

A FOOL'S TALK.

BY "TOUCHSTONE."

REPRINTED FROM "THE WORKER."

AN ESSAY IN SIMPLICITY.

"I give the men who come to my camp Socialistic leaflets to read, but they can't understand them until I explain them in simple language, when they see things clear enough. 'But why the blazes an't it wrote that way?' they ask."—From a private letter to the WORKER.

I have been shown a letter from a very intelligent fellow in the West.

He has a grievance, as all intelligent fellows have in this unsatisfactory world.

He is anxious in the cause of Reform. He talks on political and economic subjects to the men who come to his camp. He distributes Socialistic literature among them.

But, he says, **OUR SOCIALIST WRITERS DON'T WRITE SIMPLY ENOUGH.**

They are brilliant, they are logical, they are learned. Their facts are indisputable; their deductions irrefutable; their arguments crushing in the extreme.

He admits all that. They have only one fault, he says. **YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND THEM!** That is to say, the Ordinary Man in the Crowd who reads their leaflets wonders what the "blazes" they are driving at.

They discourse eloquently and earnestly enough, but the untutored mind finds their meaning hard to grasp.

If this is so, it is a vital defect.

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SOCIALISM IS A GOSPEL FOR THE MULTITUDE.

It is not a cult for educated minds only. It is not an Intellectual Fad For Fastidious People. It is not something to idle away the time with, or to show off with in company, like the boarding school girl who sits down at the piano and bangs out "The Maiden's Prayer" in chromatic variations and coruscating arpeggios. *2876*

It is an earnest message to all who toil and are sore oppressed. And it is one which the simplest mind ought to imbibe as readily as an infant sucks its mother's milk.

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But I have a notion that our Socialist writers are not so much to blame as this correspondent imagines.

It may be that the men to whom he refers are bewildered, not so much by the language used, as by the unaccustomed ideas presented, perhaps for the first time.

It may be that it seems incomprehensible to them merely because it is new, *and they have not been trained up to it.*

WE WANT SOME LEAF-
LETS FOR BEGINNERS.

That's what's the matter.

It would be a gross mistake to write always as if all men were beginners, but undoubtedly we do need a SOCIALIST PRIMER I.

If we started our children at school in the third or fourth class we should only confuse them. But when they have been taken through the lower classes it is easy enough.

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I am a Socialist. I believe in Socialism with every fibre of my being. I eat it and drink it, and sleep with it. It is one of my last thoughts at night and first thoughts in the morning.

I want to persuade all men of it, because it is good for all men. And it is so simple in its essential principles, that stated clearly, and stripped of all encumbering detail, it seems to me its truths should be self-evident to the intelligence of a child.

It is just like this. SOCIALISM MEANS WORKING ALL TOGETHER, AND SHARING ALL TOGETHER. Nothing more, nothing less.

Surely *that* is not hard to understand.

Under present conditions we fight and scramble for a living, and many are killed and wounded in the struggle, and the strong and selfish get more than is good for them or for us, and the rest have to be thankful for hard graft and poor rations.

Socialism means that instead of proceeding on these lunatic lines **WE SHOULD FORM OURSELVES INTO ONE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY,** and work and share together in peace and friendship.

That is easy to grasp, is it not?

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Anyone can see that there is something wrong now. Why do some people roll in luxury, while millions don't get half enough to eat? Nay, why do millions DIE OF HUNGER every year?

God is not to blame. The Earth is like a well-stored larder. There is nothing we require that it does not contain in plenty. If some of us children get all the butter and jam, and others cannot get even dry bread, it is clearly not the fault of the Good Provider. **IT IS NOBODY'S FAULT BUT OUR OWN.**

We behave like a mob of wild pigs in a wood. There is plenty of nuts and fruit for all. But wild pigs are stupid and greedy. Instead of each taking enough, and no more than enough, and making existence a pleasant picnic, as they could do, the senseless brutes rush fiercely upon one another, squealing hatred and anger, and fight for the food, till their tusks are red with blood, and many are slain and trampled in the mire.

There is too much of the wild pig about Society to-day.

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Suppose a handful of men were cast upon an island in the ocean, and the island was fertile, and yielded to labour everything that was required—food and drink, and shelter and clothing, and the finer things that make life worth living.

And suppose those men went each his own way, sulkily and selfishly working for himself only, or in little rival groups. And suppose they spent a considerable part of their time in quarrelling, in cheating and robbing, and in shooting and killing, one another.

Would you not say they were a pack of rascals and idiots, and unworthy of the bounty of Nature?

Of course you would, and you would feel like thanking somebody big enough to come along and boot the whole boiling of them into the sea.

Well, the World is just a great island in the Ocean of Eternity, and we men are castaways upon it.

It is a good place to live in. It is fruitful to the point of prodigality; its stores of wealth are inexhaustible. There is not only enough for us, and to spare, but for all the countless generations of men to come after us.

If any starve here, one would say, it is a scandal and a disgrace, and a crime the guilt of which few can escape.

Yet so it is. Not one, but millions, starve! Why is it so?

I will tell you.

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To begin with, THE WORLD IS NO LONGER OURS. It "belongs" to a number of people who call themselves Landlords. They have seized all the richest parts of it, and nobody can work on them unless they give up to the Landlords the greater part of what they produce.

And a number of other people, calling themselves Capitalists, are in possession of the machinery and

tools by which the raw materials are got out of the earth and turned into finished goods, and they won't let us use them unless we are content with only a small portion of the products of our industry.

And other people again have formed themselves into Privileged Castes, and have persuaded us that they are beings of a superior clay, too fine for labour, and we are silly enough to believe them, and maintain them by the sweat of our brows in indolence and luxury.

And as these people are anxious only about themselves, and care little what happens so long as there are enough labourers to supply their wants; and as there is no order or method in industry as at present conducted, but only blind rivalry and furious competition, it follows that there is always a large number of unemployed.

The Landlord has no use for them except to squeeze them for rent.

The Aristocrat is too engrossed in his pleasures to take any notice of them, unless they offend by getting between the wind and his nobility.

The Capitalist's only use for them is to play them off against the workers he employs, and to use them to keep down wages and suppress industrial revolts.

And the result is destitution and misery, and sullen discontent and bitterness, and drunkenness and prostitution, and robbery and fraud, and degrading caste distinctions, and servility and hypocrisy.

And the World, instead of being a good place for everybody, is "a Paradise for the Rich, and a Hell for the Poor."

Now the Socialist comes in here, and he says to the people, "TAKE THAT LAND! it is yours."

And to the Capitalist he says, "Keep your tools and machinery; we will make some of our own."

And to the wealthy loafer, "Off with your coat and work, for it is written, 'He that will not work, neither shall he eat!'"

Then he sets about organising his labour, just as the big Trusts do—this man for that job, that man for this. No man must be idle, because every idler is a burden on those who work, and the more that work the greater the wealth produced for division.

What would be thus created by the abour of all, would belong equally

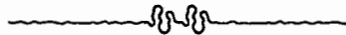
to all. And poverty would disappear from among men, and be remembered only as a nightmare in the literature of our age.

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That is all we would need to teach, I think, in Primer I.—just the simple elements of justice upon which Socialism is based. Primer II. might contain some easy object lessons in practical Socialism.

When these had been mastered the student would be in a position to spell out words and sentences, and so reach up to the more complicated ideas involved in the methods by which Socialists propose to GRADUALLY transform Things As They Are into Things As They Ought to Be.

WHEN READ, PASS ON.



When the Vanguard Van gets going, with its travelling lecturers, there will be less reason to complain of the lack of simple and direct instruction in Socialism—that Subject of all Subjects for men and women. All who are anxious to spread the light and speed the coming of the Good Time should send along a donation, however small, to the Van Trustees, Comrades Mary and "EznuK," 80a Queen Street, Brisbane.

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