SYNDICALISM

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"Victoria in manu nobis est; viget aetas, animus valet; contra illis, annis atque divitiis, omnia consenuerunt."

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CHAPTER I

THE WAY TO SYNDICALISM

Syndicalism is a method of realising the Millennium by the action and under the government of Trade Unions, and it is based on the underlying assumption that the only way of ensuring justice for the working classes or Fourth Estate is by the independent and coercive efforts of the working classes themselves.

So defined, it could only have come into existence at a comparatively late period of the world's civilisation. In the earlier periods of human history we know almost nothing of the existence of those who toil and spin. Inequality is the distinguishing note of primitive society. Apelike bullies, strong in sinews and sharp in tooth and claw, ruled with a rod of iron over their weaker palæolithic brothers. Later on the mystery-man and necromancer established a ghostly supremacy by the perpetuation of many horrid rites. In every case there was a ruling minority and a ruled majority, and before we are competent to undertake any intelligent consideration of Syndicalism, it is necessary to know something of the stages of the process whereby the ruled majority or Fourth Estate learnt to combine openly and dared to call their souls their own.

When human history commences, the Fourth Estate toil and sweat in obscurity. They make bricks without straw. They die like insects of a day whilst compelled by cruel taskmasters to build the mausoleum of a Pharaoh. Only now and then does there come to us a voice from the toiler of the ancient empires of the East, as in the following complaint of more than three thousand years ago taken from the pages of Maspero: "I have seen the smith at his work at the very mouth of his oven. His hands are furrowed like the skin of the crocodile. And within the home there is the weaver, whose fate is harder than that of the women. His knees are on a level with his stomach, he breathes no fresh air, and if for only one day he fails to produce his allotted task, he is fettered like the lotus on the lake. It is only by bribing his gaolers that he can hope once more to see the light of day." One has only to realise the horrors of this vivid description to see how impossible it was in those earliest days to discern any plain path to Syndicalism. In the commercial empire of Assyria slaves might possess a certain amount of property, and might join societies with their masters, but for the most part the Fourth Estate were as dung to be trampled ruthlessly under foot by rival chieftains on their road to fresh conquests in other regions of the earth.

In Sparta the Helots were periodically massacred lest they should become too powerful and arrive at anticipations of Syndicalism. Even Athens, whose democracy has been the ideal of many austere republican thinkers, founded her freedom for the few on the slavery of the many. Plato brooded on his ideal community, but he thought of men not as free and equal, but as made of different metals—some of gold, some of silver, but some

only of the baser metals. Cicero indited for the future his glowing orations, but he makes only the most casual reference to the huge lodging-houses at Rome where amid crime, crowding, starvation, and pestilence the greater number of the inhabitants of the ruling city existed and died. Riots and revolutionary disorders—here the modern syndicalist will nod in acquiescence—are the only ways in which the Fourth Estate can make their existence known to ancient historians. The rising of Spartacus provokes a comment from Plutarch, but how many gladiators before Spartacus had lived and suffered in obscurity? When Lucian brings his disorderly crowd of departing spirits to the river Styx, he makes a poor cobbler the calmest of all the weeping band. The cobbler had nothing to lose. He jumped up gladly at the first signal of Atropos. When Mercury suggested to him that he ought to squeeze out a tear and utter a few words of lamentation (just to keep up the custom, you know!), all the words of wailing he could utter were these: "Oh my leather parings! Oh my old shoes! Alas! alas! No longer shall I go from dawn to evening without food, nor walk barefoot and half clad all the winter, with my teeth chattering and cold! And, oh dear! who will inherit my old awl and scraper?" Typical workers like this ancient cobbler were hardly constructed of the stuff of which to-day syndicalists are made.

The period of the rise and progress of Christianity is a memorable time for the movements of the Fourth Estate. The researches of Deissmann and others have suggested that the New Testament—with the exception of Hebrews—is written in the patois of the people, and that the first adherents of the new religion sprang

directly from the ranks of proletarian societies.[1] At any rate, there is no mistaking the existence of quite a network of all kinds of associations which flourished in the early years of the Christian era. The whole subject needs even more extensive investigation than it has hitherto received. There were no doubt many secret societies of artisans existing at that time, and their connection with Christianity gave a religious turn to the rites and ceremonies of the later Craft Guilds and the earlier Trade Unions.

Notwithstanding the claim of Christianity that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free," the new religion did not at once discredit the existence of slavery. The only great change, in fact, that took place in the declining days of the Roman Empire was that the land problem became the chief question in economic history, and that the slave—sometimes the real owner—who cultivated the land for the conquerors was turned from a slave into a serf. All lovers of Scott remember his historic description of Gurth the Saxon serf—his skin jacket, his sandals bound with thongs of boar-hide, his bare head, and the brass ring soldered on his neck and engraved with the words: "Gurth, the son of Beowulph, is the born thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood."

There is a tendency amongst some of the latest investigators of mediæval villeinage to minimise the troubles of the serf. He was liable to be sold, but the privilege was exercised very sparingly. He was subject

[1] It is in one of the earliest letters of this literature—2nd Thessalonians—that we meet with the statement sufficiently suggestive of a syndicalist millennium—*εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι, μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω.* (If a man does not choose to work, neither shall he eat.) This book also furnishes a pertinent illustration of the power on the people of the end-of-the-world myth.

to dues and disabilities, but these dues and disabilities came at last to be very strictly defined by custom. And there is no doubt that, compared with the great mass of slaves in the ancient world, the serf of the Middle Ages shows a certain improvement in the condition of the Fourth Estate. But it would be too much to say that the mediæval serf was in a position to inaugurate any movement for his own salvation. He was strictly rooted to the very acre of ground on which he had been born. He was subject to claims and exactions which, however strictly defined by custom, became intolerable in their severity when applied to well-nigh every event of his life. Let him send deputies to his feudal superior to complain of his treatment, and—it actually happened in Normandy towards the end of the tenth century—the superior retaliated by cutting off the hands and feet of the innocent men who came to plead for their comrades. There is a famous passage of the French *Roman de Rou*, which has been called *The Marseillaise of the Year* 1000. "Release us from petty tyrannies," cried the serfs of these days. "We are men as our masters are; we have limbs just like them. We can suffer as they do, and we, too, are possessed of a heart—a heart that can be tender and true." Here we have a spirit that might be incorporated into a movement of Syndicalism, and without the possibilities of combination that Syndicalism inevitably implies.

It is not till we come to the Craft Guilds of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that we see any possibility of an anticipation of the syndicalist movement. "In the fourteenth century the journeymen or yeomen began to set up fraternities in defence of their rights. The formation of these societies marks a cleft within the

ranks of some particular class of artisans—a conflict between employees or master artisans and workmen. The journeymen combined to protect their special interests, notably as regards hours of work and rate of wages, and they fought with the masters over the labour question in all its aspects. The resulting struggle of organised bodies of masters and journeymen was widespread throughout Western Europe, but it was more prominent in Germany than in France or England. This conflict was indeed one of the main features of German industrial life in the fifteenth century. In England the fraternities of journeymen, after struggling awhile for complete independence, seem to have fallen under the supervision and control of the masters' gilds; in other words, they became subsidiary or affiliated organs of the older craft fraternities." [1]

Here we seem to have—in Germany at least—the suggestion of a fifteenth-century movement of Syndicalism amongst the Fourth Estate. And there is no doubt that from that time onward there existed among the apprentices of many of the Craft Guilds an organisation and a spirit which was to bear fruit in the riper years of the nineteenth century. The men chafed at the long hours they had to work and the intolerable conditions to which they were obliged to submit. In 1539 there was a printers' strike in Lyons, and sharp and telling was the apprentices' statement of their case. "Our masters," quoth they, "have a very nice time of it. They recline at ease in their shops whilst the learned men of Switzerland, Germany and Italy flock to the town to bespeak their custom. They listen to interesting tales. They hear strange stories of foreign lands. But we—

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica* (tenth edition), vol. xii. p. 16, v. Gilds.

we have no share in these good things! We have to slave from two o'clock in the morning to eight or nine in the evening, and our masters are now too grand and wealthy to take their place in our workshops by our side."

It was too early yet in the history of the world, however, for this "tric" (strike), as it was called, to be successful. For one thing the classes of masters and apprentices, though very far apart at Lyons, were not yet strictly separated. The apprentice could still look forward to becoming a journeyman. The promising journeyman courted his master's daughter, and saw a rich prize in his grasp after the wedding day. And besides, it must be remembered that there was no civil executive, as in the present day, to temper justice with severity. There were no policemen to do the behests of the powers that be. When the printers of Lyons went on strike they found at first that they could cope with the civil power of the town. They beat the blacklegs and resisted the provost and his sergeants, and the military executive of the country did not, in the earlier stages of the trouble, deign to interfere. But when the men were almost starving, and still they seemed inclined to resist, the seneschal of the French king determined to show his power. He forced the men back to work, forbade them to hold meetings of more than five people, prohibited all monopolies and combinations, and ordained that the men should neither wear arms nor offer any violence to blacklegs. And thus it would seem the last state of the Lyons printers was worse than the first.

The fact is that the Craft Guild movement, so far as it aimed at anything like Syndicalism, was a movement

that failed. To create a strong and effective coalition among the Fourth Estate there is needed, in the first place, a perfect freedom of combination; in the second place, a "great gulf fixed" betwixt masters and men; in the third place, a settled social order, with a possibility of the triumph of right over might; in the fourth place, large aggregations of the proletariat massed in single centres; and in the fifth place, a cultured and thinking minority among the workers. None of these conditions were found to any great degree fulfilled in the Craft Guild movement of the fifteenth and succeeding centuries. For a time it maintained an ineffective war with the great economic forces that threatened to destroy it. For a time Craft Guilds were the inevitable accompaniments of an industry in any large town. But by the time of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was plain that the Craft Guild movement was doomed to decay. New forms of industry were becoming inevitable. Individual liberty and free competition were the watchwords of the day. The workman in the factory saw himself for ever debarred from the faintest hope of becoming one day his own master. And the consequence was that when the nineteenth century opened the day of Craft Guilds was over, and it was imperative to organise the Fourth Estate in Trade Unions, with some features of the old Craft Guild incorporated indeed, but with many additional features which differentiated them entirely from the earlier forms of activity.

The nineteenth century presented itself to the great writer, Thomas Carlyle, who was the first to catch its syndicalist spirit, as primarily a century of revolution. Old shackles were removed, old restrictions were resented, ancient privileges were relegated to the records

of the past. Man had his clothes stripped off, and was exposed, naked as when he was born, to the intrusive and penetrating gaze of his brother man. He had to make fresh combinations; he had to form new attachments. Of course he would not be very successful at first. It was no ideal state of things that "cash payment" should be "the sole nexus between man and man." And the Scotch peasant of genius heard continually the droning of wheels which told of thousands of his own kith and kin cooped up in unlovely factories. "Hast thou heard," he asks in his own characteristic way, "the awakening of a Manchester on Monday morning at half-past five by the clock, the rushing of its thousand mills like the boom of an Atlantic tide, ten thousand times ten thousand spools and spindles all set humming there?" He at least had heard the sound with loathing in his heart, and in the days of his youth he read and re-read Goethe's *Werther* and Schiller's *Robbers* to gain literary inspiration for his cry of revolt.

Carlyle's writings made it very plain, however, that some of the conditions are now fulfilled which we have already declared to be essential for an effective syndicalist movement. The Industrial Revolution was moving men together in new centres of population. The growth of popular knowledge was creating an aristocracy of thinking artisans who grouped themselves in their voluntary associations and clubs. There was a "great gulf fixed" between masters and men which made the master's daughter a prize impossible to be won, and doomed the factory-hand to monotonous and hopeless drudgery from the cradle to the grave. The State, in the modern sense of the term, was being created and established, and there was now a large amount of

social order, with more than a possibility of the triumph of right over might. Three of our requisites for a syndicalist movement were at the beginning of the nineteenth century well on the way of being provided, and all that was needed was perfect freedom of combination to make it possible for the Fourth Estate freely to found the Trade Unions or Syndicates which were to be the starting-point of the new working-class movement.

It was not until the second decade of the century that this freedom of combination was generally realised. Germany is even now a land of restricted and obstructed association for the working classes, and it was only in 1884 that the French Trade Unions obtained a charter of liberty. The British Act of 1800 enacted that all persons combining with others to advance their wages or decrease the quantity of their work, or in any way to affect or control those who carried on any manufacture or trade in the conduct or management thereof, might be convicted before one justice of the peace, and might be committed to the common gaol for any time not exceeding three calendar months, or to be kept on hard labour in the house of correction for a term of two calendar months. In 1825 this coercion of the working classes was so far modified that meetings "for the sole purpose of consulting upon and determining the rate of wages" were legalised, provided there was nothing in the nature of "molestation" or "obstruction" of those who differed from the policy of the meeting. This was not a very great encouragement for the Trade Unions, but the conception of Trade Unions was now at least possible, and it was to Great Britain that the hopes of the leaders of the working classes were turned for an example of the real proletarian movement of the future.

"The antagonism between masters and men," said Karl Marx at a labour meeting in London in 1847, "is most developed in England, and it is there that the decisive fight between the two classes of society is most inevitable. It is in England where most probably the conflict will begin which will end with the universal triumph of democracy. It is on the victory of the English Chartists that the success of the other European democrats depends." [1] The lapse of years suggests some corrections of this prediction, but the confidence with which it was spoken shows the extent to which at that time Great Britain was a land of hope for the young labour movement. In other countries Trade Unions had to be secret societies, and their proceedings were conducted with mysterious rites and symbols. In Great Britain they could come out into the light of day and make their demonstrations openly evident to the executive government and the great mass of their fellow-countrymen. So it was, that when Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847, it was to point out that the day of secret societies, mostly manned by middle-class conspirators, was over. The future was for the working classes with their free and unfettered combinations of Trade Unions. "The working classes have nothing to lose but their chains; they have a world to win." It would not have been possible for the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* to sustain themselves at the height of this exalted sentiment if it had not been for the example of Great Britain.

The way is now open for Syndicalism; but it is necessary to explain even in the first chapter that the resulting

[1] Marx and Engels, *Le Manifeste Communiste:* traduction par Charles Andler, vol. i. p. 77, Appendice.

labour movement of the second half of the nineteenth century did not entirely take a syndicalist direction. Roughly speaking, there were three great methods of working-class "activity"—first, Political; second, Co-operative; and third, Syndical. It will tend to clearness in the subsequent course of the book, if in a preliminary fashion we distinguish these, one from the other and both from Syndicalism.

Perhaps of all these manifestations of labour activity, the political movement has hitherto occupied the most conspicuous position in the public eye. Except in Great Britain it has not been directly dependent on Trade Union organisation, and though established on the idea of a "class war," it has always been open to middle-class recruits. But it has everywhere also been founded on the economic theory of collectivism, which was introduced to the International Society of working men in the sixties by the Belgian, Cæsar de Paepe, and which progressed as men understood better the significance and political influence of the modern State. On most matters of propaganda Syndicalism is in direct opposition to the political labour movement. It supports direct action rather than the representative government of modern democracy. It favours violence rather than the tolerance of discussion and difference, which is the characteristic of modern political thought. It is not therefore collective, for it looks on the State as a political machine, and more than suspects it to be run in the interests of other than the working classes of any particular country. A syndicalist fight is a fight to the finish, because there is no superior authority such as the State which can arbitrate between the two combatants. The syndicalist unit of govern-

ment is the Trade Union, and the Trade Union is open to the men but not to their employers. The syndicalist outlook is international, because the Trade Union organisation is universal, and far transcends the boundaries or political exigencies of any particular State. There may seem to be numerous and complex differences between the political and syndicalist wings of the great Labour army; in reality, however, they may be all said to arise from the great and distinguishing fact that Collectivism relies on the particular State, and Syndicalism on the universal Trade Union.

It is not so easy to differentiate Syndicalism from the co-operative movement. Like the syndicalist the co-operator would get industry—productive and distributive—into the hands of a working-class association, and every syndicalist speculator assumes that he is to get great help from the co-operatives in the earlier stages of the social revolution. Ultimately, however, in the opinion of the syndicalist, Trade Unions will be able to do all that is now performed by co-operative societies; so that in his judgment co-operation is essentially a transitory and limited movement. It has not the militant or coercive spirit of Syndicalism. It has not experienced to the same extent as its rival the force of the industrial revolution; and though the theorists of Syndicalism do not gird at the co-operator as they do at the great political chieftains of Socialism, they yet look on him as occupying a lower plane than that directed by the leaders of their own particular movement.

CHAPTER II

SYNDICALISM AND THE CHARTISTS

THE preceding chapter has made sufficiently clear what a long way had to be traversed before anything in the nature of Syndicalism became possible. There had to be freedom of combination ere Trade Unions could exist at all. There had to be a certain diffusion of education before leaders could arise in the ranks of the Fourth Estate to guide them to the promised land. There was needed an angry intensity of class feeling to rouse the general body of the working classes to a spirit of revolt. And, according to the remarkable prediction of Karl Marx which has been already quoted, it was in England that the "decisive fight" between the two classes of society was most inevitable, and where, therefore, a preparation for the syndicalist movement could most confidently be expected.

As a matter of fact the Chartist movement—especially as it developed in the year 1842—may be said to have first given currency to some of the main ideas of revolt which have become the stock-in-trade of Syndicalism. Of course the ground was prepared for the events of 1842 by the work of Robert Owen and his scheme of a general federation of unions which should take up and work all the national industries, but it nevertheless remains true that the events of 1842 made openly manifest the force which was behind the earlier

movement. The great theorists of socialism were not blind to the significance of those developments that were happening all around them. "The Chartist movement must inevitably lead to Socialism," said Frederick Engels in 1847; and it must be remembered that modern syndicalists look on the Marx and Engels of 1847 as the great protagonists of the later movement.

At any rate, if Syndicalism is fostered by disturbed social conditions, it must be confessed that the year 1842 was particularly favourable; 1,429,000 people, or one out of every eleven in the country, were in receipt of poor relief.[1] Three attempts were made on the life of the Queen within three months. Rich and poor seemed to face each other like angry wolves. "The vengeance of the people," wrote Engels in 1845, "will come down with a wrath of which the rage of 1793 gives no true idea. The war of the poor against the rich will be the bloodiest ever waged."

Politics had proved itself a department of deceptions. "The other evening," wrote Mrs. Bulwer, the mother of the novelist, to a friend in June 1831, "a ragged fellow who was crying out the King's speech announced it with the following appendage: 'Good news for the poor! The Reform Bill will pass! Then you'll have your beef and mutton for a penny a pound. And then you'll all be as fine as peacocks for a mere trifle, to say nothing of ale at a penny a quart.'" And when the days wore on and these extravagant hopes were not realised, the same spirit of disillusionment as to politics and politicians woke up in the working classes of these days, as even now constitutes the distinguishing power of Syndicalism. They would hold monster meetings; they would summon

[1] Walpole, *History of England*, vol. iv. p. 358.

a national convention; they would see that the condition of the people was not forgotten by British legislators.

Nominally, of course, the demand of the Chartists was for political reform. They wanted universal manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, and payment of members. They pled for the ballot. And, from this point of view, it may be contended that the history of their insurrections had very little to do with such a purely industrial movement as that of Syndicalism. But when we examine the inner history of the leaders of the Chartists, such as Thomas Cooper, we find that it was the industrial woes of the poor and the manifest hopelessness of middle-class politics that were really the impelling causes which drove him to take an active part in the new revolt. It marked an epoch in Cooper's life when he came in contact with the sweated Leicester stockingers, working a whole week for the miserable pittance of 4*s.* 6*d.* And when he listened to the Chartist speech which completed his conversion, he was struck not with the pleas for political reform, but with the peroration where the orators turned round on Lord Melbourne and the Whigs, just as a syndicalist tub-thumper might turn round on M. Briand or M. Clemenceau, "Where are the fine promises they made you? Gone to the winds! . . . 'Cheap bread!' they cry. But they mean 'low wages.' Do not listen to their cant and humbug." [1]

Even in the 1838 and more purely political movement of the Chartist, it was plain that a feeling of antipathy to the ordinary practices of politics was going to be characteristic of the revolt. The National Convention in London was a working-class substitute for the Palace of

[1] *Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 137.

Westminster, just as the Syndicalist Confederation of Labour is going to do away with all the mummeries of the Palais Bourbon. "As long as I live," cried out John Barton, after the rejection by Parliament of the first monster petition, "I shall curse them as so cruelly refused to hear us; but I'll not speak of it no more." After a heartfelt exclamation like this we seem to see a syndicalist orator training the young idea how to shoot.

But it was not the movement of 1838, but the later movement of 1842 that most concerns us in a consideration of the earliest manifestations of the spirit of Syndicalism. Take the account of the mining insurrection of that year which we find in Disraeli's *Sybil*, written in 1845, and it all seems an advance description of the realisation of a syndicalist millennium: "The whole of the north of England and a great part of the midland counties were in a state of disaffection; the entire country was suffering; hope had deserted the labouring classes: they had no confidence in any future of the existing system. Their organisation, independent of the political system of the Chartists, was complete. Every trade had its union, and every union its lodge in every town and its central committee in every district. . . . A flowing standard of silk was borne before the leader like the oriflamme. Never was such a gaunt, grim crew. As they advanced, their numbers continually increased, for they arrested all labour in their progress. Every engine was stopped, the plug was driven out of every boiler, every fire was extinguished, every man was turned out. The decree went forth that labour was to cease until the charter was the law of the land; the mine and the mill, the foundry and the loomshop, were, until that consummation, to be idle; nor was the

mighty pause to be confined to these great enterprises. Every trade of every kind and description was to be stopped—tailor and cobbler, brushmaker and sweep, tinker and carter, mason and builder, all, all; for all an enormous Sabbath that was to compensate for any incidental suffering which it induced by the increased means and the elevated condition that it ultimately would ensure: that paradise of artisans, that utopia of toil, embalmed in those ringing words, sounds cheerful to the Saxon race, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work.'"

This syndicalist insurrection began with strikes among the miners. The colliery-owners in Staffordshire reduced wages from 4*s.* to 3*s.* 6*d.* per day, and only gave forty-eight hours' notice of their intentions to make this radical change. The resulting local disturbances threw the potters out of employment, and soon the labour revolt spread to Cheshire, Lancashire, Warwickshire, and Yorkshire, and later on to Scotland and Wales. It seemed for the time as if society were going to be dissolved into its constituent elements. How far was the rising of 1848 a real anticipation of Syndicalism, and why was it that it died down ineffectively and left it to the French people to be the real inaugurators of the modern movement of Syndicalism?

There were many circumstances to promise success. The new Poor Law and the recognition of the poverty of the great mass of the people had led to a bitterness of class feeling which penetrated even to the perfumed society in which the young Disraeli lived and moved. *Sybil* is a novel dealing with two nations, but these not Germany and Britain or England and Russia—they are the time-honoured but often neglected opposites of

capital and labour, the landlord and the serf. There was no real expectations among the people that the two nations would be united through the agency of politics and politicians. These hopes had been dashed to the ground by the treatment of the first Chartist petition and by the apparent failure of the Reform Bill of 1832 to realise all the extravagant expectations that had been formed of it. If the men of 1848 still approached Parliament with the demand for political reform, it was with the design of overawing Parliament rather than persuading it—of striking fear into the hearts of legislators by an overwhelming display of the people's force. The idea of a general cessation of labour worked in the artisan's mind. There would be a Sabbath rest for all the instruments of production. Surely if a movement of the Fourth Estate is ever to succeed, it ought to have succeeded in 1842.

There is not wanting evidence even that this movement of 1842 was in touch with working-class movements in the Continent of Europe. At the labour meeting in 1847, at which Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were present, the famous Chartist, Ernest Jones, delivered a strong and very powerful and strongly applauded speech. Here, then, we have the international note—a note since trumpeted so loudly by the latter-day syndicalists.

There were, however, some fatal drawbacks. The times were too early for a successful paralysis of industry. Society had to get more accustomed than it was then to the luxuries of modern productive enterprise to be sufficiently scared by their total or partial withdrawal. What was the use of talking of a paralysis of railway facilities when it was only in 1830 that the Liverpool

and Manchester Railway was opened, and men had not yet got wedded to the new mode of locomotion? How could you imitate the tactics of M. Pataud and cut off the electric light to the terror of rich society, when Neumann had not yet investigated the mathematical laws of magneto-electric induction? The truth is that, in the matter of industrial Syndicalism, society has been in a manner hoist by its own petard. It is because we have grown to expect so much that it is possible so easily to paralyse us by the withdrawal of our luxuries. It is because we have created such a large army of transport workers to minister to our pleasures that without receiving any support from the unorganised and casual labourers, these skilled men can bring at once our modern life to a standstill.

All this was impossible in 1842. There was no élite of workers accustomed to combine together, and with sufficient intelligence to begin and end a rising at the word of command. Brute violence had not been exchanged for the subtler and more dangerous expedient of passive resistance. The miners were the head and front of the Chartist industrial rising, and when the miners found their earlier advances were received without favour by the pastors and masters, they had recourse to measures of unorganised violence. Mobs plundered the bakers' stores. Crowds invaded the workshops and fired the factories. When the troops were called out, there was no anti-militant movement to moderate their ardours. The last great Chartist outburst of working-class feeling in 1848 died out, in fact, finally through fear of the action of the military. Parliament, as has already been stated, was to be overawed by a mob. The members of Parliament were to be taught wisdom

through the efficient constraint of a monster procession. But at last the Secretary of State got alarmed. The Duke of Wellington secured the approaches to Westminster with a few regular troops. At once a change was wrought in the spirit of the scene. Parliament, instead of being overawed by a crowd, had to smile at a big petition which was hastily smuggled into the palace yard on a wretched hackney cab. The mere hint of a display of force had done its work. The earliest attempt at a syndicalist movement finished its course amid inglorious laughter.

Yet it had not been without its lessons. It had revealed the spirit of rebellion, which, notwithstanding its outward moderation, really lay at the heart of the British working-class movement. It had demonstrated clearly that a movement of Syndicalism had certainly to be connected with the syndicates and syndical organisation before it could be said to have any chances of success. It revealed how impotent mere "physical force" became when confronted with the skilled dispositions of a regular army. It hinted at the idea of a general cessation of labour as one of the chief weapons in the hands of the proletariat. And it made very apparent the conclusion that until the Industrial Revolution had been allowed a little longer to run its course, there could be no certainty of winning "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work" by the combined exertions of the Fourth Estate themselves.

The truth was that, in the mid-Victorian era, England entered on a period of aversion to the exercise of anything like brute constraint. There has been nothing since like the belief in reason which was the characteristic of these complacent days. George Eliot makes

Felix Holt dream of inaugurating a social revolution by gathering the miners into little meetings and arguing them into the truth which would set them free. Even matrimony was conducted on principles of pure reason. A diarist of the period tells us that Professor Airy was so shy that he never looked a person in the face. A friend remarked to him, "Have you never observed Miss ——'s eyes? They have the principle of double refraction." "Dear me, that is very odd," said the philosopher. "I should like to see that; do you think I might call?" On calling, however, he found it a problem which would take a lifetime to study, and so he married her.

This was the spirit which, translated into mechanics' institutes and working-class colleges, helped to turn the Fourth Estate from the way of syndicalist revolution through which it had temporarily passed into the gentler ways of peaceful discussion and persuasion. The Trade Union leaders devoted themselves to the work of their offices. The men like Alton Locke read Carlyle and applied themselves to the development and improvement of their own mental energies. The turbulent spirit and far-reaching plans for a general cataclysm to which Disraeli in *Sybil* has given such a classic expression remained as a simple memory of a far-off past, until the modern syndicalist movement again brought them into prominence as a power to be reckoned with in the industrial history of the world.

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF SYNDICALISM

THE British Trade Union movement, at the point we reached towards the end of the last chapter, had seemed to falsify all the extravagant hopes entertained of the English working man by Marx and Engels. There was no trace of revolutionary sentiment. The militant republicanism of an earlier date had given place to a contented acquiescence in the existence of the "powers that be." The Trade Unions were devoting themselves with unremitting persistence and industry to the conduct of occasional strikes, to the struggle for sporadic reforms, and to the building up, in the intervals between the fights, of huge reserve funds to be used for allowing benefit payments.

In one respect, however, England was still the land of freedom. Meetings of the Fourth Estate could be arranged there more freely than in any other land. The celebrated meeting of 28th September 1864, which gave birth to the international society of working men, was held in St. Martin's Hall, notwithstanding the fact that the French delegates were the most agile and influential agents of the new movement. When the general council of the same body was elected, it met in London instead of Paris for the same reason of safety. In Paris the police-officer is full of military traditions, and rarely permits a working-class speaker to go far without sub-

mitting him to some kind of official attention. Open-air meetings cannot be held within the city except on very special occasions. Even then they are accompanied by armies of police who harass the people by all kinds of vexatious interferences. No doubt this has something to do with the hatred of many influential bodies of French workmen to the political state, and to the decided anti-political bias attached from the very first to the movement of Syndicalism.

For it was in France that Syndicalism, in the really modern sense of the term, had its official birth. The Chartist movement of 1842, as has been already shown, had its distinctively syndicalist accompaniments. It dreamt of paralysing industry and inaugurating the millennium. It believed in action, and encouraged the breaking of machinery. But the arts of production were not far enough advanced to make it successful in its main ends and objects. Its revolutionary programme occupied a permanent place in the agenda of the ordinary Trade Union meeting. The leading British Trade Unions were too reflective, too cautious, too anxious for self-improvement and economic inquiry to stake their fortunes on a single throw of the dice. The French workman, on the contrary, is far less deeply read in economics than are the élite of the British labour leaders. He is inspired by the leaders of the Revolution rather than by the pundits of Socialism. In some cases he will run before he leaps. He is full of grand projects of internationalism and anti-military propaganda rather than with the nationalisation of industries, or with the municipalisation of gas and water.

Then there was the history and political tendencies of the French people since the days of the great Revolution.

The French State is severely centralised. Even local government goes on under the censorious eye of an official of the central power. The bureaucrat cannot tolerate the existence of any administrative machinery but his own. His State must be like Spinoza's substance, "a lion's den, in which all the tracks point inward and none outward." An association of artisans, even in the days when men wore the cap of Liberty, was suspected of a nefarious intention to usurp the prerogatives of the central power. In 1790 and 1791 the Constituent Assembly forbade strikes. In 1810 the Penal Code declared "that no association of more than twenty persons meeting every day, or on certain specified days, could meet except with the consent of the Government." It is true that, so far as the working classes are concerned, this has already been paralleled in the first chapter by the citation of the British Act of 1800. But then more might have been expected in the way of privileges for the people from the men who were inaugurating the Year One. And besides, whilst there was some relief given in Great Britain in the year 1825, it was 1864 before the Penal Code of 1810 was relaxed in France, and Louis Napoleon allowed the French workmen a theoretical right to indulge in strikes or form a combination of artisans.[1]

Louis Napoleon's concessions, however, did not put an end to the prosecution of working-class combinations, and it was not till the year 1884 that Trade Unions or professional associations of more than twenty persons carrying on the same or similar trades, or connected with trades associated together to produce the same finished

[1] For a more detailed treatment of this subject see the author's *New Social Democracy*, p. 126 *et seq.*

product, were allowed to meet freely without the authorisation of the Government. Even then certain conditions were attached to this gift of freedom. The permitted Trade Unions—(1) had to be for the defence of economic interests only ; (2) they had to deposit their rules and the names of their executive ; and (3) in the case of any combination of Trade Unions, they had to make known to the central power the names of every individual Trade Union which entered into the combination or federation. It is easy to see that a history like this was bound to make of French Trade Unionism a something which was new and strange. The British Trade Unions, after their intermittent spasms of revolutionary activity in the Chartist days, devoted themselves to building up vested interests in the shape of huge reserve funds ere they felt themselves obliged once again to devote themselves to the problems of politics. But the French Trade Unions were so late in being formed that all their active members came into the Trade Union ranks brimful of political fervour. Some of them were anarchists, some had been communists; all of them were versed in revolutionary traditions. And as by the terms of the law of 1884, their union had to be for the defence of economic interests only, they were naturally tempted to stretch the significance of the adjective "economic," until it included within its ample scope the creation and organisation of a new State within the State.

Soon after the passing of the Act of 1884, a working-class organisation was built up. In the big town this became a Trades Council, or Bourse du Travail. The Bourse du Travail was a meeting of the trades of the town in a hall controlled by the municipality, and the

working-class politicians, who manned and directed the unions, were quick to see that if they ever formed a state within the state this new association might be made the nucleus of the labour municipality of the future. In the meantime it could be used—(1) for giving help to the unemployed in the town; (2) for lectures on labour subjects; (3) for propaganda; and (4) for resistance to the exactions of unprincipled employers. At the same time the Trade Unions of each district industry were forming district or National Federations. Union, in fact, was the question of the hour. The French workman had been long of starting, but he wanted to make up by the extent and effectiveness of his organisation for the time he had lost by the way. In 1892 the Bourses du Travail combined together and formed one great federation. In 1895 the National Federations of the different trades combined to form the first edition of the famous *Confederation of Labour*. In 1902 the Bourses du Travail were joined to the latter body, and thus was formed the main instrument of syndicalist activity in France as we now know it.

It has already been pointed out that the workmen who united together to form this Confederation were adepts in various forms of political propaganda. Pouget and Yvetot had attained prominence in the anarchist campaign of violence and blood. Griffuelhes, the first secretary, a journeyman shoemaker, had been conspicuous in the political campaign of the socialist sections which then struggled in the French electoral districts. Of course, from the first the new campaigners were not of the same mind and opinion. Niel, a waiter in a Montpellier café, was appointed secretary of his local Bourse

du Travail, and soon showed himself a comparatively moderate and cautious man, destined to succeed for a time to the secretaryship of the Confederation, and anxious at all times to keep it in the path of purely economic activity. Still, though some went quickly and some went slowly, they were all proletarians, all men who worked or had worked at their trade, and they were not long in contrasting themselves in this respect with the political socialist party under Jaurès and Guesde.

Soon the new economic Confederation was face to face with political and quasi-political problems. Their conference at Marseilles in 1908, for example, devoted a large amount of time, and a still larger amount of energetic and impassioned rhetoric, to the question of the proportional representation of the constituent parts of the federation. It is obvious that the Confederation was curiously and wonderfully constructed. It was made up, as has already been seen, of federations of unions and of Bourses du Travail, and this already implied a duplex representation. A union in a big town would have representation both in its municipal meeting of trades and in its national assembly of the delegates of its own particular trade. Then it must be remembered that among its constituent members there was a large number of very small unions. The glove-makers at Marseilles in 1908 had only five trade unions with 500 members, whilst the building trades had 336 unions with 40,000 members. But according to the principles on which the Confederation was founded, each Trade Union, however, small as it was, counted for one, and none for more than one. Hence arose strange anomalies. Again taking the figures of 1908, it was

found that the glove-makers had 5 votes for 500 members whilst the miners had only 35 votes for 40,000 members actually represented.

At once anomalies like these gave rise to discussion and difference. Some of the unions, like that of the railwaymen, were more revolutionary; and some, like that of the building trades, reckoned themselves as among the moderate elements in the confederal assembly. Why should not the larger unions be represented by a card-vote, according to their proportional membership? And if there was the proportional representation, should it or should it not be accompanied by some scheme for the representation of minorities? These were the questions which provoked comment and sharpened the wits of the men who came together to form this Labour Parliament of France; and the likeness of the points raised in the discussion to those which were then agitating the politicians at the Palais Bourbon, must have suggested from the first to Pouget, Pataud, Niel, Griffuelhes and the other working-class leaders of the new movement, the possibility of the Confederation of Labour displacing Parliament and becoming the real centre of all the varied activities of the working class in France.

The syndicalist conferences did not, however, favour Proportional Representation. The French working-class movement had been too long carried on in secret. Repressive laws and unfriendly officials had persecuted it until it almost ceased to exist. But now that the law of 1884 had given a fuller measure of freedom, they would encourage in every possible way the multiplication of unions. Every trade should have its union; every town should have its council. And every trade

and every town should have the same measure of representation in the Confederation. At any cost the French workman must be taught to combine. Victory could only be gained by the pressure of numbers and the rule of terror. United, the workers of a trade might do something. Separated, they would fall.

At the forefront, however, of the syndicalist programme stood the idea of an eternal and implacable war between Capital and Labour. This came to it partly from the anarchist traditions of some of its leading members, partly from the antagonism between labour and the police, which makes a strike such a sanguinary event in France. And in the earlier days of the Confederation history—especially in the year 1906—there were a succession of unfortunate strikes at Draveil and Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, which brought people and soldiery into collision and wrought the indelible impression into the heart of the rank and file of Syndicalism that nothing could be won in an economic conflict unless force were opposed to force. What is the good of appealing to the heart of your master? Small advantage in protesting in the name of justice! Business is an unceasing war, and the best way for the workers to vindicate their rights is to conduct their strikes as if they were going to be fights to the finish. So the syndicalists in the actual conduct of their strikes preferred action to speech. They favoured the big demonstration with its vote by uplifted hands to the political method of the ballot vote. They would have no compulsory arbitration, and at once they found that for a strike to effect the maximum of damage, it must be as general and extensive as possible.

In August 1906, after the bloody events of Villeneuve-

Saint-Georges, the Confederation essayed a general strike of twenty-four hours. The idea of a general strike had in a vague way haunted for a long time the minds of the workers of the nineteenth century. In 1834 the Lyons weavers had thought of it. As we have seen, it was one of the inspirations of the Chartist movement in 1842. In 1886 some American workmen gave it a trial. In 1872 Pelloutier mentioned it to the conference of the Bourses du Travail, and M. Aristide Briand—afterwards Prime Minister of France—gained his first claim to prominence by becoming its most distinguished and eager advocate. But the syndicalists very speedily saw in the advance of the modern organisation of industry a means of working a general strike more successfully than in the ancient days. Your general strike did not need to be wholly general. There was no necessity that every worker of the country should be shepherded into the same syndicalist fold. Certain industries lie at the basis of modern industrial life. Paralyse the lines of communication and modern life is impossible. Cut off the supply of coal and society is in chaos. Put out the electric lights and Paris sits trembling in fear. All this crossed the minds of the earlier syndicalist leaders, and soon the idea of the general strike became an essential element in the syndicalist propaganda.

But now the invention of fresh weapons of offence was a paramount preoccupation in the mind of the workers. "Sabotage" became a name of dread in France. In an anti-strike law which was deposited by the Briand administration, sabotage is defined as "the wilful destruction, deterioration, or rendering useless, of instruments or other objects, with a view to stopping

or hampering work, industry or commerce"; and in a general way this official description accurately measures its scope in most of the cases of labour revolt where it was put in practice. It might mean dropping petroleum into the kneading-trough. It might mean a short circuit in the electric installation. It might mean a nail in the wood to be cut by the circular saw. It might even mean a gash in the capitalist's chin by the action of a syndical razor. But it did not in all cases mean the deterioration of tools or the infliction of actual damage. The builder might linger at his work in the effort to make the cornice a real work of art. The railwaymen might attempt to carry out to the letter all the rules and regulations which a bureaucratic staff had imposed on them. All this did not mean actual damage. It was the cleverest and subtlest kind of sabotage. But it showed what stores of resource and ingenuity were at the service of the new syndicalist movement, in the prosecution of its offensive campaign—sabotage, the boycott, the Trade Union label, street demonstrations; all these, along with the orthodox strike and the more ominous general strike, were discussed and rediscussed at meetings of able leaders, and they showed the spirit of war and revolt which then and now was and is the inspiration of the syndicalist movement.

In fact Syndicalism is the antipodes of the Peace movement as it has become influential in later days. It is based on a complete distrust of moral values. You might as well squeeze blood out of a stone as extract sympathy out of a capitalist on the war-path. And this fight to the finish with their capitalist masters was early connected in the minds of the syndicalist leaders with a war against the political State. In the early

years of the syndicalist campaign, the State had presented itself as the friend and ally of the masters. The Confederation of Labour had not been many months in existence when the Bourse du Travail of Montpellier was invaded by the police. As has already been pointed out, the year 1906 was marked by a succession of sanguinary strikes. In the strike of Longwy in 1905, the French and German armies were protecting the same steel works, which were partly in French and partly in German territory. When experiences like these were combined in the memories of the workmen with the old recollections of the State's continual hostility to labour combinations, no wonder that it produced a feeling that they were out to assail the idea of the political State in every shape and form. The State mingles all parties in the work of politics. The Labour M.P. represents not his Trade Union but his constituents. Millionaires in many cases pull the political strings. Even when social reforms are wrested from the political assembly, they are administered so as to bring the maximum of loss and inconvenience to the worker. Why should the syndicalist participate in this game of politics ? Why should it be assumed that Labour and Socialist political parties are the only people who can win abiding peace for the workman ? The syndicalist will admit no such plea. Syndicalism will have an anti-political bias.

But it is at this point that we see the standing paradox of Syndicalism. Essentially as we have shown again and again it is based on the idea that the Trade Union is an economic organisation, and that the worker's best course is to fight the capitalist and eschew politics and politicians. But the very intensity of its opposition

to politics made it more political than ever. The people who are most opposed are so far apart that they cannot summon up an ordinary interest in each other. When you begin to call a man names, it is not because you don't want him, but because you are really annoyed that he has not enrolled himself on your own side. And when the syndicalist began to throw mud at the politicians, it was really because they were being led to consider the assumptions at the bases of political activity. They called themselves anti-political, but the vigour of their antagonism showed a certain substantial recognition of the doctrine they deemed it necessary to oppose. And strangest paradox of all, it was on the ground that they wanted to introduce political questions into an economic assembly that the syndicalists were practically forced to withdraw from the International Trade Union Congress. The fact was, that the syndicalists had flung so many stones at politicians that they had become familiar with every rag and tatter of the political propaganda.

The anarchists, such as Pouget and Yvetot in the syndicalist ranks, proved very influential at this stage of syndicalist evolution. They preached the doctrine of an anti-State crusade. The State was the enemy. The agents of the central power were the instruments of a bureaucratic tyranny. But so long as they had the army on their side they could continue to crush the workers. Why not attempt to detach the army from the powers that be ? Why not start an agitation among the conscripts in their *casernes ?* And so at the conference of Amiens in 1906, on the motion of the ex-anarchist Yvetot, a resolution was carried calling for an anti-military and an anti-patriotic propaganda—" always

more zealous and more audacious." But a large number of the unions felt a certain measure of doubt and distrust of the wording of this resolution. They did not like the anti-patriotic campaign. They were not inclined to follow Hervé in his depreciation of the whole idea of a fatherland "la patrie." Thus at Marseilles in 1908 it was simply stated that the workers had no country, because of their economic subjection, leaving it to be inferred that if they obtained these economic rights, they might become as strong patriots as the best of the classes above them.

It is perfectly apparent that the syndicalists who started with a strong economic bias are now well on in the consideration of political subjects. The anti-military campaign touched the State at a vital joint. The anti-patriotic resolution culminated in a vague internationalism which led to the study of foreign affairs, and answered to a tendency in the mind of the French workmen on which we have already made sufficient comment. All these political, or as the syndicalist would prefer to say, anti-political aspirations are summed up in the phrase "direct action," which henceforth became part of the standing vocabulary of Syndicalism. The policy of "direct action" is the most conclusive proof that those anti-politicians had become political. Direct action is opposed to Representative Government. The workman is to influence those in authority, not through M.P.'s or delegates, but directly through the embattled strength of his associated union. Middle-class men will no longer plume themselves that they have won for the workman the way to salvation. No elected officials can control the worker's destiny. He is not bound to the proportional representation of modern

democracy. He and his alone will negotiate the form of government in the final rally.

It would be wrong, however, to say that these ambitious aspirations had it all their own way in the Syndicalist Confederation of Labour. From the very first there were influential leaders and powerful Trade Unions holding to the view that Syndicalism was out to work in the economic field, and not to meddle with the politicians or with political utopias. Amongst the French leaders of this moderate line the most prominent at a very critical stage of the Confederation's history was Niel, the Montpellier waiter, whose name has been already mentioned. Niel was all against the view that Syndicalism was advocated in order to convulse society and to change an ordered scheme of things into a sorry chaos. Such a far-reaching view as this had the effect of diverting the Trade Unionist from the reforms necessary for his craft, and turning him into an anti-politician more dangerous to the true interests of labour than the most notorious politician of the approved and orthodox pattern. Every Trade Union has its own special difficulties—piecework, apprenticeship, machinery, speeding up, and a whole host of other particular problems; but according to Niel, there are other difficulties confined to no special union, but common to the whole body of Trade Unionism as a connected organisation. Such are the Eight Hours' Day, Compensation for Injuries, Old Age Pensions, and other subjects talked of by the industrial proletariat in every land. What the syndicalist organisation has to do is to unite together the workmen in the particular industries, so as more effectively to force on the concession of an Eight Hours' Day, or an effective and adequate Act establishing Old Age

Pensions. Of course there would be occasions when it would be necessary to strike, and the "Right to Strike," even by a large number of connected trades, would have to be carefully safeguarded. But a "general strike" in this view of the case would be very different from the revolutionary general strike of the more aggressive French syndicalists. The "general strike" of the more moderate syndicalist would be a purely economic conflict. It would be for a definite industrial reform common to many trades, but which yet could be succinctly explained and summarily realised. It would import no menace of a great conflagration, and therefore entail no corresponding duty to show how society was to subsist after the avenging fire had made an end of the old order of events. The syndicalist had no need to speculate on constitutions. He had not to be an expert in proletarian government. "Our first and most pressing duty," says Niel, "is to exert our utmost energies in this fight for all possible economic reforms. This policy will have three results: it will reveal the proper functions of Syndicalism; it will bring all unions together; and lastly, it will attract to our ranks a large body of hesitating workers who will come all the more quickly that they will see daily results from the conflicts in which we engage."

Even in France a large body of powerful Trade Unions have rallied to this purely economic Syndicalism, and when Niel was Secretary of the Confederation of Labour, the moderate men certainly occupied a commanding position. There are, however, many influences which work against their predominance. In the first place, there is the influence of the great theorists of Syndicalism, such as Sorel, Berth, and Lagardelle, of

whom more shall be said in the next chapter ; and in the second place, there is the fact that when general strikes are actually tried and fail in their main object, the resulting disappointment, for the time at least, plays into the hands of the extremists rather than the moderate man. Yet a glance at the agenda of even a militant annual meeting of the Confederation of Labour, will show what a large amount of its time is occupied with these purely economic reforms which are common to it with the Trade Unions all over the world, and how the discussions on the extra-economic subjects are generally marked by " much cry and little wool."

At present, at any rate, it is the economic aspect of Syndicalism which has been most influential in lands outside France. In Italy, where Sorel is read and translated, there is a great deal of Revolutionary Syndicalism ; probably the same assertion can be made of Spain and Switzerland ; but in Australia, the United States and our own country, its influence has been almost wholly felt on the exclusively economic side. It may be interesting at this point to quote a confession of faith from the lips of Tom Mann, as he has expounded this economic Syndicalism to large audiences both in Australia and Great Britain. " My industrial and political faith is as follows : (1) Industrial solidarity is the real power to effect economic changes. By this I mean that even though resort be had to Parliament it is only effective when the demand is made as the result of intelligent and courageous industrial organisation. It was thus that the Factory Acts were obtained and all other legislation that in any degree is economically advantageous to the workers. (2) The chief economic change must be the reduction of working hours. All through our industrial history

nothing stands out more clearly than this, that the reducing of working hours is a genuine method of raising the standard, economically and ethically correct; (3) By a drastic reduction of working hours we can absorb the unemployed. The cure for unemployment is the chief concern of revolutionaries and reformers, and the most natural, most simple, and most effective of all methods is by absorbing them into the ranks of the employed, so apportioning the work to be done over the total number to do it. (4) By removing competition for work we gain the power to get higher wages. (5) It is necessary for every worker to belong to a union, and for every union to unite with every other union in the same industry. (6) Unite to fight, fight to achieve your economic emancipation. (7) Under existing circumstances it is not desirable that membership of an industrial organisation should pledge one to specific political action. (8) Parliamentary action is secondary in importance to industrial action; it is industrial action alone that makes political action effective, but with or without Parliamentary action, industrial solidarity will ensure economic freedom, and therefore the abolition of capitalism and all its accompanying poverty and misery. (9) To ensure industrial solidarity it is necessary that the finances of the unions should be so kept that the Friendly Society benefits should be kept entirely separate from the industrial, so that every union on its industrial side may amalgamate with every other union in the same industry."

From this frank and summary statement it can easily be seen that Syndicalism has passed into the Anglo-Saxon lands not in its most ambitious Latin manifestations, but under the more modest form of Industrial

Unionism. There is the syndicalist emphasis on the need of Trade Union organisation, but without the querulous note which comes naturally to the Frenchman as the result of his history in the past; there is the exhortation to Trade Unions of the same industry to combine, a subject which has always attracted significant attention in the Congresses of the Confederation of Labour; there is, as in France, an importance attached to an Eight Hours' Bill as the first stage of economic reform. But there is a very decided difference in the way in which the attack is made on politics and politicians. The French orthodox syndicalist attacks the politician because he believes him to be superfluous, and looks to the Confederation of Labour to construct a new political machinery out of the ruins of the old. The British syndicalist attacks the politician because he believes him to be attracting too exclusive an attention, and wishes to restore the true balance of affairs. The latter does not deny that the politician has his place; he cannot refuse to contemplate the necessity of ultimate Parliamentary action; but he says, economics first, and politics second. Industrial action will win in the long-run, with or without Parliamentary action. There is not here the same conviction of the superannuation of politics which made Sorel compare a Socialist M.P. to a "Marquis of the *ancien régime*."

But it is in the hopes they cherish of the result of strikes that up to now the great difference lies between Latin and Anglo-Saxon Syndicalism. The Latin conceives that by means of his generalised strike he is going to lay his master low. He has no doubt about it. As we shall see in the fifth chapter, Pouget and Pataud are prepared to give an advanced report of the whole course

of the Revolution. The Anglo-Saxon workers, on the contrary, take a much more grave and serious view of the fighting strength of capitalism. How grave and serious their view is may be illustrated by comparing Jack London's *Iron Heel* with the forecasts of the French syndicalists! The citadels of capitalism are not going to be taken as the French took the Malakhoff Tower by a brilliant dash. Capitalism despises the army and the navy. Capitalism directs the Press. Capitalism can drill and pay an army of strike breakers. Strikes may win specific reforms. A general strike of miners may win a minimum wage. A general strike of railway men may force on an "all-grade" programme. A general strike of workers in two countries may stop a threatened war. But beyond its significance for those definite objects the Anglo-Saxon syndicalists do not see in the General Strike a way of gaining their object by a combined and sudden onslaught. In America the power of the Trusts is too great for that. In Great Britain there is always the remembrance that to gain anything lasting in the past, economics had to be joined to politics.

Before closing this chapter it is advisable to note that the case of Germany also illustrates the fact that Syndicalism changes its complexion as it passes to a different land. There are practically no syndicalists, in the French sense of the term, in Germany. The German workman has too keen a sense of the fact that his first necessity is political rather than economic reform. But in the Fatherland the result of the syndicalist movement has been seen in a tendency to speculate on what is called the "political strike." The latter is a mere adjunct to political action. Granted that a reactionary government even with a socialist majority in the

Reichstag refuse political reform ; why should not then the working classes swarm in the streets, compel the soldiery to come out, and then meet the soldiery with passive resistance rather than the method of revolt ? All this could be done at the word of command, and at the word of command the Trade Unionists could again disappear into their homes. This is the form in which syndicalist ideas most conspicuously show their influence in Germany. They suggest a possible anti-military campaign. As a matter of fact there has been such a campaign in Germany, and now in Great Britain as well ; and here again we see an important respect in which the French syndicalists have impressed one of their leading ideas on the working-class agitation of many different lands.

CHAPTER IV

SOREL AND THE THEORISTS

Syndicalists, as has already been sufficiently shown, have not always been a family one and undivided. From the first there were in their ranks moderate men and extremists. The moderate men were cautious, soft-voiced, and sometimes compromising. The extremists were confident, clamorous, and often one-sided. But as hard experience showed that Rome was not going to be built in a day, and ambitious general strikes failed in their main purpose, the extremists gradually lost a large amount of their authority and prestige in the syndicalist ranks. Niel, the moderate leader, actually became for a time the Secretary of the Confederation of Labour. In fact the extremists might have been decisively routed had it not been for that little group of theorists who are the subject of this chapter.

Theory, it is true, does not precede practice. There must already be the promise of a living movement before the theorist arises to explain it. "When philosophy," says Hegel, "paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only known. The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering." But although the deliverance of the philosopher is true, it is also true that theory, when it does come in, for ever impresses its stamp on the living movement. It may

curtail or confine it. It may push it to unexpected extremes. It certainly gives it form and coherence in the shape the thinker desires. Henceforth there is no longer question of the movement heading to a premature decease; rather it lives and grows with more definite body and form. A tradition of thought is created, and young men of parts find a conception of Syndicalism in the intellectual air. Such a tradition of thought Syndicalism owes to three Frenchmen—Sorel, Berth, and Lagardelle, and to the Italian Arturo Labriola.

Of these four, Georges Sorel has perhaps been the most powerful and influential. He is now between sixty and seventy years of age, and lives in a little house at Boulogne-sur-Seine. Throughout all his life he has given proof of a singular independence of mind, and of a disposition to question any accepted deliverances of the powers that be. In 1892, as he tells us himself, he was in a government appointment, but when it came to soliciting promotion and obtaining the Cross of the Legion of Honour, he could not persuade his mind to take such a "descent to Avernus." Yet he is a man of a very affectionate nature, and deeply devoted to the causes he holds most dear. In 1897 he lost his wife, and many references in subsequent books show how deeply this loss affected his mind and his life. Since 1899 he has collaborated at intervals in the production of *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, the review which has done most for the theoretical presentation of the syndicalist cause. He has never, however, taken any part in the actual practical propaganda of Syndicalism. He confines his efforts to throwing out seeds of thought which germinate in the minds of the young men who are more in touch than he with the real course of affairs. Perhaps it is as

well that he thus clearly sees his powers and its limitations; for undoubtedly there is an element of rancorous and even irreconcilable opposition in Sorel's mind which would make him a difficult personage to work with in any kind of voluntary society.

Sorel's first influential production was a magazine article in 1897, on "The Socialist Future of Trade Unions," and it was this deliverance which caused him to qualify as the theoretical exponent of the syndicalist point of view. Two years before the article was published, the first Confederation of Labour had been formed as an amalgam of Trade Union federations, and everyone was wondering what would be the future of this earliest product of the Act of 1884. Politics were at a discount. Panama scandals, compromised officials, short-lived ministries, all made public and parliamentary life a thing of no account. General Boulanger had been the idol of the Paris crowds. The Dreyfus revelations were poisoning the wells of the country's moral life. And just at that time there appeared these speculations of Sorel which bid the workmen organise in their autonomous unions, avoid the contaminating pitch of political intrigue, and realise that their organisations were neither benefit clubs nor co-operative societies, but organic wholes wherein lay the germs of the country's economic and political future.

Time was on Sorel's side. All the events of the next few years after the publication of this brochure seemed to show that the workman's salvation lay not in politics. The Dreyfus agitation disclosed even deeper depths of moral depravity in the country's bureaucratic life. Socialists entered the ministry, but at the end the legislative result left bitter disappointment in the workman's

mind. Great writers like Paul Adam, or Octave Mirbeau or Anatole France, grew discontented with the powers that were. In such a world seething with disappointment, disillusionment, and unrest, Sorel's little book seemed to the great labour organisation a "still small voice" of comfort and hope. It bade them organise and conquer. It encouraged them to turn their back on corrupt politicians. Hitherto, as Lagardelle pointed out, the great defect in France had been an incapacity, or rather an inability to form societies. There had been no voluntary associations as in Britain and America to bring the saving salt of idealism into the country's legislative life. The State would brook no rivals. The bureaucrat could not tolerate an *imperium in imperio.* All this was going to be changed. The workmen were going to combine, apart from State patronage and control. The Confederation of Labour was destined to hold in the hollow of its hands the whole future of France.

This love for autonomous combination apart from State patronage and control, powerfully reinforced as it was by the lessons drawn from current political events, Sorel undoubtedly managed to impress on the whole subsequent syndicalist movement. It is this which explains the fact that in the Confederation as now constituted every union counts for one, and none for more than one. It is this which explains the syndicalist bias against the bureaucratic State. And in countries where the course of political life has run with clearer and less turbulent currents, it has undoubtedly led to a certain distrust of the whole syndicalist point of view. In Britain, for example, it is difficult for the Trade Unionist to summon up complete and whole-hearted enthusiasm for the uncompromising denunciation of politics in which

the syndicalist literature abounds. The socialist may be disappointed with his labour politician. He may think that the smoking-room of the House of Commons has made him less active as a propagandist of his old ideas. But he does not think that the whole political outlook is dark as the midnight. Except as *News from Nowhere*, he would not be inclined to anticipate that the Palace of Westminster would ever become a receptacle for manure. Accordingly, he differs from Syndicalism in one of the first of Sorel's commandments, and the spread of the creed appears destined to a speedy termination.

Sorel's versatile spirit, however, was not thus to be checked. In the conception of the General Strike he very soon found an idea which could well serve as a rallying point for every form of revolutionary Syndicalism. In the last chapter it was pointed out that the General Strike assumes a new aspect as it is advocated by moderate or extreme men in the Confederation of Labour. The moderate men look on a strike as organised to attain certain definite economic ends—it may be the dismissal of non-unionists, it may be a minimum wage, it may be the recognition of the workmen's union—but there is always some definite economic motive lying at the background of the whole upheaval. The extreme men, on the contrary, hold that a strike may be supported from a political or rather an anti-political motive—the desire, namely, to overturn the whole present fabric of society. To the former the General Strike is the combination to attain economic ends which are common to a whole federation of workers; to the latter a General Strike is a combination the more effectively to inspire fear of the Great Conflagration.

It is in justifying the General Strike as an ultimate weapon for the workmen's salvation that the best work of the syndicalist theorists has been done. On the whole, general strikes for economic objects have hardly been remarkably successful. It is not possible to dismiss them with a shrug of the shoulders. It is not entirely relevant to count up with laborious arithmetic all the working days that have been lost during the continuance of the battle, and then record them all against the cause of the workers, as the recording angel would make up a story of his sins at the crack of doom. The study of strike statistics in different countries show conclusively that the great majority of isolated strikes do accomplish something. Albeit at great cost and excessive sacrifice they tend in the long-run to ameliorate the workers' lot. But a generalised strike implies in the first place a widely diffused enthusiasm. Great bodies of workmen in different trades come out at the word of command. And the result—even when on the whole favourable—does not, and hardly can appear quite commensurate with the exertions by means of which the partial victory was obtained. Hence disappointment and regret. Hence imprecations and fresh outbreaks of saddened and maddened spirits. Hence at the end of it all a disposition to believe that this new weapon of the generalised strike is not going to open up to the workman an early door to the enjoyment of his earthly paradise.

Sorel and the syndicalist theorists did their most influential work in opposing this tendency. They applied themselves, with competent intellectual training, to the justification of the General Strike. They upheld it by the citation of Kant and Bergson. They exhibited it as a conception more deeply and overwhelmingly

Marxist than the speculations of Kantsky and his latter-day so-called disciples. They proclaimed it with conclusive iteration as the real distinguishing conception of revolutionary Syndicalism. And they connected it with a whole philosophy of violence which drew its illustrations impartially from early Christian history and the events of the French Revolution. It may be interesting in a summary fashion to indicate the course of thought which led them to this ominous conclusion.

Society, say Sorel and Berth, is not going to be reformed in the course of its own fatal evolution. Marx was misled on this account by his residence in England. He heard the economists in that country proclaiming a doctrine of *laissez-faire*. "Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost" was going to lead the nation to a banquet of millennial joy. Ricardo's "economic man," harsh and inscrutable as he might seem, was yet a Balaam who was eventually bound to bless. In other words, Marx, though pessimistic as to capitalist misappropriations in the past, was yet optimistic as to the prospects for the future. Small businesses would become big businesses, and the big business would then be preparing itself by its own voluntary act for its own public extinction. All that was required was that the proletariat should combine so as to prepare themselves for this blessed gift of all the industries of the country when they came to them like manna from the skies. The Communist Manifesto celebrated the growth of open associations of the proletariat instead of secret societies. If the Fourth Estate could only realise it, they had a world to win.

The syndicalist theorists, while proclaiming themselves more Marxist than the Marxists themselves, decline

to follow Marx in his optimistic conclusions. The wounds of the body politic were not to be so early healed. Physicians, and stern physicians, would be needed to diagnose and prescribe. The workmen must be prepared for a hard struggle against growing infirmities ere society could be regenerated. Berth proclaims with Kant the supremacy of the practical reason. Sorel extols a philosophy of action. Both hold that Marx would have been helped by a spirit of pessimism as to the needs of the future. Social life had become degenerate. It was difficult to summon up the old heroic ardour when masters had lost their aggressive determination, and workmen their spirit of revolt. In the days of Marx the master would stand out to the last against his men, and the power of *laissez-faire* would be really tested and tried. In our own days he might try to bargain and compromise, and so class distinctions would be obliterated, and the fighting spirit of the workmen would sink to unmerited rest.

From this altitude of dark despair the Trade Unionist is to be saved by the proclamation of the General Strike. The General Strike is revolutionary. It is for the purpose of overturning society. The General Strike is pessimistic. It recognises that there is in the future hard and stern work to be accomplished. But beyond admitting its destructive possibilities, how can you further justify it? You can overturn the old world, no doubt, but are you quite as certain that you will be able to build up a new world on the ruins of the old?

In this dilemma the French syndicalist theorists all fall back on the philosophy of Bergson.[1] Why should

[1] Before studying what follows the reader is advised to read the chapter on "Intuition," in the book on Bergson published in this series, p. 45.

you need to justify your General Strike by giving a rationalist account of the society you will establish on the ruins of the old ? Why should you be expected to know the site of every temple erected on the site of your expected New Jerusalem ? Knowledge that you can work out in the recesses of your intellect and schematise in black and white is, after all, not the most perfect form of knowledge. Intellect is discursive and limitative ; it is intuition that gives us the rounded or perfect whole. " Strikes can be defended," says Sorel, " if they express in a perfect fashion all the aspirations of Socialism with a precision and sharpness of outline which no other mode of thought can possibly give them." Here the prophet seems lapsing into rationalism, and we naturally ask that the precision and sharpness of outline shown in the defence of the strike should also be applied to the description of the situation that succeeds the strike's success. It is now, however, that Sorel most completely shelters himself under the mantle of Bergson. " Strikes have given birth in the minds of the people to the noblest, deepest, and most inspiring of motives, but it is the General Strike that groups all these ideas into a universal picture and, by bringing them together, gives to each its maximum of possible influence. We obtain thus such an intuition of Socialism that language is impotent clearly to express it, and we obtain this intuition in a perfectly timeless whole. In fact, it is the perfect knowledge of the Bergsonian philosophy."

Of course, not all the rank and file of the syndicalist movement have adopted this subtle point of view of these theorists. You do not find a Bergsonian, naked and undisguised, at the corner of every street in Paris. In fact, if we keep in mind the syndicalist practice as it

was detailed in the last chapter, and compare it with syndicalist theory, it may be held that practice has followed its own lines and left to theory very little to analyse or explain. For example, in syndicalist practice sabotage occupied a prominent place. No syndicalist strike ever takes place without an attempt being made to introduce the dreaded reality in some of the forms which have been already mentioned. But Sorel and the theorists detest sabotage. It seems to them to be a forswearing of the craftsman's noblest faculties to consent to turn out imperfect or marred workmanship. To loiter at the task is to suggest that the artisan is not fitted for the social revolution. The fact is that if the Fourth Estate are to be able to do anything at all after the General Strike, they must, as Sorel points out, reconstitute society on the basis of the self-governing workshop or factory. But how can they do this if they accustom themselves to inefficient work ? It is in the industries that have most experienced the power of the Industrial Revolution that the syndicalist looks for his leading disciples, and how can you become a good and skilful craftsman unless you accustom yourself on any and every occasion to turn out the very best work of which you are capable ?

Here then is a very important aspect in which the syndicalist propagandists have not followed the lines of Sorel. In fact practical Syndicalism was not at all given its first impulse by the theorists. It existed before Sorel, and its leading principles—the use of violence, its anti-military and its anti-patriotic bias—were all, as has been already shown, really forced on it by the particular circumstances of France at the time. But in the significance which they have given to the

notion of the General Strike, in the way in which they have elevated it to the rank of a primary dogma of Syndicalism, the theorists, as has already been hinted, have really exercised their greatest influence on the practical movement. By this is not meant that every syndicalist workman in the present year of grace fondly believes when he goes on strike that the New Jerusalem is near. He may rather have before his mind, as the most evident motive of his activity, some immediate economic advantage to be gained. But since Sorel made the revolutionary idea of the General Strike a part of the intellectual atmosphere in which the more ardent spirits of the syndicalist movement are born, it has always, dimly and undescried, been a controlling motive in most of the more serious convulsions of the Fourth Estate. It has given power and force to the extreme men, when otherwise they would have been forced out of the field by their more moderate brethren. It has undoubtedly enabled desperate workmen in America to fly to dynamite with a lighter heart. It has given confidence to the desperadoes of Industrial Unionism in Australia. A destructive policy seems a policy of utter despair, but if Sorel assures you on the testimony of the most popular university philosophy of the day that a destructive policy can be defended, surely you, a mere member of the despised proletariat, are not out to show signs of a particularly tender conscience.

Sorel thought that Italy would be a particularly receptive soil for his own particular form of propaganda; but Labriola, the young university professor who leads the syndicalists in that country, has some important differences from Sorel. He is not so bitter against the politicians. In fact, his only objection to politics as

at present constituted in Italy, is that it mingles the classes, and permits the Socialist party to welcome within its ranks all kinds of middle-class undesirables. If a proletarian party could be constituted in Italy, something like our own Labour Party, Labriola would give it his support; but he would ask it resolutely to abstain from putting forward, as leading elements in its programme, a mere dishing up of schemes of State Socialism which involve the manipulation of the middle-class expert. In fact, Labriola is most interested in stimulating and helping every constructive movement of the Fourth Estate. That is the primary aim of his syndicalist programme. Bergsonian general strikes, and the syndicalist philosophical pessimism must ever occupy for him a very secondary position.

But when all is said and understood, we must at the end of the chapter come back to the position that the really serious aspect of the view of the syndicalist theorists is their depreciation of reason. In the mind of the younger men of the French school this has almost become an obsession. Lagardella sees the cloven hoof of reason in the arrangements of a political caucus. Berth distinguishes himself from the anarchists because they founded themselves on Hegel and Schopenhauer, and reposed sufficient strength on their reason to proclaim themselves freethinkers and atheists. The new syndical school of philosophy has no hostility to religion. It rather respects it as founded on the same intuitional glance into the secret of things which is the basis of syndicalist theory. The aim of all industrial propaganda should be to bring men back to the heroic self-sacrificing spirit of the early days of Christianity or the best days of the French Revolution. In other words,

and as Vico put it, you must sometimes progress by going backwards. And the consequence is, that in these latter days the syndicalist propagandist sees everything fluid and uncertain. He is released from the obligation of running before he leaps. He need not shut himself up in his study and make a chart of the course before he abandons himself wildly to the behests of every fragmentary intuition. There is no doubt that the idea of a general burst-up has immense fascinations for the popular mind. Every sub-editor knows the magic influence—as to editions and sales of his paper—of a sordid deed of blood. Every student of sociology has studied the unsettling popular power of a war fever. From one point of view, Sorel's valuation of the myth of a " General Strike " is merely a generalisation of much of the experience of modern journalism. You can most effectively move men's minds by the picture of the great conflagration. But from another point of view, it is the most significant and pernicious influence in the whole later history of the Fourth Estate. It turns the efficient and reflective artisan into the unreflecting and misguided, though devoted enthusiast, who looks out for a chance of wrecking the railway line, or ushers in the reign of darkness by a short circuit in the electric wire. The way of reason may be, as Hegel pointed out, a way which involves much pain and requires a vast amount of patience ; but take it for all in all, it is the only way which will ultimately lead the Fourth Estate along the road of victory.

CHAPTER V

A SYNDICALIST MILLENNIUM

THE syndicalist theorists have not, it is clear, been able to induce the practical propagandists blindly to follow their deductions. It is true that the theorist has one great and outstanding advantage over the man who fights in the ranks. The theorist puts his thoughts on paper, and the written word remains. The syndicalist pamphlets are translated and carried from land to land. Newspapers and periodicals quote some characteristic syndicalist articles. Thinking artisans appropriate the new method of thought, and even when the philosopher appears to be exercising a deleterious influence on a few extremists, he may be really preparing the way for the complete conversion of every comrade in the ranks.

But that time is not yet; and, as has been shown again and again, the effective syndicalist movement among the Fourth Estate seems, in a large measure, to be following its own lines, appropriating ideas here and there from the theorists, but mainly determined by the practical situation which it finds in widely contrasted lands. Thus in France it is affected by the antipathy to a centralised administration and to a jaded political system; while in Australia, America, Germany, Italy, and in Great Britain, so far as it now affects our industrial situation, it has its own peculiar developments. There is a certain international cast of thought peculiar to all

the syndicalists ; but above and beyond that, there is a method and manner of revolt peculiar to the needs and social developments of very different countries.

Even in France Sorel and his friends have not been able to claim the Confederation of Labour as their own. If there is one article of faith characteristic of the Sorel philosophy, it is that you must not, and need not try to schematise the future. It is true that Sorel is not always quite consistent in this point. There are passages in his works where he almost seems to rhapsodise on the skilled craftsmen working in a syndicalist workshop, in the happy days that are yet to be. But these are only casual lapses. For the most part, he screens himself within the shadow of Bergson and warns off dreamers and Fifth Monarchy men from every square millimetre of the enchanted ground.

Pouget and Pataud, however, whom we have already mentioned as leading spirits among the militants of the Confederation, have chosen in an inspired hour boldly to disregard this advice. They have attempted to introduce us to a syndicalist millennium, and as the complaint is most frequently made that syndicalists have no constructive ideas, it may be advisable to linger for a few pages over this dip into the future. Of course but the barest abstract can be given of its ideas, and the reader must be referred to the original book itself if he wishes to make the picture complete.

It was in the building trade that the first mutterings arose of the labour revolt. There was a calmness in the air which seemed to presage a storm. And as the day passed, a spirit of wrath and revenge appeared to wake in the heart of the strikers. The government brought out the troops, and the workmen fought behind barri-

cades. The gap between masters and men grew wider and wider. The noonday sun bathed the rebel limbs and seemed to bring to the people fresh encouragement and strength. Suddenly, to every café in the workmen's quarters, there was brought the news that some of their own class had been shot down by the troops. This was the first great incident of the rebellion. Henceforth wherever workmen met the talk was all of the first victims of the war.

This necessity to talk widened the area of the revolt. "It is with social cataclysms," say Pouget and Pataud, "as with living bodies; they start from a cell, a tiny germ, which gradually multiplies from more to more." Strike followed strike, and when the masters adopted the lockout, the only result was that many who had before been undecided threw themselves into the ranks of rebellion. Soon 100,000 workmen in Paris were out in the streets. The provinces, too, felt the force of the contagion. News of boycotting and sabotage were brought from every part of the city. The government was undecided, unwilling to shoot down the strikers, and appalled at the strength and spirit of the rising.

A notable episode of the revolt was a great pilgrimage of strikers to the place where their fellows had been shot down by the soldiery. A storm had broken out earlier in the day, and a piercing wind searched the crowds and encouraged sombre thoughts. Wreaths of flowers were brought from every working-class centre of Paris, and deposited in a great heap as a tribute to their comrades slain. It was noticeable that the people showed no fear of the soldiery. And when the Confederation announced a general strike throughout all the city, it was evident that the crowds were prepared to carry it out to the

letter. Surely the Social Revolution was now inevitable.

The Executive of the Confederation of Labour took into its hands the management of the revolt. It directed its agents to go to the labour centres and post men at the strategic points in the line of communications. Revolutionaries and anti-militarists of the old type came with offers of help and service to the Confederation headquarters. The anti-militarists were particularly helpful. The government were proposing to use the army as soldiers of industry, and anti-militarists made it their business to haunt the barracks and talk to all the troopers they could find about the situation. Wherever there were blacklegs at work huge crowds bore down on the doomed workshop, and despite the opposition of foremen they swarmed into enclosures, damped furnaces, and by "peaceful persuasion" soon had the blacklegs in the ranks of revolt.

By this time the upper classes of Paris were feeling very uncomfortable. And the Confederation was deliberately doing all it could to make their uncomfort as great as possible. The dustmen, who still went their accustomed rounds in the working-class districts, were sternly forbidden to go near the aristocratic quarters of Paris. Huge heaps of festering refuse made the air foul behind many a lordly mansion. The dudes could not solace themselves with bands or jockeys. There were neither trams nor tubes. Petroleum was poured into the kneading-trough. Troops were moved wildly from place to place, but as soon as they repressed sabotage in one direction it broke out in another.

Still the upper classes hoped against hope. Their life was gradually being made intolerable, but they still

believed that the government would master the rebellion and restore again the old and happy state of things. The first real doubt as to the issue woke in their minds when, in spite of all precautions against strikes and sabotage, the gas and electric supply failed. It is easy to be valorous in the daylight or in the light of the electric arc. But dark thoughts supervene when all is black around and without. The upper classes of Paris beheld their doom in the midnight.

After that, one by one, the primal necessities of life failed. The railways ceased to run; the postmen and telegraphists came out on holiday. And when the government sent out soldiers to make life possible for its loyal artisans, the strikers indulged in sabotage to make all industry impossible. Baffled and infuriated, the government tried to arrest the heads of the Confederation, but the leaders of the rebellion were nowhere to be found. A huge demonstration held at the funeral of the victims of the soldiery saw the people gathered in a serried mass which neither police nor troops could break up or disperse. Life was becoming hardly worth living, civilisation was dissolving in chaos. The last and unkindest cut of all came when the newspapers ceased to appear. What were the harassed upper classes to do ? The luxuries of life had gone. The necessities of life were only hardly to be obtained. Surrounded by foul smells, and crouching in the darkness of an upper attic in these well-upholstered homes, how could they do other but fear the issue ?

Up to this point, it must be confessed, the syndicalist millennium is sufficiently ghastly and grim. There can be no doubt of their instinct for destruction. It is wonderful to note the fertility of invention shown in

devising fresh inconveniences to perturb aristocrats and politicians. But it is now, when the work of destruction has been carried to the uttermost, that the Confederation of Labour sees the necessity to construct. A Happy City must be reared anew on the ruins of the old. And it is just here that the syndicalist millennarians reveal their imperfections. They only succeed by assuming the absence of obstacles and difficulties which they would be sure to encounter in aggravated forms in the actual course of affairs.

In the first place, an American writer like Jack London would dispute that the first skirmishes of the engagement could be won so easy. In a country where the Industrial Revolution has fully run its course, they have disquieting experiences of the presence of strike-breakers and Pinkerton's police ! And in the second place it must be remembered that the lavish use of sabotage, useful as it may be in revolt, becomes irreparable in reconstruction. If the machinery of Paris has been ruined and its lines of communication destroyed, how can you at once raise a new city on the wreckage of the old ?

Yet our syndicalist millennarians will never despair ! With a light heart they set about constructing the syndicalist Holy City ! They admit that everything is in ruins around them. The rich have fled to the country. Financiers find their business gone. No journals give the news of the world. Only the Bourses du Travail exist as the germ of the municipality of the future and the Confederation as the State—and (*mirabile dictu !*) it looks like being a bureaucratic State—which is now to guide the destinies of France. Without credit, and with panic written on the faces of young and old, what is a poor syndicalist to do ?

Pouget has no doubts about it. He remembers his Kropotkin, and plumps first for the "Conquest of Bread." At the outset the co-operatives supply and make as much as they can; but when this supply proves insufficient, the mob seizes stores of grain and wheat wherever they find it. Bakers', butchers', and grocers' shops fall into syndicalist hands, and notwithstanding the sabotage of the days of revolt, everything is found ready for the new régime. Soon a plentiful supply of eatables is ready to be distributed, first to the sick and then to the strikers. Unionists and non-unionists take part in this work of distribution; and if the rich want some of the good things they have to pay for them at the market price.

But where was the old government all this time? Meeting misfortune after misfortune. First the army faltered. If it was marched against the strikers it was met with passive resistance, and men and women swarmed round the soldiers chiding and appealing. Then Parliament was invaded. The Socialists of the Left were indignant, and an amusing picture is given of an inspired orator—evidently M. Jaurès—reconciling his party in an eloquent speech to the new state of things. Finally—and this is the most remarkable episode in the millennial glory—the banks are seized, and yet the credit of France remains as high as ever. Everybody knows how Mr. Norman Angell has startled us by showing how credit decays at the slightest rumour of war. Not so in the Social Revolution. Then society can be dissolved into chaos, and yet foreign countries will take your notes and depositors will find all their demands duly honoured.

But it is unnecessary any further to dwell on the story

of this syndicalist millennium. So far as it is destructive, it is full of information as to the characteristic methods of the new movement; but so far as it is constructive, it belongs to the same class of literature as More's *Utopia*, or Morris's *News from Nowhere*, or Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, or Anatole France's *White Stone*, or Wells' *War in the Air*. The new government marvellously balances demand and supply. It offers free education from the school to the university. It distributes necessities to all according to their needs. It ordains an eight hours' day, with an old age pension at fifty. It replans the towns. It wins over the provinces. And when indignant foreign monarchs send trained foreign troops to take possession of this syndicalist Utopia, the Confederation rises in its strength and annihilates the foreign armies by the power of the Hertzian rays.

Evidently, however, this is a fancy sketch in which all the difficulties are cautiously avoided. For example, how are the members of the executive committee of the Confederation elected? And how are they to be elected for the future? And is it possible to devise a method of election which will not bring you face to face with all the difficulties of representative government in that science of politics which is anathema to the syndicalist of former days? Or this Confederation which is to balance demand and supply—is it not the old tyrannical collectivist and bureaucratic State under another name? Does it not involve the rule of the expert? And are we not to be hurried and hustled about in the same uncompromising way at the behest of the powers that be? Surely the rulers are as tyrannical as ever in this new syndicalist millennium.

The truth is that this attempt on the part of two noted secretaries of the Confederation to disregard the advice of Sorel, and actually to schematise the future, can hardly be called a brilliant success. In the destructive part it is illuminating in its exposure of syndicalist methods of revolt. We hear the tramp of hurrying feet. We read of grim carnage on the streets. We listen to the crash of breaking machinery. We behold Paris doomed to an Arctic night. The philosophy of violence here finds two brilliant practical exponents, but when they pass from violence to reconstruction it is like Antæus flying in an aeroplane from his mother earth.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEANING OF SYNDICALISM

Syndicalism is clearly a great and significant movement. It has its roots deep down in the recesses of the historic past. It has not yet made fully clear how much it is destined to achieve in the future. What is certain is that it has connected itself, either sympathetically or unsympathetically, with most of the leading tendencies—economic, religious, political and philosophical—of the time, and that echoes of its leading opinions find a receptive ear in many of the thinking artisans of our own particular era.

It may therefore prove interesting and instructive, before this little book ends, to give a somewhat extended consideration to the question of the ultimate meaning and significance of Syndicalism. Syndicalists, as we have seen again and again, are not at all united on any and every point. Syndicalism itself, in many of its main principles, is an amalgam of ideas forced on many thinking workmen by the particular economic and political circumstances of France in the latter part of the nineteenth century. How much of these are grain and how much mere chaff? In other words, how much of Syndicalism is transitory, evoked by and connected with circumstances peculiar to a special epoch of the world's history, and how much universal, ruled and

directed by that spirit of history whom Mr. Hardy has called "The President of the Immortals."

Let us begin to approach this question by recalling the general definition of Syndicalism given at the beginning of this book. This may be divided into two parts, the first of which gives the practical policy, and the second the underlying assumption. The practical policy is to realise the millennium by the action and under the government of Trade Unions, or, to give them their French word, of syndicates. The underlying assumption is that any millennium for the proletariat or Fourth Estate can only be brought about by the independent and coercive efforts of the Fourth Estate themselves. At the last analysis it will be found that the practical policy contains what is particular in the syndicalist programme, and that the underlying assumption contains what is permanent and universal.

The practical policy of Syndicalism is necessarily limited and particular, because the modern Trade Union is not fitted by its character and constitution to realise a social millennium. A Trade Union is an economic organisation. It is composed of men and women in the same situation economically—*i.e.* they are wage earners who work under the direction and control of others. Its object is to secure out of the total product of industry as much as possible for the workers in the way of wages. It cannot take this from the adequate reward of superintendence or from the current rate of interest on the capital employed. Obviously it must assume that there is an "unearned increment" so far as the capitalist class is concerned, and that this rent and quasi-rent is a legitimate source of added wages to the workman, always supposing he is strong enough to com-

pel attention to his claims. The last words are added advisedly; for it is the characteristic of economic action that it cannot assume a softening of men's hearts—it can allow for no voluntary co-operation of different classes for the common good. The economic struggle is a struggle for material wealth, or at any rate for happiness which can be expressed in divisible values; and if one possesses the money that he seeks, the presumption always is that another is correspondingly poorer. "My brother Charles and I both want the same thing—*i.e.* Milan." So the French king is said to have expressed himself to the Emperor Charles I: and the possibility of estrangement caused by this duplication of desire is equally present in every case where masters and men face each other in the economic field of affairs.

Clearly this is and must be so. In its economic aspect society is not organised to realise an earthly reign of justice or to produce the largest amount of contentment, or to see the lion and the lamb lying down in peace together. In all his estimates the capitalist is guided by the claims of money power. "The vital point of production with him," says that suggestive American economist, Professor Veblin, "is the vendibility of the output; its convertibility into money values, not its serviceability for the needs of mankind." If a promoter of companies has two inventions brought before his notice—one that will increase the output, but not increase the expenses of production in a dangerous trade; the other, one that will not probably be more profitable, but will do by mechanism what before was done to the detriment of man's life or health, he is obviously bound on economic considerations to prefer the first. In economics master and men stand facing each other like

two combatants on a battlefield. Each wants to get the utmost pecuniary advantage he can, and each appears willing to be as ruthless, relentless and remorseless as possible in pressing that advantage to the utmost conceivable extreme.

That is why Syndicalism in its practical policy begins with the assumption that masters and men stand facing one another in deadly and implacable conflict. It is bound to do so by reason of the economic experience of the unions on which it founds its hopes for the future. A Trade Union is an association of workmen organised with a view to war. In our own country it claims certain legal immunities, because in a state of war the civil law steps aside, and the only object of neutrals is to preserve a fair field and no favour for the two contending parties. Nominally, it is a voluntary association, and Mr. Sidney Webb has given us some interesting ideal descriptions of the many anticipations of modern democratic expedients formulated in the rough experience of industrial development. All these idyllic dreams are, however, forgotten when the Trade Union has once declared war. War is a stern business, and even a democratic union cannot make it other than it is. The executive takes control of the campaign. The general secretary or some other leading personage becomes a " super-man " in his power and influence. If a workman disobeys the behests of the union he is boycotted, insulted, and it may be ruined. If a man refuses to join the union he is submitted to " persuasion," which is too rough to be intelligently peaceful. And, again it must be added, it is easy to say why it must be so. Treason in war must be punished with the extreme penalty of the law. One faithless officer may imperil a whole host. Economic conflict

belongs to the primal stage of humanity's activities when the law was the law of the strongest, and politics was too far off to exercise any moderating influence in the cause of human affairs.

In order to keep consistently to his economic postulate of an implacable industrial warfare, the syndicalist is bound to take up an attitude of hostility to politics. Politics implies a combination of men and women of all ranks and classes, in a certain locality, for carrying out the "general will" of that locality, and for embodying the result in systems of administration and law. It encourages discussion and debate. It can hardly blame division of opinion. It assumes that the interests of different sections and classes of society are not so entirely at variance that measures and Acts of Parliament may not be passed by the consent of representatives of each section to promote the general weal. As such, it seems to traverse some of the fundamental assumptions on which the practical policy of Syndicalism is founded. It denies its "class war." It refuses to believe that masters and men need necessarily fight to the finish. It cannot admit that the strike is the only or the most effective weapon of proletarian warfare, and, as we have already seen in the second chapter, it was because the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832 did not realise at once all the extravagant political hopes that had been formed of it, that the first great popular movement arose which can with any propriety be called syndicalist in the modern sense of the term.

Now we seem to be getting near the roots of the principles of modern Syndicalism. It started with a certain anti-political prejudice, and whilst it was becoming a force to be reckoned with in modern France, there

was everything to confirm its anti-political prepossessions. French political life in those days was not exactly to be admired. The Dreyfus case brought a shock to the minds of even those who would immediately usher in a collectivist bureaucracy. The Panama scandal, the Wilson exposure, the tales about President Carnot—are not all these written in the pages to be hastily passed over in French political history? And the men who founded and manned the French Trade Unions that made up the Confederation of Labour, had been politicians before they became active Trade Unionists. They had experience of the amount of time and trouble it took to extort from the State in 1884 a charter of liberties for the unions. They had to suffer in the earliest months of their history from the interference of the State soldiers in the case of labour disputes. They had to tolerate the sometimes intolerable interference of the uniformed police inspector. And the consequence was that circumstances peculiar to France and a situation that might not be met with in any other country to exactly the same degree, determined to a very large extent the practical policy of the first syndicalist agitators.

This particular side to the syndicalist propaganda may be further illustrated by considering the millennial aspirations of the Confederation of Labour. The French syndicalist is out to realise no small ideal. His aim is revolutionary; his design is nothing more nor less than to overturn the whole fabric of society in order to rear up a new world on the ruins of the old. But how can you realise a millennium through the economic agency of Trade Unions? Economics belongs to the simplest and most general phase of society's activities. The

government of a workshop is autocratic and often arbitrary. The wager of battle is the main method of settling disputes, and the strike implies not that a millennium shall be attained where all shall receive their proper meed of justice, but that one combatant triumphs by harassing, starving, or otherwise forcing his antagonist to helpless surrender. When we tried in the fifth chapter to sketch a syndicalist forecast of the future, we were obliged to confess that so far as the constructive part of it was concerned, it was inadequate and incomplete. Pouget and Pataud can ruthlessly and remorselessly show how the strikers can crush and suppress modern society; but they can only turn the Trade Unions into governing authorities by forgetting their economic limitations and making them practical replicas of the collectivist and political state. The Bourses du Travail become municipalities, and the Federations of Unions and Confederation of Labour become the departments and central authority of the new régime. But surely—as has before been pointed out—all this involves the consideration of political problems. There must be some way of selecting the ruling officials of the Bourses du Travail. The central executive of the Confederation must be elected by some kind of constituencies; and unless democratic custom and practice are thoroughly safeguarded, the new despots may become more arbitrary and tyrannical than the old. In fact, they will start with a predisposition to become so; for the officials of the Confederation have ruined the old society, after a series of sanguinary engagements, in which the Trade Union general to be successful had to dispose of unlimited and autocratic power. There is no such admission as this in the pages

of Pouget and Pataud ; but the reason is that they do not vigilantly enough scrutinise the assumptions with which they start, and while professing to be anti-political, they are content to head straight for the theorist problems of politics under colour of an economic flag.

That is why the great French theorists of Syndicalism—such as Sorel, Berth, and Lagardelle—do not attempt to anticipate the millennium. In fact, as we have already seen, they fly to Bergson in order to be able to warn off intruders from the dangerous ground. You cannot, as they look at the question, lay down in rational order and development what the future is going to bring. You may have a glowing intuition of the General Strike which may serve to inspire great crowds of workmen in the path of victory, but the moment you try to analyse and refine it, the golden vision passes away and leaves you face to face with only unsubstantial mists. "When you question me, I do not know it; but when you do not question me, I know it quite well." This is the ultimate position of the syndicalist theorist, and there is no doubt that he is wiser in his generation than the syndicalist propagandists such as Pouget and Pataud. You cannot, as has already been asserted more than once, usher in the millennium after a purely economic rebellion. To institute the reign of justice on earth you can neither dispense with politics nor with rational and ordered effort and investigation. The gospel of Bergson can hardly content the statesman or the enthusiastic member of a society for some ambitious but well-grounded reform.

Outside France and the United States, the practical tendency has been to recognise the economic limitations of the practical policy of Syndicalism. Everywhere during these later days there has been an intensified

determination and bitterness shown in the conflicts between masters and men; and this is traceable, either more or less directly, to the spread of the syndicalist spirit among the workmen. In the United States, in Australia, in our own country, even in Germany, the unions in the same industry are being connected together, and conflicts, when they do come, wage over a very much greater area and generally result in a large proportion of regrettable incidents. But when the tramway workers of Brisbane at the beginning of 1912 precipitated a general strike in that city, they were not above relying on the agency of the politician. The State Government of Queensland applied to the Federal Premier for the use of the military, but as the Federal Premier was a Labour member and his advisers constituted a Labour Cabinet, it can easily be understood that his reply was a refusal. Surely then the syndicalists of Australia can hardly take up the same anti-political attitude which is supported by the syndicalist theorists of France, and as a matter of fact it was pointed out at the end of the third chapter that Tom Mann, whose syndicalist conceptions were largely coloured by Australian experience, does not deny that there is a field, although a subordinate field, for political and Parliamentary action. Both France and the United States are different; for there are particular circumstances attendant on the political life of both countries which justify the reluctance of thinking artisans to stake the ultimate success or practical efficacy of their propaganda on a turn of the political dice.

Practically, then, Syndicalism does not always follow the same policy in different lands; but ultimately there is no doubt that the influence of French example and

theory tends to a general assimilation of foreign methods all over the working population of the world. Take for example the fact, that in the first number of *The Syndicalist* published in our own country, there is a glowing appeal to the soldier to disregard, in the case of a strike, the orders of his superior. For that offence the Government were ill-advised enough to condemn Tom Mann to the felon's cell; a little reflection would have shown the law officers of the Crown that this is simply a case of the adaptation of foreign syndicalist conceptions to situations which are not at all entirely parallel. You may appeal with some measure of success to the conscript cooped up in his barracks. He comes straight to military life from field or counting-house or factory. He has read, it may be, syndicalist pamphlets; or one of his comrades utilises every spare hour off duty by discoursing to large numbers of listeners on the coming Rule of the Workers. But it is very different with a paid or mercenary army. There the recruits don't as a rule come from the employments where talk on social problems is most universal or common; and when a man has chosen soldiering as a trade, and gets pay for his services, he is not likely to succumb so easily to syndicalist temptation as the man who looks on it as a compulsory and often distasteful interlude in his industrial life. Here then we have an example of the way in which, owing to the teaching of syndicalist theorists and their disciples, the particular policy of Syndicalism gets transplanted to very different lands; but the fact that this occurs and will probably occur in a much more marked fashion in the remote future does not make the practical policy of Syndicalism any less limited and special. The syndicalist sets out to accomplish by economics what

economics cannot possibly succeed in accomplishing. He has to win a millennium by the force of brute strength, and not the strongest Samson of the syndicalist army can end by accomplishing the dangerous feat. In these circumstances he must either keep the Utopian side of his speculations very much in the background and thus enrol himself among the industrial unionists ; or else he must indulge in even more ruthless methods of boycotting and sabotage in order to win his way to the industrial heaven on the backs of a huge heap of crippled and disabled workmen.

The above criticisms can be applied very fairly to the practical policy of Syndicalism as defined at the beginning of the first chapter, but the case is very different when we come to the underlying assumption. There Syndicalism is strong, and will ever become stronger. There it connects itself with the march of the Fourth Estate through the centuries to ever greater power and influence. It is true that even here the use of the adjective " coercive " in the definition calls attention to just those very limitations of Syndicalism to which we have called attention when dealing with the practical policy; but this is a small matter when compared with the significant and momentous declaration that the only way of ensuring justice for the working classes or the Fourth Estate is by the independent efforts of the working classes themselves.

All human history witnesses to the efforts of the working classes to attain some sort of an equality in society. In the early empires of the East, in the military republics of ancient Greece, ever in the darkness of mediæval reconstruction, they were condemned to more or less modified and always intolerable slavery. It was not

till the beginning of the nineteenth century that there seemed any hope that the general body of the people would burst their bonds, and for the incitements and encouragements then provided we have to thank the Industrial Revolution. This great economic movement massed the proletariat together in great centres under the autocratic government of the factory system. There was the sentiment of numbers. There was the enthusiasm of the crowd. The knowledge of one was conveyed in the contact of daily labour to other men who worked with the same machinery. Then came a mighty upheaval of the spirit of the Fourth Estate. In Russia within the last few years there has been a revolution that has failed ; and the failure is very largely ascribed to the fact that in the empire of the Muscovites the Industrial Revolution has scarcely yet accomplished its perfect work. Only in a few great industrial centres are the workmen massed together in workshops, and isolated workers labouring here and there in the estates of the great are hardly cohesive enough to do anything mighty or lasting in the world's history.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century this disaffection among the Fourth Estate has become still more pronounced, and has been christened by the name of the Labour Unrest. John Ruskin once said that every time he went to a theatre he wondered why the Fourth Estate did not break through all bounds and barriers, and overthrow the artificial restrictions which society had made to limit their freedom and comfort. In the theatre he saw gallery, pit, stalls and boxes, each of them filled with people—all gowned and groomed in their appropriate dresses or apologies for dresses ; and none of them at liberty to pass from his own domain to the

domain specially reserved for his neighbour. If only the scales could fall from the eyes of the occupants of the pit! If only they could realise the hideous unreality of those manufactured distinctions. And the prophet draws the general conclusion that society, as it exists to-day, is really founded on ignorance. It is because the Fourth Estate do not know, because "my people doth not consider"; if only they saw society in the limelight of more perfect knowledge they would not hesitate a day before they sprang up and rent their rulers.

To-day that better knowledge is more possible than it has ever been before. Elaborate Blue Books, Yellow Books, and books of every official shape and hue, pass from government departments in all the European countries to enlighten the proletariat as to their true position. Statistics are ransacked by ingenious experts. The number of people with incomes over £500 and over £10,000 a year are paraded with revolutionary pomp. Workmen's wages are accurately averaged over great and leading industries, and the small rise in money values is contrasted with the significant rise in food prices over the same period. Tramps, factory hands, typists, tell their tales of woe and obtain publishers for their auto-biographies. Committees on physical deterioration suggest that commercialism is rapidly depriving the working classes of civilised countries of anything that can be called an adequate bodily constitution. On the other hand, the statistics of strikes show that when men combine together, and really mean business, they can win a considerable accession of advantages at the point of the bayonet. In vain the *Board of Trade Labour Gazette* points out that in March 1912, no less than 24,579,500 working days were lost on account of strikes

and disputes in the industries which sent in returns to this department. It seems a prodigious waste ; and the friends of the masters are as indignant as the Pharisees were at the breaking of the alabaster box of ointment ; but in both cases the attitude of the parties condemned is the same. In each the end justifies the means.

The first result of these labour convulsions was the Socialist movement, which in this country began to exert an influence after the year 1880. Latter-day Socialism, though it had its earlier prophets, such as Saint Simon, Fourier, Louis Blanc, and Weitling, is really to be traced to the meetings of the International Society of Working Men in the sixties of the nineteenth century. Karl Marx, as we have already pointed out, invited the working-men of Europe to unite in open societies instead of secret meetings. Proudhon advised them to combine together and form centres of governmental influence. But very soon the Socialist movement turned its most conspicuous energies into the way of politics. Lassalle had some secret communication with Bismarck, and the thought was entertained that through the benevolent action of the State the workmen might be redeemed. Socialist political parties were formed first in Germany, and afterwards in the other great commercial countries successively, and they strove hard, by continuous iteration of the dogma of the " class war," to preserve themselves from contamination by other parties who were struggling for the same political salvation. But when the Labour Unrest became manifest at the beginning of the twentieth century it was evident that a certain amount of it, at any rate, was due to disappointment at the action of these very same political parties. They had not brought to the workmen all the boons they promised.

They had, without exception, become collectivist, shouting for an application to social problems of the machinery of the State, and forgetting that the State was as yet only imperfectly democratised. They were willing to entrust the destinies of the democracy to "experts," men who might indeed wear red ties and be clothed in Jaeger, but who had no claim by training or first-class knowledge to say that they were sprung from or represented the Fourth Estate.

The reaction against Collectivism found a first focus in the French syndicalist movement. The stormy course of French industrial history had predisposed a large section of the thoughtful working-class leaders of that country to hold to the opinion that the first necessity in a modern movement of the Fourth Estate, is to encourage the formation of purely proletarian societies. Small consolation is it to get good fat sops from the kid-gloved hands of experts if the workman does not foster and develop an instinct to combine. A boon which you have yourself won and worked for is worth a hundred boons which descend like manna from the upper air where the patron directs and organises. And besides, have not our working-class leaders been contaminated by politics? At that particular time in France a large number of brilliant writers—Octave Mirbeau, Taine, Zola, Paul Adam, and Anatole France—were exposing in the most telling of sentences the intrigues of the Parliamentary Lobby. It seemed as if a workman would loss his sense of the interests of his class if he became a deputy or senator. He would represent all classes of his constituents instead of the one class of the oppressed. So the people would not be able to form efficient societies to oppose to the overweening power

of the State, and whatever benefits they received would be bestowed by the charity of patronage rather than compelled by the power of triumphal Trade Union Democracy.

When the leaders of the new movement turned from Socialist and Anarchist politics to foster combination amongst the working classes, they had to start from the existing organisation, the Trade Union, which had just in 1884 received its charter of liberty. They had therefore to start with an economic organisation, deliberately planned to resist aggression, and with which strikes were an ordinary incident of its yearly existence. The same or similar Trade Unions existed in other commercial countries, and so Internationalism became a leading sentiment of the syndicalist movement. But of course the fact that most Syndicalist reasonings begin and end with economics has, as has already been pointed out, brought in a great deal that is special and particular into the syndicalist propaganda. Trade Unions may be very well for resisting and promoting economic aggression; but when you want to make your unions the germ of an economic, political, and educational millennium, you have to go into a great many problems that cannot be dealt with on purely economic considerations. Consequently one of the most significant points about modern Syndicalism is its large number of unsolved problems. How are your Trade Unions going to run the industry of the future? Is every workman to attend the executive assembly like the labourers at the parish meeting or the citizens at the Athenian Ekklesia? Or are they to elect representatives from their midst who shall sit like directors of a modern company with the representatives of the master? And where do the

interests of the community generally in "unearned increment" come in throughout the new arrangements? Is it not the case that some industries, such as those which have to do with keeping open lines of communication, are so fundamental to the well-being of the community that the citizens generally can't leave them without heavy and adequate representation of the interests of the people at large? Could the Confederation of Labour ever claim to represent the interests of the community of all ranks and classes in this largest and most comprehensive sense? The above clamorous series of questions are simply a few examples of the immense number of unsolved problems which lie about the economic foundations of modern Syndicalism.

The intellectual leaders of the movement do not feel themselves obliged to touch such ultimate problems. They repeat their Bergsonian incantations and scout political devices as for the most part superfluous machinery. Sorel has, of course, some instructive ideas about the improved education of the workers. To him the Trade Unions have a great deal of good work to do in this direction. Berth gives the idea of Trade Unions such a wide extension that they seem to answer to the requirements of Ostrogorski, and become those voluntary associations which are to rout the political caucus and redeem the politics of the future from the charge of oppression and slavery. But neither of these able men feel themselves constrained on account of the further course of these speculations to go back and narrowly scrutinise the economic foundations on which their massive superstructure was originally built.

Yet, in spite of all these drawbacks, it must be held that Syndicalism, so far as its underlying assumption is

concerned, has come to prevail. The Fourth Estate has at length arrived at a condition of mind when they are demanding what has been done with their human destinies. The upper and middle classes have learnt the power of combination. Autocratic kings kept a few well-drilled mercenaries, and were able easily to suppress every effort at rebellion. The Nonconformists of the first half of the nineteenth century were relatively few, but they hung so well together that they were able to exert quite a disproportionable influence on the Executive Government. Why should the Fourth Estate not recognise that if they are to gain anything, they must gather together in their proletarian societies and allow the principalities and powers to see that they are determined to win all the rights which for so long have been unjustly withheld from them. Industries may be taken over by the State, but unless the State means the Confederation of Labour, the last state of the workers in these government industries may conceivably become as bad as the first. The franchise may be given to the adult manhood and womanhood of the country; but if the workers have been so little trained to unite together for the defence of their own interests, that only a very small proportion of them come out and vote, it is not of very much avail to give them on the voting day the privilege of having their babies kissed by the neighbouring squire and his dame!

No doubt before Syndicalism is finally appropriated by the Spirit of Time, it must be shorn of a great many of its particularities and limitations. It was born of a time of stress and oppression; its first founders had witnessed the democracy of empire and the tyranny of the republican burcaucrat. Its economic premises led

its votaries fatally onward to a conception of society where all are pulled by their money interests, and society is a state of intestine war, where only sabotage, boycotting, "ca' canny," and the ruthless suppression of all possibility of difference among the workmen, could be trusted to lead the Fourth Estate to ultimate success. Sorel and Berth are, undoubtedly, always very respectful to religion. In this they differ from the rational Socialist and Anarchist of an earlier epoch. They see in religion and Christianity a power which has moved the mind of the working classes through what Sorel calls the end-of-the-world myth, much as Syndicalism would call forth all their heroic energies by the myth of the General Strike. Consequently they chide such writers as Renan when they speak in an easy-going or sceptical way about the spirit of religion. Religion is a sentiment which has had power and endured. If they could only give to Syndicalism the same power and permanence, both Sorel and Berth would be amply content.

Furthermore, syndicalists would reform an educational system. They would make education more practical, less concerned in conserving the clerkly traditions of the past than in infusing a new spirit into the craftsman's duty. In this connection Berth even sees, in the advance of that Industrial Revolution which has made Syndicalism possible, a way of ensuring the future resource and versatility of spirit of the workman. He thinks that the industries which have been most affected by machinery, and which turn the workman mostly into a machine-minder, have made the workman also more active and ingenious, and transformed him into a willing disciple of the syndicalists. This is not apparently

because he works fewer hours and has more leisure for study. Evidently Berth means that the machine-minder by the very nature of his daily work is taught reliance and resource. It would be good to believe so; but the very fact that it is so held shows the abounding aspirations of Syndicalism.

Of course syndicalists are not always just to politics, however much they may be justified in their attacks on the politician. American experiences amply show that the emancipation of the working classes is not going to be won by mere compulsion of numbers on the part of the working classes themselves. Impelled by Syndicalism the people are going in the right direction by seeing to the strength and cohesion of their own working-class combinations; but they must all unite in promoting that special and complex development of society's life, where, as in politics, all ranks and classes in a certain locality are asked to unite together as voters and legislators for the attainment of the general good. There are signs that, whilst preserving their zeal for their own associations, the syndicalists of the world are forgetting the first fury of their opposition to the politician. The Australians cannot forget that the Federal Government has been run by a Liberal Cabinet. The British movement has seen again and again Parliament assembled to lend a favouring ear to the people's claim. Even in France, where, as we have seen, there is more reason for the syndicalist to distrust the course of politics, the present secretary of the Confederation of Labour disclaims the imputation of being anti-political. "I am not anti-political," he retorts; "I am non-political." In other words, he is a long way towards the position of Tom Mann; not "no politics," but Industry first and

Politics second. At the same time there is a disposition to forget that industry goes deeper down into the aboriginal depths of society than the later politics. You may change your administrative arrangements, but unless you change also the economic texture of the people's life your changes will be of a very temporary nature. But while all this is perfectly true, it is also true that the syndicalist will have to revise his doctrines so as to give a more sympathetic welcome to political endeavour. It may suit Sorel to indulge in acrid reflection on political achievement, but in the interests of the Fourth Estate co-operation cannot be refused when and wherever it is offered by " men and women of good will." If Syndicalism is improved in this and other directions, it will no doubt supersede the old Socialist movement as the animating spirit of the work among the Fourth Estate. The road from slavery to freedom is always a toilsome road in every part of human history, but sustained by all that is best in the new gospel, the workman may well claim that he makes his way along the onward path with the ultimate certainty of success.

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Lectures Historiques, Albert Thomas.
Autobiography, Thomas Cooper.
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