspend it. By a vote of the majority the Constitution was altered; henceforth every man would be entitled to dispose as he pleased of the fruit of his own labour, and a new incentive was given to industry. It was the dawn of a new and brighter day.

CHAPTER VII.

“And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour. The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.”—ISAIAH iii. 5.

It was once said, in all reverence, by a famous newspaper editor that the Bible, with its terse, expressive, concentrated style, would remain for all time as an example of first-rate journalism. Certainly it would be hard to pen a paragraph more vividly describing the pass to which things had come to at New Australia than the above quotation from the prophet Isaiah. Freedom of action was denied to all, the smallest details of each one's daily life were jealously spied upon by some other, and the degrading atmosphere of mistrust, which turned every man against his neighbour, was exploited by the base for their own ends.

A blight seemed to descend upon everything managed by the community, and the children proved no exception to the rule. Deliberately cut off from the softening influence of religion, and

brought up to ignore all distinctions of age or sex, it was natural for them to seek always their own pleasure and ride rough-shod over the old and infirm. Untaught and unrestrained, the neglected children seemed doomed to suffer all their lives for the follies of their parents. This was perhaps the saddest aspect of the New Australia fiasco.

As soon as the resolution, abolishing Socialism, was carried Frederick Kidd, under whose sane and practical administration the change was brought about, set off to Asuncion to interview the Government, whom he found sympathetically disposed and prepared to do all in their power to assist the colonists. Withdrawing the original grant of territory, the President confirmed them in possession of the twenty-five square miles on which they were actually settled, and approved a scheme whereby every man was entitled to select for himself an allotment of sixty squares of agricultural ground, for which he would be given title-deeds when he had built a house and complied with the usual conditions. The right of grazing over the grass lands was reserved in common for all, so that it was possible for every individual colonist to become a big cattle farmer if he could find the necessary capital. This fact created fresh ambition in the heart of every family, and there was a general exodus of able-bodied men to the railway works at Sapucay, to Asuncion, Rosario, or Buenos Aires—anywhere where good wages could be earned by a man willing to work his fingers to the bone.

One colonist, who now owns many hundred head of cattle, worked as a butcher in an Argentine meat works, where wages are high, living on the odd halfpence of his pay and remitting the balance to his wife, to be carefully invested in lean cattle, for which a ready market could be found when fattened. The Administrator himself looked for work as a bootmaker's assistant in Asuncion (he had once had a prosperous business of his own), but, to his delight, a leather merchant set him up with a stock of leather and even became responsible to a third party for the value of the necessary tools. Being a good workman he soon made headway and became a cattle owner also, though it is principally on his trade that he relies for a living. The story of other

colonists was similar. One and all found salvation in the "iron law of wages," and discovered for themselves that Capital is the indispensable ally and friend, and not the enemy, of Labour. The legitimate ambition of each one was to become himself a capitalist, for "Capital is the result of Labour and Abstinence."

There is a sentence in Levy's "Outcome of Individualism" which well sums up the conditions at New Australia: "A brief but brilliant span of existence may be attained by a Socialistic State living on the capital of its predecessors; but it soon runs through this capital and goes out like a spent squib and leaves a nasty smell."



Self-Help means Prosperity.

Mr. Fred Kidd (who succeeded Lane as Administrator), with Mrs. Kidd and family. In Australia he was a prosperous bootmaker, but sold his business and contributed the proceeds to the common fund. Left penniless, when Communism was abandoned, he obtained credit for leather and tools and commenced life afresh. He is now comparatively prosperous.

The "nasty smell" at New Australia took the form of rancour and bitterness of spirit, so that many families were not on speaking terms with their nearest neighbours—not that anyone had time or inclination in those terrible days for sociabilities. Women, whose husbands were away earning wages, worked like niggers in the corn fields for themselves and for their children. The sternest

individualism now prevailed, for when all were on the verge of starvation no man would share his children's bread with the work-shirkers. There was no longer any talk of an eight-hour day or of Trade Union regulations as to what particular task a given individual might perform. From sunrise to sunset men, women and even children worked at whatever task came first to hand, unheeding the rays of the tropical sun. Even the coming of night did not see the cessation of their labours when the moon's bright light illuminated the corn fields. In an incredibly short space of time houses shot up, surrounded by well-tilled kitchen gardens, carefully fenced in to keep men or brutes from damaging the crops, and very soon the grass lands were once more dotted with cattle—cheap, sorry beasts some of them, but precious beyond all reckoning, for the sake of the regained joy of ownership which they personified. It was not long, moreover, before the self-banished fathers and husbands were able to return with money in their pockets and restored hopefulness.

Some used the money thus earned to convey themselves and their dear ones back to Australia, others determined to make the most of the country's natural advantages, and to combine the rearing of cattle with lumbering operations or store-keeping. On these lines one and all made rapid progress, and many of the 130 colonists who remain at New Australia possess from 100 to 600 head of cattle and horses, to say nothing of pigs, poultry, etc., and in addition grow a great deal of fruit, vegetables and maize (for the last of which, as also for all kinds of livestock, there is always a good market.)

It must not be imagined, of course, that every colonist has been equally successful. Nature does not discount the intelligent industry of the energetic or supplement the efforts of the idle, incompetent, or stupid, in order to level things down "without regard to sex, age, office, or physical or mental capacity." But even the laziest have been compelled by necessity to do infinitely more for themselves than they ever did under communism, while the industrious have been encouraged by that self-interest which is so essential to progress, by means of forethought, thrift and diligence, to put by for their old age and lay the foundation of prosperity for their children.

Finally, it must be recorded that the "atmosphere of gross materialism" has long since vanished from New Australia. By a majority vote of those who remained, a schoolmaster, sent thither by the Bishop of the Falkland Isles in 1904, was permitted to hold religious services, and he has been succeeded by a clergyman of the Church of England, who numbers in his Sunday congregations the majority of the colonists, among whom the balm of renewed faith and the vivifying influence of religion have worked wonders in the patching up of differences and the renewing of old friendships. The children are now well cared for in all respects, and compare well with those more happily circumstanced in England. At the present day New Australia is neither a Utopian Eden nor a "hell upon earth." It is an average community of sane, sober, hard-working, self-respecting farmers, living at peace with one another and united in condemnation of the common enemy—Socialism in all its guises, whether it calls itself "Christian Socialism," "Atheistic Socialism," or merely "Co-operative Communism."

Cosmé, however, has made no such progress. At first it endeavoured to keep itself going by the circulation of an ingeniously worded paper, full of specious promises, which induced other credulous souls to forsake the various spheres in which they moved in the expectation of finding impossible happiness in Lane's Utopia. Cheated by false hopes, these newcomers quickly fell into the growing quagmire of discontent and misery. Things became worse every year; the original glamour faded, and men's hearts hardened, as they had done at New Australia. First William Lane, and then his brother, forsook the place and returned to the Antipodes. Some of the former's dupes have found employment on the railway, some have left the country, and others, with families of young children, remain tied to the spot, hopelessly striving to make headway against the dead-weight of debt—for everything is mortgaged—which bears them down. For their miseries they have to thank, not William Lane alone, but the whole host of writers and speakers who, by their fallacious doctrines, induced them, and would fain induce the nation, to wreck their lives on the Socialistic quicksands.

Mismanagement, extravagance, favouritism, indolence, dis-

content, heathenism, these are the necessary accompaniments of Socialism; while industry, economy, thrift, independence, self-respect and satisfaction are sterling qualities called forth by legitimate pride in individual ownership. Of this truism the plain story of New Australia serves as an excellent illustration. It is not necessary to point the moral further.

William Lane set out to teach the world a lesson—and he has done so!

APPENDIX.

BASIS OF CO-OPERATIVE ORGANISATION.

Ownership by the community of all the means of production in exchange and distribution.

Conduct by the community of all production in exchange and distribution.

Superintendence by the community of all labour-saving co-operations.

Maintenance by the community of children under guardianship of parents.

Maintenance by the community of all sanitary and educational establishments.

Saving by the community of all capital needed by the community.

Division of remaining wealth production among all adult members of the community equally, without regard to sex, age, office, or physical or mental capacity.

Subject to the supremacy of the laws of the state settled in, which all members pledge themselves to observe loyally, the following authority and regulations shall be observed between the members of the community :—

Ballot vote of all adult members to be supreme authority.

Director, elected by two-thirds majority of general ballot, to be sole executive authority, advised by Board of Superintendents.

Superintendents, elected by two-thirds majority of departmental ballot, to be sole departmental authorities, subject to director.

Regulations affecting the community at large to be confirmed by a two-thirds majority of all adult members.

Departmental regulations to be confirmed by a majority of all adult members interested.

All regulations to be submitted annually for continuation or rejection.

Disputes arising between the community and any member or members to be decided in equity by an arbitrator mutually agreed upon between the communal authority and the member or members interested.

Disputes arising between members to be decided in equity by an arbitrator mutually agreed upon by them.

Dismissal from the community, for persistent or unpardonable offence against the well-being of the community, to be decreed only by a five-sixth majority of all adult members.

All offices to be vacated annually and whenever occupants cease to retain the confidence of their constituents.

The individuality of every member in thought, religion, speech and leisure, and in all matters whatsoever whereby the individuality of others is not affected to be held inviolable.

The sexes to be recognised as equally entitled to full membership.

Religion not to be officially recognised by the community.

Amendment of this basis for co-operative organisation to be made only by a two-thirds majority of all adult members.

Without prejudice to the liquor question members shall pledge themselves to teetotalism until the initial difficulties of settlement have passed, and the Constitution been established.

FINANCIAL CLAUSES.

Every member of the association, by act of joining the association, agrees to subscribe to the funds of the association all he may possess when he is finally enrolled for actual migration, such subscription to be not less than £60.

The necessary funds for all preliminary expenses, including prospecting, organisation, and colonisation arrangements, shall be provided by a preliminary payment of £10, £5 of which must be paid within one month of provisional enrolment, the other £5 within three months of provisional enrolment: this £10 to be counted as part of the £60 which is fixed as the minimum final subscription.

The payment of £10 for preliminary expenses and the final subscription of not less than an additional £50 shall both be, when made, free and voluntary donations to the board of trustees for the purposes of the association, which no member shall reclaim if he decides, after having made either, to withdraw from membership. But any member shall be entitled to reclaim any amount over £10 which he may have paid to the board of trustees in advance for and on account of his final subscription should he decide, before final enrolment for migration, to withdraw from membership. The board of trustees, if for any reason whatever it decides to strike from the roll any member who has fulfilled to the time of such striking off all the conditions of membership, shall return him his previous payments in full.

A subscription of £30 will be required for widowed mothers accompanying sons to the settlement. Exceptions at discretion of trustees.

At the discretion of the trustees a minimum subscription of £100 may be required of men over 50 years of age applying for membership.

Every member on joining shall state the estimated amount of his intended final contribution, and the delegate enrolling shall certify that such is a fair estimate to the best of his knowledge and belief.

Every family enrolled after June 12, 1893, to be charged a premium of £10 for every child over one year of age, this premium to be added to the final payment of not less than £50. Exceptions at discretion of trustees.

W. W. HEAD,

Secretary Board of Trustees.

111, Elizabeth Street, Sydney, June 12, 1893.

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