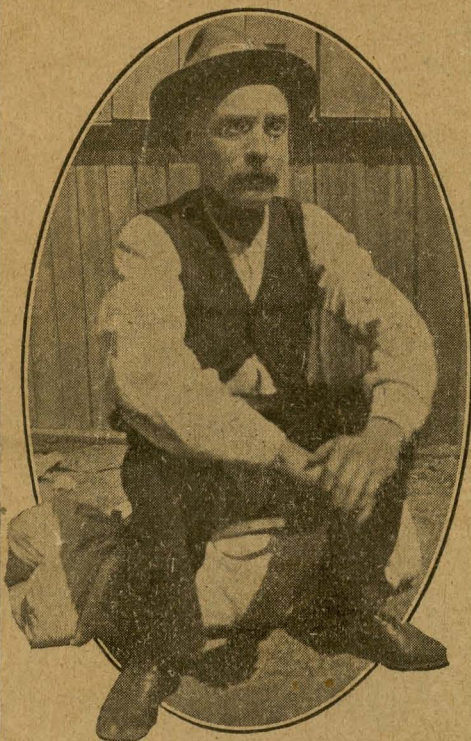


First Series

Autograph Edition

Random Ramblings

By The Vag.



Here upon his well-worn swag
Rests a tired and weary vag.

The People's Print., 16 George Street West, Sydney

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TO THE READER

In presenting the contents of this booklet to a critical public, the author offers no apology. The articles have already underwent the searching scrutiny of a reading section of the community, having appeared in the columns of "The People" (Sydney) from week to week, and are specially selected from a number of "Rambles" published therein. Further, it has been at the request of many of The Vag's personal friends that their publication is undertaken. In mentioning this latter fact, a timely opportunity occurs to thank those who subscribed to autograph copies in advance, which, in these strenuous times of short purses and famine prices, aided the work of printing the booklet.

The title of "Random Ramblings" was chosen on account of the many and varied excursions made in the realms of political, economic, and social science, and the pen-name, or, to be more classical, "nom de plume," (The Vag.) because of the nomadic character of the thoughts expressed. But varied and nomadic though these thoughts may be, they represent not only knowledge gained by personal life-experience, they contain also the accumulated experience of a long past and a gripping present. As such are they presented, perhaps to the super-man in a rather crude form, without "sweet words that butter no parsnips,"—only ugly naked Truth.

With these few remarks, dear reader, I must now leave you with your own thoughts and "Random Ramblings."

THE VAG.

Yours faithfully
Thos. Batho

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

I.—Francis Adams and the Army of the Night

A little time ago one of my circle lent me a book of poems, entitled "Songs of the Army of the Night," by Francis Adams, poet and iconoclast, or idol-smasher, and as my friend values that book above The Vag.'s virtues, notice has been served to return same immediately, if not sooner. The demand must be acceded to, or a bitter penalty paid. Now, then, to business. It may, no doubt, dear reader, interest you to learn something of this man. Briefly, he was the son of Professor Leith Adams, scientist and army surgeon. Born 1862. Educated at Shrewsbury School (Eng.). Spent two or three years in Paris and afterwards became assistant master at Ventnor College in 1882. Two years later married, came to Australia, where he busied himself in literary, educational, and political work, and was on the staff of the Sydney "Bulletin." His wife having died here, his second marriage took place in 1887, and in the same year he went on a short visit to China and Japan. In 1890 he returned to England, much broken in health, and his last two winters were spent in the Riviera and Egypt. He died, by his own hand, at Margate, on September 4th, 1893. Francis Adams was not alone a victim of the "White Plague of Consumption," but also the "Black Plague of Poverty." Thus, it is, many geniuses in this Capitalist Age, live—and die. But it was his words of presentation of his songs to an unfeeling world which appealed to me. I now present them to you:

THIS BOOK.

I give this Book

TO YOU,—

Man or woman, girl or boy, laborer, mechanic, clerk, house-servant, whoever you may be, whose wages are not the value of your work—no, not a fraction of it,—whose wages are the

minimum which you and those like you, pressed by the desire for life in the dreadful struggle of Competition, will consent to take from your employers who, thanks to it, are able thus to rob you:—

I give it to YOU

in the hope that you may see how you are being robbed,—how Capital that is won by paying you your competitive wages is plunder,—how Rent that is won by the increased value of land that is owing to the industry of us all, is plunder,—how the Capitalist and Landowner who over-ride you, how the Master or the Mistress who work you from morning till night, who domineer over you as servants and despise you (or, what is worse, pity you) as beggars, are the men and women whose sole title to this is, that they have the audacity and cunning to plunder you, and you the simplicity and folly not to see it and to submit to it:

I give this Book to YOU,

in the hope that you may at last realise this, and in your own fashion never cease the effort to make your fellow-sufferers realise it:

I give it to YOU,

in the hope that you may formally enrol yourself in the ranks of the Army of the Night, and that you will offer up the best that has been granted you of heart and soul and mind towards the working out of that better time when, in victorious peace we silence our drums and trumpets, furl our banners, drag our cannon to its place to rest, and solemnly disarming ourselves become citizens once more, or, if soldiers, then soldiers of the Army of the Day!

2.—Only a Swagman

AGED ABOUT 50.

The body of a swagman was recently found and buried in the bush out from Coolgardie, Western Australia. His name was unknown, and he was about 50 years of age.

In the loose mould
Out from Coolgardie

Bury an old
Pioneer hardy.
Not old in years,
One of the stragglers
Who'd conjure no tears
From huckstering hagglers
A page from the past
These tragedies sully,
Uncoffined at last
Within an old gully.
Lay all alone
In the sand drifty
"Swagman Unknown,
Aged About 50."
Maybe some mate,
Sister or brother,
Sighs in this State,
Smiles in another.
Someone adored
In the years yester,
Mary or Maud,
Eva or Ester.
Some pal or friend,
Who might have saved him,
Solaced his end,
Decently graved him.
Someone o'erthrown
Some bond grown rifted,
Now he's "Unknown,
Aged About 50."
Maybe he'll sleep
Sound as they slumber,
Where women weep
And the graves cumber.
No verse in lead
Tells of his dying,
But o'er his head
Sheoaks are sighing.
On his behalf
No tomb arises;

His epitaph
 No one surprises;
 "Living alone;
 Habits unthrifty;
 Swagman Unknown,
 Aged About 50."

3.—Early Day Reminiscences

TALKING ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE "LABOR" AND SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES, yours truly knows a bit—not much, true, but a little. Shall I let you into a few secrets? Yes. Righto! Remember, though, the history of things is also the history of men and vice versa. To tell the tale as I know it, a little of the writer's experience must be weighed in, besides the mention of a few personages who now sit in high places and—hold down your ears, brothers and sisters—rule us, you and I, with the capitalist rod of iron, with sharp steel points added just to make the thrashings feel all the more severe on the wage-slave's toil-wearied back. "Spare the rod and spoil the citizen," is the "Labor" Rulers maxim, and with their compulsory legislation the prickings are being felt some. Enough of these political liberty-thieves for the present—to follow them now will lead us astray.

It was at the time of the '90 strike that my attention was first turned Labor-wards, and, as with most young men with a new idea, the fire of enthusiasm soon set alight, and the hope of working-class salvation centred itself in the new political movement that arose out of the industrial defeat of the workers. At that time Socialism was much spoken of, but those who shouted it loudest understood it least. Beautiful utopian schemes for the reformation of a bad economic world were hatched by the score. An attempt to materialise one of these schemes was made about '93, a few hundred people pooling their earthly wealth and setting sail for some remote spot in a far-off land, away from civilisation and everybody, there to start another fire in the Hell of Capitalism. That

was Lane's Paraguayan Utopia. It has been repeatedly referred to by politicians and labor-skinners as the great Socialist Failure! You see, they took Human Nature and the Capitalist Environment with them! Had they left these two blights behind, well, perhaps—! Anyway, as was prophesied by the wise, the show cracked up; the bad economic world was not reformed, and has got worse and worse and worse ever since, and from present indications threatens to become much worse before getting better. By-the-way, we'll have to do a jump backwards. The Vag.'s ahead of his story.

As far as recollection carries, it was about the year 1891 when I joined the Australian Socialist League. The crudest idea of Socialism was held. Indeed, truth to tell, so mixed were the notions, that from the variety of propaganda statements, The Vag. was quarter philosophical anarchist, quarter physical-force anarchist, quarter state socialist, and quarter laborite. The first platform lecture held on his becoming a member was a reading by a well-known "Labor" spruiker, from a philosophical book on anarchy, which was passing muster for Socialism. It was somewhere about this time that the two "Billies," Holman and Hughes (the former now N.S.W. State Premier, the latter Federal Prime Minister) appeared on the scene, together with George S. Beeby (who now stands square-footed in the capitalist camp, labelled correctly,—Nationalist—Liberal—to himself). Holman was the star to which many workers hitched their hopes—fools that we were. But then he tickled our ears with magic phrases, and scorched the capitalist to death with vitriolic words. How he fired off at the House of Fat where now reigns Fred Flowers arrayed in wig and capitalist glory! As for the damnable system? "It was do others or others would do you!" Now the traces are broken, the hopes fallen, and Holman doing the "doing."

Hughes reached Parliament (State) in '94 and Holman some time later. That was the end of them so far as their interest in the workers were concerned, the label Labor only being retained for vote-catching purposes. At this time the A.S.L. had its Headquarters at Leigh House, Castlereagh Street, Sydney, the leading spirits being, after the desertions of the politicians who hovered around when they wanted to make use of its members, A Thomson, C. Barlow, Dave Carson,

and Jas. O. Moroney. Of this quartette of early Socialist pioneers of Australia, only one survives to-day, and he is the present general secretary of the Socialist Labor Party. And what those men did to keep the flag of Socialism flying and clear the movement of confused ideas, would require another page. Besides, this is only a gallop through. It might be mentioned that by big effort, combined with the aid of others whose names must obviously be omitted from a write-up of this description, the A.S.L. pulled through. In the year 1894 a paper called "The Socialist" was published in Sydney, which, while not officially endorsed by the organisation, received the support of most of the membership. It was privately-owned and conducted, two comps. (Holland and Batho) taking on the venture. And the struggle! Why the ghost hardly ever showed its toes, and never walked. First it was brought out as a demp-folio 8-paged monthly with a red cover, and then changed into a 4-paged weekly. The pair had managed to scratch together about £5 worth of second hand type, which was so old that it was only with patience and plenty of water it could be persuaded to stand upright. The type was set up in a small front "room" in an old cottage that once stood at the corner of Parramatta-rd. and Charles-st., Petersham, and shouldered across what was then Johnston's paddock to a printing office in Newtown, where standing room only was rented and the right to print owed for. Holman knew those days and more than once commiserated with the two struggling world-saviours! Both were married men with families, and, curious-like, you want to know how they lived? God knows! I'm thinking it was on dry bread and hope, and an occasional visit to friends. Sometimes one or the other would get a few days' work outside, the proceeds going into the stew-pot and served out equally. What was mine to-day was yours to-morrow.

The paper lived because the hopes behind it were as great as the sky above. Denmark was rotten, and it was only a matter of explaining Socialism to the workers when it would be hugged as closely as a grizzly hugs its dinner. Well the next happening was a libel case. Something, rightly or wrongly, crept into the columns of "The Socialist" about "Joey" Creer, the then Government Labor Mart Boss, and

the proprietorship pushed behind the spikes at the Darlinghurst Criminal Court. No time here for details. Sufficient to say Holland was fined £30 or three months' gaol, Batho £5 or gaol till it was paid. Needless to state, the latter's fine was begged, borrowed, or stolen, which. The Vag. is not in a position to say, while the former did the time allotted by a judge who complained, on perusing the paper during the jury's retirement, that the publication was vicious inasmuch as it aimed at setting class against class, and further desired to know, supposing he had a horse under Socialism, who would do the grooming. Of course, being a privileged man in a privileged place no one had the privilege of enlightening him. This trouble over, another loomed large. The already starved exchequer had run as dry as a drought-stricken cow. It was concluded, after much speculation, that as Sydney wasn't too keen on Socialism, perhaps Newcastle would offer a better field for propaganda, the miners generally being regarded as better material than the city slave. All the "office fittings" were sold,—and these were no more elaborate than the fittings of a costermonger's stable—and the proceeds, together with what cash could be scraped together, used to pay the back rent owing, and some minor debts. The undertaking being too great for two, a third party entered into the partnership, not one of whom had sufficient cash to pay for the soling of their worn-out footwear. But prospects ahead were as broad as oceans and hopes as big as mountains. So the £5 worth of second-hand type, with the few cases, were boxed up, and the whole printing outfit labelled "passenger's luggage," the passengers getting steerage tickets for Newcastle. After the fares were paid, the trio possessed, and averaged between them, a capital of 3s. each, but the lot being in one pocket, the magnificent amount of 9s. was the available capital with which to launch a weekly paper. Landed in the Black City, the first thought was breakfast. Eighteenpence went bang, reducing the capital to seven-and-sixpence! Then a hunt was made for an "office." This was discovered in a little shell, the size of a contractor's portable ticket-box, pitched in front of a blacksmith's shed in Hunter Street West, and which had to serve as a living abode as well as a comp. room. The "Pill Box" was secured, and the rent (3s. 6d.) paid in advance. Thus five shillings had vanished from the capital stock. The next expenditure

was cartage of the printing outfit to the office, 3s., and after buying candles to work with at night there was 5d. left for lunch, a loaf of bread and two-pennyworth of apples served for that. For tea there was hope, and many a time and oft hope had to be substituted for a square meal. Pages could be filled with incident surrounding the launching of "The Northern People," both tragic and comic, but there is so much to be stated as to make any further reference thereto out of the question. It may here be said that the paper saw daylight in the first week of the year 1897.

Somewhere about the year 1898, the A.S.L. in Sydney started "The Collectivist," Barlow, Thomson, and Moroney carrying most of its burden. When the first edition was placed for sale, the late Andy Thomson, in his own quaint characteristic style, in addressing a Domain audience said: "Look you here, we fellows have got out a paper for your education, you had better support it, for when there's no money there'll be no paper." Acting on proposals from the two individuals concerned in "The Northern People" (the third party wearying of the struggle had got out), the League agreed to an amalgamation of the two papers. This was accomplished, but even with the added assistance given by the Sydney Branch, the struggle was fierce, so fierce indeed that it was thought that by producing the paper in Sydney again as a semi-party-owned concern, the position would be relieved. In the latter part of 1899, the three years' accumulation of plant was removed from Newcastle to Sydney, the paper re-established in the early portion of 1900 as "The People," with an office in Kidman's Buildings, Market Street. Still the struggle waged furiously. Another libel action, incurred under the same editorship while the paper was printed at Newcastle, mulct the League in damages amounting to over £30. This had to be met by the Party, and in addition, money found to keep alive. There was no job-printing to speak of, the whole time and attention being centred in the paper. While support was greater expenses were greater. Old members of the General Executive will remember the "Weekly Horror," as the Executive meeting were then called. In 1901, as far as The Vag. recalls events, the organisation agreed to take over the whole responsibility of producing "The People," and became sole owners on certain conditions,

one of those conditions being, I remember, that the League shoulder whatever indebtedness existed and continue publication. About August of the same year, the premises where "The People" is now located were secured. And here I must chop right off—to go further now would mean columns of space and hours of time. Both are now cut out. You have a little, only one-ninetieth portion, true, but still a little, of the early struggles of the Socialist Press.

4.—The Struggle to Survive

We will commence Rambles at the point from which we left off when dealing with "The People" and its Past. We had got as far as 16 George Street West, Sydney. Here the struggle was continued. The indebtedness—debts taken over and incurred—reached over a "pony." You know, of course, being all sports, what a "pony" means in sporting parlance—a hundred pounds. Not much to the man who owns thousands, but to a working-class organisation fighting for life and battling for principle, a hundred pounds seemed as a fortune, and, fancy, owing—not owning—a fortune! By the way, I forgot to state that the paper when published from the Market Street premises was a 4-paged news size, but owing to financial embarrassment—good word that last one—the publication was reduced to what was termed by a cynical member, "pocket-handkerchief" size.

The plant was limited, the machinery portion of it consisting of a small platen, on which any job that happened along was printed; the paper itself being printed outside. In the latter part of the year 1902 so far as memory serves, the managing-editor (Holland) resigned, and it was decided to appoint a Press Committee and do away with the luxury of an editor. The first Press Committee appointed consisted of Moroney, Batho, and Drake, the former assisting in the literary work, the latter in the financial, while Batho shouldered the managerial, mechanical, and, practically, the editorial. The three had a jolly old time! A debt of over one hundred pounds, no money in hand, not a scrap of "copy" to fall back upon, they had a hard row to hoe from the jump. Moroney and Drake followed their respective occupations in the day-time, devoting leisure moments to the work undertaken.

Batho installed in the office, ate, drank, slept and worked on the premises. Then it was "case" to bed, from bed to "case," and more "case" than bed, by a long bow. About the first outside job that found its way into the new premises was brought by a "bury-you-quick-and-cheap" for cash tradesman. You shudder! The management didn't; it just smiled all over its handsome frontispiece and three-quarter ways down its back, for "Cash Printer" was printed on the window, cash was wanted, and here was a cash order! From that moment the job-printing became a source of income—although it entailed longer hours and harder work. And so "The People" showed some signs of growing. The membership, had some go in those days, and did a lot to assist financially and morally, thereby lightening the load. By determination and parsimony, the "pony" was knocked in the head and buried—but the thing died hard, very hard. "In the midst of life we are in debt," and while a good reputation may get into debt, it is often spoilt in trying to get out of it—and not succeeding. Anyway, the Press Committee succeeded and its reputation set down good! Yet the struggle, from a financial point, was a keen one—hand to mouth, as they say, but more hand than mouth.

Many a night the Press Committee sat up waiting for "the ghost to walk," but the thing was too uncharitable to budge out of its nookery. And there was this to pay, and that wanted, and somebody requiring something that everybody must have—or peter out. Thank the stars above, there was a Micawber in our midst who, while not possessing that immortal's vices, certainly had his chief virtue. Moroney was the Micawber of "The People" outfit. His solacing words were, when financial gloom darkened the sanctum, "O well, something'll turn up, and if it don't, it don't." It always chanced, "when night was darkest," that something did turn up, often unexpectedly, and then the Press Committee faced a new dawn, only to be followed by another night of gloom, then a dawn—and so on. All this time the paper was machined out. An offer for the purchase of d.c. printing press, from an enthusiastic member who paid the cash and took a mortgage,—afterwards redeemed by the party—was negotiated in 1906, and, with the aid of the membership, electric power installed. That was one of the most unexpected

of all the happenings. With the installing of the machine came the enlarging of the paper to its present size. This entailed more expense and the saving through machine installment was consumed by extra cost in improvement of the paper. So the struggle proceeded. Every now and again the position was such that the Press Committee (for years past comprising Batho and Moroney) had to take the membership into its confidence, and meetings called to let those interested know how matters stood. Of course, not being strictly a commercial concern, "The People" being printed as a propaganda messenger of Socialism, most of its production went unpaid for. Storm after storm has been weathered in those long weary years of struggle, but with the war and depression "The People" has struck a gale that will take some pulling through. Probably, if some determined, combined and sustained effort is made to keep afloat, the paper may come through safe and sound. As the gen-sec. wrote quoting Tom Paine: "This is a time to try men's souls." Yes. And continuous struggle tries one's patience! Now we'll break off here. The Vag. doesn't feel disposed to travel further on this track. It is all short-cuttings, and the obscuring of individuals, the deleting of the part they played, also numerous incident humerous and otherwise, robs it of much interest. So I'll trespass no further on this preserve.

5.—Is Justice One-Eyed?

Prussian methods are written down as the vilest extant. The Vag. admits they are bad—very bad. But, then, that is no reason why Messrs. Fisher, Hughes, & Holman, of the Federal and State Political Trust Company, should seek to emulate such methods. And from what The Vag. sees of police court proceedings, the law is stretched to meet any requirement desired, while justice is simply strangled. A person has only to be charged with disloyal utterance to meet the full vengeance of a patriotic magistrate. No matter how trivial, whether said in joke or under provocation—the person so charged is bound to go to gaol. The same, they tell us, applies to Germany. How Dr. Liebknecht, who has been bobbing up every now and again in the Reichstag as opposed to the war and for peace, would fare in Australia in such a

position and in a similar circumstance, The Vag. won't attempt to hazard as Australia is a democratic country ruled by "Labor," and "fair play" the game—on paper! Two or three persons (Jackson, Quinton, and Barker) have received punishments for saying things that to the lay mind, at any rate, were innocent enough. Methinks such actions savors of Prussianism. Anyhow, there it is—and the workers are going to get more of this sort of repressive measure before the end of capitalism is reached.

Socialists do not expect to achieve the Social Revolution by means of sensational vaporings or flag flappings, nor by standing at street corners hollering "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum!" They are not "bums," but men and women who stand on as high a plane of morality as the system permits them. That is not to say there're angels, either, because they don't deal in winged humans, alive or dead. Of the earth they're earthly—some even "grubby." Don't get offended, "grubby" is only The Vag.'s way of expressing "absolute materialism," and in its evolution Mankind, they say, passes through the grub stage! Edison, I think, is credited with saying: "Humanity was only in the dog-stage of Progress," but he said it before the war. It is open to argument now whether humanity has even reached the dog-stage! Well, socialists are materialistic so far as terrestrial things are concerned, and leave celestial affairs for Archbishops Wright and Kelly to clean up, therefore, take into account all the historical bearings of the past and the whole present activities of society, political and industrial. This brings us into conflict with those people who proclaim "Direct Action" to be the means by which to win freedom. Now, every "Direct Actionist" is not a "Bum," but some of him is; some of him is worse—even agent provocateur. Despairing of politics because of its misuse and abuse, there are many honest workers captivated by the new sound "Direct Action," tickled with blunt terms such as "bloodsucking parasites, murderous thieves, etc.," as applied to the top-dog (which, though true as expressions, cut no ice in making for conviction as to the unstableness of capitalism), and impressed with the apparent—only apparent—efficacy of sabotage as publicly advocated by many who leave the practise of it to others, I say there are many such workers who turn from political action in disgust, only to find that whilst they may be

prepared to leave politics alone, in a political society politics will not leave them alone. They remind me of the chap who tried to shave himself. He handled the razor so unskillfully as to succeed in making his face resemble a butcher's chopping block—all cuts,—and then swore shaving was no damn good to anybody. The workers have so handled politics. Even if used as a shield, as De Leon, in another way pointed out, politics may be utilised to advantage by the workers if handled scientifically for a definite purpose—the overthrow of the system. The workers must use the political means by which their economic exploitation is made legal and maintained by force, to render such exploitation illegal by decreeing Collective Ownership of the Plants of Production and Production for Use to be the new economic order, to be given effect to and maintained by the economic force of the working class represented in its industrial organisation. More could be said, especially as to the easy prey the "Direct Actionist" is for the vulture-like agent provocateur, but we have already travelled a long way from the course that first suggested itself, and must now wend our way back.

To show the unjustifiable severity with which those who are charged under the Defence Act for offences are treated when brought before magistrates, the Barker case might well be quoted. Barker, editor of a paper called "Direct Action," was charged before a Sydney magistrate with offending against the Commonwealth Defence Act, and on being remanded was even refused the privilege accorded the greatest criminals—bail. On application to a judge, however, this boon was granted in heavy sureties. The report of proceedings as recorded in the "Daily Telegraph," Sydney, is reprinted below:

EDITOR FINED £50.

Thomas Barker (28), of Nithsdale Street, Sydney, and editor of "Direct Action," was charged at the Central Police Court yesterday, with contravening regulation 28 of the War Precaution Regulations, 1915, by circulating statements likely to prejudice recruiting.

Mr. Bathgate, of the Crown Solicitor's office, appeared for the prosecution, and Mr. Young (instructed by Mr. P. K.

White) for the defendant, who pleaded not guilty.

Detective Jordan gave evidence that defendant told him on September 3, that he printed the circular complained of for the Industrial Workers of the World. He added that since being warned by the police he had not printed or sent out any of the circulars. Barker also told witness he had been honorably discharged from the British Army, in which he had served for five years.

Sergt. Pearce stated that on different dates in July, he saw posters similar to the one produced in different parts of the city. He defaced them when possible.

The poster complained of contained the following:

"To Arms! Capitalists, parsons, politicians, landlords, newspaper editors, and other stay-at-home patriots! Your country needs you in the trenches. Workers, follow your masters."

Detective Jordan (recalled) said he had heard defendant, when addressing people in the Domain, say, among other things, "I won't tell you not to go to the war; it is a certainty that I am not going." "The organisation I belong to does not believe in war." Barker also described the military as parasites. For some time past witness had not heard h.m. refer to the war.

Mr. Bathgate asked for DIRECT IMPRISONMENT.

Mr. Macfarlane, C.S.M., convicted and imposed a fine of £50, in default six months' hard labor. Defendant was also ordered to enter into recognisances to comply with the provisions of No. 28 of the War Precautions Regulations, 1915, during the currency of the war, in default six months' imprisonment.

Notice of appeal was lodged.

On a charge of having committed a breach of the Printing Act in issuing a poster which did not bear the name of the printer or publisher, defendant was fined £20, with 6s. costs, in default three months' imprisonment.

Therefore, in default of the three latter conditions stipulated by the magistrate, Barker goes to gaol for 15 months, which is a longer term than criminal court judges have given to highway robbery. And does anyone seriously believe that such a poster would have the effect of prejudicing enlistment?

The Vag. sees no reason why it should. If taken as read the opposite effect ought to result, for it does seem to the writer that those who believe the most in war are never in the firing line. As for the later offence, the contravention was there—but—sufficient for the day, etc.

You will note that mention is made in the aforementioned proceedings of the Industrial Workers of the World. To sprag possible confusion, the organisation referred to, it should be stated, is not the original I.W.W. organisation launched in 1905, but a hybrid thing of more recent birth, and known throughout America as the "Bummery," so-called after its battle-song "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum." Coming from nowhere—wherever that is—it is marching to the same place. Discarding as it does political action it is difficult to imagine in what other direction it could possibly go. With its principles and tactics both the S.L.P. and the Detroit I.W.W. are entirely out of accord. Indeed, if the workers followed some advice given it would lead to much individual sacrifice without any results other than disastrous ones. While progress demands sacrifice it does not urge foolish waste. While holding these views in common with many others, The Vag. is certainly of the opinion that the law is wielded with an uneven hand against those whose views conflict with the views of its administrators. There is surely no crime in any person stating that they do not believe in war, if there is, then Australia is more than Russianised; neither can there be any crime in telling those who believe in war to do some of its fighting! But, then, Justice is always represented as blindfolded, yet seems to look out from one eye! And Mr. Hall, the State "Labor" Attorney-General, is reported to have said that if necessary, while the war was on, even freedom of speech should be muzzled. And Mr. Hall is a democrat yet believes in levelling all—with the exception of a few politicians—to the oyster state.

6.—A School Teacher and Socialism

At the moment there is a letter before me from a school teacher to a friend. On scanning its contents the fact is disclosed that the friend has been endeavouring to make a Socialist of the lady in question but apparently with no success. To this purpose Socialist papers and pamphlets were

forwarded, among these being the "Sydney People." In answer to these a reply came of which the following is a significant portion:

" . . . Some of these papers you sent me are dreadfully bitter, spiteful, and untrue, and if the writers were leaders I should be sorry to be in their power."

Truth is oftimes a dreadfully bitter pill to swallow, and those administering it are not infrequently regarded as spiteful and untruthful. But there is one fact noticeable about our accusers, and that is they rely upon bald assertion and not evidence to sustain their charges. It is remarkable how dense the average educators of our children are upon working-class economics. Superstition is to most of them a greater fort than social science, and the Adam and Eve story of creation far more palatable than the truth of evolution. This lady educator of the young mind need never fear the power of what she terms "leaders," Socialism does not mean rule by force and bloodshed as is the case with the present system for which she is an apologist, but by humane and good sense. The evils in society about which Socialist writers wax so wrath are the effect of capitalism, and wherever one poor body lacks life's needs those who stand by the cause of it must bear the blame and shame. To end a system that exploits the poor, and consigns millions of the world's hapless creatures to undeserved poverty and misery should be the aspiration and aim of every good man and true woman.

Socialism will free woman from economic dependency upon man, which means happier marriages.

There are one or two matters I'd like to touch upon before retiring. It is said that Socialists are too materialistic, that happiness is more of a spiritual condition than a material one. Please let His Vagship differ. Happiness is a material condition. I hold that through the application of the senses—touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing—to the external material things of the world that happiness is possible, and in proportion as man's possibilities are curtailed for the satisfaction of normal desires so is happiness limited. Happiness is a relative term, is it not? It expresses a condition of life where self-satisfaction and contentment obtains as opposite

to an unsatisfied, insufficient socially-created desires bordered with discontent and misery. And about Human Nature! The question has been asked of me: Does it change? Undoubtedly. That is to say, actions; conduct, etc., which are the outward manifestation of what is termed Human Nature vary under different environments, and if human nature was so obstinately static as professing christians so stoutly maintain, then all the Sermons on the Mount must prove unavailing and all those souls born in sin and wickedness lost beyond salvation. Every thought, idea, etc., originates from environment, and when applied to other environments aids in the creation of new ones which to a greater or lesser degree changes human nature by remoulding action and conduct. If human nature was a stubborn fixity the wonder is that we are not all exactly alike in act word or deed. The colonel's wife reclining in the luxury of a beautiful drawing room imbibing the latest "classic," is quite a different environment to that wherein Bidy Grady is fuming and fretting in a hot and stuffy kitchen cooking her ladyship's food. Sisters they may be in theory, but in fact with ideas, thoughts, actions and natures as wide apart as the drawing-room from the kitchen. Confucius preached the application of the golden rule long before Christ, and since Christ's time many well-meaning people have earnestly sought to make human nature dove-tail in with its noble sentiment, but, unfortunately for them, material conditions mould more powerfully than sentiment, we find the Sermon on the Mount a dead letter and the golden rule a myth. The world is a hotbed of exploitation and slaughter. Sordid materialism rules high and low, christian and pagan. The sayings of Christ are used as instruments to maintain and perpetuate a profit system, interpreted to apply to things we know not of, instead of the ever-present materialistic realities of life. Of course it is argued that christian teachings build up character, which would obviously reflect itself in the conduct of man to man, character being the expression of relations one with the other. Now, there are none but who will agree that there are men and women of unquestionable character who regard theology as a superstition, while many others who accept its teachings reservedly are the very exemplification of "fallen man." As recently as Sunday last one of the latter type threatened to pull the

"red" crawl out of a red infidel" friend of mine for having the temerity to criticise a notorious local churchman. That is character for you.

We hear much talk about things spiritual now-a-days, but what they really are few bother to state. Are not all conceptions, ideas, ideals, and such matters of mind, drawn from material realities? Is there one expression of the spiritual that cannot be found in the material form? Heaven itself is built in the mind out of earthly materials. Old Nick himself is a "spiritual" representation of distorted nature, while women and children are always angels! Why even the picture of an afterlife is only the reflection of material life, as proved by the fact that man imports his own shape, form, and ego into the scene. The sleeping soul is a phrase often used which interpreted signifies a cabined mind, and a mind engrossed in the painful struggle for daily bread, cannot be expected to rise in admiration of the beauties of nature, and in proportion as man enjoys nature, so happiness contracts and expands. Why, if the "spiritual" is the sole basis of happiness, are men born with "souls asleep" that resist the efforts of nature to awaken them? And if the spiritual is solely of the spiritual, that is to say, the gift of God to his children, then why are not all in enjoyment thereof? As for the idea of meekness producing character and happiness, it may be here safely stated that meekness has no foothold in progress, the poor in spirit cannot rise from low estate, the fact that they may (only may) inherit the kingdom of heaven is no compensation for that which is lost to them through submission to those who rule and rob them. To sum up: Knowledge is expressed by material things; ideals are the extension of knowledge gained from the material; the base of all life is the material, and happiness having its origin in things material is the expression of contentment born out of the possibilities of satisfying social and natural desires; that before men and women can live in the fulness of a so-called spiritual life they must first be secured in a material condition and surrounded with opportunities that go towards expanding the mind and awakening the soul. Real happiness finds its origin in material things. Likewise, unhappiness. The Socialist Philosophy aims at controlling the material towards the creation of universal happiness.

7.—As Seen by Others

Once more the Vag. makes bow to his audience, and in so doing joins in the triumphant hallelujah song of hope which finds expression when events mark the progress of humanity in its march towards a better life and the attainment of higher things. Messages of congratulation in connection with the recorded advance of Socialism in New South Wales are reaching "The People" office, and, of course, naturally enough, his Vagship must have his finger in the pie, and here is his congratulation to comrade Socialists on the big stride Socialism has taken. So good cheer, everybody! There are signs on the social horizon of the awakening of the working class. All is not gold that glitters; neither are appearances always indicative of real character. Behind the gloss of Australian prosperity there is more poverty hidden than one can imagine. If you will only walk around your semi-fashionable suburbs this fact will be patent to anyone by a glance at the front window of many of those "poor-proud" villas adorning them—the homes of the 'aristocratic' section of the "lower order" of mankind. In those windows hang the sign-boards of either poverty or greed—and in nine cases out of ten it is poverty, "aristocratic" poverty. "Board and residence," "Furnished Apartments," "Unfurnished Room to Let," are the signs of straightened circumstances which speak as loudly as did the "Mangling Done Here" advertisement in poorer quarters in pre-laundry days, before the idea of getting rich by taking in the whole of the other fellow's washing materialised into a specialised reality. This sort of thing tells me that in centres of "niceness and respectability" a struggle for existence goes on from day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year. There is no "Village Blacksmith," who "looked the whole world in the face, for he owed not any man," for it seems to me that with the nicest as well as the nastiest of -we humans the revised old saw, "In the midst of life we are in debt," holds good.

What has this to do with Socialism? you ask. Well, it's a sign that capitalism is not all that it is cracked up to be by its apologists. It shows that capitalism is no respecter of persons; that not only are the very nasty members of the working class hit hard by big rents and high prices, but also the would-

be nicest of the biped species. Do I think such conditions are making for Socialism? you ask. And I answer, Yes. Poverty makes strange bedfellows, and amongst them many Socialists. I tell you it was the presence of the Devil of Capitalism that first sent me moving towards the Light. And let me tell you that even I, the Vag., once owned a big capitalist mind and a little pocket, and thought no small chinks of himself because he resided in a villa and others stewed or shivered in a garret. That the stonewall philosophers assert, is human nature. If this is so,—and the “human-nature” philosophy of these walled-in jackdaws brooks no contradiction, Human Nature is Human Nature, and he who declares otherwise is a seven-tongued liar standing in danger of a roasting and richly deserving to be hung, drawn, and quartered,—if that is human nature to “kid” oneself to be so much superior to one’s neighbor simply because you’ve got a wash-house and he’s got none, then I must candidly admit that life’s experience has whipped all the human nature out of men, and left me a Socialist. Now, the fact of the matter is, poverty is obnoxious to human nature, and those possessed of that essential, become so tired of the threatening approach of the monster, that reason asserts itself and attention given to the best way of getting rid of the thing. Yes, the Vag. feels assured that conditions are pushing the toilers of every caste along the line of progress, and in the signs of the times sees the approach of Socialism.

An old friend of mine dug out my identity recently, and wrote me his impressions of these Random Ramblings the other day. Inherent modesty causes me to withhold his first impression. Anyhow, this friend discovered a little flaw in the author, which if remedied would be to the Vag.’s better piece of mind and body. “There is a dominant note of sadness,” writes he, “running through your Ramblings; but I don’t wonder at that, for you are evidently very sensitive and sensible to the sufferings of the poor all over the world. A sensible, sensitive man fighting the battle of the poor versus the rich is most likely to become sad, if not melancholy, at times when he sees the seemingly hopeless economic ignorance of the workers, and their child-like faith in their misleaders. A person must be sensible, and become sensitive and sympathetic towards the undermost strata of society, but I think Socialists should for their own health and happiness cultivate a little

callousness in that matter. They should become like a wardsman I knew in the hospital. He was laughing one day at a patient who was crying in pain, and I remarked that he ought to be in the patient’s place! The wardsman sobered at once, and said that when he first became a wardsman he used to cry and fret over every corpse that he had to wheel to the mortuary. It made him so miserable and ill that at last the doctor sharply told him that he would either have to take less notice of suffering and dying humanity, or else give up his job! And he gave over crying, and began whistling when he felt like crying, and finally he became so callous that, as he said, “he could wheel out a ‘stiff’ and whistle as if it were a matter of no importance whatever.” Therefore, when feeling inclined to cry, swear, or tear your hair, just try and whistle, and then do a cool think. Reflect that the planet and all it contains is subject to continual change, that changes come surely, if slowly, and the evils we deplore will surely come to an end some-day, not because of our sorrow or anger, but because of the great evolutionary movement—the tendency to change that is at work everywhere. It is no use trying to raise the sun with a crowbar, we must work, and, above all, wait, until the forward-rolling movement of the whole earth brings the sun above the horizon. It is well to be sympathetic, well to be sensitive to human suffering, and well to be sensible of what is going on around us, but it IS NOT well to see too much evil, to feel too much pain, and make oneself ill over a matter that NO ONE MAN can cure. Reflect that the average working man would make you suffer as he does, if he had the chance to get you down. The average man believes that capitalism is right, and the only wrong he or she suffers is in not being able to rob others. Many of our fellow-workers remind me of a Cousin Jack’s saying: “It’s a good job that wild bulls have got short horns.” See what the workers have done to the three socialist candidates—pushed them aside and voted for their own opponents and enslavers. There is only one thing to do under the circumstances, my friend, The Vag., that is to keep on trying by voice and pen to educate the workers politically, economically and industrially, until they realise that it is neither right nor necessary to rob or to be robbed in order to be happy. Push a-oneside as much of the sadness of life as you can, for as the poet sang:

Life is a river, and man is a boat,
Which over its surface is destined to float,
And joy is a cargo so easily stored
That he is a fool who take sorrow on board.

Now, readers, The Vag. appreciates that comrade's words of advice, and shall endeavour to whistle when sadness seeks a nest within him. But, candidly, I don't think that ever I shall ever learn to whistle and wheel corpses at the one time! It is not good to share everybody's sadness and no one's joys. And it is possible to mar usefulness in removing sadness by partaking of its sorrows too deeply. But when one gets a full glimpse of both the dark and what is regarded as the bright side of life, it is a difficult task for any sensitive person to abstain from "carguing" sorrow or unloading anger! Nevertheless, with all this sadness The Vag. is hopeful. Economic forces are at work, which, combined with socialist propaganda, is awakening the workers out of their own callousness to their own wretched conditions. The great mass of the human beasts of burden are totally ignorant of the fact that they are robbed and enslaved, and that if permitted to do so would stone the man to death who told them. It is these things that gives cause for sadness. Years ago The Vag. learned from a valued comrade of the S.L.P., that it was most unwise, nay, absolutely foolish, for a socialist to import himself or herself wholus bolus into the miseries of others and then to imagine that the sufferers of such misery and degradation felt it as keenly as the former. If they did, he argued, those suffering from the misery arising from poverty would be doing something to get rid of the cause. It is quite true, as is often said, there is a lot of sympathy run to waste in this world—and plenty of unappreciative forklings who want no "damned sympathy" or any change of condition, for, like the hog at the swill-trough, they are quite contented no matter how much filth and dirt they wallow in. I reckoned my friend's advice a good Ramble, and decided to give readers the benefit of it.

Since my last appearance capitalism in Australia has not mended any., Take up what one will, from the daily news-rag to a statistical register, the fact that conditions are far from improving is well in evidence. In the Commonwealth of Aus-

tralia, even with "Labor" Governments composed of expert patchers-up in command, the capitalist-paid statistician tells us that up to the quarter ending (March, year 1913), there were over 15,000 unionists out of employment, the cause being "Lack of Work." As to how many there are unemployed outside of unions there is no record, but these, too, must run into five figures if the numbers applying to paper-advt. jobs may be taken as any criterion. So the garden is not quite so lovely as politicians and ever-do-wells tell us it is. And many a workers' larder will suffer as a consequence of many outdoor toilers being rendered wage-less on account of the continuous wet weather experienced of late. Man may have harnessed nature and bridged the expansive ocean, but the majority have not got the system beaten which periodically, during crises, starves willing workers in the midst of the plenty that they produce.

8.—Kitchen and Cupboard Talks

Ho, there! Reader. Another week has slipped by. Still the old world wags on, heedless of the goings and the comings. We who are here—are her; those who are gone—have gone; a fact as indisputable as two and two make four. Rather a silly remark, think you. Yes? But my thoughts were wandering when it was made. Wandering in this direction: Here we are on this planet, a vast humanity, surrounded with resources beyond our present ken, and possibilities that would turn the wizards of fairy story green with envy. Behind us lies ages of experience to lighten the darkness of the Future. In truth, may it not be written that Experience is the Light of Progress. Time its Lantern. For millions of years the World has been one great stage of a mighty procession, a procession of human travellers, not one of whom had any choice of either coming or going; all enter by the Gate of Life and depart through the Portals of Death—where, so far as we know, the Human Procession ends. Think, or TRY and think, I've tried to do so, but it sets my brain in such a whirl that it feels as though the millions of memory cells were about to burst and immerse the mind in blank confusion, of the myriad strength of that procession. No; there is no man living who can conceive of its length and numbers, and

The Vag. feels assured that the Recording Angel lost count long ago!

What is the fellow driving at? is probably now the uppermost thought in your mind, reader. And justifiably, too. These ramblings are of so random a nature as to be most difficult to follow much less understand. It can't be helped. I'm not self-made. Whatever the shortcomings, I refuse responsibility. Anyhow, get on to my heels and we'll track out of the woods. Now if "Man that is, born of Woman hath but a short time to live," and each and one and all of us are only passing travellers here below, I want to know, and you SHOULD want to know, also: Why it is that a few of those travellers monopolise the Earth and "its fulness thereof," and the legions born into servitude to minister unto their every want, comfort, and desire? How it comes that some folk are, so to speak, born with spurs on their heels; others with saddles upon their back? And the reason why the world is fenced in, and notices posted here, there, everywhere, warning "sundry" that trespassers will be prosecuted. History reveals the whyness and thusness of things. The Adam and Eve story of creation doesn't fit in with the materialistic conception of things mundane; the divine right of kings has been exploded by the fact of communities smashing out those idols; and the Kehristian notion that those "owning" are the Lord's chosen purse-bearers" is knocked kite high by the fact that the gambling tables and stock exchange not only alter the length and breadth of the purse but frequently the ownership thereof. Do you see the point? Well, stick a pin there—jab. What I am driving at is that the present day conditions are the result of material forces, that history and science both demonstrate the fact that Man started out on his March to meet Progress with a Club in his hand: in his quest for food he was compelled to protect himself against the dangers of the forest. His slavery days began with the knowledge that it was more profitable to put prisoners of war to work producing for the innards of the conquerors than to gridle them for food. From that time on mankind has been divided into masters and slaves, the forms of slavery changing with the development of the tool of production, until the Age of Reason has been reached when men realise their slavery and discovering its cause, are setting about to mancipate themselves therefrom.

Private Ownership of the source and means of Human Life owns Human Life itself; and can therefore make willing slaves of the Ownerless Mass.

Looked at in the above light we see that things have not always been as they are, as newspapers and knaves, not excepting fools, too, are oftentimes prone to wisely and sagely inform us. I am neither what you would call young or consider old—and I note many changes in my short sojourn upon this planet. Changes, too, of such magnitude and importance as to convince The Vag., among thousands of others, of the approach of a New Industrial and Social Order of things. And my earnest prayer is: May it come soon. I tell you in confidence, those of you whose ear I have got; that already I am heartily sick of the slummishness and vileness of capitalism, and so should every man and woman to be with a mind above hogdom and ambitions beyond snarling, scratching, and biting their way through the world with only a care for their own miserable selves and the devil take the hindmost. What puzzles me is how so many people live on in contentment apparently unconscious of their miserable state. Time and oft have I met poverty in the home from what I know of working class life poverty is present in every home—and marvelled how it was suffered with so much surface contentment. But now the bear with the sore head is on the growl—and, let it be hoped, on the prowl to find a way to smash its capitalist poverty breeding environment. Quite a number of my closer acquaintances, members of the wage earning class some of whom have regarded me with disguised suspicion for a long time past, and even in my presence have with an Irish whisper expressed those suspicions, actually thought I was touched in the upper storey, these acquaintances, let me tell you, have been touched in a softer spot than my head-piece, right in their pockets, and they're growling like good old soreheads. They are just beginning to feel the pinch; high rents and high prices are convincing them that they inhabit a Fool's Paradise. Why, wages have gone up, and employment is more regular, and I'll be hanged if I ain't much worse off than in less prosperous times, chorus they! There's no hope for a working man to get ahead of his position in these days of capitalist class domination, and so they growl and grumble on. Conditions are lashing contentment out of the workers, and the

truth, cast forth by the Socialist is not falling on barren soil.

Now, it has often occurred to me that if there is anyone in this world who should welcome Socialism, it is the wives and mothers of the wage workers. There is a great economic struggle in the home—and the woman has to bear the brunt of it. The husband as a rule hands his wages over each week to the housewife, who is looked to to make it stretch the week out no matter how small the amount. Rent must be paid, else the few sticks of furniture which go to make up what is ironically termed "the home" are in danger of falling under the auctioneer's hammer into other hands; the husband must get his three good meals and a bed regularly to keep up steam that the machine may run profitably; the children require food and decent clothing, a little sunshine now and again in the form of pleasure, there's the cost of education too—books, paints, sewing materials, etc. And as for footwear—powder my socks, boots are everlastingly wanted, and many a time not obtainable when most urgently needed. Then there are a dozen and one little incidentals which are required at certain times. Should illness or accident befall husband or bairn, the wife or mother carries the burden. While man is snug by fire-side smoking the pipe of peace, or discussing work in a tap room, or at a political meeting barracking for politicians who are after feathering their own nests, and "kidding" the strong-backs and hardheads only to give them place and power and they'll SACRIFICE their precious selves in getting human mules cheaper nosebags and cheaper stabling; don't alarm yourselves, Mr. Man, and burden us with pious protestations of angelic innocence, because The Vag. knows the world a bit and is not quite so green as he is virtuous-looking—while the lord and master (of a fleeting moment) is engaged as described, the wife and mother is darning and mending, cutting down and patching-up. There are also periods of unemployment, times when the paltry wages cannot possibly be stretched to the length of the nicest family limits, someone goes unpaid, who, then, faces the music? Go ask the landlord, the time payment collector, the debt "duns," and I'll pound my life that the answer will be: In nine out of ten cases THE WOMAN, nearly always the woman. Isn't this only too true? And you call this LIVING when its an insult to name it "Existence." - Look you here, woman, you are part earner

of that paltry pittance you receive from your husband called in capitalist parlance, wages, and when your "lord" hands it over to you pass him no compliment, but ask him why in the name of all that's Right he doesn't use his brains to get the whole social value of his labor, the surplus stolen by the master class, so that you and yours may LIVE, secured from poverty, and freed from the wretchedness and anxiety of a mean, sordid, hand to mouth existence. Yes; I know I'm in your kitchen—the parlor door's shut, locked, barred, and bolted! You either want to hide its bareness, save its appointments until you die, else its let to help you pay the rent? Let me ask is not all this working class gospel? Anyway, I tell you the thoughtful wageslave has a pretty bad time of it under the present anarchic unsocial condition of things, especially if he shares domestic troubles.

Socialism to the average woman lacking knowledge thereon is a hideous nightmare. It has been painted so in the blackest of ink in capitalist gutter papers, and drawn on their imagination in the most lurid of language by pulpiteers, platformists, and politicians standing for the rich and idle class. These opponents of Socialism have thrust their arms to the pits in the vilest sexual muck capitalism has bred and accumulated, dragged out almost unthinkable monstrosities, vulgar and bestial, and presented it as an inevitable coming under the new social order. What sort of an opinion could men conjuring so vile a picture of the woman of the future state have of the woman of this day and generation? Respect, bah! none; chivalry, a mask only. They saw, and, doubtless many lived it, the looseness of the sexes in what is euphonistically termed the "higher social circles," and reflected their own minds and their own doings. It was quite reasonable that the soul of virtue and pure mindedness should revolt at such a picture of her future self. But the assumptions were groundless, and the filth of capitalist creation. Of course I know that the working class is not free from vice, but on the score of sexual morality its members compare more than favorably with those of the monied order. And the reason why the stop-in-the-kitchen women abhors Socialism is because it will break up your home, and steal your children? Why, my gentle reader, that is just the very thing capitalism is doing every day! As night follows day homes are smashed and families

cast adrift on the treacherous waters of capitalist society. Your little home is not immune. The slightest economic wave may dash it to pieces. Understand? How many are there among us but who have not at some period or other had their homes smashed and hopes grounded. A great many, you say. Perhaps so; but I feel sure that there are a greater number who have. Regarding your children, mother, the factory hell is waiting open-jawed to consume your daughters and your sons they drag almost from the cradle, whether you will it or not, to make conscript soldiers of them. Then these body-snatching, child thieves add insult to injury by proposing to offer you Five Pounds ahead for breeding babes to be eaten up by the greedy, life-consuming dragon of capitalism in factory or on red streamed battleground. I am plain Jack Blunt—and that is what I think. Then you're afraid that after smashing your home, robbing you of your children, Socialism will steal your hubby? Ha! ha! ha! He! he! he! Ho! ho! ho! Oh, dear! The bare thought of a big steal of hubbies tickles me to death. What? I'm not serious? Why, woman alive, my face resembled a yawning graveyard before this goak forced itself upon me. True; a lot of women cuddle this silly notion. I once overheard a political Liberal woman informing another of her sex that "Socialism meant she'd be everybody's wife." Only minds evil can think such evil where no premises exist for such. Does anyone mean to tell me that the creation of an environment where slumdom and economic insecurity is unknown, the claw-and-tooth struggle for existence absent, in which woman would be the economic, social, and moral equal of man, and opportunities embracing everyone to live useful, honest clean lives, that an environment so ordered would produce the sexual bestialities as predicted by anti-socialist cranks? Bah! write them down knaves and fools. Good-bye, you of the fair sex, I've tarried long enough, and now must ramble further. Please give the question of Socialism more than a casual glance.

Now I'm off again: The Churches are going begging for congregations, for the good and sufficient reason that the hard-pressed workers are dropping their superstitious ideas and are discovering the fact for themselves that religion will not satisfy an empty belly. The truism that a hungry stomach knows no morality is borne out in the everyday economic

whirligig of things. And I feel doubly assured that the same stomach has no religion and can expect little or no succour from the churches. Parsons, priests, and preachers are at bottom the most sordid materialists in the world, and its an ingrained part of the profession to do as little as possible and get as much as they can grab for it. Churchdom has been and still is a notorious Grabber, its heads—parasites upon parasites! Ugh! Can one wonder at the workers when awakened to class-consciousness jettisoning the Church? Why, it is then the hollow mockery, fraud, and sham is perceived. And officialdom recognises the trend of things, as this cutting from an English paper, the "Daily News," dated May, 1912, indicates: It is a reverend Fleming Williams who is speaking—

"He claimed that the people are developing a social conscience in the exact ratio in which the churches are neglecting to cultivate it. The inevitable result will be our churches will be left high and dry. The world will go on forgetting our existence. They will leave us to discuss our little theological conundrums, which, though of profound interest, hardly affect the great needs and wants of the world."

Religion never yet, nor never will, furnish anything for the material wants and needs of the world, and insofar as it stands in the path of economic and social progress it is going to be bumped and bumped hard. Economic development and sociological science are racing far ahead of religion, leaving the latter hopelessly in the rear. The only justification for the existence of Churchdom, so far as I can see, is the cracking of theological conundrums and doping the "dopeable." To me the foregoing is a plain admission of the inefficacy of the church and its religion. This is all on that point—here goes for another excursion.

There is a Biblical quotation which runs: "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Nobody doubts its truth. And a striking example is found in the tottering position of the A.S.P., formerly the S.F.A. It went into business in the year 1907 with cymbal clapping and flag flapping—and everyone saw the revolution crossing the sky on horseback. The S.L.P. was to be blown to atoms! Gee whiz! Bang!! But that organisation held together firm and solid. The S.F.A. took in anarchists and anybody and everybody; all was grist that came

to its mill. The building up of a sound, scientific body was not its immediate purpose—that would come when confusion worse confounded had been established! It was then a big house—but some of its studs have since broke away. Now it is called the A.S.P. and is much smaller. This body publishes a paper under the caption “The International Socialist,” or at least the “Sydney Branch” does, which professes to be revolutionary, sound, and scientific. It has made charges against the S.L.P. and when challenged to substantiate same, so I gleaned from “The People,” went dumb, deaf, and blind. It has unrolled tripe by the yard, and blundered Marx into error. Yet its conductors claim to be Marxian from scalp to toenail. When the question of two parties crops up, A.S.P.iers cry parrot-like: “personalities, personalities!” They scream it about your ears, and bawl it down your neck. I have heard them. **REASON THEY WON’T HAVE, HISTORY THEY DON’T WANT.** Members of the S.L.P., of course, are the criminals.

This paper—the oracle of the A.S.P.—is a three-quarter cross between Capitalism, Single-tax, and Socialism, and if correct economics is the poise of Socialists, the A.S.P.ers stand head downwards. Get your head into the following which is taken from the aforementioned “I.S.,” of date June 29, 1912. It is an answer to a correspondent:

Querist.—Your friend’s contention that the books in a bookshop are capital is wrong. They are wealth produced by labor. Capital is that form of wealth used in production, as machinery, etc. The factors of production are three: Labor, tools, and land, and the product is wealth. As everything is, in the last analysis, the result of the laborer operating the tool upon land everything is wealth produced by labor. Under OUR system a bookseller is a **DISTRIBUTOR** of the product of labor and as such he **AIDS** production. In so far as he takes **UNDUE PROFIT** from his clients **HE IS AN EXPLOITER.** (Caps. ours).

That is what I promised to deal with. Isn’t it a sparkling gem of economic wisdom? One feels like riddling it right off the jump, but I am at the end of my tether as far as space goes, so it may be as well to grape-shot it in our next Ramble.

THE MARTYRS OF FREEDOM.

They never fail who die
In a great cause; the block may soak their gore;
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls—
But still their spirit walks abroad, though years
Elapse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which overpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to freedom!

Byron.

8.—Slaves in the Making.

Excuse my persistence! Please let me apologise—not for being alive, not much! For how many times have I not wished myself dead, you likewise, and I feel sure that IF “wishes were horses, The Vag. would ride” to the devil, in good company, too! But wishes are not horses, they’re only wishes. What I wish to apologise for is the weightiness of the matter this week. After perusal, I must admit it to be heavy. Never mind, worry through it—and all will be well.

France wants babies! Well, let her have them by the thousands! The Vag. doesn’t want any—’cos he’s now out of business. But France has got to get a move on, or, as M. Paul Lery Beaulieu estimates, in six generations the French nation will have petered out. That’s a bit serious, isn’t it? Now, I wonder what part poverty has played in the decline of the birth-rate in France. A very big part, I trow. There in order to stimulate this dwindling industry a scheme is on the boards to subsidise the mother of a child to the tune of £20, which may be taken either in two cash payments—the first at the birth of the child, and the second when it is one year old—or else be placed to a fund to provide the mother with an annuity on reaching the age of 60. The last proposal is irony itself, if what Mr. Max O’Reil has stated is true, that no French woman has ever been known to reach the age of 50, let alone 60. By persuading mothers to accept the subsidy as a prospective annuity the industry may probably be made to flourish cheaply if not expeditiously. While all this rumpus is being kicked up about the lack of babies, no tangible

attempt is being made to permanently improve the conditions of life so as to secure every man, woman and child in the fullness of economic tenure. Bring them in, and the devil take them when they get here. The Socialists are the only people who hold the solution to the population question. All that the politicians can think to do is to moon about with a Batchelor's Tax proposal under their wings seeking to coerce young men to marry and assist to bring children into the world when there is no economic future before them worth a continental rap. What a solution! Sure, it must make any sensible man wish he'd never been born!

At the Balmain Police Court lately, a number of conscripts were fined £5 in most cases for failing to render the personal service required by the Federal "Labor" Government's Capitalist Defence Act. Some of the boys asked for time to pay; others scorned the concession.

"What do you intend to do?" inquired the magistrate of one of these.

"I will do the time," was the reply.

"I don't like the idea of you young fellows going to GAOL, but the minimum penalty under the Act is £5, and I cannot impose less," said the magistrate.

"I couldn't rake the money up in a month," pleaded one of the lads.

"I don't want you to, but I will grant you any reasonable time. Will three months be long enough?"

This concession was agreed to, and the boys were HANDED OVER to the Military Authorities to complete their hours of service.

Questions elicited the fact that one lad received only 15s. a week as an apprentice, his father £2 8s. as a laborer, and a family to support. Another lad was the sole support of a widowed mother and three sisters. His wages were only 25s. a week, and the firm by which he was employed permitted him to work overtime to augment his meagre earnings.

By Jehovah! But when Mr. William Morris Hughes, Andrew Fisher, Senator Pearce and the rest of the non-descript crew, see the result of their handiwork musn't they feel proud? The whole thing causes the blood to simmer in my very veins, and I wish—but what's the good of wishing?

We've got to keep on fighting, and that's all about it.

This is a world of strife, sure. A strife between those who act wrongly and those who want to do the right. There are many well-meaning, good-intentioned people in the world, kind and sympathetic, who would do the correct thing if they could but don't know how, whilst, on the other hand, there are others who understanding the difference between Right and Wrong commit a Wrong because it doesn't PAY to do the Right. "Do a little Wrong for the belly's sake!" That is the text of the capitalist system, and is a text given practical effect to in everyday life. It is very hard to walk straight through a crooked environment, but those seeing the crookedness of the industrial and social environment in which mankind is hedged, who remain indolent and indifferent as to its operation and effects, are guilty of a crime against humanity and equally as responsible for the many ills arising therefrom as the jerry builder who is conscious of the dangers he is creating. There are numbers of people who agree that the Socialist Labor Party is scientific, that its tactics are in correct keeping with its science, its logic unassailable and its facts undisputable, yet, while admitting the Rightness of these things, when the moment arrives to give practical effect to their admissions, they turn right about face and act towards the continued perpetuation of that which they previously agreed to be wrong. Many reasons are assigned for such actions, amongst which environment is the strongest one advanced, but if all men are going to succumb to the capitalist environment of wage slavery, the conditions ahead of present and future generations are fearful to contemplate. Better far that the sun ceased to give warmth to this old planet, or that procreation were put an end to, rather than Mankind should succumb to the present vicious dog-eat-dog system. I say if the world offers no more to the mass of the people than an existence harrowed with uncertainty and poverty, misery and anxiety, we are not justified in aiding in the adorning of the future! But while it is true that a bad environment is inducive to wrong-doing, history and experience teaches us that it is also an incentive to others to give expression to the Right as it appears relative to the Wrong—and so Progress is made. Thanks to those who have in the past rose superior to the sordidness of their surroundings, in spite of all obstacles ploughed the ground that the seed of a more healthy

environment may be sown and bear good fruit, we who learned their experiences and discoveries, marked the effects of their efforts upon environment, know full well that with the machinery at hand, and armed with the Knowledge that lies behind us, the face of the world can be changed, and an environment created, the goodness of which will develop higher and nobler manhood and womanhood than is possible under the cribbed and cabined environment capitalism imposes upon humankind.

9.—Cold-Footed Economics

You think I'm waxing sentimental, dear reader, and reeling off a little cheap drawing-room philosophy, now don't you? Yes. I thought so. But as it happens it is not drawing room philosophy at all, but kitchen talk between me and myself. I'm as cold as a frog; the fire has gone out, and we can't afford too much coal-miner's life. So you can quite understand my mental state. Where my thoughts lead I must follow. By the way, this brings to mind a remark passed in conversation some years ago with a man who is now a prominent Liberal hack. He wasn't a hack then—anyhow, he went wrong for his stomach sake, and has been wrong ever since. I cannot say whether his conscience at times pricks him or not, that, of course, doesn't matter. We were discussing "Capital," not that either of us knew much about that famous work of Karl Marx, and were consequently discussing it in the abstract, not in the concrete. He had investigated the cover, I had probed further, just turned it over. "To study Marx," said he, "one requires a hard seat, a bare table, and a head swathed in wet, ice-cold towels." I don't know whether he meant the towels to keep the head from swelling, or keep down the temperature. Then I agreed with him—but I don't now. Warmth causes the blood to flow, and the brain to quicken. My experience is that nice, warm, comfortable surroundings, not elaborate, but with a degree of comfort, are most conducive to the studying of Marx's stupendous effort. Now I'm cold: my feet as stones; and if my "copy" is shaky, my economics faulty, you know the reason. Cold-footed economics are no good to anyone, and I readily believe that when the Sydney "International Socialist" editor got the following junk of economics from off his chest, he had

his head against an ice-berg and his feet in a refrigerating box. You read it last Ramble, did you? Then read it again and again—then tell us what YOU think about it:

Querist—Your friend's contention that the books in a bookshop are capital is wrong. They are wealth produced by labor. Capital is that form of wealth used in production, as machinery, etc. The factors of production are three: Labor, tools, and land, and the product is wealth. As everything is, in the last analysis, the result of the laborer operating the tool upon land everything is wealth produced by labor. Under OUR system a bookseller is a DISTRIBUTOR of the product of labor and as such he AIDS production. In so far as he takes UNDUE PROFIT from his clients HE IS AN EXPLOITER. (Caps ours).

But it does make me shiver! Let us see now. "Books in a bookshop are not capital." No? Then tripe in a tripe shop, clothes in a clothes shop, butter, eggs, ham, beef, and groceries in a provision or grocery store, pigs in a pig market, cattle in a sale yard, or horses in Kiss's bazaar, none of these things are capital, if that theory is well founded. And, consequently, the workers engaged therein cannot be exploited wage slaves, and have therefor no grievance against society, enjoying as they must all the wealth within the shop, store, warehouse, etc., wherein they are employed. Is not this the logic of that position? Say a man has £1500 to invest, he sees where book distribution could be carried on at a profit, and transforms his money into books. We then have Money—Commodity—Money. That is to say, the would-be bookseller expends £1000 in a commodity called books, as a means of increasing his previous money stock, by the only way possible, via Profit. The object of book distribution being to continue the exploitation commenced in the factory, mill, and workshop. Having thus expended his money stock in commodity-books, if he would succeed he must purchase another commodity, labor power, to aid in the work of distribution, which according to the above definition is a necessary social function which "aids production." Now as "Capital is that part of wealth used in the exploitation of labor to obtain profit," are not books in a bookshop just as much Capital to the book-

seller as machinery is to the machine seller? His Money Capital is transformed into Commodity and again into more Money-Capital. Books in a bookshop are then a means to obtaining Profit, just as is a machine in a factory. That is how it looks to me. I am open to admit that if the bookshop was the end of the terminus as far as the commodity books were concerned, then this "wealth produced by labor" would cease to be Capital. As we know the bookshop is not the final destination of books, the seller wants to sell them quick and lively and thereby obtain a profit on the money he has expended in the purchase of books and the labor-power necessary to reach the final goal of production. Again, it might reasonably be asked: If books in a bookshop are not Capital, is the bookshop in which the books are, or the money in the till, Capital? According to the above version as set forth by the "A.S.P. organ" and alleged mouth-piece of revolutionary socialism and Marxian economics, "The International Socialist," obviously not, for the reason that both the shop and the money in the till are used to "AID production" only. For the present, however, enough said on this point. Now, on to the next. "Everything" IS NOT "in the last analysis the result of the laborer operating the tool upon land," neither is "everything wealth produced by labor." "The earth we stand upon, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the sun that gives us life, light, and cheer, these are part of everything, and represent to us wealth as much as the food we eat, the clothes we wear, or the book we read. Shivering are you? So am I. I feel almost as icy as Charity! Let me ramble on. Economic facts are cold-iron, alright! Never mind. Those parts of everything, say authorities, are wealth, but I need not tell you that they are not wealth produced by the laborer operating upon land, because young four-year-old could tell you different than that. Why, bless my buttons, he'd want you to show him the "man with the hoe" making the sun or creating the earth. Quibbling, this, eh? You assume that I know what is meant even if what was meant wasn't said. Anyhow, I understand what is writ. That answer to "Querist" is what The Vag. would call "Cold-Foot Economics." Here let us say, Labor Produces ALL VALUE. Hold fast to that Truth!

This over, I suppose reader, you breathe more freely. Economics are hard—and dry, too but as correct economics

is the Rock upon which Socialist Propaganda is built, we cannot, must not, ignore them, or we may find ourselves snowed up by capitalist economists. But we have further to travel before reaching the end of our economic excursion. Hold your breath now, for we are about to open the gates to one of the chambers of mysteries! "Under OUR system a bookseller is a distributor of the produce of labor and as such he aids production." Pin that to your ear—jab, jab! That looks as sound as a bell, eh? Perhaps so. Merely as the owner of books and a bookshop "our" bookseller does not necessarily aid production, nor does he as such add value to production. What happens is: That each stage through which commodities produced by labor pass in reaching their final destination—consumption,—such as transportation, handling, etc., the average socially necessary labor embodied therein adds value thereto, therefore the workers engaged in transportation and distribution, while not producers of commodities, are socially necessary, and just as equal as value-creators as those engaged in actual production. This appears to be the point of difference. We will wave aside the distinction that may be drawn between a product and a commodity, as it may be considered superfine. Already a fancy has got hold of me that someone is thinking: "Oh, he's strained at a gnat, and—"—Well! I haven't. See? If the camel has got its head in I'll swear by all my illustrious sires, the bump will never go down! Keep up your pecker, my patient readers, the end of the road is now in sight.

The next bit takes the bun. Let it be written in letters bold, and blazoned upon every international revolutionary banner! Get into your red blankets, you revolutionaries who scream wildly about gutters of blood: bring forth your babes that the "High Priests" of the A.S.P. may dedicate them to the holy cause, a la Tomann! "IN SO FAR AS HE TAKES UNDUE PROFIT FROM HIS CLIENTS HE IS AN EXPLOITER." Well may you rub your eyes, and look like doubting Thomas! That quotation is from the aforementioned alleged socialist sheet of June 29, 1912. This means, if it means anything at all, that distributing capitalists such as Hordern's, Grace Bros., Cole's, etc., if they take DUE PROFIT are NOT exploiters! Here is a statement made in all seriousness in answer to a correspondent, through the medium of its public organ, that the Profit System may be tolerated as

long as DUE PROFIT only is taken by commodity-selling capitalists. By the use of the term UNDUE PROFIT we can only presuppose the existence and CORRECTNESS of DUE PROFIT. And what is due or "undue profit," anyhow? Whatever claim this body may have had to be of socialist nature, by the contention that only when undue profit is taken is the capitalist an exploiter, and the only conclusion thereby to be drawn, that the taking of due profit absolves a person from class opportunism. It is all economic piffle. And when a month is allowed to pass without any admission of error or correction thereof, through its mouth-piece, the only conclusion one can arrive at is that the Australian Socialist Party endorses that answer to "Querist" as its definition of Capital. For the present more than enough has been said, while time and space warns me to get off the grass, and off I get!

10—Capitalism and the "Unfit."

Medical men both in Great Britain and Australia are busying themselves about what are termed in the profession as the "Unfit," one British medical man expressing grave doubts as to the wisdom of prolonging the lives of those who through misfortune of birth or accident in life are rendered "unfit" to successfully battle with the economic storm and stress of life that the capitalist environment entails. The "unfit" means to the potion and saw-bones fraternity the poor who through physical defection are unprofitable to capitalism, and does not include the gouty, old, decrepit, debauched and diseased members of the parasitic moneyed-class who contribute so much to the profession to hold a seat on this planet. Personally, The Vag. agrees with some of the medicos that it would be good to let many victims kindly and lightly through the Gates of the Unknown, not so much for the benefit of society as for the sake of the sufferer. Even were society to allow its so-called "unfit" to die just when it couldn't help the problem of the "unfit" would not perish. Capitalism breeds and makes the Unfit. The poverty of the body and anxiety of the mind expresses itself, to a greater or lesser degree, in physical and mental disabilities both in acquisition and transmission. Let us take our own fears, thoughts, and anxieties, those of us who stand on the brink of Poverty's Hell and are conscious of its awfulness, its consuming inferno, do these not affect the strongest both mentally and physic-

ally? Then how much more must those be affected who are struggling and battling in the vortex of such an inferno? Doctors when they leave the consulting room to dabble in social science generally blossom out as quacks and instead of getting at the cause of the disease, as would be expected of them in their own branch of science, they go fooling with effects and appear ridiculous. A short time back in these Rambles it was shown that a medical man of repute, before a medical conference in Europe, seriously suggested as a method of minimizing mental deficiency the killing of babes at birth showing signs of insanity! And it is a notorious fact that insanity presents itself in 90 cases out of a hundred at the adult stage as a result of the cares and worries of life. Could anything more absurd be conceived? Now for a breath!

Unfit, in the capitalist sense of the term, means those who from varied causes—all springing from capitalist ownership and its mode of production for individual gain—are outside the fence of industry and unable to earn a livelihood or produce profits. These it is found necessary for the capitalist to feed; and although a reserve army of "unfits" is of excellent service to keep the "fits" docile and tractable within the toils, when it grows too large and very hungry it's time to consider as to getting rid of a portion of it. Hence the cry from the capitalist-controlled laboratory to let the "unfit" rot out. The medical profession, like the legal, clerical, and military profession, is a big capitalist job-trust, and sees everything socially and politically through capitalist spectacles. Dr. T. Fiaschi, of Sydney, in his presidential address before the Auckland Congress, referred to the compulsory portion of the Australian Defence Act, as a means of distinguishing between the fit and the unfit. Yes, the compulsory training may determine the fit from the unfit for capitalist purposes, but it will not prevent the "unfit" from manifesting itself in the community through the prevailing conditions. Even compulsory training may produce its unfit by forcing boys to do what is absolutely hateful to them, and being bullied and bounced by upstarts, these things are just as likely to result in a break-up of a boy's mental and physical system and leave him a wreck, totally unfit to cope with the tremendous battle of life. Conscriptio on the Continent has been responsible for the shatter-

ing of thousands of young lives.

On the question of Conscription I am reminded that the matter was discussed at the Political Hard-Labor League Conference, 1914, where it was decided to ask for an inquiry into the working of the system with a view to amendment of the Act to remedy abuses wherever they exist. A suggestion that "private conscience" might with good reason be considered in conjunction with the inquiry was actually turned down by a majority of the democrats assembled. The "gem" of the fakir labor movement, Morrish, M.L.A., wanted an amendment moved that conscripts should not be utilised during times of industrial unrest. This wasn't taken seriously, but that it was considered necessary to table such an amendment is evidence that the conscript army can at any time be used against striking workmen. Even though the amendment had become part of the motion, if ever occasion arose in the interest of capitalist law-'n-order for military action within the walls of Australia the cadet as part of the military force would be compelled, if ordered, to take a hand. And just let The Vag. inform you hard-headed laborites that a number of your own sons are so filled with the glories of militarism, so amenable to its discipline, and so desirous of sporting their prowess and patriotism, that at the word of command the musket would be levelled at you.

As for fits and misfits, it was once The Vag.'s misfortune to have occasion to call in a doctor to one of his family. I state Miss-Fortune advisably for once the medicine men get into the house it's good-bye to your little "sock," it doesn't matter whether it be priest, parson, lawyer, or doctor—they're all after boodle. You may meet a "good sort" once in a blue moon, and when you do hang on to him. If you've got a little surplus and any one of those four gents. waylay you, your surplus is "gone a million!" I'll tell yer honest, I'd sooner shake hands with one hundred "dirtmen" in one day than nod to one doctor, parson, priest, or lawyer in a twelvemonth. Of course, the doc., standing on his dig. or hind legs, might retort that misfits or unfits, or whatever other sort of fits you like to name, like The Vag. should be let die, and the "Delirium Tremens" with maddened glee chime in with "good riddance to bad 'human rubbish,'" and after we are dead, what about it? The world'll go on as

fast as ever! But we're a mile off the track. To come back: After seeing to the patient the doc. happened to spy a copy of "The People" laying on a table near by, and, picking it up, remarked that he'd never heard of it before and enquired its value. Under the circumstances of production he was informed that the value was greater than he'd be pleased to exchange for it. The man was amazed, perplexed, dumbfounded. "Well, w-h-a-t-'s it worth?" stammered the nonplussed one. "Worth!—to some people, a gold-mine, to others,—not the little land beneath their fingernails." A look of consternation flitted across his dial as though he had suddenly realised the presence of a madman, but collecting composure quietly asked its price. "A paltry copper," was the answer. "Why didn't you tell me that at first?" "For the simple reason I was never asked." Then a discussion ensued on the question of Socialism, and the relation of the doctor to the patient clearly shown to be a cash-nexus one. But whilst agreeing in the main with our side of the proposition, the question was altogether a too abtuse one for him to dabble with. He went—and hasn't been back since.

Now, as long as Capitalism continues, with its economic insecurity, its pitfalls and dangers, its temptations and snares, society will have its criminals, unfits, etc. While men and women struggle like wild beasts for a mere existence, in daily fear of being driven to the lowest depths of social degradation, children born under unfavorable conditions, and reared in the fetid atmosphere of the slum, whilst working-class mothers are weighted with anxiety and worry to keep the home together, families driven by cursed landlordism from place to place, as is often the case, under these conditions the "naturally" unfit will appear; and where men and women and boys and girls, in the hurry and bustle of profit-getting industrialism, are open to risks of dangers to life through disease or accident, so will the "unfit" be always with us. What the world requires is a complete revolutionary change; what the individual desires and strives for is economic security, but under this present old order of things economic security cannot be guaranteed. Many of the apparently fitted to survive have been beaten by the environment and rendered unfit. Socialism is what the world wants—not doctors twaddle about social unfits. The sources and means of wealth production

OWNED by the people instead of, as to-day, being owned by a class. Already we have collective production and no one with a grain of grey matter in their cranium would suppose that with collective ownership production will be carried on for the profit of a class! No. Production for Profit is a condition of Private or (Class) Ownership of Industry. What then must be the condition of a Collectively Owner and Controlled Industrial System? PRODUCTION FOR USE! And production for use spells ECONOMIC SECURITY for the whole of the people, work made pleasurable and not a drudgery, all available labor organised and conserved for USEFUL service, not run to waste as we see it to-day. PLAN and not CHAOS, the motto; LIFE and not DEATH—the object of Humanity. What a grand life all could live if the working-class world would but acquire sense. The result of labor that is now burned by the rich in woeful ways, and that wasted by wanton destruction to fix the market, this under a sane, planful, and equitable system as Socialism IS to be, will be in the hands of its rightful owners and used with a healthy view of getting the best out of life. Under capitalism “seeing life” is just “hogging!” We have not yet reached the portals of true civilisation, and will not do so till Socialism is won. Friends, till then The Vag. thinks the world will keep a-hogging, and capitalism continue to manufacture its UNFITS. Pity 'tis, 'tis true!

Socialism is the Human stage of Civilisation! No civilisation can reign where war and robbery obtain. Capitalism with its growing armaments, its mighty instruments, of life and property destruction, its gilded war chiefs, and armed battalions, is no better than Savagedom. What greater savagery can be imagined than the savagery of the bloody battlefields! Robbery and murder of the Industrial battlefields. And on both these fields the wars of conflicting economic interests are fought—and the workers are always the fighters and sufferers on both. Socialism alone can abolish those conflicting economic interests and thereby end war, wipe-opt the last vestige of organised savagery, and usher in Socialism. How long that time is off, no one can tell. Whether you and I will live to see the glad day when the Gates of Civilisation will open and the working class receive its inheritance, The Vag. cannot hazard a guess. This

I do know: that the world is running faster than ever, that a big capitalist smash-up is apparent at no great distant date, that to-day there is more clear-thinking on Socialism in the world than ever before and a more general awakening to class-consciousness, that Socialism is the only means of individual and collective preservation, and for the progress of the human family, and for these reasons I feel convinced that Socialism is coming as surely as to-morrow's sun will rise, and its advent much nearer than most people think. But whether you or I are alive or dead by that time doesn't matter. What does matter is that we do our best, and not our worst, for the advancement of the Future. For the past has gone beyond all human recall, and can only serve as a guide for the action in the immediate present that builds our hopes of the morrow. Impatience and despair do not aid us in our cause, but weakens us in the fight, besides darkening our individual lives. - Patience and hope are the weapons of victory. The battle in which socialists are engaged is the accomplishment of the mission of the ages—the emancipation of the working-class from its last form of slavery.

I heard men saying: Leave tears and praying,
The sharp knife heedeth not the sheep;
Are we not stronger than the rich and the wronger,
When the day breaks over dream and sleep!

Come, shoulder to shoulder as the world grows older!
Help lies in naught but thee and me,
Hope is before us, the long years that bore us
Bore leaders more than men may be.

Let dead hearts tarry and trade and marry,
And trembling nurse their dreams of mirth.
While we the living our lives are giving
To bring the bright new world to birth.

Come, shoulder to shoulder ere earth grows older!
The Cause spreads o'er land and sea;
Now the world shaketh, and fear awaketh,
And joy at last for thee and me.

—William Morris.

William Morris is dead. He saw not the birth of the new world of which he sang so hopefully. In his day he worked for Socialism in the face of greater obstacles and disappointments than present themselves to us. Karl Marx, Socialist Philosopher and Guide, is not with us in the flesh, but the great work he performed for Socialism lives. He lighted the beacon to direct the working class towards its emancipation, and the beacon-light grows brighter as each day brings us closer to the goal of humanity's hope. Wherefore despair and why impatient! Do all that thou can'st, Progress asketh no more!

II.—Ingersoll's Dream of the Future

As an antidote to our rambles together through the bogs of Capitalism, we might succeed to a more hopeful vein by projecting ourselves into the great future that lies stretched before us, and picture a new world, a noble, happy, intellectual, people. Live within ourselves for a brief moment at least, the Life we desire. To do this, I would commend you to Robert Ingersoll's "Vision of the Socialist." It is a word picture, beautifully painted, though not over drawn. After bogging through the sordid everyday happenings of the capitalist world, a bright passage of healthy imagination is of passing relief, and without further ado, I herewith present it to you:

"I see a world where thrones have crumbled, and where kings are dust. The aristocracy of idleness has perished from the earth.

"I see a world without a slave. Man at last is free. Nature's forces have by science been enslaved. Lightning and light, wind and wave, frost and flame, and all the secret subtle powers of earth and air are the tireless toilers of the human race.

"I see a world at peace, adorned with every form of art, with Music's myriad voices thrilled, while lips are rich with words of love and truth; a world in which no exile sighs, no prisoner mourns; a world on which the gibbet's shadow does not fall; a world where Labor reaps its full reward, where work and worth go hand in hand; here the poor girl trying to win bread with the needle—the needle that has been called 'the asp for the breast of the

poor'—is not driven to desperate choice of crime or death—suicide or shame.

"I see a world without the beggar's outstretched palm, the miser's heartless stony stare, the piteous tale of want, the livid lips of lies, the cruel eyes of scorn.

"I see a race without disease of flesh or brain—shapely and fair, the married harmony of form and function—and as I look, life lengthens, joy deepens, love canopies the earth; and over all, in the great dome, shines the eternal star of human hope."

This to you may seem a far-fetched dream; to me it is the thought of a fair civilisation for which Socialists are to-day striving, and yet to materialise.

