

# SCIENCE.—SUPPLEMENT.

FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 1887.

## CO-OPERATION ON THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE.

### I. — FRANCE.

ABOUT a year ago the British minister for foreign affairs addressed a circular to her Majesty's representatives at Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, Brussels, The Hague, and Stockholm, indicating certain information as to co-operation in those countries which the government desired to obtain. The official replies to the circular contain a great mass of information as to co-operation, much of it difficult to be obtained by any one save a government official. Much of the value of the reports is concealed because of their not having been edited or compiled in any way. Each investigator obtained such facts as he could, and stated them in the way most convenient to himself. We shall call attention to such facts in the reports as are of value in connection with the general attention now being given to co-operation in this country.

The principal questions to which replies were desired were these : —

1. To what extent have industrial co-operative stores been established among the working-classes, and upon what basis?
2. (a) How far have co-operative workshops been established either by associations of workmen or by arrangements between employers and employed?
- (b) Have they been successful commercially, and how far do they prevent strikes and other disputes?
- (c) Upon what terms are profits usually divided in such workshops?
3. Are there any successful co-operative or people's banks, and what is their mode of operation?
4. Are there any instances of co-operative societies which provide social, educational, and recreative facilities for the working-people on a self-supporting basis?
5. Are there any co-operative societies for providing improved dwellings for artisans and laboring people? What system do they adopt, and with what success?
6. Is agriculture carried on by means of co-operation with any success?

7. Give details of any co-operative arrangements for carrying on shipping, fishing, and industries other than those already mentioned.

From France comes the answer that save at Lyons, the system of co-operation for diminishing the cost of articles of daily use is rarely met with. Owing to the nomad habits of the working population of Paris, it is particularly neglected in that city. At Mulhausen in 1832 the first instance of a French effort in this direction is found, in the establishment of a co-operative bread-store which managed to realize a profit, while supplying its members with bread at a reduction from the ordinary retail price. In 1849 this association numbered fifteen hundred members. The early attempts at co-operation were made at the instance of the employers, and not at that of the workmen. Lyons has been the seat of numerous co-operative enterprises, most of which were started by workmen. The co-operative stores in France are either for bread or meat alone, or for groceries, combined sometimes with clothes, drapery, and objects of household use. The bread-stores have the most success. The Angoulême store sold in 1874 — eight years after its foundation — five hundred thousand kilos of bread at about five centimes a kilo below the price asked by private bakers.

The last general statistics of co-operative supply associations are those of 1869, when there were in France and Algeria together about a hundred and twenty co-operative bakeries. Since then many others have been formed, but though increasing, co-operative supply has taken no great hold in France.

Co-operative workshops, however, have been in existence since J. Buchez began an agitation in their favor, as long ago as 1830. The main result of Buchez's teaching was a jewellers' association. The system of this co-operative society was to put by a seventh of the profits for the inalienable capital or foundation fund, and to divide the remainder amongst the members : one half of this remainder was paid over at once ; the other half, left in the business till the member's death or retirement, when it was to be returned. The working-members were paid weekly an amount corresponding to the usual wages paid for the work they may have done, and the rules of the association laid down that there should be six working-days a week, of eleven hours each, and that whoever stopped work for three days without the per-

mission of one of the two managers (who were chosen by election) should be fined, and if the offence were repeated during the year, the fine was doubled.

Before the revolution of 1848 the French government was very jealous of innovations not emanating from itself or submitted for its approval; but after 1848 the right of workmen to associate so as to enjoy the profits of their work was recognized, and co-operation became popular. On July 5, 1848, the chamber passed a decree which provided, that, in order to encourage the spirit of co-operation, a fund of three million francs should be placed at the disposal of the minister of agriculture and commerce, to be divided among co-operative associations spontaneously formed either between workmen, or masters and workmen. Shortly afterwards a committee of sixteen met to distribute this state aid. Five hundred requests for loans from this fund were received in a single year, and many associations came into existence solely for the purpose of obtaining a share of the subsidy. As a matter of fact, the major part of the loan was given to employers in want of temporary assistance, who failed to comply with the provisions of the statutes as to their relations with their workmen. The results of this government aid are said to have been good, and some saving was effected by employing these associations instead of contractors on public works.

The *coup d'état* of 1851 gave a shock to co-operation in France, and the associations dissolved, fearing punishment as socialists.

Whilst the movement was thus generally arrested by the workmen's dread of the government, a few new co-operative associations were quietly started. The first of which there is any notice was one of dyers, at Villefranche, in 1856; in 1858 there were formed co-operations of tailors at Toulouse, of carpenters in Paris, and of dyers at Tarare; in 1859, of house-painters in Paris; and in 1860 and 1862 co-operative workshops were started at Marseilles and Montpellier.

In 1864 the emperor showed that he had no opposition to co-operation by protecting the first branch of the famous *Société internationale*. In 1865 he went a step further, and caused to be drawn a *projet de loi* creating a new form of association for workmen's co-operative societies. This effort was not wholly successful, and an inquiry into the whole working of co-operation was instituted. The evidence was of much interest, and tended to establish the fact that the labor of an associated workman is better than that of the unassociated. In 1868, when co-operation was growing in favor, the failure of the *Crédit au travail* — a society established to give credit to co-

operation by discounting the paper of the associations, and by opening a credit with them on suitable security — put a sudden stop to all co-operative progress. The *Crédit au travail* failed, not because of losses, but because the capital of the bank was locked up and unavailable. Neither the Franco-German war nor the Commune seem to have affected the co-operative societies. The period between 1870 and 1880 was largely devoted to talk and the elaboration of impracticable schemes, and it was not until the strikes of 1879 and 1880 that general attention was again turned to co-operation. A congress of workmen, meeting at Paris in 1881, advocated co-operation through the trades syndicates, and a number of societies were formed in this way. In 1883 M. Waldeck-Rousseau, minister of the interior, appointed a commission to investigate co-operation, and the results of the inquiry fill two large volumes. The evidence given before the commission by the managers of thirty-four Paris co-operative workshops was very detailed and in many respects valuable. The three principal names in connection with co-operative production in France are those of M. Leclaire, the painter; M. Laroche Joubert, the Angoulême paper-manufacturer; and M. Godin, the founder of the *Familistère*. What the associations organized by these men have accomplished is well known.

The details regarding co-operative credit institutions in France present little that is new, and building associations are very rarely found. Indeed, no instance of workmen alone combining for this object is known. One reference to education in the statutes of a co-operative association of tin-workers is worth noticing. It reads thus: "As immorality proceeds from want of instruction, every member who has children is bound to give them instruction according to his means, under pain of exclusion from the society after two warnings given at intervals of three months."

Co-operative agricultural associations do not exist in France, and have proved a failure in Algeria. On the Mediterranean as on the Newfoundland coasts, it is usual for the fishermen to share the profits with the owners and masters of their crafts. The usual plan of division in the neighborhood of Marseilles is that half the take belongs to the owner of the boat and gear, the other half to the captain and crew *pro rata*. The system of giving the hands regular wages instead of a share in the profits is now on the increase.

DR. EMERY of Brooklyn reports the poisoning of thirty-two boys at an orphan-asylum in that city from chewing the inner bark of the locust-tree, which they stripped from fence-posts.