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The Anarchists of Norway

Freedom Press

April 1, 1890

(Front our Norwegian correspondent.)

In one of the highest parts of Norway, in the wide and beautiful Osterdalen (East Valley), there lies a large and rich country named Tynset. The winters are long and very cold up there, but it is a summer resort, and people from all parts of the country, but mostly from England and other foreign lands, come up the fjord in steamers to breathe the fresh and healthy mountain air.

This remarkable place is the head-quarters of the Anarchist movement in mountainous Norway. That is to say, that in this place the Norwegian Anarchist paper Fedraheimen is published. The present editor-in-chief Rasmus Steinsvik, is living in a little cottage, very little indeed, living the rich life of a man fighting for truth and freedom; but living also in the conditions to which such men always are subject, a life of economical poverty. But his faith in Anarchism, his belief in our great ideas has made him strong and unselfish, so he has sacrificed what was dearest in his life to fight for the coming revolution. It is through such men that the victory will be gained. The other editor is the well-known Ivar Mortensen, a highly educated man who studied to become a parson in the Norwegian State Church. Now he is preaching the gospel of

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Anarchism, preaching in churches and preaching at meetings. He also is living the life of an idealist. His immense hatred of the capitalists has made him live like the workers, sharing with them their conditions, their poverty and their faith in the future.

These two fire our most prominent comrades, real workers for our cause. Their paper Fedraheimen is becoming the paper of the Norwegian youth.

It must be remembered that in so large a country as ours, the two millions of inhabitants are scattered, and that there are few factory towns; thus the propaganda must be carried on by writing. It is only in Tynset, that there are organizations founded upon the principles of Anarchism. In the cities we have none that are public. None of our comrades have yet dared to openly take up the work; for one alone it would be dangerous to do so. But I venture to call the Social Democratic organizations of Kristiania and Bergen in a measure Anarchistic. The leaders have told me that they believe in Anarchism, believe in it as the most highly developed form of society, but they think that we must first go through Social Democracy before we can reach it. This stand-point will be better understood when I say that the social movement in this country has not yet been divided into several parties as in England and elsewhere; consequently Social Democrats and Anarchists stand as comrades, fighting, they say, for the same cause—the abolition of poverty and the freedom of the individual, and the motto of the Socialists is, "Without economic liberty there is no individual freedom."

On returning from America two years ago I took up the propaganda of Anarchism. In various papers and reviews I have written plainly about the matter, and it is yet so new that every paper takes my articles.

At Trondhjem some youths formed a group, called "The New Time," where we held discussions, but on account of the smallness of the town, in secret. At Vossevangen I have delivered an address upon Anarchism in a Young Men's Society. Very few of

them were not Anarchists. We shall always have the youth on our side. The editors of Fedraheimen now intend to carry on more propaganda by word of mouth than before. It is surely the first means to make way for the new ideas.

We wish to publish some of P. Kropotkin's articles as pamphlets, but like all Anarchists we are in need of cash. However Fedraheimen is now printing most of them. We are never so happy as when we find a paper of his to translate. He is loved as if he were our own countryman.

We have translated from Freedom "The Wage System," "Past and Future," "Is Communism Just?" and extracts from other articles; and I have translated your last month's review of Ibsen's "Lady from the Sea" for a Christiania Liberal paper.

I think the Norwegian movement is founded upon a sound basis, and when we get strength enough to organize, we will be a party of which foreign comrades will have to be proud. But it must be remembered that we work under other conditions than those of England. May our efforts succeed.