

HOW LABOUR MAY OUST THE EMPLOYER.

MR. A. R. WALLACE'S SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

"THE Doyen of Science," as Mr. G. N. Barnes calls Mr. Alfred R. Wallace, sends a letter of welcome to the new series of the *Amalgamated Engineers' Monthly Journal*. In it he advocates a policy of productive competition by labour with the existing employers:—

Organised Labour is not doing the best for itself and the community. Whatever may have been the case in the past, it is *to-day* a waste of energy and of means to endeavour to raise your wages by means of strikes. The employers being organised also, are stronger than you are. The time, I believe, has come when organised Labour should devote the funds hitherto spent on strikes upon industrial competition with the employers. It seems to me incredible that a society such as yours cannot among its 90,000 members produce knowledge and ability sufficient to carry on any ordinary engineering works as well and as profitably as can a capitalist employer. It would be worth your while to make any sacrifice to do this, and thus absorb your unemployed members, paying them wages for profitable work instead of allowances while remaining idle.

The economies of such a system would be so great that in a few years you would not have an unemployed member, and the inevitable, the absolutely certain, result, would be that *wages would rise automatically*, and would remain permanently high. Then with your accumulated capital you would always be ready to purchase the works and factories of bankrupt employers at low rates, because no capitalist would buy without the certainty of obtaining labour, whereas *your* supply of labour would be inexhaustible. It will be a grand day for the workers when this principle is adopted of fighting the capitalists by competition instead of by strikes. This is what they will dread, because this method will give *you* the advantage, will render *you* the stronger.

I do not see how this plan can possibly fail, always supposing that you can carry it out on thoroughly business lines, and make yourselves a reputation for the highest quality in materials and workmanship. The employers now can demand the highest business capacity, the most skilled workers, the most talented designers and inventors. You would have the same in your own ranks, and if not could as readily obtain them; and it is to be presumed that your own members, working for themselves and for the elevation of their class, would not work less efficiently than they do for the capitalist.

If energetically and persistently carried out, and combined with a system of co-operation and thorough education, the movement once begun must inevitably extend, and by the middle of the century almost the whole, if not the whole, engineering work of the country (excluding, I suggest, war material) might be in the hands of the workers themselves.

But as soon as you have successfully shown the way, other Labour societies will certainly follow your example, and we shall then be marching steadily on to the realisation of the co-operative commonwealth.

With best wishes for the cause of Labour, in which alone there is now hope for civilisation and humanity.