

MAY-DAY LABOUR DEMONSTRATION.

The Friends of Labour who were yesterday invited to rally in their thousands around the unfurled Labour flag in Hyde-park had evidently a poor opinion of their duty. The Socialists and the Independent Labour Party of London were supposed on this occasion to join hands with their Continental brethren in making May-Day memorable in the annals of Labour and of Socialism, which is described as the "gospel of hope." May-Day, according to yesterday's programme, as organised by the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party, was to be made famous as Labour Day, and the British Workman was going to assemble in his thousands on the Thames Embankment in order to march to Hyde-park and trample upon the pretensions of the Capitalist. The weather at the outset was bright and breezy, and seemed in every way to favour the project, but the multitude of the workers came not. When the order to march from the Embankment was given the demonstrators certainly did not exceed 1,500, and they made a very humdrum progression to the Park by way of Northumberland-avenue, Cockspur-street, Pall-mall, St. James's-street, and Piccadilly. True, they had plenty of banners, and two bands, whose favourite tune appeared to be the "Marseillaise," but the majority of the processionists were either youths or foreigners, and any semblance of enthusiasm was conspicuous by its absence. That the British Workman was not there was evident from the conversation of the men who walked behind the banners. Their talk was not in English, but in French, German, or Yiddish, and some of the banners bore inscriptions in a foreign tongue. The Anarchists, whose movements have recently been distinguished by wholesome reticence, ventured on this occasion to show themselves, although the official organisers of the demonstration repudiated all association with them, and they made a separate display of their own with their red banners, red caps, and red rosettes.

By the time the procession reached the Park rain had begun to fall, and a considerable proportion of those who had followed from the Embankment beat a hasty retreat, their enthusiasm for the cause not being equal to cope with the heavy shower which set in as the appointed speakers mounted the rostrums of the respective platforms. There was no crowd on the spot to compensate for the absentees, and while three platforms had been prepared, the gathering around any one of them did not exceed 300 or 400. The Anarchists set up a platform of their own some distance apart, and they were honoured by a larger audience than the Socialists, for the simple reason that they had had the foresight to locate themselves in the vicinity of trees, the spreading branches of which afforded some slight shelter from the rain. The Anarchists really displayed considerable activity, and their agents distributed broadcast copies of a leaflet, which was described as the "Anarchist May-Day Manifesto." In this manifesto the Anarchists opined that "we are advancing with great strides towards Communism," and they declared their "program" to be "bread and liberty for all." "But," they added, "in order to obtain this ideal force must be used." The Anarchists further stated that they were prepared for the struggle, and while they welcomed isolated acts of revolt, they regarded these as but the mere forerunners and signs of the great revolt which was brewing, the acts of men sick of infamous oppression, but still not sufficient to overthrow the existing system. In their speeches the Anarchists were perhaps less valorous than their manifesto would have led people to expect, and the obvious indifference of their audience showed that with them the primary consideration was not instruction in the tenets of anarchy, but shelter from the inhospitable element.

At each of their three platforms the Socialists, who appeared on this occasion to be hand-in-glove with the Independent Labour Party, representatives of both creeds associating indiscriminately, began by giving three cheers for the "social revolution." There was, however, a suspicious absence of British cheers, and the predominance of the foreign Labour element was only too palpable. Numerous copies were sold of a Socialist print, the leading feature of which was a cartoon representing a donkey kicking out of the way landlordism and capitalism. Oddly enough, this donkey was supposed to typify Labour, although a man in the crowd remarked that "it's only human donkeys that works." The speakers included Mr. Tom Mann, Mr. H. M. Hyndman, Dr. Aveling, Mr. Pete Curran, Mr. George Lansbury, and Mr. William Morris. A significant feature of the speeches was that all the speakers repudiated the idea of any alliance between Labour and the Liberal Party. Mr. Tom Mann denounced Liberal capitalists as plutocratic rascals, and said that for Labour voters to support Liberals was to support plutocrats who were no more their friends than were the Tories.—Mr. William Morris said the great thing they were fighting for was the abolition of all class distinctions, when there would be no masters and no working-men, but all would be equal.—Mr. Lansbury, who has announced his intention to go to the poll as the Social Democratic candidate for Walworth, the seat which has just become vacant by the death of Mr. William Saunders, declared that it was idle for the Liberal Party to concern itself with such matters as the Disestablishment of the Church while the working-classes were clamouring for the Disestablishment of capitalist robbers. Long before the speeches were concluded the audiences, never large, became more attenuated, and only a few hundred people heard the official resolution put from the different platforms. It was couched in the following terms, and declared in each case to be carried:—

"That the workers demonstrating and making holiday upon the 1st of May pledge themselves to do their utmost every year to make Labour Day more and more a complete holiday, not granted by the antagonist master class, but wrung from them; send their fraternal greetings to their fellow-soldiers, the workers of all countries; declare for the legal eight hours day and universal adult suffrage as two of the most immediate steps to be taken towards the ultimate goal of the working-class movement; and again record the fact that this ultimate goal is the ending of the class war by the abolition of classes, the ending of the capitalistic system by the abolition of private property in the means of production and distribution."