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THE NEW REVOLUTION.

(Manchester Guardian.)

The "Times" has lately been trying to make our blood run cold by an elaborate description, in a series of articles, of the great revolutionary movement which, it seems, threatens the foundations of society. We are divided, it appears, into two nations. One is a Socialistic nation, and consists of skilled and organized labour. It takes the lesser share of the burdens of the war and gets the greater privileges. The other nation is individualist and patriotic, and consists of all the rest of the people, the rich and the poor, the millionaire, the professional man, the business man, and the unskilled labourer. It is a quaint association, and one is at first inclined to dismiss the entire scheme of the "Times" writer as the baseless fabric of a dream. But there is just a little solid kernel of reality in it all, and this may be seen from a paper "presented to the trade union movement by the command of the National Guilds League." It will be remembered that some weeks ago the Reconstruction Committee issued a report on Joint Industrial Councils. The idea of this report was the formation of councils, national and local, of employers and employed, for the joint governance of the industries in which each party is interested. It was the belief of the Committee that organized workpeople are demanding a more direct and living share in the control of the work by which they gain their livelihood, and the suggestion was that this demand could be met by associating their representatives with employers in a council which should form a kind of government of each trade, not only dealing with conditions of labour but exerting itself to promote the development of the industry, to foster education and initiative, to stimulate and supervise the introduction of new processes, and in general to deal with the many objects in which employers and employed agree in their interests as well as those in which they differ. To the unsophisticated this seemed a somewhat advanced proposal. But the National Guilds League, in the "observations" which they address to the trade union movement upon it, regard it as a very milk-and-waterly performance. They hasten to say that it has no connection with any proposals of theirs because it aims at a "permanent improvement in the relations between employers and workmen," whereas the League wants to abolish these relations altogether. To the Guild it seems impossible that employers and employed should sit on one council, because they have opposite interests and aims. The Guild, that is, repel the suggestion of an underlying unity of aim and insist on a radical and insuperable antagonism. They set out, they explain very frankly, "not to improve relations between employers and workmen but to make the whole relationship impossible. Discussions and agreements between the parties are for the time

being unavoidable, but they "are merely expressions of the economic power of the parties, and rest not upon good relations but upon a fundamental antagonism." The Guild, in fact, take us back to the days of open war and breathe the very spirit of the hard master of the days of "Mary Barton" and "North and South," who knew not "men" in his employ but "hands" that worked his machines. They call for the class war, not satisfied with the national war that we have on our hands. If improved machinery should prevent many disputes which now occur, it is the hope and belief of the Guild "that this would result in stimulating new disputes on more vital issues."

That all this is of the nature of a revolutionary movement we may admit, but we do not share the alarm of the writer in the "Times," because we take it to be the expression of a very small handful of academic people, deriving only spasmodic support from the current tendency of trade unions to revolt against their own leaders and substitute the authority of the shop steward. An anarchic movement of such a type may give trouble, but in the long run is far more dangerous to its own side than to its opponents, far more to be dreaded by those who desire to see organized labour strong for the prosecution of existing order of society.

The Guild, however, has its own view, which seems quite definite as far as its goes, of the industrial future. "The proper industrial function of the State is to nationalize industries, and therefore to entrust their management to trade unions." Apparently, the property in coal-mines or railways is to be in the hands of the State, but they are to be managed exclusively by miners and railwaymen. The employer as such is to be eliminated. As to this, it may be remarked that it may be possible to eliminate the employer by confiscating the goodwill of his business and turning him out of his office, but it is not possible to eliminate the employer's function. Someone must still direct the coalmine, the cotton factory, or the railway, and the work of direction is arduous, responsible, and difficult, making such call on brain and nerve that the men who can respond adequately are rare—rare enough to get monopoly payment for their services. The trade unions as they are have had no training in this work. It has not been their business. But if they could take it on at all, they would have to evolve an official class, a directorate, a supreme and subordinate management and the rest, parallel to that which exists now. The must compromise and mine coal. It is easy for the distinction between the man who gives orders and the man who executes them does not arise from the wickedness of human nature, but is inherent in the character of high organization. Divergencies of interest, just parallel to those which we know, would arise between the management and the workpeople. It would make very little difference that the manage-

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