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The Commune

WILLIAM MORRIS, ISSUE.

SPECIAL NUMBER

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1927

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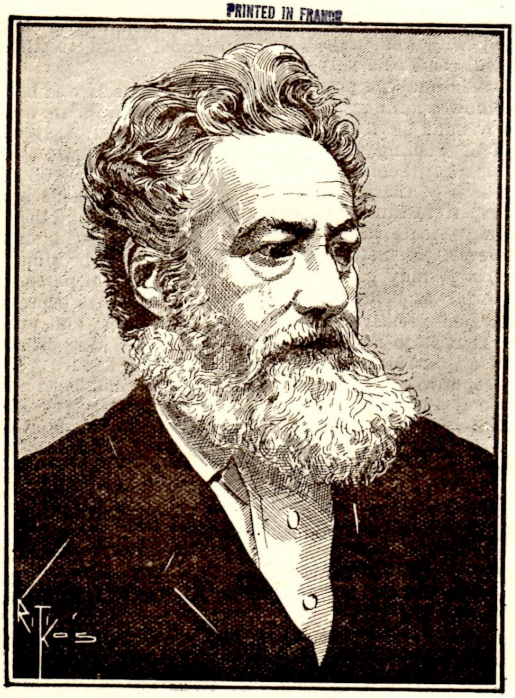

WILLIAM MORRIS (B. 1834 - D. 1896)

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Intelligence enough to Conceive, ~~Power to Compel~~ courage enough to will, power enough to Compel. If our ideas of a new Society are anything more than a dream, these three qualities must animate the due effective majority of the working people: and then, I say, the thing will be done

(Facsimile of WILLIAM MORRIS writing, from his address on COMMUNISM.)

THE SOCIALISM OF WILLIAM MORRIS

By GUY A. ALDRED

Slightly revised from a shorthand report of a lecture delivered at the Seamore Picture House, Glasgow, October 25th, 1915).

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My subject to-night is « The Socialism of William Morris ». In dealing with this subject, I may say a few things that will come as a surprise to many orthodox Socialists who may be present, and to strangers who know nothing about Socialism or the movement. What I shall say will not be from the standpoint of wishing to shock people, but from that of educating them. If what I say seems a little strange or new, therefore, my hearers should remember that, from time to time, we come up against facts and ideals which are strange. The strange, however, is not to be resented necessarily. The strange may gradually enlighten and so change forms and ideas.

William Morris is appreciated greatly in the world of capitalist culture. That is to say, he is spoken and is written about a great deal. While there is quite a number of people who have much evil to urge against Socialism, there is a vast number who have nothing but good to say about William Morris. That is not because Morris was good. It is purely a custom to speak well of William Morris in order to be regarded as occupying a certain position in the world of art and letters. William Morris possessed a certain amount of self-confidence, and by virtue of that confidence, and his money, he forced the world to recognise his mastership in the fine arts.

In our religious institutions, folk talk about Jesus Christ, meaning the myth ; but there is not a single parson who knows or cares about Jesus the man, his type, or his class among the ministers who are preaching in Glasgow to-night. They talk and pray, because it is the custom to do so.

When people talk of literature, discuss authors and poets, they most frequently are not concerned with understanding the poets or authors, but are taken up entirely with getting an easy position. By flattering some recognised institution in literature, they hope to be recognised as litterateurs.

That is the position of William Morris. That is why you find critics in arts praising him, not because of his Socialism, but trying to praise him in spite of his Socialism, by pretending that art is a very important thing itself and something that has no place in Socialism. They do not realise that art and literature can have no reality without Socialism : that all culture is devoid of meaning, is sham and hypocrisy, unless you come down to the fundamental economic question.

William Morris was born in the year 1834. More or less that was an eventful period in British history. The year 1834 was the beginning of the present constitutional regime in Britain. It saw the close of that period of struggle for the rights of political independence on the part of the people which began with the period of the French Revolution and went on through the Napoleonic Wars. Alive at the time when Morris was born were a number of persons who had made a hard struggle for the free press, for the Rights of the People to understand politics : persons who had suffered years in prison for blasphemy and sedition under absurd Acts of Parliament. William Morris was not born into an atmosphere or environment that was likely to make him interested in this struggle at first. He was born in an atmosphere of middle-class respectability, one of religion and conventional Charlatanism. Its prevailing idea was not that which works with the people, but that which goes against the people in their struggle.

In his early years, the only thing that he secured in the way of knowledge and culture which influenced his Socialism, was his love of heraldry, and a tendency to worship things which seemed entirely out of date with the commercial period in which he lived — a tendency to plunge into Gothic architecture. This lasted throughout his life, and influenced his later ideas.

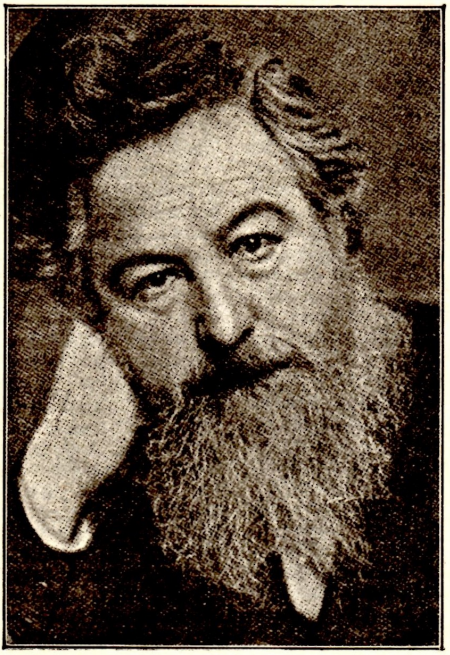
Down to the « fifties » there was nothing great in William Morris's life. In that year he went to Oxford, where he took up with the High Church Party against the Low Church Party ; an act which afterwards influenced his Socialism.

Morris, in his love for Gothic Architecture, was expressing not the old Pagan tendency of ancient and Imperial Rome, but still a Pagan tendency : the Pagan tendency of the ancient barbarians, of the Goths, and of the people who believed, not in parasitic art or in effeminate art as the Greeks believed, but who believed in art which

represented the joy of life. Throughout his life, Morris consistently cherished his sympathy for Gothic Architecture on this account: because it represented life's barbarian earnestness against mock society's cultured sham, and expressed the rich joy of labour as opposed to the misery of mere toil.

This barbarian tendency came out in his love of medievalism and found expression in his association with the High Church Party. The Low Church Party in England has much in common with the Non-Conformist Party, and is almost identical with the latter in its prejudices against sacerdotalism and joy in worship. Like the Nonconformist Party, the Low Church faction believed in worshipping God in the simplest form possible. Often, this meant the ugliest and most severe. This view reflected the piety of the time of Oliver Cromwell, the period when the joys of King Charles merry court and profilgate pleasure code were abolished in favour of stern, rigourous, discipline. In many ways, his virtuous outlook was quite good, but it was completely joyless. That very joylessness condemned it to collapse, because it is not natural for a man to want to spend all his life in a penitentiary. Yet that is what the evangelical and nonconformist outlook amounts to.

William Morris caught the enthusiasm of the High Church Party and the Paganism behind it. The consequence is that we find him obtaining a rich understanding of the symbolism of art.



WILLIAM MORRIS

Another study, taken During life.

After some time, Morris discarded the idea of becoming a priest and going into the servitude of the Church. He determined to become an architect; and we have a record of him studying architecture for some time. But coming under the influence of Rossetti, he abandoned the idea in favour of becoming a painter. Meantime, he had been studying architecture because of his love for the Goths and the Gothic architecture. Through this abandonment of love he gained a great practical knowledge of architecture and the pursuit of art — art worked out for itself and

not pursued with leisured ease in a mere parasitical study. He was a man who could embody for himself the almost forgotten and misunderstood tendency of the Pagan Goths.

This man came into conflict with a world full of sham, a world Christian and evangelical in the worst senses of those much abused terms : not Christian in the robust, primitive sense of good works or of righteousness ; but Christian in the later political established sense of that miserable, contemptible Pagan compromise of Church and Constantine ; Christian in the sense of the corruption of the fourth and fifth centuries.

In 1870, Morris began to get interested in politics. Previously, he had kept aside from politics because he felt if he had to give his energy to politics, it would be necessary to cast aside all his art and literature and love of painting,and love of studying this and that phase of ancient heraldry. It meant throwing away the very rich life and charm of medievalism which belonged to him.

Mroris was impelled by this intense reverence for the past to challenge the great restoration movement which swept over the land in the « seventies ». This was a movement to « restore » ancient churches, against which Morris protested, on the ground that the « restoration » of ancient churches meant their abolition. Accordingly, he formed a society to prevent this « restoration », except where it signified only the keeping out of wind and rain.

I confess that, personally, I am not a great deal interested in medievalism. I think that the future will be a great deal more inspiring than the past, and that the present is the material out of which to construct that future. But Morris was expressing to the full his own personality. That is the great lesson of his life, and that should be the great aim of every one of us present here to-night. We should be ourselves, and not clothes-props, elegantly or shabbily arrayed, according to circumstances, insuits composed of other men's thoughts and dogmas.

We have to remember that no man can belong, truly, to any party or sect. Each one of us should, and must, belong to ourselves. The individual is greater than the nation. If each individual will insist on belonging to him or herself, and will express truly, their view of things, a true relationship will spring up and unite in bonds of harmony the men and women of all lands.

William Morris was a Socialist after his own kind, and we must be Socialists after our kind. Brought by our similar circumstances to a certain common understanding, we still can find opportunity for ample expression of our own personalities.

We know that Britain is the noblest country the world ever has seen. We all know that there is no king, who has had ancestors who believed so much in liberty, as our present King, George V. Witness George II., George III., George IV. Witness those who placed the stamp-tax on knowledge. Witness the suffering and imprisonment of the workers and the pioneers of political freedom under these sovereigns.

In 1870, Russia was interested in the Bulgarian atrocities. We all know how politicians live on atrocities. Prime Ministers, literally thrive on atrocities. No single government would be able to keep going if it was not for atrocities. The working-men of all countries are so chivalrous. They never think of the slums at home, or of the starving children that inhabit these corners of the homeland ; but any little story about people abroad will make these same workers weep copious tears.

At the particular period in the life of Morris to which I am referring now, Britain was the best friend of the Turks. Russia, in the « seventies », got off on a morality campaign, but Britain backed up Turkey in her atrocities in Bulgaria. William Morris came into the political arena and protested against this. Liberals and Radicals were protesting also. William Morris allied himself to the Liberal Party in consequence, but gave an entirely new interpretation to the Eastern Question.

He began to despise the middle-class. He saw that its Liberalism was but a makeshift, and that he had nothing in common with the Radical Party. He came to see that his own personal class were the worse class in society. He observed the energy that reposed in the working people, energy that must be let loose, energy that must be driven or persuaded in the right direction before we can have a decent society. So he began to examine the Eastern Question in this mood. He viewed it not as a political question but as a question which gave expression to economic tendencies in society, which was part of one great question — the emancipation of the world. From this time forward William Morris became a Socialist.

In 1883, Morris took the great plunge and joined the Social Democratic Federation, whereby he was brought into full contact with the Socialist movement in this country. At the head of the S.D.F. was H. M. Hyndman. Mr. Hyndman was a politician pure and simple. He believed in a certain idea of Political or Parliamentary Socialism — really capitalist state collectivism — which he imagined, or pretended to imagine, represented revolutionary Socialism. Unfortunately, Hyndman was accepted at this own valuation.

Working-class experience lays down certain first principles of Socialism for the workers movement to accept. These principles are expressed in the analysis of capitalism and the exposition of

surplus value. He said to the workers in effect : « You have no rights in society. You do not count. You have no power whereby to give weight to your wishes or thoughts. Consequently you have no influence. You have certain duties to perform in order to live and you are permitted to go about those duties and to live, so long as you can sell your labour-power. The moment you are unable to sell your labour-power, you have no right to existence, and you must die. »

That dictum was true when first propounded. The same dictum is true to-day. In the present war, those in authority do not say to us : « You are citizens ! Consider now, is war right ? Is it right for us to go to war ? » No ! they say : « We are at war and will make you go. Come — or be fetched ! » When they make peace, they won't say : Your valour makes your presence desirable at this discussion and settlement of terms. » They will make peace without our aid, because they own and control us economically and politically and every other way. When, finally, we do become citizens it will not be with the aid of any king's army, but we shall become citizens in opposition and in antagonism to the old influence of those who live on surplus value. Meanwhile, we are « My People » !

Karl Marx gave expression to this class war in society, this fundamental cleavage of aspiration and purpose begotten of economic antagonism, in a watchword which haunted Europe : « Workers of all lands, unite ! You have nothing to lose but your chains ; you have a world to gain ! »

He thus proclaimed a truth. This truth is true still. Marx, in expressing it, explained that his Socialism was something entirely opposed to all existing conditions of society. It was opposed to the family idea ; it involved free-love ; and it was opposed to the state. Marx said, if necessary, Socialism would not hesitate to be conceived in violence. He called its birth the Social Revolution, meaning a complete change of society, not mere parliamentary revolution, but Social Revolution, something more fundamental than a change of masters — an entire alteration of the social system, a radical transformation of its structure.

In 1874 — When Hyndman's Democratic Federation, which afterwards became the Social Democratic Federation, was born — William Liebknecht united the small Marx party with the larger Lassalle party, with the result that a new Social Democratic Party was born, opposed to revolutionary Socialist principles, and uninterested in the watchword of proletarian revolt. This party represented the surrender of the workers' to the small traders' interests. It was essentially middle-class, esentially reformist, essentially comfortable, essentially wanting in all genius of revolution. Its watchword was Lassalle's cry : « Through universal suffrage to victory .»

This watchword then represented, and continued to represent Hyndman's ideal. Hyndman swung in with the Social Democratic movement organised by Liebknecht, and became its pioneer in Britain, because the political revolution it aimed at accomplishing in the different countries was to establish a different governing class, and not to achieve a complete social insurrection.

Morris understood economics but did not have an intellect adaptable to grapple with dialetical economics. He took his own genius, his knowledge of medievalism and the expression of his sense of the joy of labour into the Socialist movement. He gave it his poetic vision and understanding of life, and the joy of being which Marx never brought into it. The consequence was that William Morris made a distinct contribution to Socialist thought, but purely because he was himself and not because he tried to model himself after someone else.

Morris, the poet, a man who saw the real nature of artistic values ; Morris, who saw and said that truth was truth, came into contact with Hyndman and saw that he was a politician straining all his faculties to a certain end, namely, a political success under a system where all success must be shallow and pretentious ; a political success which made John Burns possible ; which allows a politician from the ranks of labour to get on, but leaves the workers at the end of the journey where they were at the beginning. Morris was not a Social Democrat for a year when he broke away and founded the Socialist League. He realised that economic control is behind everything else. He realised that many of his late friends were merely Charlatans playing the game for their own ends; Charlatans like the Professors of Philosophy in our universities, the humbugs we put into power and into intellectual authority over us. If people were true to their art, they would not tolerate these sleek purveyors of unwisdom in the position to which they have elected themselves.

Morris's Socialism, expressed in his poems, his contributions to *The Commonweal*, and in his lectures, was that economic was greater and more important than political control. That is the message which I want to drive home to night. There can be no talk of working-class political power in this, or in any other society. There must be an end of political power in society if the workers are to be free. That end will correspond with the social revolution and a clear understanding of the economic position of the people, that will come when they try to analyse the conditions of society, and ask themselves why man is the slave of the machine.

Morris wanted comradeship : comradeship where no real comradeship could exist ; and for this reason he was not an ideal Socialist.

Later, Morris was torn between the charlatan parliamentary element, which did not want action, and the Anarchist element, which is supposed to be very revolutionary and extreme, but which is lacking in the real genius of revolution as a civil factor. This Anarchist element preached violence and bombs and dynamite. It attracted to its cause police spies. But after all, you do not change imagination and give understanding to people by throwing bombs. We all bring our contribution of guilt and we all bring our contribution of commonsense and our contribution of slavery to this intolerable system of society, which makes slaves of us all.

This Anarchist movement meant really respecting nothing, not even its own principles. After all, man is a social problem and his integrity matters to himself, but there is an integrity which balances society and the real society of the future. Morris would not approach the evil thing. He saw that mere violence would lead nowhere. He knew, if he could get the consciousness of the people directed towards a sense of the poetry and the drama of the revolution ; if he could get them to understand the poetry of every home in Europe ; if he could get their imagination stimulated until they saw all the past destiny of man, and the present sufferings of the slaves in every attic and in every cellar of slumland ; there would arise a people against whose liberties no one would dare conspire, a people who would be no more a mere prostitute civilization. Morris thought that if he could take the people selling their labour-power and show them the light, slowly let drip into their lives the music of the water of understading, that would be the beginning of a new education.

Morris went back to the parliamentary party, much to the delight of politician and war-monger, H. M. Hyndman. Rejoicing at this devolution in his « Further Reminiscences », published in 1913. Hyndman says that, in 1889 there was.

« An active rivalry, not to say antagonism, between the S. D. F. and the Socialist League similar to that which existed in France between the Marxists and the Possiblists. »

Hyndman's suggestion is that the S. D. F. was Marxist and revolutionary, and the Socialist League Possiblist and Reformist. But Hyndman knew, when he penned this suggestion, that the Socialist League was not organised to be less advanced, but to be more advanced than the S. D. F. It was essentially a propagandist organisation. To compare Morris's *Commonveal* with Hyndman's *Justice* would be to clinch this truism.

I do not pretend to draw any great distinction betwen the Marxists and the Possiblists, because the Marxists do not ground themselves on the philosophy of Marx, but on his intrigues and ambitious which finally betrayed Social Revolutionary aspiration to parliamentary compromise.

Morris learned to despise palliators and parliamentarism during his membership of the League. He agreed, in this, with the consistent teaching of Marx from 1848 to 1871 and opposed no less the consistent example of Marx from 1871 to 1883. On his return to the S. D. F., Morris compromised alike in his contempt for palliators and his opposition to parliamentarism. And so proud was *Justice*, the S. D. F. organ, of Morris's revisionism, that, in 1913, it reprinted from its columns of 1894, « Wat Tyler's » interview with him affirming this sorry retrogression. At Morris's blessing of its palliatives and eulogy of the ballot-box *Justice* repoices ! Yet Hyndman would lead his readers to believe that the *Socialist League* was an Anti-Marxist organisation because it stood for Possiblism. It may have been anti-Marxist in some senses but it was certainly also an Anti-Possiblist, that is, a *true* revolutionary Socialist organisation. Hyndman's placing shows how history is written. Well ! Well ! !

Morris went back to the parliamentary party, a broken propagandist. But he does not live as a parliamentarian. Ramsay Macdonald cannot quote him as a parliamentarism. Morris lives for his revolutionary outlook. He survives for his belief in the social révolution, for his caustic censures of parliamentarism. Remove Morris's opposition to parliamentarism and you kill his work, you stifle his genius, you trample down his vision and his every achievevement as a pioneer. Morris lives in Socialist history as an Anti-Parliamentarian.

To-day, when certain « Socialist » adventurers are telling us that Socialism is a purely secondary matter ; if one can master the message of Morris, it is to realise that Socialism not only does matter, but that it is *the reality ;* that our lives are the *reality* ; and that Socialism against the war, Socialism against mere pacifism even, Socialism against capitalism, is the message.

What we need to-day is to be a little more exact, a little more determined. We can be true to Socialism of William Morris only by taking a grand conception of the reality and necessity of the Social Revolution.

Morris died in 1896. A few years have elapsed since that time. But we do not seem to be making much progress. What we want now is *not* the idealist but the MAN. Morris is dead. Though he does not live, his expression of the tendencies of a certain period of British history, and his bringing together of ideas from different epochs in society, will inspire others to live.

There are those who worship the man, who rave about his poetry. I have spoken of them

already. To others I would say : if we must respect the man and mention his name, let us do so truly. Don't let us mention the man and go on serving a prostitute philosophy of murder, which the present is. If we must worship the man, don't let us mention his name in the same breath or in the same article which asks a man to slay his fellow. Morris has a message for Socialists. It is to believe in Socialism. Any man who can reconcile his (Morris's) Socialism with the present day Society, does not understand Morris, and does not recognise what Socialism is.

Socialism is here to become practical. That sort of « Socialist army » which falls down before kings ; which « believes » in William Morris ; which « believes » in Socialism and the call of art ; which *believes* in military discipline ; which *believes* in no man's conscience and has *faith* in no man's conscience, is impossible.

William Morris's call is a serious thing. If we accept the call of Socialism ; if we feel its imperative necessity, then we must take and wear our armour. Socialism is something serious. When Socialism awakens in us a real love it must come to life and prove irresistible. Then we shall stand, Truth against Falsehood, Harmony against Discord. The battle will prove the consummation of all the preceding struggles, the end of the militarism of all the countries of the world, of the accursed capitalist system which is behind militarism, and political imbecility.

The ideal of realising oneself entirely in harmony with one's fellows, that is the ideal of the message I want to deliver to-night.

The Idle Singer.

Oh Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But, rather when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die —
Remember me a little then I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread
These idle verses have no power to bear ;
So let me sing of names remembered,
Because they living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time.
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight ?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate.
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

Folk say, a wisard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,
That through one window men beheld the spring,
And through another saw the summer glow,
And through a third, the fruited vines arow,
While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,
Piped the drear wind of that December day.

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright, and pardon me,
Who strive to build a shadowry isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where, tossed about, all hearts of men must be ;
Who, ravening monsters, mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

From « The Earthly Paradise ».

The Wars of Capitalism.

The word Revolution, which we Socialists are so often forced to use, has a terrible sound in most people's ears, even when we have explained to them that it does not necessarily mean a change accompanied by riot and all kinds of violence, and cannot mean a change made mechanically and in the teeth of opinion by a group of men who have somehow managed to seize on the executive power for the moment. Even when we explain that we use the word revolution in its etymological sense, and mean by it a change in the basis of society, people are scared at the idea of such a vast change, and beg that you will speak of reform and not revolution. As, however, we Socialists do not at all mean by our word revolution what these worthy people mean by their word reform, I can't help thinking that it would be a mistake to use it, whatever projects we might conceal beneath its harmless envelope. So we will stick to our word, which means a change of the basis of society ; it may frighten people, but it will at least warn them that there is something to be frightened about, which will be no less dangerous for being ignored ; and also it may encourage some people, and will mean to them at least not a fear, but a hope.

How do we live, then, under our present system ? Let us look at it a little.

And first, please to understand that our present system of Society is based on a state of perpetual

war. Do any of you think that this is as it should be ? I know that you have often been told that competition which is at present the rule of all production, is a good thing and stimulates the progress of the race ; but the people who tell you this should call competition by its shorter name of *war* if they wish to be honest, and you would then be free to consider whether or no war stimulates progress, otherwise than as a mad bull chasing you over you own garden may do. War, or competition, whichever you please to call it, means at the best pursuing your own advantage at the cost of some one else's loss, and in the process of it you must not be sparing of destruction even of your own possessions, or you will certainly come by the worse in the struggle. You understand that perfectly as to the kind of war in which people go out to kill and be killed ; that sort of war in which ships are commissioned, for instance, « to sink, burn, and destroy » ; but it appears that you are not so conscious of this waste of goods when you are only carrying on that other war called *commerce ;* observe, however, that the waste is there all the same.

Now let us look at this kind of war a little closer, run through some of the forms of it, that we may see how the « burn, sink, and destroy » is carried on in it.

First, you have that form of it called national rivalry, which, in good truth, is nowadays the cause of all gunpowder and bayonet wars which civilized nations wage. For years past we English have been rather shy of them, except on those happy occasions when we could carry them on at no sort of risk to ourselves, when the killing was all on one side, or, at all events, when we hoped it would be. We have been shy of gunpowder war with a respectacle enemy for a long while, and I will tell you why : It is because we have had the lion's share of the world-market ; we didn't want to fight for it as a nation, for we had got it ; but now it is changing in a most significant way ; we are losing or have lost that lion's share ; it is now a desperate « competition » beetween the great nations of civilization for the world-markets, and to-morrow it may be a desperate war for that end. As a result, the furthering of war is no longer confined to the honour-and-glory kind of the old Tories, who, if they meant anything at all by it, meant that a Tory war would be a good occasion for damping down democracy ; we have changed all that, and now it is quite another kind of politician that is wont to urge us on to « patriotism » as 'tis called. The leaders of the Progressive Liberals, as they would call themselves, long-headed persons who know well enough that social movements are going on, who are not blind to the fact that the world will move with their help or without it these have been the jingoes of these later days. I don't mean to say they know what they are doing : politicians, as you well know, take good care to shut their eyes to everything that may happen six months ahead ; but what is being done is this : that the present system, which always must include national rivalry, is pushing us into a desperate scramble for the markets on more or less equal terms with other nations, because, once more, we have lost that command of them which we once had. We shall let this impulse to snatch markets carry us whither it will, wither it must. To-day it is successful burglary and disgrace, to-morrow it may be mere defeat and disgrace.

I only want to show you what commercial war comes to when it has to do with foreign nations, and that even the dullest can see how mere waste must go with it. That is how we live now with foreign nations, prepared to ruin them without war if possible, with it if necessary, let alone meantime the disgraceful exploiting of savage tribes and barbarous peoples on whom we force our shoddy wares and our hypocrisy at the cannon's mouth.

Well, surely, Socialism can offer you something in the place of all that. It can ; it can offer you peace and friendship instead of war. We might live utterly without national rivalries, acknowledging that while it is best for those who feel that they naturally form a community under one name to govern themselves, yet that no community in civilization should feel that it had interests opposed to any other, their economical condition being at any rate similar ; so that no citizen of one community could fail to live and work without disturbance of his life when he was in a foreign country, and would fit into his place quite naturally ; so that all civilized nations would form one great community, agreeing together as to the kind and amount of production and distribution needed ; working at such and such production where it could be best produced ; avoiding waste by all means. Please to think of the amount of waste which they would avoid, how much such a revolution would add to the wealth of the world ! What creature on earth would be harmed by such a revolution ? Nay, would not everybody be the better for it ? And what hinders it ? I will tell you presently.

Meantime, let us pass from this « competition » between nations to that between « the organizers of labour », great firms, joint-stock companies ; capitalists in short, and see how competition « stimulates production » among them ; indeed it does do that ; but what kind of production ? Well, production of something to sell at a profit, or say production of profits ; and note how war commercially stimulates that : a certain market is

demanding goods ; there are say a hundred manufacturers who make that kind of goods, and everyone of them would, if he could, keep that market to himself, and struggles desperately to get as much of it as he can, with the obvious result that, presently, the thing is overdone, and the market is glutted, and all that fury of manufactur has to sink into cold ashes. Doesn't that seem something like war to you ? Can't you see the waste of it — waste of labour, skill, cunning, waste of life in short ? Well, you say, but it cheapens the goods. In a sense it does ; and yet only apparently, as wages have a tendency to sink for the ordinary worker in proportion as prices sink ; and at what a cost do we gain this appearance of cheapness ! Plainly speaking,at the cost of cheating the consumer and starving the real producer for the benefit of the gambler, who uses both consumer and producer as his milch cows.

I needn't go at length into the subject of adulteration, for everyone knows what kind of a part it plays in this sort of commerce ; but remember, that it is an absolutely necessary incident to the production of profit out of wars, which is the business of the so-called manufacture ; and this you must understand, that, 'aking him in the lump, the consumer is perfectly helpless against the gambler ; the goods are forced on him by their cheapness ; and, with them, a certain kind of life which that energetic, that aggressive cheapness determines for him . for so far reaching is this curse of commercial war that no country is safe from its ravages : the traditions of a thousand years fall before it in a month ; it overruns a weak or semi-barbarous country, and whatever romance or pleasure or art existed there, is trodden down into a mire of sordidness and ugliness ; the Indian or Japanese craftsman may no longer ply his craft leisurely, working a few hours a day, in producing a maze of strange beauty on a piece of cloth ; a steam-engine is set agoing at Manchester, and that victory over nature and a thousand stubborn difficulties is used for the base work of producing a sort of plaster of china clay and shoddy ; and the Asiatic worker, if he is not starved to death outright, as plentifully happens, is driven himself into a factory to lower the wages of his Manchester brother worker, and nothing of character is left him except, most likely, an accumulation of fear and hatred of that, to him most unaccountable evil, his English master. The South Sea Islander must leave his canoe-carving, his sweet rest, and his graceful dances, and become the slave of a slave : trousers, shoddy, rum, missionaries, and fatal disease — he must swallow all this civilization in a lump , and neither himself nor we can help him now till social order displaces the hideous tyranny of gambling that has ruined him.

Let those be types of the consumer : but now for the producer ; I mean the real producer, the worker ; how does this scramble for the plunder of the market affect him ? The manufacturer, in the eagerness of his war, has had to collect into one neighbourhood a vast army of workers ; he has drilled them till they are as fit as may be for his special branch of production, that is for making a profit out of it ; and with the result of their being fit for nothing else ; well, when the glut comes in that market he is supplying, what happens to this army, every private in which has been depending on the steady demand in that market and acting, as he could not choose but act, as if it were to go on for ever ? You know well what happens to these men : the factory door is shut on them ; on a very large part of them often, and at the best on the reserve army of labour, so busily employed in the time of inflation. What becomes of them ? Nay, we know that well enough just now. But what we don't know, or don't choose to know, is, that this reserve army of labour is an absolute necessary for commercial war ; if *our* manufacturers had not got these poor devils whom they could draft on to their machines when the demand swelled, other manufacturers in France, or Germany, or America, would step in and take the market from them.

Just let your minds run for a moment on the kind of waste which this means, this opening up of new markets among savage and barbarous countries which is the extreme type of the force of the profit-market on the word, and you will surely see what a hideous nightmare that profit-market is : it keeps us sweating and terrified for our livelihood, unable to read a book, or look at a picture, or have pleasant fields to walk in, or to share in the knowledge of our time, to have, in short, neither animal or intellectual peasure ; and for what ? that we may go on living the same slavish life till we die, in order to provide for a rich man what is called a life of ease and luxury ; that is to say, a life so empty, unwholesome, and degraded, that perhaps on the whole he is worse off than we the workers are ; and as to the result of all this suffering, it is luckiest when it is nothing at all ; when you can say that the wars have done nobody any good ; for, oftenest, they have done many people harm, and we have toiled and groaned and died in making poison and destruction for our fellow-men.

Well, I say, all this is war, and the results of war, the war this time, not of competing nations, but of competing firms or capitalist units : and it is this war of the firms which hinders the peace between nations which you surely have agreed

with me in thinking is so necessary ; for you must knows that war is the very breath of the nostrils of these fighting firms, and they have now, in our times, got into their hands nearly all the political power, and they band together in each country in order to make their respective governments fulfil just two functions : the first is at home to act as a strong police force, to keep the ring in which the strong are beating down the weak ; the second, is to act as a piratical body-guard abroad, a petard to explode the doors which lead to the markets of the world : markets at any price abroad, uninterfered privilege, falsely called *laissez-faire*, at any price at home ; to provide these is the sole business of a government such as our captains of industry have been able to conceive of. I must now try to show you the reason of all this, and what it rests on, by trying to answer the question. Why have the profit-makers got all this power, or at least why are they able to keep it ?

That takes us to the third form of war commercial : the last, and the one which all the rest is founded on. We have spoken first of the war of rival nations ; next of that of rival firms : we have now to speak of rival men. As nations, under the present system are driven to compete with one another for the markets of the world ; and as firms, or captains of industry, have to scramble for their share of the profits of the markets ; so also have the workers to compete with each other — for livelihood and it is this constant competition of war amongst them, which enables the profit-grinders to make their profits, and, by means of the wealth so acquired, to take all the execuive power of the country in their hands. But here is the difference between the position of the workers and the profit-makers : to the latter, the profit-grinders, war is necessary ; you cannot have profit-making without competition individual, corporate and national ; but you may work for a livelihood without competing ; you may combine instead of competing.

I have said war was the life-breath of the profit-makers ; in like manner, combination is the life of the workers. The working-class, or proletariat, cannot even exist as a class without combination of some sort. The necessity which forced the profit-grinders to collect their men first into workshops, working by the division of labour ; and next into great factories worked by machinery ; and so, gradually, to draw them into the great towns and centres of civilization, gave birth to a distinct working-class or proletariat : and this it was which gave them their *mechanical* existence, so to say. But note, that, they are combined into social groups for the production of wares, but only as yet mechanically ; they do not know yet what they are working at, nor whom they are working for, because they are combining to produce wares of which the profit of a master forms an essential part, instead of goods for their own use. As long as they do this, and compete with each other for leave to do it, they will be, and will feel themselves to be, simply a part of those competing firms I have been speaking of ; they will be, in fact, just a part of the machinery for the production of profit ; and, so long as this lasts, it will be the aim of the masters to decrease the market value of this human part of the machinery ; that is to say, since they already hold in their hands the labour of dead men in the form of capital and machinery, it is their interest, or we will say their necessity, to pay as little as they can help for the labour of living men which they have to buy from day to day : and, since the workmen they employ have nothing but their labour-power, they are compelled to underbid one another for employment and wages ; and so enable the capitalist to play is game.

I have said that as things go, the workers are part of the competing firms, an adjunct of capital. Nevertheless, they are only so by compulsion , and, even without their being conscious of it, they struggle against that compulsion and its immediate results, the lowering of their wages, of their standard of life : and this they do, and must do, both as a class and individually : just as the slave of the great Roman lord, though he distinctly felt himself to be a part of the household, yet collectively was a force in reserve for its destruction, and individually stole from his lord whenever he could safely do so. So here, you see, is another form of war necessary to the way we live now, the war of class against class, which, when it rises to its height — and it seems to be rising at present — will destroy those other forms of war we have been speaking of ; will make the position of the profit-makers, of perpetual commercial war, untenable ; will destroy the present system of competitive privilege, or commercial war.

Now observe, I have said that, to the existence of the workers, it was combination, not competition, that was necessary ; while, to that of the profit-makers, combination was impossible, and war necessary. The present position of the workers is that of the machinery of commerce, or, in plainer words, its slaves ; when they change that position and become free, the class of profit-makers must cease to exist ; and what will then be the position of the workers ? Even as it is, they are the one necessary part of society, the life-giving part ; the other classes are but hangers-on who live on them. But what should they be, what will they be, when they, once for all, come to know their real power, and cease

competing with one another for livelihood ? I will tell you they will be society, they will be the community. And being society — that is, there being no class outside them to contend with — they can then regulate their labour in accordance with their own real needs. — *Commonweal*, 1887.

Socialism, v. Philanthropy.

To those who wish to retain any respect for human nature, the stupidity exhibited by the speakers at meetings like Poor-law Conferences is somewhat of a blow. Meantime, it is not worth while to hunt these people through the labyrinth of lies which they construct so elaborately. Yet, fools as they are, it is strange that even they cannot see that their arguments against the exceptional nature of the distress, which no one denies, form the heaviest indictment possible against the cruel fraud which they call Society, and which they sustain so persistently. If this is to be our ordinary condition in the future, and if you have no plan for getting rid of this « chronic » and necessary misery and degradation what scheme of revolution can be too wild for us to try ? In sober truth it seems to most thinkers that we are being pushed down a long incline, and that before long we shall look back to this year as one of comparative prosperity. What is the remedy for the present condition of the poor ? To get rid of the condition of the poor ; and we know how to do it if we will, by getting rid of the condition of the rich, to whose existence as a rich class the poor are necessary.

When the working classes become conscious of the struggle which is always going on between them and the classes which live upon their labour, then they will be able and ready to face the dangers of the action which must come before the realisation of the new order of things ; the dangers, the added miseries, the load of responsibility which must attend such action ; then, and not till then. And necessity only can make them conscious of this struggle. The classes that live on the labour of the workers, if they are not conscious of this, yet act instinctively as if they were. They act as if they knew that the consciousness of the class-struggle were being forced upon the workers.

All kinds of philanthropical schemes are set on foot for their supposed benefit by the richer classes, from the building of goody-goody people's palaces up to schemes which are a kind of demi-semi-Socialistic. The aim of all this philanthropy is undoubtedly to make is somewhat easier for the workers to live — as wage slaves ; and possibly many of the philanthropists believe that they are acting thus on their own freewill ; but as a class they are not so doing, necessity is compelling them on the one hand to keep the poorest slaves quiet by hope of charity in some form or another ; and on the other to give all opportunity possible for the better paid workers to rise into the capitalist class. To make the basis of exploitation as wide as possible, to interest as many as possible in the plunder of labour, is the aim of all middle-class dealings with the workers which are not mere demented folly.

It is clear that this attempt at diverting the aspirations of the workers into the channel of mere individual self-interest has not the same chance of success when times are bad and trade slack, as in periods of commercial prosperity , and if that prosperity should, when it came, turn out to be steady and continuous, Socialism would become a mere « pious opinion » ; because the pleasure and excitement of the gambling for livelihood which would be open to all the better-off workmen, would blind them to the degradation of their condition and the sordidness of the desperate struggle. In short, the class-struggle would tend toward the creation of a new class formed out of the superior workmen, just as our present middle-class has been formed out of the guild-crafstmen and freedmen of the Middle Ages.

To counteract this tendency is the main business of Socialists at present. To assert the necessity of the wage-workers, not only of all countries but also of all conditions, to unite ; to refuse to admit any distinction between skilled and unskilled, employed or unemployed, must be our answer to the bourgeois attempt at building up a new midle-class. And Socialists must consider that, if that tendency becomes a fact, and the new class does grow up, it will show that we have been mistaken in supposing that the present system was rotting to its end. It would mean that Socialism was put off not for fifty years but for centuries.

Therefore, at the risk of being accused of want of sympathy with suffering, and inhuman party spirit, we are bound to hail the signs of the rotting away of commercialism the depressions of trade and confusion of politics, just as an oppressed people hails the war which is to set them free. It is unheard of and impossible that birth should take place without struggle and suffering ; but in spite of that we long for the day. — « *Commonweal* », 1886.

Empire Farce and Tragedy.

Grand Court ceremonies have varied the budget of terrible and doubtful news to hand during the last few days ; the same morning which gave the papers the happy chance of describing the hard-won police victory at Chicago, gave them the opportunity of a long account of the glories of the costumes of the Drawing Room. In other words, the loads of idiotcy with which the court ladies try to set off their somethat doubtful charms. One almost wonders that even such empty fools as these are, are not ashamed to play such a farce in the midst of all these tragedies.

Or that farce of all farces, the Queen opening the Colonial Exhibition with a Court ceremonial, crowned by the degradation of a man of genius ! It fairly sickens one to think that the man who wrote « Rispah », with all its passion and deep sympathy for the wrongs of the poor ,should have been driven, by mere yielding to convention, to allow such flunkey doggerel as this Jingo « Ode » to appear with his name tacked on to it. That the press, including the *Pall Mall*, should puff it is proper and natural of course ; they know that this Exhibition is just a piece of commercial advertisement (who gets the money realised by it, by the way ?) and with their tongues in their cheeks proceed to praise the exemplification it offers of the hopes of the perpetual unity of the empire ; and even poor Home Rule must be lugged in to point the moral.

Examples of the last remains of the Art of India which our commercialism has destroyed, have been made to do duty as a kind of gilding for the sordidness of the rest of the show, and are a sorry sight indeed to one who knows anything of what the art of the East has been. But let that pass. There are, perhaps, certain exhibits of examples of the glory of the Empire which have been, I think, forgotten. We might begin at the entrance with two pyramids, à la *Timour*, of the skulls of Zulus, Arabs, Burmese, New Zealanders, etc., etc., slain in wicked resistence to the benevolence of British commerce. A specimen of the wire whips used for softening the minds of rebellious Jamacia negroes under the paternal sway of Governor Eyre might be shown, together with a selection of other such historical mementoes, from the blankets infected with small-pox sent to unfriendly tribes of Red-Skins in the latter eighteenth century down to the rope with which Louis Riel was hanged last year, for resisting a particularly gross form of land-stealing. The daily rations of a Indigo ryot and of his master under one glass case, with a certificate of the amount of nourishment in each, furnished by Professor Huxley. The glory of battles against barbarians and savages, same enclosed in the right eye of a louse. mercy of Colonists towards native populatio a strong magnifying-glass to see the same by allegorical picture of the emigrant's hope (a leaving England ; (b), after six months in Colonies. A pair of crimson plush breeches my Lord Tennyson's « Ode » on the openin the Exhibition, embroidered in gold, on the thereof. A great many other exhibits of a sin nature could be found suitable to the expos of the Honour, Glory and Usefulness of British Empire. — « *Commonweal* », 1886.

To the Reader.

In January 1916, in accordance with our pro of the previous month, we issued a splendid liam Morris number of the *Spur*. Ten years eclipse that effort. There cannot be two opi as to the propagandist value of this venture. may be questioned, however, is the wisdo adding a further burden of debt to already burdened shoulders. Though always glad and to increase the size of the paper, I, myself, compelled to question the financial expedienc this effort, for, unless the readers and sympath send some *very immediate and very substa* support, *this issue of the « Commune » may to be the last.* I appeal, therefore, to all com in the cause—with optimistic faith in their so rity, which I hope will prove to be justifie supply the necessary SINEWS OF WAR. Those wish to help must respond to this appeal wi recklessness similar to that exhibited in publis the present paper. Think of the Minister for M tions—and don't be « Too Late » !

G. A.

The Reward of "Genius."

It is a very common incident at a debat Socialism, for an opponent or doubter to tak the cudgels on behalf of « brainwork » opposed to hand-work. Even before you a yourself a Communist, as I have to do, su questioner is anxious about the future of br work in the transitional stages of Social Though this subject has been ably treated be I will venture, nevertheless, on a few p words in addition to what has been said ; w I hesitate to do the less because I have had s small experience of hand-work, though not of most laborious kind, and abundance of e rience of « brain-work », so-called.

Our objectors dwell upon diverse aspects their anxiety for the future of the brain-work

Some, for instance, seem most exercised on the question of what is to become of the men of genius when Socialism is realised ; but I must beg of them not to let this anxiety destroy their appetites, or keep them awake at night, for it is founded on a perhaps popular, but certainly erroneous, conception of that queer animal, the man of genius, who is generally endowed with the full share of the predatory instincts of the human being, and can take remarkably good care of himself. Indeed, I can't help thinking, that, even under a Socialistic condition of things, he will pull such long faces if he doesn't get everything that he wants, and will make matters so uncomfortable for those that he lives amongst if he falls short of his ideal of existence, that good-natured and quiet people will be weak enough to make up a purse (or its equivalent) for him, from time to time, to keep him in a good temper and shut his mouth a little. I must further say, though, that they *will* be exceedingly weak if they do so, because they will be able to get out of him all the special work he can do, without these extra treats. For the only claim he has to the title of a « man of genius » is that his capacities are irrepressible ; he finds the exercice of them so exceedingly pleasant to him, that it will only be by main force that you will prevent him from exercising them.

Of course, under the present competitive system, having been paid once for his work, by getting his livelihood by it, and again by the pleasure of doing it, he wants to be further paid in various ways, a great many times more. Neither, under the circumstances, can I blame him much for this, since he sees so many people for doing nothing paid so much more than he is ; except in the matter of pleasure in their work. But also, of course, he won't venture to claim all that in a Socialist society, but will have, at the worst, to nibble at the shares of those who are weak enough to stand it. So I will, in turn, dismiss my anxiety, with the hope that they will not be so weak as to coddle him up at their own expense, since they will have learned that so-called self-sacrifice to the exactions of those who are strong in their inordinate craving and unmanliness does but breed tyrants and pretenders.

But, furthermore, I do not see, and never could see, why a man of genius must needs be a man of genius every minute of his life. Cannot he work as well as ordinary folk in some directions besides working better than they in others ? Speaking broadly, all men can learn some useful craft, and learn to practice it with ease. I know there are exceptions ; just as there are cultivated persons who cannot be taught to write (the late Dean Stanley was one, for instance) ; but they must be considered as diseased persons, and the disease would die out in a generation or two under reasonable conditions of life. In short, the « man of genius » ought to be able to earn his livelihood in an ordinary way, independently of his speciality ; and he will, in that case, be much happier himself and much less of a bore to his friends, let alone his extra-usefulness to the community.

As to the comparative wear and tear of « brain-work » — the work of the man, for instance, who is occupied in literary matters — the theory of our objectors, apart from their strange ideas of the usefulness of this, is that he works hard — harder, they will often say, than the hand-worker. Well, if he works under bad sanitary conditions, doesn't get fresh air or exercise enough, no doubt that does exhaust him, as also if he works too long or is harassed in his Work by hurry or anxiety. But all these drawbacks are not special to his craft ; all who are working otherwise than in the open-air work under the first of these disadvantages, and all wage-earners works under the last of them.

There is any amount of humbug talked about the hard work of the intellectual workers, which, I think, is mostly based on the fact, that they are in the habit of taking regular, and, so to say, socially-legalised holidays, which are supposed to be necessary to their health, and we may admit are so, but which the « non intellectual » workers have to forego, whether they are necessary to them or not.

Let us test the wear-and-tear of this intellectual work very simply. If I have been working at literary work for, say eight hours at a stretch, I may feel weary of it, although I have not felt it a mere burden all along, as probably I should have done if I had been carrying a hod of bricks up and down a ladder ; but when I have knocked off, I can find relaxation in strong physical exercise — can, for example, take a boat and row for a couple of hours or more. Now, let me ask, is the hodman after *his* eight hours' work fit for a couple of hours of mental work as a relaxation ? We know very well he is not so fitted, but rather for beer and sleep. He is exhausted, and I am on the look out for amusement. To speak plainly,I am only changing my amusement, for I have been amusing myself all along, unless I have added disadvantages to my work which are not esential to it.

And again, has not the hodman's work dealt in some way with his brain? Indeed it has. I have been using my brain, but not exhausting it ; but though he has not been using his, he has been exhausting it by his hand work done at a strain, or else he ought to be able to take the mental relaxation corresponding to my bodily relaxation. In truth, whereas the hours of the intellectual worker are really always shorter than

those of the hand-worker, the very reverse ought to be the case, or in other words the wear-and-tear of the hand-labour is far greater.

But our objectors have not as a rule got so far as to consider this matter from the wear-and-tear side of it. They think that the superior workman should have extra reward because he is superior, and that the inferior must put up with being worn and torn in the service of this divine right. That is their superstition of divine right in this business ; but, also, from the economical point of view, they consider that it is necessary to bribe the superior man, for fear you should lose his talent. What I have said of the man of genius applies to all superior workmen in greater or less degree, and disposes of the need of a bribe. You need not bribe the superior workman to be superior, for he has to work in any case (we must take that for granted), and his superior is pleasanter, and indeed easier, to him than the inferior work would be : he will do it if you allow him to. But also if you had the need you would not have the power to bribe, except under a system which admitted of slavery, *i.e.*, tormenting some people for the pleasure of others.

Can you bribe him to work by giving him immunity from work ? or by giving him goods he cannot use ? But in what other way, can you bribe him when labour is free and ordinary people will not stand being compelled to accept degradation for his benefit ? No, you will have to depend on his aptitude for his special work forcing him into doing it ; nor will you be disappointed in this. Whatever difficulties you may have in organising work in the earlier days of Socialism, will not be with the specialists, but with those who do the more ordinary work ; though as regards these, setting aside the common machine-work, the truth of the matter is that you can draw no hard and fast line between the special workman and the ordinary one. Every workman who is in his right place — that is doing his work because he is fit for it — has some share in that « genius » so absurdly worshipped in these latter days. The « genius » is simply the man who has a stronger speciality and is allowed to develop it ; or, if you please, has it so strongly that it is able to break through the repressing circumstances of his life, which crush out those who are less abundantly gifted into « dull level of mediocrity ». It is a matter of degree chiefly.

I am afraid therefore, that our Anti-Socialist objectors will have in the future — I mean under a social arrangement — to put up with the misery of not having more than they need forced on them in return for their occupying themselves in a way which pleases them most, and with the further misery of seeing those who are not so intellectual as themselves doing their work happily and contentedly, and not being deprived of their due food and comforts because their work is less pleasing and exciting than that of their luckier fellows. No doubt this will be hard for the « geniuses » to bear (though harder still, I suspect, for the prigs or sham geniuses) ; but if there is any truth in the old proverb that « other people's troubles hang by a hair », the rest of the world — *i.e.*, all except a very few — will bear it with equanimity. Indeed they well might, if they consider in those happier days what enormous loss the world has suffered through the crushing out of so much original talent under the present system ; for who can doubt that it is only the toughest and strongest (perhaps the highest, perhaps not) of the geniuses that have not been crushed out. The greater part of genius, shared in various proportions by so many millions of men, has been just wasted through greed and folly. — « *Commonweal* », *Sept. 25th*, 1886.

All for the Cause.

Hear a word, a word in season,
For the day is drawing nigh
When the Cause shall call upon us,
Some to live and some to die !

He that dies shall not die lonely,
Many an one hath gone before ;
He that lives shall bear no burden
Heavier than the life they bore.

Nothing ancient is their story,
E'en but yesterday they bled,
Youngest they of earth's beloved,
Last of all the valiant dead.

E'en the tiding we are telling,
Was the tale they had to tell,
E'en the hope that our hearts cherish,
Was the hope for which they fell.

In the grave where tyrants thrust them
Lies their labour and their pain ;
But undying from their sorrow
Springeth up the hope again.

Mourn not, therefore, nor lament it,
That the world outlives their life ;
Voice and vision yet they give us,
Making strong our hands for strife.

Some had name and fame and honour,
Learn'd they were, and wise and strong ;
Some were nameless, poor, unlettered,
Weak in all but grief and wrong.

Named and nameless all live in us ;
One and all they lead us yet,
Every pain to count for nothing,
Every sorrow to forget !

Hearken how they cry, « O happy,
  Happy ye that ye were born
In the sad slow night's departing,
  In the rising of the morn.

Fair the crown the cause hath for you,
  Well to die or well to live
Through the battle, through the tangle,
  Peace to gain or peace to give. »

Ah, it may be ! oft meseemeth,
  In the days that yet shall be,
When no slave of gold abideth
  'Twixt the breadth of sea to sea,

Oft, when men and maids, are many ,
  Ere the sunlight leaves the earth,
And they bless the day beloved,
  All too short for all their mirth.

Some shall pause awhile and ponder
  On the bitter days of old,
Ere the toil of strife and battle.
  Overthrow the curse of gold ;

Then 'twixt lips of loved and lover
  Solemn thoughts of us shall rise ;
We who once were fools defeated,
  Then shall be the brave and wise.

There amidst the world new-builded
  Shall our earthly deeds abide,
Though our names be all forgotten,
  And the tale of how we died.

Life or death then, who shall heed it,
  What we gain or what we lose ?
Fair flies life amid the struggle,
  And the Cause for each shall choose.

Hear a word, a word in season,
  For the day is drawing nigh,
When the Cause shall call upon us
  Some to live, and some to die !

The Chartist Movement.

As to the Chartist agitation, there is this to be said of it, that it was thoroughly a working-class movement, and it was caused by the simplest and most powerful of all causes — hunger. It is noteworthy that it was stongest especially in its earlier days, in the Northern and Midland manufacturing districts — that is, in the places which felt the distress caused by the industrial revolution most sorely and directly ; it sprang up with particular vigour in the years immediately following the great Reform Bill ; and it has been remarked, that disappointment of the hopes which that measure had cherished had something do to with its bitterness. As it went on, obvious causes for failure were developed in it ; self-seeking leadership ; futile discussion of the means of making the change, before the time was ripe ; blind fear of ultimate consequences on the part of some, blind disregard to immediate consequences on the part of others ; these were the surface reasons for its failure . but it would have triumphed over all these and accomplished revolution in England, if it had not been for causes deeper and more vital than these.

Chartism differed from mere Radicalism in being a class movement ; but its aim was after all political rather than social. The Socialism of Robert Owen fell short of its object because it did not understand that as long as there is a privilege class in possession of the executive power, they will take good care that their economical position, which enables them to live on the unpaid labour of the people, is not tampered with : the hopes of the Chartists were disappointed because they did not understand that true political freedom is impossible to people who are economically enslaved : there is no first and second in these matters, the two must go hand in hand together : we cannot live as we will, and as we should, as long as we allow people to *govern* us whose interest it is that we should live as *they* will, and by no means as we should : neither is it any use claiming the right to manage our own business unless we are prepared to have some business of our own : these two aims united mean the furthering of the class struggle till all classes are abolished — the divorce of one from the other is fatal to any hope of social advancement.

Chartism, therefore, though a genuine popular movement, was incomplete in its aims and knowledge ; the time was not yet come and it could not triumph openly ; but it would be a mistake to say that it failed utterly : at least it kept alive the holy flame of discontent ; it made it possible for us to attain to the political goal of democracy, and thereby to advance the cause of the people by the gain of a stage from whence could be seen the fresh gain to be aimed at.

I have said that the time for revolution had not then come : the great wave of commercial success went on swelling ; and though the capitalists would — if they had dared — have engrossed the whole of the advantages thereby gained at the expense of their wage slaves, the Chartist revolt warned them that it was not safe to attempt it. They were *forced* to try to allay discontent by palliative measures. They had to allow Factory Acts to be passed, regulating the hours and conditions of labour of women and children, and, consequently, of men also in some of the more important and consolidated industries ; they were *forced* to repeal the ferocious laws against combination among the workmen ; so

that the Trades Unions won for themselves a legal position and became a power in the labour question ; and were able, by means of strikes and threats of strikes, to regulate the wages granted to the workers, and to raise the standard of livelihood for a certain part of the skilled workmen : though the main part of the unskilled were no better off than before.

Thus was damped down the flame of a discontent vague in its aims, and passionately crying out for what, if granted, it could not have used : twenty years ago any one hinting at the possibility of serious class discontent in this country would have been looked upon as a madman ; in fact, the well-to-do and cultivated were quite unconscious that there was any class distinction in this country other than what was made by the rags and cast clothes of feudalism, which in a perfunctory manner they still attacked. — *From « The Hopes of Civilization. »*

A Death Song.

(Written to be sung at the funeral of Com. Linnell, first victim of Bloody Sunday, Trafalgar Square 13th November, 1887).

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What cometh here from west to east awending ?
And who are these, the marchers stern and slow ?
We bear the message that the rich are sending
Aback to those who bade them wake and know.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

We asked them for a life of toilsome earning.
They bade us bide their leisure for our bread ;
We craved to speak to tell our woeful learning :
We come back speechless, bearing back our dead.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

They will not learn ; they have no ears to hearken
They turn their faces from the eyes of fate ;
Their gay-lit halls shut out the skies that darken.
But, lo ! this dead man knocking at the gate.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

Here lies the sign that we shall break our prison ;
Amidst the storm he won a prisoner's rest ;
But in the cloudy dawn the sun arisen
Brings us our day of work to win the best.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

Art, Labour and Socialism.

I am « one of the pepole called Socialists », therefore I am certain that evolution in the economical conditions of life will go on, whatever shadowry barriers may be drawn, across its path by men whose apparent self interest binds them, consciously or unconsciously, to the present, and who are therefore hopeless for the future.

I hold that the condition of competition between man and man is bestial only, and that of association human : I think that the change from the undeveloped competition of the Middle Ages, trammelled as it was by the personal relations of feudality, and the attempts at association of the gild craftsmen into the full-blown laissez-faire competition of the 19th century is bringing to birth out of its own anarchy, and by the very means by which it seeks to perpetuate that anarchy, a spirit of association founded on that antagonism which has produced all former changes in the condition of men, and which will one day abolish all classes and take definite and practical form, and substitute Socialism for competition in all that relates to the production and distribution of the means of life. I further believe that as that change will be beneficient in many ways, so especially will it give an opportunity for the new birth of art, which is now being crushed to death by the money-bags of competitive commerce.

My reason for this hope for art is founded on what I feel quite sure is a truth, and an important one, namely, that all art, even the highest, is influenced by the conditions of labour of the mass of mankind, and that any pretensions which may be made for even the highest intellectual art to be independent of these general conditions are futile and vain ; that is to say, that any art which professes to be founded on the special education or refinement of a limited body or class, must of necessity be unreal and short-lived.

« Art is man's expression of his joy in labour. » If those are not Professor Ruskin's words they embody at least his teaching on this subject. Nor has any truth more important ever been stated ; for if pleasure in labour be generally possible, what a strange folly it must be for men to consent to labour without pleasure, and what a hideous injustice it must be for society to compel most men to labour without pleasure ! For since all men not dishonest must labour, it becomes a question either of forcing them to lead unhappy lives or allowing them to live happily.

Now the chief accusation I have to bring against the modern state of society is that it is

founded on the art-lacking or unhappy labour of the greater part of men, and all that external degradation of the face of the country of which I have spoken is hateful to me not only because it is a cause of unhappiness to some few of us who still love art, but also and chiefly because it is a token of the unhappy life forced on the great mass of the population by the system of competitive commerce.

The pleasure which ought to go with the making of every piece of handicraft has for its basis the keen interest which every healthy man takes in healthy life, and is compounded, it seems to me, chiefly of three elements — variety, hope of creation, and the self-respect which comes of a sense of usefulness, to which must be added that mysterious bodily pleasure which goes with the deft exercice of the bodily powers. I do not think I need spend many words in trying to prove that these things, if they really and fully accompanied labour, would do much to make it pleasant. As to the pleasures of variety, any of you who have ever made anything — I don't care what — will well remember the pleasure that went with the turning out of the first specimen. What would have become of that pleasure of you had been compelled to go on making it exactly the same for ever ?

As to the hope of creation, the hope of producing some worthy or even excellent work, which, without you, the craftsman, would not have existed at all, a thing which needs you and can have no substitute for you in the making of it, can we any of us fail to understand the pleasure of this ?

No less easy, surely, to see how much the self-respect born of the consciousness of usefulness must sweeten labour. To feel that you have to do a thing not to satisfy the whim of a fool or a set of fools, but because it is really good in itself, that is, useful, would surely be a good help to getting through the day's work.

As to the unreasoning, sensuous pleasure in handiwork, I believe in good sooth that it has more power of getting rough and strenuous work out of men, even as things go, than most people imagine. At any rate it lies at the bottom of the production of all art, which cannot exist without it even in its feeblest and rudest form.

Now this compound pleasure in handiwork I claim as the birthright of all workmen. I say that if they lack any part of it they will be so far degraded, but that if they lack it altogether they are, so far as their work goes, I will not say slaves, the word would not be strong enough, but machines more or less conscious of their own unhappiness.

The craftsman of the Middle Ages no doubt often suffered grievous material oppression, yet in spite of the rigid line of separation drawn by the hierarchical system under which he lived between him and his feudal superior, the difference between them was arbitrary rather than real ; there was no such gulf in language, manners and ideas as divides a cultivated middle-class person of to-day, 'a gentleman', from even a respectable lower class man ; the mental qualities necessary to an artist — intelligence fancy imagination — had not then to go through the mill of the competitive market, nor had the rich (or successful competitors) made good their claim to be the sole possessors of mental refinement.

As to the conditions of handiwork in those days, the crafts were drawn together into gilds which indeed divided the occupations of men rigidly enough, and guarded the door to those occupations jealously ; but as outside among the gilds there was little competition in the markets, wares being made in the first instance for domestic consumption, and only the overplus of what was wanted at home close to the place of production ever coming into the market or requiring any one to come and go between the producer and consumer, so inside the gilds there was but little division of labour ; a man or youth once accepted as an apprentice to a craft learned it from end to end, and became as a matter of course the master of it ; and in the earlier days of the gilds, when the masters were scarcely even small capitalists, there was no grade in the craft save this temporary one. Later on, when the masters became capitalists of a sort, and the apprentices were, like the masters, privileged, the class of journeymen craftsmen came into existence ; but it does not seem that the difference between them and the aristocracy of the gild was anything more than an arbitrary one. In short, during all this period the unit of labour was an intelligent man.

Under this system of handiwork no great pressure of speed was put on a man's work, but he was allowed to carry it through leisurely and thoughtfully ; it used the whole of a man for the production of a piece of goods, and not small portions of many men ; it developed the workman's whole intelligence according to his capacity, instead of concentrating his energy on onesided dealing with a trifling piece of work ; in short, it did not submit the hand and soul of the workman to the necessities of the competitive market, but allowed them freedom for human development.

It was this system which had not learned the lesson that man was made for commerce, but supposed in its simplicity that commerce was made for man, which produced the art of the middle ages, wherein the harmonious co-operation of free intelligence was carrried to the

furthest point which has yet been attained, and which alone of all art can claim to be called Free.

The effect of this freedom, and the widespread or rather universal sense of beauty to which it gave birth, became obvious enough in the outburst of the expression of splendid and copious genius which marks the Italian Renaissance. Nor can it be doubted that this glorious art was the fruit of the five centuries of free and popular art which preceded it, and not of the rise of commercialism which was contemporaneous with it ; for the glory of the Renaissance faded out with strange rapidity as commercial competition developed. So that at about the end of the 17th century, both in the Intellectual and the Decorative arts the commonplace or body still existed, but the romance or soul of them was gone. Step by step they had faded and sickened before the advance of commercialism,now speedily gathering force throughout civilisation. The domestic or architectural arts were becoming (or become) mere toys for the competitive market through which all material wares used by civilised men now had to pass. Commercialism had by this time well nigh destroyed the craft-system of labour, in which, as aforesaid, the unit of labour is a fully-instructed craftsman, and had supplanted it by what I will ask leave to call the workshop system, wherein, when complete, division of labour in handiwork is carried to the highest point possible, and the unit of manufacture is no longer a man, but a group of men, each member of which is dependent on his fellows, and is utterly useless by himself. This system of the workshop division of labour was perfected during the 18th century by the efforts of the manufacturing classes, stimulated by the demands of the ever-widening markets ; it is still the system in some of the smaller and more domestic kinds of manufacture, holding much the same place amongst us as the remains of the craft-system did in the days when that of the workshop was still young. Under this system, as I have said, all the romance of the arts died out, but the commonplace of them flourished still ; for the idea that the essential aim of manufacture is the making of goods still struggled with a new idea which has since obtained complete victory, namely, that it is carried on for the sake of making a profit for the manufacturer on the one hand, and on the other for the employment of the working class.

This idea of commerce being an end in itself and not a means merely, being but half developed in the 18th century, the special period of the workshop system, some interest could still be taken in those days in the making of wares. The capitalist manufacturer of the period had some pride in turning out goods which would do him credit, as the phrase went ; he was not willing wholly to sacrifice his pleasure in this kind to the imperious demands of commerce ; even his workman, though no longer an artist, that is a free workman, was bound to have skill in his craft, limited though it was to the small fragment of it which he had to toil at day by day for his whole life.

But commerce went on growing, stimulated still more by the opening up of new markets, and pushed on the inventions of men, till their ingenuity produced the machines which we have now got to look upon as necessities of manufacture, and which have brought about a system the very opposite to the ancient craft-system ; that system was fixed and conservative of methods ; there was no real difference in the method of making a piece of goods between the time of Pliny and the time of Sir Thomas More ; the method of manufacture, on the contrary, in the present time, alters not merely from decade to decade, but from year to year ; this fact has naturally helped the victory of this machine system, the system of the Factory, where, the machinelike workmen of the workshop period are supplanted by actual machines, of which the operatives as they are now called are but a portion, and a portion gradually diminishing both in importance and numbers. This system is still short of its full development, therefore to a certain extent the workshop system is being carried on side by side with it, but is being speedily and steadily crushed out by it ; and when the process is complete, the skilled workman will no longer exist, and his place will be filled by machines directed by a few highly trained and very intelligent experts, and tended by a multitude of people, men, women and children, of whom neither skill nor intelligence is required.

This system, I repeat, is as near as may be the opposite of that which led up to that splendid outburst of art in the days of the Italian Renaissance which even cutivated men will sometimes deing to notice now-a-days ; it has therefore produced the opposite of what the old craft system produced, the death of art and not its birth ; in other words the degradation of the external surroundings of life — or simply and plainly unhappiness — through all society spreads that curse of unhappiness ; from the poor wretches,the news of whom we middleclass people are just now receiving with such naif wonder and horror ; from those poor people whom nature forces to strive against hope, and to expend all the divine energy of man in competing for something less than a dog's lodging and a dog's food, from them up to the cultivated and refined person, well lodged, well fed, well clothed, expensively

educated, but lacking all interest in life execept it may be the cultivation of unhappiness as a fine art.

Something must be wrong then in art, or the happiness of life is sickening in the house of civilisation. What has caused the sickness ? Machine labour will you say ? Well, I have seen quoted a passage from one of the ancient Sicilian poets rejoicing in the fashioning of a water-mill, and exulting in labour being set free from the toil of the hand-quern in consequence ; and that surely would be a type of a man's natural hope when foreseeing the invention of labour-saving machinery as 'tis called ; natural surely, since though I have said that the labour of which art could form a part should be accompanied by pleasure, no one could deny that there is some necessary labour even which is not pleasant in itself, and plenty of unnecessary labour which is merely painful. If machinery had been used for minimising such labour, the utmost ingenuity would scarcely have been wasted on it, but is that the case in any way ? Look round the world, and you must agree with J. S. Mill in his doubt whether all the machinery of modern times has lightened the daily work of one labourer.

And why have our natural hopes been so disappointed ? Surely because in these latter days, in which as a matter of fact machinery has been invented, it was by no means invented with the aim of saving the pain of labour. The phrase labour-saving machinery is elliptical, and means machinery which saves the *cost* of labour, not the labour itself, which will be expended when 'saved' on tending other machines. For a doctrine which, as I have said, began to be accepted under the workshop system, is now universally received even though we are yet short of the complete development of the system of the Factory. Briefly, the doctrine is this, that the essential aim of manufacture is making a profit ; that it is frivolous to consider whether the wares when made will be of more or less use to the world so long as anyone can be found to buy them at a price which, when the workman engaged in making them has received of necessaries and comforts as little as he can be got to take, will leave something over as a reward to the capitalist who has employed him. This doctrine of the sole aim of manufacture (or indeed of life) being the profit of the capitalist and the occupation of the workman, is held, I say by almost everyone ; its corollary is, that labour is necessarily unlimited, and that to attempt to limit it is not so much foolish as wicked, whatever misery may be caused to the community by the manufacture and sale of the wares made.

It is this superstition of commerce being an end in itself, of man made for commerce, not commerce for man, of which art has sickened ; not of the accidental appliances which that superstition when put in practice has brought to its aid ; machines and railways and the like, which do now verily control us all, might have been controlled by us, if we had not been resolute to seek profit and occupation' at the cost of establishing for a time that corrupt and degrading anarchy which has usurped the name of Society.

It is my business to foster your discontent with that anarchy and its visible results ; for indeed I think it would be an insult to you to suppose that you are contented with the state of things as they are ; contented to see all beauty vanish from our beautiful city for instance ; contented with the squalor of the black country, with the hideousness of London, the wen of wens, as Cobbet called it ; contented with the ugliness and baseness which everywhere surrounds the life of civilised man ; contented, lastly, to be living above that unutterable and sickening misery of which a few details are once again reaching us, as if from some distant unhappy country, of which we could scarcely expect to hear, but which I tell you is the necessary foundation on which our society, our anarchy, rests.

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Now above all things I want us not to console ourselves by averages for the fact that the riches of the rich and the comfort of the well-to-do are founded on that terrible mass of undignified, unrewarded, *useless* misery, concerning which we have of late been hearing a little, a very little ; after all we do know that is a fact and we can only console ourselves by hoping that, if we are watchful and diligent (which we very seldom are) we may greatly diminish the amount of it. I ask you is such a hope as that worthy of our boasted civilisation with its perfected creeds, its high morality, its sounding political maxims ? Will you think it monstrous that some people have conceived another hope, and see before them the ideal of a society in which there should be no classes permanently degraded for the benefit of the Commonweal ?

For one thing I would have you remember, that this lowest class of utter poverty lies like a gulf before the whole of the working class, who in spite of all averages live a precarious life ; the failure in the game of life which entails on a rich man an unambitious retirement, and on a well-to-do man a life of dependence and laborious shifts, drags a working man down into that hell of irredeemable degradation.

I hope there are but few at least here who can comfort their consciences by saying that the working class bring this degradation on themselves by their own unthrift and recklessness. Some do no doubt; stoic philosophers of the higher type

not being much commoner among day labourers than among the well-to-do and rich ; but we know very well how sorely the mass of the poor strive, practising such thrift as is in itself a degradation to man, in whose very nature it is to love mirth and pleasure, and how in spite of all that they fall into the gulf. What ! are we going to deny that when we see all round us in our own class cases of men failing in life by no fault of their own ? nay many of the failures worthier and more useful than those that succeed : as might indeed be looked for in the state of war, which we call the system of unlimited competition, where the best campaigning luggage a man can carry is a hard heart and no scruples.

For indeed the fulfilment of that liberal ideal of the reform of our present system into a state of moderate class supremacy is impossible because that system is after all nothing but a continuous implacable war ; the war once ended and commerce, as we now understand the word, comes to an end and the mountains of wares which are either useless in themselves or only useful to slaves and slave-owners are no longer made, and once again art will be used to determine what things are useful and what useless to be made ; since nothing should be made which does not give pleasure to the maker and the user, and that pleasure of making *must* produce art in the hands of the workman ; so will art be used to discriminate between the waste and the usefulness of labour ; whereas at present the waste of labour is, as I have said above, a matter never considered at all ; so long as a man toils he is supposed to be useful, no matter what he toils at.

I tell you the very essence of competitive commerce is waste ; the waste that comes of the anarchy of war. Do not be deceived by the outside appearance of order in our plutocratic society. It fares with it as it does with the older forms of war, that there is an outside look of quite wonderful order about it ; how neat and comforting the steady march of the regiment : how quiet and respectable the sergeants look ; how clean the polished cannon ; neat as a new pin are the storehouses of murder ; the books of adjutant and sergeant as innocent looking as may be ; nay, the very orders for destruction and plunder are given with a quiet precision which seems the very token of a good conscience ; this is the mask that lies before the ruined cornfield and the burning cottage, the mangled bodies, the untimely death of worthy men, the desolate home. All this, the results of the order and sobriety which is the face which civilised soldiering turns towards us stay-at-homes, we have been told often and eloquently enough to consider ; often enough we have been shown the wrong side of the glories of war, nor can we be shown it too often or too eloquently ; yet, I say, even such a mask is worn by competive commerce, with its respectable, prim order, its talk of peace and the blessings of intercommunication of countries and the like , and all the while its whole energy, its whole organised precision is employed in one thing, the wrenching the means of living from others ;while outside that everything must do as it may, whoever is the worse or the better for it ; like the war of fire and steel, all other aims must be crushed out before that one object ; worse than the older war in one respect at least, that whereas that was intermittent, this is continuous and unresting, and its leaders and captains are never tired of declaring that it must last as long as the world, and is the end all and be all of the creation of man and of his home ; of such the words are said : —

> For them alone do seethe
> A thousand men in troubles wide and dark ;
> Half ignorant they turn an easy wheel
> That sets sharp racks at work to pinch and peel.

What can overthrow this terrible organisation so strong in itself, so rooted in the self-interest, stupidity, and cowardice of strenuous, narrow-minded men ? So strong in itself and so much fortified against attack by the surrounding anarchy which it has bred ?

Nothing, but discontent with that anarchy and an order which in its turn will arise from it, nay, is arising from it, an order once a part of the internal organisation of that which it is doomed to destroy.

For the fuller development of industrialism from the ancient crafts through the workshop system into the system of the factory and machine, while it has taken from the workmen all pleasure in their labour or hope of distinction or excellence in it, has welded them into a great class, and has by its very oppression and compulsion of the monotony of life driven them into feeling the solidarity of their interests and the antagonism of those interests to those of the capitalist class : they are all through civilisation feeling the necessity of their rising as a class. As I have said, it is impossible for them to coalesce with the middle class to produce the universal reign of moderate *bourgeois* society which some have dreamed of ; because however many of them rise out of their class, these become at once part of the middle class, owners of capital, even though it be in a small way, and exploiters of labour ; and there is still left behind a lower class which in its own turn drags down to it the unsuccessful in the struggle ; a process which is being accelerated in these latter days by the rapid growth of the great factories and stores which are extinguishing the remains of the small workshops

served by men who may hope to become small masters, and also the smaller of the tradesmen class; thus then, feeling that it is impossible for them to rise as a class while competition, naturally, and as a necessity for its existence, keeps them down, they have begun to look to *association* as their natural tendency, just as competition is of the capitalists; in them the hope has arisen, if nowhere else, of finally making an end of class degradation.

I know there are some to whom this possibility of the getting rid of class degradation may come, not as a hope, but as a fear; these may comfort themselves by thinking that this Socialist matter is a hollow scare, in England at least; that the proletariat have no hope, and therefore will lie quiet in this country, where the rapid and nearly complete development of commercialism has crushed the power of combination out of the lower classes; where the very combinations, the Trades Unions, founded for the advancement of the working class as a class, have already become conservative and obstructive bodies, wielded by the middle-class politicians for party purposes; where the proportion of the town and manufacturing districts to the country is so great that the inhabitants, no longer recruited by the peasantry, but become townsmen bred of townsmen, are yearly deteriorating in physique; where lastly education is so backward.

It may be that in England the mass of the working class has no hope; that it will not be hard to keep them down for a while—possibly a long while. The hope that this may be so I will say plainly is a dastard's hope, for it is founded on the chance of their degradation. I say such an expectation is that of slave-hoders or the hangers-on of slave-holders. I believe, however, that hope is growing among the working class even in England; at any rate you may be sure of one thing, that there is at least discontent. Can any of us doubt that, since there is unjust suffering; or which of us would be contented with 10s. a week to keep our households with, or to dwell in unutterable filth and have to pay the price of good lodging for it? Do you doubt that, if we had any time for it amidst our struggle to live, we should look into the title of those who kept us there, themselves rich and comfortable, under the pretext that is was necessary to society?

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Remember we have but one weapon against that terrible organisation of selfishness which we attack, and that weapon is Union. Yes, and it should be obvious union which we can be conscious of, as we mix with others who are hostile or indifferent to the cause; organised brotherhood is that which must break the spell of anarchical Plutocracy. One man with an idea in his head is in danger of being considered a madman; two men with the same idea in common may be foolish, but can hardly be mad; ten men sharing an idea begin to act; a hundred draw attention as fanatics, a thousand and society begins to tremble, a hundred thousand and there is war abroad, and the cause has victories tangible and real—and why only a hundred thousand? Why not a hundred million and peace upon earth? You and me who agree together, it is we who have to answer that question. — *Reprinted from « To-Day ».*

Socialists and Parliament.

To capture Parliament is the policy of the Democrats.

The questions to be asked of this, as of all other policies, are, first; What is the end proposed by it? And secondly; Are they likely to succeed? As to the end proposed, I think there is much difference of opinion. Some Democrats would answer from the merely political point of view, and say: Universal Suffrage, Payment of Members, Annual Parliaments, Abolition of the House of Lords, Abolition of the Monarchy, and so forth. I would answer this by saying: After all, these are not ends, but means to an end; and, passing by the fact that the last two are not constitutional measures, I would say, if you had gained all these things and more, all you would do would be to establish the ascendency of the Democratic party, having so established it, you would then have to find out by the usual party means what that Democratic party meant: and you would find that your triumph in mere politics would lead you back again exactly to the place you sarted from You would be Whigs under another name.

The real masters of society, the real tyrants of the people, are the landlords and the capitalists, whom your political triumph would not interfere with. Then, as now, it would be possible, sometimes, for a diligent man, with his mind set wholly on such success, to climb out of the proletariat into the monied class, there to sweat as he once was sweated; which, my friends, is if you will excuse the word, you ridiculous idea of freedom of contract. The sole and utmost success of your policy is that, it might raise up a strong opposition to the condition of things which it would be your function to uphold: but most probably such opposition would still be outside Parliament and not in it; you would have made a revolution, probably not without blood shed, only to show people the necessity for another revolution the very next day.

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But it will be said, and cerainly with much truth, that the Democrats are not all for mere political reform. I say that I believe that is true, and a very important truth too. I will go further and will say that all those who can be distinguished from Whigs do intend social reforms, which they hope will somewhat alter the relations of the classes to each other ; and there is generally speaking, amongst Democrats, a leaning towards a kind of limited State-Socialism ; and it is through that, that they hope to bring about a peaceful Revolution ; which, if it does not introduce a condition of equality, will, at least, make the workers better off and contented with their lot. They hope to get a body of representatives to Parliament, and by them to get measure after measure passed, which will tend towards this goal ; nor would some of them, perhaps most of them, be discontented if, by this means, we could glide into complete State-Socialism.

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I must point out to these semi-Socialist Democrats that, in the first place, they will be made the cats-paw of some of the wilier of the Whigs. There is no end of these semi-Socialist-looking measures one may name ; for instance, the allotment scheme, and other schemes, tending towards peasant proprietorship, co-operation, and the like, which, after all, in spite of their benevolent appearance, are really weapons in the hands of the reactionaries, having, for their real object, the creation of a new middle-class made out of the working class and at their expense ; the raising, in short, of a new army against the attack of the disinherited.

There is no end to this kind of dodge, nor will be, apparently, till there is an end of the class which tries it on ; and a great many of the Democrats will be amused and absorbed by it from time to time. They will call this sort of nonsense « practical » ; it *seems* like doing something, while the steady propaganda of a principle which must prevail in the end is, according to them, doing nothing. For the rest it is not likely to become dangerous, farther than, as it clogs the wheels of the real movement somewhat, because it is a mere piece of reaction on the one side ; if, I mean, it takes the form of peasant proprietorship, flying right in the face of the commercial development of the day, which tends ever more and more towards aggregation, thereby smoothing the way for the organised possession of the workers when the true Revolution shall come.

On the other hand, when this attempt to manufacture a new middle-class takes the form of co-operation and the like, it is not dangerous, otherwise than as above-stated, because it means nothing more than a slightly altered form of joint-stockery, and everybody, almost, is beginning to see this. The greed of men, stimulated by the spectacle of profit-making all around them, and also by the burden of the interest on the money, which they all have been obliged to borrow, will not allow them even to approach a true system of co-operation. Those benefitted by the transaction presently become rather eager shareholders in a commercial speculation, and, if they are working-men, are also capitalists. The enormous commercial success of the great co-operative societies, and the absolute nothingness of that success on the social conditions of the workers, are sufficient tokens of what this non-political co-operation must come to : « Nothing—it shall not be less. »

But again, it may be said, some of the Democrats go further than this : they take up actual pieces of Socialism, and are more inclined to support them. Nationalization of the land, or of railways ; or, cumulative taxation on incomes ; or doing away with inheritance ; or, new factory laws ; or, restriction, by law, of the day's labour —one of these, or more than one sometimes, the Democrats will support, and see absolute salvation in one of these planks of the platfom.

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Those who think they can deal with our present system in this piece-meal way very much underrate the strength of the tremendous organisation under which we live, which appoints each of us his place ; and if we do not chance to fit it, grinds us down till we do. Nothing but a tremendous force can deal with this force ; it will no suffer itself to be dismembered, nor to lose anything which is really its essence, without putting forth all its force in resistance. Rather than lose anything which it considers of importance, it will pull the roof of the world down upon its head.

For, indeed, I grant these semi-Socialist Democrats that there is one hope of their tampering piece-meal with our Society ; if, by chance, they can excite people seriously, however blindly, claiming one or the other of these things in question, and could be successful in Praliament with driving it through, they would certainly draw on a great civil war ; and such a war, once let loose, would not end but either with the full triumph of Socialism, or its extinction for the present. It would be impossible to limit the aim of the struggle ; nor can we even guess at the course which it would take, except that it could not be a matter of compromise.

But suppose the Democratic party peaceably successful on this new basis of semi-State-Socialism what would it all mean ? Attempts to

balance the two classes whose interests are opposed to each other, a mere ignoring of the antagonism which has led through so many centuries to where we are now ; and then, after a period of disappointment and disaster, the naked conflict once more : a revolution made and another immediately necessary on its morrow !

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How, then, are the people's eyes to be opened ? By the force evolved from the final triumph and consequent corruptioon of Commercial Whiggery, which force will include in it, a recognition of its constructive activity by intelligent people on the one hand ; and, on the other, half-blind instructive struggles to use its destructive activity on the part of those who suffer and have not been allowed to think ; and to boot, a great deal that goes betwen those two extremes. In all this, all those who can be truly called Socialists will be involved.

The modern development of the great class-struggle has forced us to think ; our thoughts force us to speak ; and our hopes force us to try to get a hearing from the people. Nor can one tell how far our words will carry, so to say. The most moderate exposition of our principles will bear the seeds of disruption ; nor can we tell what form that disruption will take.

One and all, then, we are responsible for the enunciation of Socialist principles and of the consequences which may flow from their general acceptance, whatever that may be. This responsibility no Socialist can shake off by declarations against physical force and in favour of constitutional methods of agitation ; we are attacking the constitution with the very beinnings, the mere lispings of Socialism.

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What is the policy of Socialism ?

If Toryism and Democracy are only nebulous masses of opposition to the solid centre of Whiggery, what can we call Socialism ? Well, at present, in England at least, Socialism is not a party but a sect. That is sometimes brought against it as a taunt ; but I am not dismayed by it ; for I can conceive of a sect—nay, I have heard of one—becoming a very formidable power. and becoming so by dint of its remaining a sect. So I think it is quite possible that Socialism will remain a sect till the very eve of the last stroke that completes the Revolution ; after which it will melt into the new Society. And is it not sects, bodies of definite, uncompromising principles, that lead into revolutions ? Was it not so in the Cromwellian times ? Nay, have not the Fenian sect, even in our own days, made Home Rule possible ? They may give birth to parties, though not parties in themselves.

And what should a sect like we are, have to do in the Parliamentary struggle—we who have an ideal to keep always before ourselves and others, and who cannot accept compromise ; who can see nothing that can give us rest for a minute save the emancipation of labour brought about by the workers gaining possession of all the means of the fructification of labour, and even before then pure Communism ahead to strive for ? What are we to do, then ? Stand by and look on ? Not exactly. Yet we may look on other people doing their work while we do ours.

They are already beginning, as I have said, to stumble about with attempts at State-Socialism. Let them make their experiments and blunders, and prepare the way for us by so doing. And our own business ? Well, we—sect or party or group of self-seekers, madmen, and poets, which you will — are at least the only set of people who have been able to see that there is and has been a great class-struggle going on. Further, we can see that this class-struggle cannot come to an end till the classes themselves do : one, alas, must absorb the other. Which, then ? Surely the useful one, the one that the world lives by and on.

The business of the people at present is to make it impossible for the useless, non-producing class to live ; while the business of Constitutionalism is, on the contrary, to make it possible for them to live. And our business is to help to make people conscious of this great antagonism between people and Constitutionalism ; and meantime to let Constitutionalism go on with its government unhelped by us at least, until it at least becomes conscious of its burden of the people's hate, of the people's knowledge that it is disinherited, which we shall have done our best to further by any means that we could.

As to Socialist in Parliament, there are two words about that. If they go there to take a part in carrying a Constitutionalism by palliating the evils of the system, and so helping our rulers to bear the burden of government, I for one, and so far as their action therein goes, cannot call them Socialists at all. But if they go there with the intention of doing what they can towards disruption of Parliament, that is a matter of tactics for the time being ; but even here, I cannot help seeing the danger of their being seduced from their true errand, and I fear that they would become, on the terms above mentioned, simply supporters of the very thing they set out to undo.

I say that our work lies quite outside Parliament, and it is to help to educate the people by

every and any means that may be effective ; and the knowledge we have to help them to is threefold — to know their own, to know how to take their own, and to know how to use their own. — *Extracts from a paper on « Whigs, Democrats, and Socialists » read at a Fabian Society Conference, South Place Institute, June 11th,* 1886.

The Voice of Toil.

I heard men saying, leave hope and praying,
All days shall be as all have been ;
To-day and to-morrow bring fear and sorrow,
The never-ending toil between.

When earth was younger 'mid toil and hunger,
In hope we strove, and our hands were strong ;
Then great men led us, with words they fed us,
And bade us right the earthly wrong.

Go read in story their deeds and glory,
Their names amidst the nameless dead ;
Turn then from lying to us slow-dying
In that good world to which they led ;

Where fast and faster our iron master,
The thing we made for ever drives,
Bids us grind treasure and fashion please
For other hopes and other lives.

Where home is a hovel and dull we grovel,
Forgetting that the world is fair ;
Where no babe we cherish, lest its very soul perish ;
Where mirth is crime, and love a snare.

Who now shall lead us ? what god shall heed us
As we lie in the hell our hands have won ?
For us are no rulers but fools and befoolers,
The great are fallen, the wise men gone.

I heard men saying, leave tears and praying,
The sharp knife heedeth not the sheep ;
Are we not stronger than the rich and the wronger
When day breaks over dreams and sleep ?

Come,shoulder to shoulder ere the earth grows older!
Help lies in nought but thee and me
Hope is before us—the long years that bore us
Bore leaders more than men may be.

Let dead hearts tarry and trade and marry,
And trembling nurse their dreams of mirth,
While we the living our lives are giving
To bring the bright new world to birth.

Come,shoulder to shoulder ere the earth grows older!
The Cause spreads over land and sea ;
Now the world shaketh, and fear awaketh,
And joy at last for thee and me.

The Beauty of Life.

From the first dawn of history till quite modern times. art, which nature meant to solace all, fulfilled its purpose ; all men shared in it ; that was what made life romantic, as people called it in those days ; that, and not robber-barons and inaccessible kings with their hierarchy of serving-nobles and other such rubbish ; but art grew and grew, saw empires sicken and sickened with them ; grew hale again and haler, and grew so great at last, that she seemed in good truth to have conquered everything, and laid the material world under-foot. Then came a change at a period of the greatest life and hope in many ways that Europe had known till then : a time of so much and such varied hope that people called it at the time the New Birth ; as far as the arts are concerned I deny it that title ; rather it seems to me that the great men who lived and glorified the practise of art in those days, were the fruits of the old, not the seed of the new order of things ; but a stirring and hopeful time it was, and many things were new born then which have since brought forth fruit enough ; and it is strange and perplexing that from those days forward the lapse of time, which, through plenteous confusion and failure, has on the whole been steadily destroying privilege and exclusiveness in other matters, has delivered up art to be the exclusive privilege of a few, and has taken from the people their birth-right ; while both wronged and wrongers have been wholly unconscious of what they were doing.

Wholly unconscious—yes, but we are no longer so ; there lies the sting of it, and there also the hope.

When the brightness of the so-called Renaissance faded, and it faded very suddenly, a deadly chill fell upon the arts : that New-Birth mostly meant looking back to past times, wherein the men of those days thought they saw a perfection of art, which, to their minds, was different in kind, and not in degree only, from the ruder suggestive art of their fathers : this perfection they were ambitious to imitate, this alone seemed to be art to them ; the rest was childishness. So wonderful was their energy, their success so great, that no doubt, to commonplace minds among them, though surely not to the great masters, that perfection seemed to be gained ; and, perfection being gained, what are you to do ? You can go no further, you must aim at standing still, which you cannot do.

Art by no means stood still in those latter days of the Renaissance, but took the downward road with terrible swiftness, and trumbled down at the bottom of the hill, where it lay long in great content, believing itself to be the art of Michael

Angelo, while it was the art of men whom noboly remembers but those who want to sell their pictures.

Thus it fared with the more individual forms of art. As to the art of the people : in countries, and places where the greater art had been flourished most, it went step by step on the downward path with that : in more out-of-the-way places, England for instance, it still felt the influence of the life of its earlier and happy days, and in a way lived on a while ; but its life was so feeble, and, so to say, illogical, that it could not resist any change in external circumstances, still less could it give birth to anything new ; and before this century began, its last flicker had died out. Still, while it was living, in whatever dotage, it did imply something going on in these matters of daily use that we have been thinking of and doubtless satisfied some cravings for beauty : and when it was dead, for a long time people did not know it, or what had taken its place, crept so to say into its dead body—that pretence of art, to wit which is done with machines, though sometimes the machines are called men, and doubtless are so out of working hours ; nevertheless, long before it was quite dead, it had fallen so low that the whole subject was usually treated with the utmost contempt by every one who had any pretence of being a sensible man ; and, in short, the whole civilised world had forgotten that there had ever been an art *made by the people as a joy for the maker and the user.*

But now it seems to me that the very suddeness of the change ought to comfort us,to make us look upon this break in the continuity of the golden chain as an accident only, that itself cannot last ; for think, how many thousand years it may be, since that primeval man graved, with a flint splinter on a bone, the story of the mammoth he had seen, or told us of the slow uplifting of the heavily-horned heads of the reindeer that he stalked : think, I say of the space of time from then till the dimming of the brightness of the Italian Renaissance ! Whereas from that time, till popular art died unnoticed and despised among ourselves, is just but two hundred years.

Strange too, that very death is contemporaneous with the new-birth of something at all events ; for, out of all despair, sprang a new time of hope lighted by the torch of the French Revolution : and things that had languished with the languising of art, rose afresh and surely heralded its new birth : in good earnest poetry was born again, and the English Language, which, under the hands of sycophantic versemakers had been reduced to a miserable jargon, whose meaning, if it had a meaning, cannot be made out without translation, flowed clear, pure, and simple, along with the music of Blake and Coleridge : take those names, the earliest in date among ourselves, as a type of the change that has happened in literature since the time of George II.

With that literature in which romance, that is to say humanity, was re-born, there sprang up also a feeling for the romance of external nature, which is surely strong in us now, joined with a longing to know something real in the lives of those who have gone before us.

The century that is now beginning to draw to an end, if people were to take to nicknaming centuries, would be called the Century of Commercialism ; and I do not think I undervalue the work that it has done : it has broken down many a prejudice and taught many a lesson that the world has been hitherto slow to learn : it has made it possible for many a man to live free, who would in other times have been a slave, body or soul, or both : if it has not quite spread peace and justice through the world, as at the end of its first half we fondly hoped it would, it has at least stirred up in many fresh craving for peace and justice : its work has been good and plenteous, but much of it was roughly done, as needs was ; recklessness has commonly gone with its energy, blindness too often with its haste : so that, perhaps, it may be work enough for the next century to repair the blunders of that recklessness, to clear away the rubbish which that hurried work has piled up ; nay, even we, in the second half of its last quarter, may do something towards setting its house in order.

Nothing can make me believe that the present condition of your Black Country yonder is an unchangeable necessity of your life and position. Such miseries as this were begun and carried on in pure thoughtlessness, and a hundredth part of the energy that was spent in creating them would get rid of them. I do think, if we were not all of us too prone to acquiesce in the base byword « after me the deluge », it would soon be something more than an idle dream to hope that your pleasant midland hills and fields might begin to become pleasant again in some way or other, even without depopulating them ; or that, those once lovely valleys of Yorkshire in the « heavy woollen district », with their sweeping hill-sides and noble rivers, should not need the stroke of ruin to make them once more delightful abodes of men, instead of the dog-holes that the Century of Commerce has made them.

Well, people will not take the trouble, or spend the money, necessary to alter these things, because they do not feel the evils they live amongst ; because they have degraded themselves into something less than men ; they are unmanly because they have ceased to have their due share of art.

The truth is, that in art, and in other things

besides, the laboured education of a few will not raise even those few above the reach of the evils that beset the ignorance of the great mass of the people: the brutality of which such a huge stock has been accumulated lower down, will often show, without much peeling through, the selfish refinement of those who have let it accumulate. The lack of art, or rather the murder of art, that curses our streets from the sordidness of the surroundings of the lower classes, has its exact counterpart in the dulness and vulgarity of those of the middle classes, and the double-distilled dulness, and scarcely less vulgarity of those of the upper classes.

Therefore let us work and faint not; remembering, that though it be natural, and therefore excusable, amidst doubtful times, to feel doubts of success oppress us at whiles, yet not to crush those doubts, and work, as if we had them not, is simple cowardice; which is unforgivable. No man has any right to say that all has been done for nothing, that all the unwearying strife of those that have gone before us shall lead us nowhither; that mankind will but go round and round in a circle for ever: no man has a right to say that, and then get up, morning after morning, to eat his victuals and sleep a-nights, all the while making other people toil to keep his worthless life a-going.

Be sure that some way or other will be found out of the tangle, even when things seem most tangled; and be no less sure that some use will then have come of our work, if it has been faithful, and therefore unsparingly careful and thoughtful.

We talk of the civilisation of the ancient peoples, of the classical times: well, civilised they were no doubt, some of their folk at least: an Athenian citizen, for instance, led a simple, dignified, almost perfect life; but there were drawbacks to happiness, perhaps, in the lives of his slaves; and the civilisation of the ancients was founded on slavery.

Indeed, that ancient society did give a model to the world, and showed us for ever what blessings are freedom of life and thought, self-restraint and a generous education; all those blessings the ancient free peoples set forth to the world—and kept them to themselves.

Therefore no tyrant was too base, no pretext too hollow, for enslaving the grandsons of the men of Salamis and Thermopylae; therefore did the descendants of those stern and self-restrained Romans, who were ready to give up everything. and life as the least of things, to the glory of their common-weal, produce monsters of license and reckless folly. Therefore did a little knot of Galilean peasants overthrow the Roman Empire.

Ancient civilisation was chained to slavery and exclusiveness, and it fell; the barbarism that took its place has delivered us from slavery and grown into modern cviilisation; and that, in its turn, has before it the choice of never-ceasing growth, or destruction by that which has in it the seeds of higher growth.

There is an ugly word for a dreadful fact, which I must make bold to use—the residuum: that word, since the time I first saw it used, has had a terrible significance to me; and I have felt from my heart that, if this residuum were a necessary part of modern civilisation, as some people openly, and many more tacitly, assume that it is, then this civilisation carries with it the poison that shall one day destroy it, even as its elder sister did: if civilisation is to go no farther than this, it had better not have gone so far; if it does not aim at getting rid of this misery and giving some share in the happiness and dignity of life to *all* the people that it has created, and which it spends such unwearying energy in creating, it is simply an organised injustice, a mere instrument for oppression, so much the worse than that which has gone before it, as its pretentions are higher, its slavery subtler, its mastery harder to overthrow, because supported by such a dense mass of commonplace well-being and comfort.

Surely this cannot be; surely there is a distinct feeling abroad of this injustice: so that if the residuum still clogs all the efforts of modern civilisation to rise above mere population-breeding and money-making, the difficulty of dealing with it is the legacy; first, of the ages of violence and almost conscious brutal injustice; and next, of the ages of thoughtlessness, of hurry and blindness. Surely all those who think at all of the future of the world are at work, in one way or other, striving to rid it of this shame.

That, to my mind, is the meaning of what we call National Education, which we have begun, and which is doubtless already bearing its fruits; and will bear greater, when all people are educated, not according to the money which they or their parents possess, but according to the capacity of their minds.

What effect that will have upon the future of the arts, I cannot say, but one would surely think a very great effect; for it will enable people to see clearly many things which are now as completely hidden from them as if they were blind in body and idiotic in mind; and this, I say, will act not only upon those who most directly feel the evils of ignorance, but also upon those who feel them indirectly—upon us, the educated: the great wave of rising intelligence, rife with so many natural desires and aspirations, will carry all classes along with it, and force us all to see that many things which we have been

used to look upon as necessary and eternal evils, are merely the accidental and temporary growths of past stupidity, and can be escaped from by due effort, and the exercise of courage, goodwill, and forethought.

And among those evils, I do, and must always, believe will fall that one which I account the greatest of all evils, the heaviest of all slaveries; that evil of the greater part of the population being engaged for by far the most part of their lives in work, which, at the best, cannot interest them, or develop their best faculties; and, at the worst (and that is the commonest, too), is mere unmitigated slavish toil, only to be wrung out of them by the sternest compulsion, a toil which they shirk all they can — small blame to them. And this toil degrades them into less than men: and they will some day come to know it, and cry out to be made men again, and art only can do it, and redeem them from the slavery; and, I say, once more, that this is her highest and most glorious end and aim; and it is in her struggle to attain to it, that she will most surely purify herself, and quicken her own aspirations towards perfection.

But we — in the meantime we must not sit waiting for obvious signs of these later and glorious days, to show themselves on earth, and in the heavens; but rather turn to the common-place, and maybe often dull work of fitting ourselves in detail to take part in them if we should live to see one of them; or, in doing our best to make the path smooth for their coming, if we are to die before they are here.

Now after all, for us who are learning art, it is not far to seek what is the surest way to further it; that which most breeds art is art; every piece of work that we do which is well done, is so much help to the cause; every piece of pretence and halfheartedness is so much hurt to it. Most of you who take to the practise of art can find out in no very long time, whether you have any gifts for it or not: if you have not, throw the thing up, or you will have a wretched time of it yourselves, and will be damaging the cause by laborious pretence: but if you have gifts of any kind, you are happy indeed beyond most men; for your pleasure is always with you, nor can you be intemperate in the enjoyment of it. and as you use it, it does not lesson, but grows: if you are, by chance, weary of it at night, you get up in the morning eager for it; or, if perhaps, in the morning, it seems folly to you for a while, yet presently, when your hand is moving a little in its wonted way, fresh hope has sprung up beneath it, and you are happy again. While others are getting through the day like plants thrust into the earth, which cannot turn this way or that, but as the wind blows them, you know what you want, and your will is on the alert to find it and you, whatever happens, whether it be joy or grief, are at least alive.

I know, indeed, that men, wearied by the pettiness of the details of the strife, their patience tried by hope deferred, will, at while, excusably enough, turn back in their hearts to other days; when, if the issues were not clearer, the means of trying them were simpler; when, so stirring were the times, one might even have atoned for many a blunder and backsliding by visibly dying for the cause. To have breasted the Spanish pikes at Leyden, to have drawn sword with Oliver: that may well seem to us at times amidst the tangles of to-day a happy fate: for a man to be able to say, I have lived like a fool, but now I will cast away fooling for an hour, and die like a man — this is something in that certainly: and yet 'tis clear that few men can be so lucky as to die for a cause, without having first of all lived for it. And this is the most that can be asked from the greatest man that follows a cause, so it is the least that can be taken from the smallest.

Meanwhile — if these hours be dark, as, indeed, in many ways they are — at least do not let us sit deedless, like fools and fine gentlemen, thinking the common toil not good enough for us, and beaten by the muddle; but rather let us work like good fellows trying, by some dim candle-light, to set our workshop ready against to-morrow's daylight; that, to-morrow, when the civilised world, no longer greedy, strifeful, and destructive, shall have a new art, a glorious art, made by the people and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user. — *From a lecture delivered before the Birmingham Society of Arts, July 19th*, 1880.

No Master.

Saith man to man, we've heard and known,
  That we no master need.
To live upon this earth, our own,
  In fair and manly deed;
The grief of slaves, long passed away,
  For us hath forged the chain
Till now each worker's patient day
  Builds up the House of Pain.

And we shall we too crouch and quail,
  Ashamed, afraid of strife;
And, lest our lives untimely fail,
  Embrace the death in life?
Nay, cry aloud and have no fear;
  We few against the world;
Awake, arise, the hope we bear
  Against the curse is hurl'd.

It grows, it grows, are we the same,
The feeble band, the few ?
Or what are these with eyes aflame,
And hands to deal and do ?
This is the host that bears the word,
No Master, High or Low !
A lightning flame, a shearing sword,
A storm to overthrow.

Peace and War.

It is rather the miseries of bourgeois peace than those of war which will force on the workers perception of the fact that our commercial system is volting into a chaos which, but for the steady advance of Socialism, would mean a return to a savagery a thousand fold worse than that from which mankind has slowly and painfully emerged.

For if Europe were to be at war again many worthy persons would point out that all our misfortunes were due to it, and that peace obtained once more all would be well again. Moreover, the pleasurable excitement of reading every morning stirring news of the hopes and fears of the contest, while we sat safe at home, would arouse our latent Jingoism. and would take people's attention off the really important social matters which they are now forced to consider, and the pressing nature of which is now educating the people surely if slowly.

But that is not all, nor the most important side of the matter. It is a frightful thing to have to say, but a true one, that a war would at first benefit those of the workers who were not immediately concerned in it: it would « give employment » by destroying before they were used some of the commodities made by the workers, not for their own livelihood, but as counters for « making money ». The miseries of war would not really be felt till peace came again, the sham peace of our class society, bringing with it once more lack of employment, over-production, over-population, and the rest of it, till men at last, unable to bear the consequences of their own folly any longer, would rise in a body and accept the social revolution, thrusting aside the turnip-lantern bogy of fear so sedulously held up to them by interested fools, scoundrels and cowards When they do that they will find no tremendous difficulty in making what they want for their own use, and using it.

But all that might come to without the intervention of war and slaughter, and probably the sooner, since, as aforesaid, they will feel the pinch more speedily, and see the only remedy more clearly.

Meanwhile, it is a favourite amusement with the middle-classes to try to prove to the workers that they do not suffer, or that if they do, yet things are getting better in spite of the depression of trade. Lord Derby (who though an earl, is mentally as complete a specimen of the bourgeois as could be wished) is the latest player in this game. He professes, however, that he is perplexed at the figures that show that our prosperity is increasing while our trade-profits are falling off. It might be suggested to him as a solution of his « perplexity » that the ever increasing productivity of labour, or, if you please, the increasing cheapness in the process of manufacture, is telling more and more in favour of the « haves » and against the « havenots » ; that the tendency is for the middle-class, now that it has embraced the aristocracy and made them all traders, to extend downwards, and so to widen the basis of class-robbery or property ; so that at first sight Lord Derby has some reason to be reassured as to the stability of the Robber Association, miscalled Society, which it is his sole business to up-hold. — « *Commonweal* », 1886.

The March of the Workers.

What is this, the sound and rumour ? What is this that all men hear,
Like the wind in hollow valleys when the storm is drawing near,
Like the rolling on of ocean in the eventide of fear ?
'Tis the people marching on.
Whither go they, and whence come they ?
What are these of whom ye tell ?
In what country are they dwelling 'twixt the gates of heaven and hell ?
Are they mine or thine for money ? Will they serve a master well ?
Still they rumour's marching on.
Hark the rolling of the thunder ?
Lo the sun ! and lo thereunder
Riseth wrath and hope and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

Forth they come from grief and torment ; on they wend towards health and mirth,
All the wide world is their dwelling, every corner of the earth,
Buy them, sell them for thy service ! Try the bargain what 'tis worth,
For the days are marching on.
These are they who build thy houses, weave thy raiment, win thy wheat,
Smooth the rugged, fill the barren, turn the bitter into sweet,
All for thee this day—and ever. What reward for them is meet
Till the host comes marching on ?

Many a hundred years passed over have they laboured deaf and blind ;
Never tidings reached their sorrow, never hope their toil might find.
Now at last they've heard and hear it, and the cry comes down the wind,
And their feet are marching on.
O ye rich men, hear and tremble, for with words the sound is rife :
« Once for you and death we laboured : changed henceforward is the strife,
We are men, and we shall battle for the world of men and life ;
And our host is marching on.

« Is it war, then ? Will ye perish as the dry wood in the fire ?
Is it peace ? then be ye of us, let your hope be our desire.
Come and live ! for life awaketh, and the world shall never tire :
And the hope is marching on. »
« On we march then, we the workers, and the rumour that ye hear
Is the blended sound of battle and deliv'rance drawing near ;
For the hope of every creature is the banner that we bear,
And the world is marching on. »
Hark the rolling of the thunder ?
Lo the sun ! and lo thereunder
Riseth wrath and hope and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

The Socialist Programme.

In laying before the Socialist public the first number of our new departure, we feel that a few special words are likely to be looked for from the editor.

Now, as we understand the policy of the Socialist League, it aims at education and organisation towards action when the fitting moment arrives.

When that action is set on foot it will have nothing less for its aim than the taking over by the workers of all the means of producing wealth, to be used for the benefit of the community, that is to say, for the benefit of each and all of those who compose it ; in other words, the realisation of a new society with equality of condition for its basis. Before we can attain to this it is necessary that the mass of the workers should understand this much at least, that nothing short of this will deliver them from the ills they now groan under, that anything short of this though it may change the number of their master or their position to each other, though it may take from one group of them to give to another, will leave them under masters still, will still leave them slaves to arbitrary authority.

But it will be said to us : « Do you believe in a sudden leap into this new society, as the result of a consecutive and logical change, with no experiments, no attempt at temporary amelioration of the lives of the workers » ?

No ; we believe in no such an impossibility : a time of transition there must be, and many will accept the incompletest transition as the realisation of their hopes ; experiments there will be, and many will refuse to acknowledge their failure even in the teeth of obvious facts. Attempts at bettering the conditions of the worker will be made, which will result in raising one group of them at the expense of another, will create a new middle-class and a new proletariat ; but many will think the change the beginning of the millenium. All these things will and must be ; the question for us is, what share shall we take in them ?

Whatever our share in them may be, we believe that these attempts, this transitional condition, will be chiefly brought about by the middle-class, the owners of capital themselves, partly in ignorants good-will towards the proletariat (as long as they do not understand its claims), partly with the design both conscious and unconscious, of making our civilisation hold out a little longer against the incoming flood of corruption on the one hand and revolution on the other.

We believe that the advanced part of the capitalist class, especially in this country, is drifting, not without a feeling of fear and discomfort, towards state-Socialism of the crudest kind ; and a certain school of Socialists are fond of pointing out this tendency with exultation, as presaging the early triumph of the Cause of the People, and are looking forward to the time when we shall be « All Socialists » in the sense that Krapotkine uses the phrase in the chapter under that title in his « Words of a Rebel ». Well, we also exult in this change of front of the middle-classes, not because we wish to become All Socialists on these terms, but because it is good that the attempts and failures should be made, the new officialism of the transition period foisted on the world by the dominant class, which has no other function but self-preservation. We rejoice to see Bourgoisdom digging its own grave amidst the blunders and blind stumbling that Socialists might otherwise be driven into.

But though we rejoice in this and though we admit that it is good that partial changes should take place, since they cannot be final, or the condition of things they bring about be long

enduring, what have we to do with helping them on, save by steadily enunciating our principles?

Can we pretend to push forward some measure which we know is impracticable or useless, loudly crying out on practicality menwhile? Can we who preach the down-fall of hypocrisy make friends with the compromise which we despise? Can we who preach freedom, fetter our souls from the outset by cowardly acquiescence with a majority which we know is wrong?

A thousand times no!

Again we are but a few, as all those who stand by principles must be until inevitable necessity forces the world to practice those principles. We are few, and have our own work to do, which no one but ourselves can do, and every atom of intelligence and energy that there is amongst us will be needed for that work: if we use that energy and intelligence for doing work which can be done just as well by men who are encumbered with no principles, we waste it; and we had then better confess ourselves beaten, and hand over our work to others who understand better what a party of principle means. Whatever good may go with the stumbling, compromising kind of Socialism, let it be done at least by those who *must* do it; do not let us do their works as well as our own. We *must* wait and they must act; let us at least not confuse our ideas of what we are waiting for by putting a false issue before ourselves.

But there is another thing besides Bourgeois stumbling into State Socialism which shows which way the tide is setting, and that is the instinctive revolutionary attempts which drive them into these courses. What is to be said about these? They are leaderless often, and half blind. But are they faithful of nothing but suffering to the workers? We think not, for besides the immediate gain which they force from the dominant class as above said, they are a stern education for the workers themselves. And however bitter that education may be, it surely is not so much worse than the periods of quietude they have had to endure; the worse thing that we have to dread, though every day now it is less to be dreaded, is that the oppressed people will learn a dull contentment with their lot, and give their masters no more trouble than may come of their dying inconveniently, and being terrible objects to look at or to speak to while they live: the rudest and most unsuccessful attempts at revolution are better than that, though that is what is chiefly aimed at by the middle-class social reformers.

With all genuine revolutionary attempts, therefore, we must sympathise, and must at the least express that sympathy, whatever risk its expression may subject us to; and it is little indeed if we can do no more than that.

The *Commonweal*, then, will steadily continue to put forward the principles of International Revolutionary Socialism; will deprecate all meddling with parliamentary methods of « reform ». Constitutionalism means the continuance of the present system; how can Socialists, therefore, who aim at abolishing the system, support its support? With all revolutionary movements the *Commonweal* will sympathise as it has always done, and will not accuse the people of rashness for doing what they have been forced to do, or of blindness for making the only protest against their wrongs that they are able to make.

In a few words, our function is to educate the people by criticising all attempts at socalled reforms, whose aim is not the realisation of equality of condition, but the hindering of it; and by encouraging the union of the working classes towards Revolution and the abolition of artificial restraints on life. The true aim of the people of this epoch is to learn how to live, and assert their right to do so in the teeth of all opposition. — *An editorial signed by William Morris and E. Belfort Bax, reprinted from the « Commonweal », May 1st,* 1886.

Kent Rebel Song.

The following rebel song is culled from Morris's *Dream of John Ball*. In Wat Tyler's rebellion « the wild men of Kent » poured down on the dens of the Temple lawyers, pulled down their houses, carried off the books, deeds, and rolls of remembrance, and lurnt them in Fleet Street, to spuite the Knights Hospitallers. This is supposed to be the song that inspired them as they fought and destroyed that which they hated. — Ed.

⁂

The sheriff is made a migthy lord,
  Of goodly gold he hath enow
And many a sergeant girt with sword;
  But forth will we and bend the bow.
    We shall bend the bow on the lily lea
    Betwixt the thorn and the oaken tree.

With stone and lime is the burg wall built,
  And pit and prison are stark and strong,
And many a true man there is spilt,
  And many a right man doomed by wrong.
    So forth shall we and bend the bow
    And the king's writ never the road shall know.

Now yeomen walk ye warily,
  And heed ye the houses where ye go,
For as fair and as fine as they may be,
  Lest behind your heels the door clap to.
    Fare forth with the bow to the lily lea
    Betwixt the thorn and the oaken tree.

Now bills and bows ! and out a-gate !
  And turn about on the lily lea !
And though their company be great
  The grey-goose wing shall set us free.
    Now bent is the bow in the green abode
    And the king's writ knoweth not the road.

So over the mead and over the hithe,
  And away to the wild-wood wend we forth ;
There dwell we yeomen bold and blithe
  Where the Sheriff's word is nought of worth.
    Bent is the bow on the lily lea
    Betwixt the thorn and the oaken tree.

WHEN ADAM DELVED AND EVE SPAN
WHO WAS THEN THE GENTLEMAN ?

(Frontispiece to 1st edition, « A. dream of John Ball », 1888.)

⁂

John Ball, Pictured

Above the heads of the crowd, and now slowly working towards the cross, was a banner on a high-raised cross-pole, a picture of a man and woman half-clad in skins of beasts seen against a back-ground of green trees, the man holding a spade and the woman a distaff and spindle rudely done enough, but yet with a certain spirit and much meaning ; and underneath this symbol of the early world and man's first contest with nature were the written words :

« When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman ? »

The banner came on and through the crowd, which at last opened where we stood for its passage, and the banner-bearer turned and faced the throng and stood on the first step of the cross beside me.

A man followed him, clad in a long dark-brown gown of coarse woollen, girt with a cord, to which hung a 'pair of beads' (or rosary, as we should call it to-day) and a book in a bag. The man was tall and big-boned, a ring of dark hair surrounded his priest's tonsure ; his nose was big but clear cut and with wide nostrils ; his shaven face showed a longish upper lip and a big but blunt chin ; his mouth was big and the lips closed firmly ; a face not very noteworthy but for his grey eyes well opened and wide apart, at whiles lighting up his whole face with a kindly smile, at whiles set and stern, at whiles resting in that look as if they were gazing at something a long way off, which is the wont of the eyes of the poet or enthusiast.

He went slowly up the steps of the cross and stood at the top with one hand laid on the shaft, and shout upon shout broke forth from the throng. When the shouting died away into a silence of the human voices, the bells were still quietly chiming with that-far away voice of theirs, and the long-winged dusky swifts, by no means scared by the concourse, swung round about the cross with their wild squeals ; and the man stood still for a little, eyeing the throng, or rather looking first at one and then another man in it, as though he were trying to think what such an one was thinking of, or what he were fit for. Sometimes he caught the eye of one or other, and then that kindly smile spread over his face, but faded off it into the sternness and sadness of a man who has heavy and great thoughts hanging about him.

But when John Ball first mounted the steps of the cross a lad at some one's bidding had run off to stop the ringers, and so presently the voice of the bells fell dead, leaving on men's minds that sense of blankness or keen disappointment which is always caused by the sudden stopping of a sound one has got used to and found pleasant. But a great expectation had fallen by now on all that throng, and no word was spoken even in a whisper, and all men's hearts and eyes were fixed upon the dark figure standing straight up now by the tall white shaft of the cross, his hands stretched out before him, one palm laid upon the other. And for me, as I made ready to hearken, I felt a joy in my soul that I had never yet felt. — *From « A Dream of John Ball ».*

⁂

THE VOICE OF JOHN BALL

So now I heard John Ball; how he lifted up his voice and said:

« Ho, all ye good people! I am a priest of God, and in my day's wrok it cometh that I should tell you what ye should do, and what ye should forbear doing, and to that end I am come hither: yet first, if I myself have wronged any man here, let him say wherein my wrongdoing lieth, that I may ask his pardon and his pity.'

A great hum of good-will ran through the crowd as the spoke; then he smiled as in a kind of pride, and again he spoke:

« Wherefore did ye take me out of the archbishop's prison but three days agone, when ye lighted the archbishop's house for the candle of Canterbury, but that I might speak to you and pray you: therefore I will not keep silence, whether I have done ill, or whether I have done well. And herein, good fellows and my very brethren, I would have you to follow me; and if there be such here, as I know full well there be some, and may be a good many, who have been robbers of their neighbours ('And who is my neighbour?' quoth the rich man), or lechers, or despiteful haters, or talebearers, or fawners on rich men for the hurt of the poor (and that is the worst of all) — Ah, my poor brethren who have gone astray, I say not to you, go home and repent lest you mar our great deeds, but rather come afield and there repent. Many a day have ye been fools, but hearken unto me and I shall make you wise above the wisdom of the earth; and if ye die in your wisdom, as God wot ye well may, since the fields ye wend to bear swords for daisies, and spears for bents, then shall ye be, though men call you dead, a part and parcel of the living wisdom of all things, very stones of the pillars that uphold the joyful earth.

« Foorsoth, ye have heard it said that ye shall do well in this world that in the world to come ye may live happily for ever; do ye well then, and have your reward both on earth and in heaven; for I say to you that earth and heaven are not two but one; and this one is that which ye know, and are each one of you a part of, to wit, the Holy Church, and in each one of you dwelleth the life of the Church, unless ye slay it. Forsooth, brethren, will ye murder the Church any one of you, and go forth a wandering man and lonely, even as Cain did who slew his brother? Ah, my brothers, what an evil doom is this, to be an outcast from the Church, to have none to love you and to speak with you, to be without fellowship! Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them, and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on for ever, and each one of you part of it, while many a man's life upon the earth from the earth shall wane.

« Therefore, I bid you not dwell in hell but in heaven, or while ye must, upon earth, which is a part of heaven, and forsooth no foul part.

« Forsooth, he that waketh in hell and feeleth his heart fail him, shall have memory of the merry days of earth, and how that when his heart failed him there, he cried on his fellow, were it his wife or his son or his brother or his gossip or his brother sworn in arms, and how that his fellow heard him and came and they mourned together under the sun, till again they laughed together and were but half sorry between them. This shall he think on in hell, and cry on his fellow to help him, and shall find that therein is no help because there is no fellowship, but every man for himself. Therefore, I tell you that the proud, despiteous rich man, though he knoweth it not, is in hell already, because he hath no fellow; and he that hath so hardy a heart that in sorrow he thinketk of fellowship, his sorrow is soon but a story of sorrow — a little change in the life that knows not ill. »

He left off for a little; and indeed for some time his voice had fallen, but it was so clear and the summer evening so soft and still, and the silence of the folk so complete, that every word told. His eyes fell down to the crowd as he stopped speaking, since for some little while they had been looking far away into the blue distance of summer; and the kind eyes of the man had a curious sight before him in that crowd, for amongst them were many who by this time were not dry-eyed, and some wept outright in spite of their black beards, while all had that look as if they were ashamed of themselves, and did not want others to see how deeply they were moved, after the fashion of their race when they are strongly stirred.

But while I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name — while I pondered all this, John Ball began to speak again in the same soft and clear voice with which he had left off.

'Good fellows, it was your fellowship and your kindness that took me out of the archbishop's prison three days agone, though God wot ye had nought to gain by it save outlawry and the gallows; yet lacked I not your fellowship before ye drew near me in the body, and when between me and Canterbury street was yet

a strong wall, and the turkeys and sergeants and bailiffs.

'For hearken, my friends and helpers; many days ago, when April was yet young, I lay there, and the heart that I had strung up to bear all things because of the fellowship of men and the blessed saints and the angels and those that are, and those that are to be, this heart, that I had strung up like a strong bow, fell into feebleness, so that I lay there a-longing for the green fields and the white-thorn bushes and the lark singing over the corn, and the talk of good fellows round the ale-house bench, and the babble of the little children, and the team on the road and the beasts afield, and all the life of earth; and I alone all the while, near my foes and afar from my friends, mocked and flouted and starved with cold and hunger; and so weak was my heart that though I longed for all these things yet I saw them not, nor knew them but as names; and I longed so sore to be gone that I chided myself that I had once done well; and I said to myself:

« 'Forsooth, hadst thou kept thy tongue between thy teeth thou mightest have been something, if it had been but a parson of a town, and comfortable to many a poor man; and then mightest thou have clad here and there the naked back, and filled the empty belly, and holpen many, and men would have spoken well of thee, and of thyself thou hadst thought well; and all this hast thou lost for lack of a word here and there to some great man, and a little winking of the eyes amidst murder and wrong and unruth; and now thou art nought and helpless, and the hemp for thee is sown and grown and heckled and spun, and lo there, the rope for thy gallows-tree! — all for nought, for nought.

« Forsooth, my friends, thus I thought and sorrowed in my feebleness that I had not been a traitor to the Fellowship of the Church, for e'en so evil was my foolish imagination.

« Yet, forsooth, as I fell a pondering over all the comfort and help that I might have been and that I might have had, if I had been but a little of a trembling cur to creep and crawl before abbot and bishop and baron and bailiff, came the thought over me of the evil of the world wherewith I, John Ball, the rascal hedge-priest, had fought and striven in the Fellowship of the saints in heaven and poor men upon earth.

« Yea, forsooth, once again I saw as of old, the great treading down the little, and the strong beating down the weak, and cruel men fearing not, and kind men daring not, and wise men caring not; and the saints in heaven forbearing and yet bidding me not to forbear; forsooth, I knew once more that he who doeth well in fellowship, and because of fellowship, shall not fail though he seem to fail to-day, but in days hereafter shall he and his work yet be alive, and men be holpen by them to strive again and yet again; and yet indeed even that was little, since, forsooth, to strive was my pleasure and my life.

« So I became a man once more, and I rose up to my feet and went up and down my prison what I could for my hopples, and into my mouth came words of good cheer, even such as we to-day have sung, and stoutly I sang them, even as we now have sung them; and then did I rest me, and once more thought of those pleasant fields, where I would be, and all the life of man and beast about them, and I said to myself that I should see them once more before I died, if but once it were.

« Forsooth, this was strange, that whereas before I longed for them and yet saw them not, now that my longing was slaked my vision was cleared, and I saw them as though the prison walls opened to me and I was out of Canterbury street and amidst the green meadows of April; and therewithal along with me folk that I have known and who are dead, and folk that are living; yea, and all those of the Fellowship on earth and in heaven; yea, and all that are here this day. Overlong were the tale to tell of them, and of the time that is gone.

« So thenceforward I wore through the days with no such faint heart, until one day the prison opened verily and in the daylight, and there were ye, my fellows, in the door — your faces glad, your hearts light with hope, and your hands heavy with wrath; then I saw and understood what was to do. Now, therefore, do ye understand it! »

His voice was changed, and grew louder than loud now, as he cast his hands abroad towards that company with those last words of his; and I could feel that all shame and fear was falling from those men, and that mere fiery manhood was shining through their wonted English shamefast stubbornness, and that they were moved indeed and saw the road before them. Yet no man spoke, rather the silence of the menfolk deepened, as the sun's rays grew more level and more golden, and the swifts wheeled about shriller and louder than before.

Then again John Ball spoke and said.

« 'In good sooth, I deem ye wot no worse than I do what is to do — and first that somewhat we shall do — since it is for him that is lonely or in prison to dream of fellowship, but for him that is of a fellowship to do and not to dream.

« And next, ye know who is the foeman, and that is the proud man, the oppressor, who scorneth fellowship, and himself is a world to himself and needeth no helper nor helpeth any, but, heeding no law, layeth law on other men because

he is rich ; and surely every one that is rich is such an one, nor may be other.

» Forsooth, in the belly of every rich man dwelleth a devil of hell, and when the man would give his goods to the poor, the devil within him gainsayeth it, and saith, ' Wilt thou then be of the poor, and suffer cold and hunger and mocking as they suffer, then give thou thy goods to them, and keep them not. '

« And when he would be compassionate, again saith the devil to him, 'If thou heed these losels and turn on them a face like to their faces, and deem of them as men, then shall they scorn thee, and evil shall come of it, and even one day they shall fall on thee to slay thee when they have learned that thou art but as they be '.

« Ah, woe worth the while ! too oft he sayeth sooth, as the wont of the devil is, that lies may be born of the barren truth ; and sooth it is that the poor deemeth the rich to be other than he, and meet to be his master, as though, forsooth, the poor were come of Adam, and the rich of him that made Adam, that is God ; and thus the poor man oppresseth the poor man, because he feareth the oppressor. Nought such are ye, my brethren ; or else why are ye gathered here in harness to bid all bear witness of you that ye are the sons of one man and one mother, begoten of the earth ? '

As he said the words there came a stir among the weapons of the throng, and they pressed closer round the cross, yet witheld the shout as yet which seemed gathering in their bosoms.

And again he said :

« Forsooth, too many rich men there are in this realm ; and yet if there were but one, there would be one too many, for all should be his thralls. Hearken, then, ye men of Kent. For overlong belike have I held you with words ; but the love of you constrained me, and the joy that a man hath to babble to his friends and his fellows whom he hath not seen for a long season.

« Now, hearken, I bid you : To the rich men that eat up a realm there cometh a time when they whom they eat up, that is the poor, seem poorer than of wont, and their complaint goeth up louder to the heavens ; yet it is no riddle to say that oft at such times the fellowship of the poor is waxing stronger, else would no man have heard his cry. Also at such times is the rich man become fearful, and so waxeth in cruelty, and of that cruelty do people misdeem that it is power and might waxing. Forsooth, ye are stronger than your fathers, because ye are more grieved than they, and ye should have been less grieved than they had ye been horses and swine ; and then, forsooth, would ye have been stronger to bear ; but ye, ye are not strong to bear, but to do.

« And wot ye why we are come to you this fair eve of holiday ? and wot ye why I have been telling of fellowship to you ? Yea, forsooth, I deem ye wot well, that it is for this cause, that ye might bethink you of your fellowship with the men of Essex. '

His last word let loose the shout that had ben long on all men's lips, and great and fierce it was as it rang shattering through the quiet upland village. But John Ball held up his hand, and the shout was one and no more.

Then he spoke again :

« Men of Kent, I wot well that ye are not so hard bested as those of other shires, by the token of the day when behind the screen of leafy boughs ye met Duke William with bill and bow as he wended Londonward from that woeful field of Senlac ; but I have told of fellowship, and ye have hearkened and understood what the Holy Church is, whereby ye know that ye are fellows of the saints in heaven and the poor men of Essex ; and as one day the saints shall call you to the heavenly feast, so now do the poor men call you to the battle.

« Men of Kent, ye dwell fairly here, and your houses are framed of stout oak beams, and your own lands ye till ; unless some accursed lawyer with his false lying sheep-skin and forged custom of the Devil's Manor hath stolen it from you ; but in Essex slaves they be and villeins, and worse they shall be, and the lords swear that ere a year be over ox and horse shall go free in Essex, and man and woman shall draw the team and the plough ; and north away in the east countries dwell men in poor halls of wattled reeds and mud, and the north-east wind from off the fen whistles through them ; and poor they be to the letter ; and there him whom the lord spareth, the bailiff squeezeth, and him whom the bailiff forgetteth, the Easterling Chapman sheareth ; yet be these stout men and valiant, and your very brethren.

« And yet if there be any man here so base as to think that a small matter, let him look to it that if these necks abide under the yoke, Kent shall sweat for it ere it be long ; and ye shall lose acre and close and woodland, and be servants in your own houses, and your sons shall be the lords' lads, and your daughters their lemans, and ye shall buy a bold word with many stripes, and an honest deed with a leap from the gallows-tree.

« Bethink ye, too, that ye have no longer to deal with Duke William, who, if he were a thief and a cruel lord, was yet a prudent man and a wise warrior ; but cruel are these, and headstrong, yea, thieves and fools in one — and ye shall lay their heads in the dust. »

A shout would have arisen again, but his eager voice rising higher yet, restrained it as he said :

« And how shall it be then when these are gone ? What else shall ye lack when ye lack masters ? Ye shall not lack for the fields ye have tilled, nor the houses ye have built, nor the cloth ye have woven ; all these shall be yours, and whatso ye will of all that the earth beareth ; then shall no man mow the deep grass for another, while his own kine lack cow-meat ; and he that soweth shall reap, and the reaper shall eat in fellowship the harvest that in fellowship he hath won ; and he that buildeth a house shall dwell in it with those that he biddeth of his free will ; and the tithe barn shall garner the wheat for all men to eat of when the seasons are untoward, and the rain-drift hideth the sheaves in August ; and all shall be without money and without price. Faithfully and merrily then shall all men keep the holidays of the Church in peace of body and joy of heart. And man shall help man, and the saints in heaven shall be glad, because men no more fear each other ; and the churl shall be ashamed, and shall hide his churlishness till it be gone, and he be no more a churl ; and fellowship shall be established in heaven and on the earth. » — *Speech attributed to John Ball — the Rebel Priest of Kent, who perished in the rebellion of Wat Tyler,* 1381 — *in* THE DREAM OF JOHN BALL.

ACROSS TIME'S ABYSS.

A Dream Converse with John Ball.

Sometimes I am rewarded for fretting myself so much about present matters by a quite unasked for pleasant dream.

⁂

We (John Ball and William Morris) entered the Church through the south porch under a round-arched door carved very richly, and with a sculpture over the doorway and under the arch, which, as for as I could see by the moonlight, figured St. Michael and the Dragon.

The nave was not very large, but it looked spacious too ; it was semewhat old, but well-built and handsome ; the roof of curved wooden rafters with great tie-beams going from wall to wall. There was no light in it but that of the moon streaming through the windows, which were by no means large, and were glazed with white fretwork, whith here and there a little figure in very deep rich colours. Two larger windows near the east end of each aisle had just been made so that the church grew lighter toward the east, and I could see all the work on the great screen between the nave and chancel which glittered bright in new paint and gilding : a candle glimmered in the loft above it, before the huge rood that filled up the whole space between the loft and the chancel-arch. There was an altar at the east end of each aisle, the one on the south side standing against the outside wall, the one on the north against a traceried gaily-painted screen, for that aisle ran on along the chancel. There were a few oak benches near this second altar, seemingly just made, and well carved and moulded ; otherwise the floor of the nave, which was paved with a quaint pavement of glazed tiles like the crocks I had seen outside as to ware, was quite clear, and the shafts of the arches rose out of it white and beautiful under the moon as though out of a sea, dark but with gleams struck over it.

The priest let me linger and look round, when he had crossed himself and given me the holy water ; and then I saw that the walls were figured all over with stories, a huge St. Christopher, with his black beard, being close to the porch by which we entered, and above the chanced arch the Doom of the Last Day, in which the painter had not spared either kings or bishops, and in which a lawyer with his blue coif was one of the chief figures in the group which the Devil was hauling off to hell.

« Yea », said John Ball, « tis a goodly church and fair as you may see 'twixt Canterbury and London as for its kind ; and yet do I misdoubt me where those who are dead are housed, and where those shall house them after they are dead, who built this house for God to dwell in. God grant they be cleansed at last ; forsooth one of them who is now alive is a foul swine and a cruel wolf. Art thou all so sure, scholar, that all such have souls ? and if it be so, was it well done of God to make them ? I speak to thee thus, for I think thou art no delator ; and if thou be, why should I hed it, since I think not to come back from this journey ».

I looked at him and, as it were, had some ado to answer him ; but I said at last, « Friend, I never saw a soul, save in the body ; I cannot tell ».

He crossed himself and said, « Yet do I intend that ere many days are gone by my soul shall be in bliss among the fellowship of the saints, and merry shall it be, even before my body rises from the dead ; for wisely I have wrought in the world, and I wot well of friends that are long ago gone from the world, as St. Martin, and St. Francis and St. Thomas of Canterbury, who shall speak well of me to the heavenly Fellowship, and I shal in no wise lose my reward. »

I looked shyly at his as he spoke ; his face looked sweet and calm and happy, and I would have said no word to grieve him ; and yet belike my eyes looked wonder on him : he seemed to note it and his face grew puzzled.

« How deemest thou of these things ? » said he : « why do men die else, if it be otherwise than this ? »

I smiled : « why then do they live ? » said I.

Even in the white moonlight I saw his face flush, and he cried out in a great voice, « To do great deeds or to repent them that they ever were born. »

« Yea », said I, « they live to live because the world liveth ».

He stretched out his hand to me and grasped mine, but said no more ; and went on till we came to the door in the rood-screen ; then he turned to me with his hand on the ringlatch, and said, « Hast thou seen many dead men ? »

« Nay, but few », said I.

« And I a many », said he ; « but come now and look on these, our friends first and then our foes, so that ye may not look to see them while we sit and talk of the days that are to be on the earth before the Day of Doom cometh. »

So he opened the door, and we went into the chancel ; a light burned on the high altar before the host, and looked red and strange in the moonlight that came through the wide traceried windows unstained by the pictures and beflowerings of the glazing ; there were new stalls for the priests and vicars where we entered, carved more abundantly and beautifully than any of the woodwork I had yet seen, and everywhere was rich and fair colour and delicate and dainty form. Our dead lay just before the high altar on low biers, their faces all covered with linen cloths, for some of them had been sore smitten and hacked in the fray. We went up to them and John Ball took the cloth from the face of one ; he had been shot to the heart with a shaft and his face was calm and smooth. He had been a young man fair and comely, with hair flaxen almost to whiteness ; he lay there in his clothes as he had fallen, the hands crossed over his breast and holding a rush cross. His bow lay on one side of him, his quiver of shafts and his sword on the other.

John Ball spake to me while he held the corner of the sheet :

« What sayest thou, scholar ? feelest thou sorrow of heart when thou lookest on this, either for the man himself, or for thyself and the time when thou shalt be as he is ? »

I said : « Nay, I feel no sorrow for this ; for the man is not here : this is an empty house, and the master has gone from it. Forsooth, this to me is but as a waxen image of a man ; nay, not even that, for if it were an image, it would be an image of the man as he was when he was alive. But here is no life nor semblance of life, and I am not moved by it ; nay, I am more moved by the mon's clothes and war-gear — there is more life in them than in him. »

« Thou sayest sooth », said he ; « but sorrowest thou not for thine own death when thou lookest on him ? »

I said, « And how can I sorrow for that which I cannot so much as think of ? Bethink thee that while I am alive I cannot think that I shall die, or believe in death at all, although I know well that I shall die — I can but think of myself as living in some new way ».

Again he looked on me as if puzzled ; then his face cleared as he said,

« Yea, forsooth, and that is what the Church meaneth by death, and even that I look for ; and that hereafter I shall see all the deeds that I have done in the ody, and what they really were, and what shall come of them ; and ever shall I be a member of the Church, and that is the Fellowship ; then, even as now. »

I sighed as he spoke ; then I said, « Yea, somewhat in this fashion have most of men thought, since no man that is can conceive of not being ; and I mind me that in those stories of the old Danes, their common word for a man dying is to say, ' He changed his life '.

« And so deemest thou ? »

I shook my head and said nothing.

« What hast thou to say hereon ? » said he, « for there seemeth something betwixt us twain as it were a wall that parteth us. »

« This », said I, « that though I die and end, yet mankind yet liveth, therefore I end not, since I am a man ; and even so thou deemest, good friend ; or at the least even so thou doest, since now thou art ready to die in grief and torment rather than be unfaithful to the Fellowship, yea rather than fail to work thine utmost for it ; whereas, as thou thyself saidst at the cross, with a few words spoken and a little huddling-up of the truth, with a few pennies paid, and a few masses sung, thou mightest have had a good place on this earth and in that heaven. And as thou doest, so now doth many a poor man unnamed and unknown, and shall do while the world lasteth : and they that do less than this, fail because of fear, and are ashamed of their cowardice, and make many tales to themselves to deceive themselves, lest they should grow too much ashamed to live. And trust me if this were not so, the world would not live, but would die, smothered by its own stink. Is the wall betwixt us gone, friend ? »

He smiled as he looked at me, kindly, but sadly and shamefast, and shook his head.

Then in a while he said, « Now ye have seen the images of those who were our friends, come and see the images of those who were once our foes ».

So he led the way through the side screen into the chancel aisle, and there on the pavement lay the bodies of the foemen, their weapons taken

from them and they stripped of their armour, but not otherwise of their clothes, and their faces mostly, but not all, covered. At the east end of the aisle was another altar, covered with a rich cloth beautifully figured, and on the wall over it was a deal of tabernacle work, in the midmost niche of it an image painted and gilt of a gay knight on horseback, cutting his own cloak in two with his sword to give a cantle of it to a half-naked beggar.

« Knowest thou any of these men ? » said I.

He said, « Some I should know, could I see their faces ; but let them be. »

« Were they evil men ? » said I.

« Yea », he said, « some two or three. But I will not tell thee of them ; let St. Martin, whose house this is, tell their story if he will. As for the rest they were hapless fools, or else men who must earn their bread somehow, and were driven to this bad way of earning it ; God rest their souls ! I will be no tale-bearer, not even to God. »

So we stood musing a little while, I gazing not on the dead men, but on the strange pictures on the wall, which were richer and deeper coloured than those in the nave ; till at last John Ball turned to me and laid his hand on my shoulder.

Said he : « I have still much to say to thee, and the night is yet young. Go we and sit in the stalls of the vicars, and let us ask and answer on matters concerning the fashion of this word of menfolk, and of this land wherein we dwell ; for once more I deem of thee that thou hast seen things which I have not seen, and could not have seen. »

With that word he led me back into the chancel, and we sat down side by side in the stalls at the west end of it, facing the high altar and the great east window. By this time the chancel was getting dimmer as the moon wound round the heavens ; but yet was there a twilight of the moon, so that I could still see the things about me for all the brightness of the window that faced us ; and this moon twilight would last, I knew, until the short summer night should wane, and the twilight of the dawn begin to show us the colours of all things about us.

So we sat, and I gathered my thoughts to hear what he would say, and I myself was trying to think what I should ask of him ; for I thought of him as he of me, that he had seen things which I could not have seen.

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THOSE TWO TALK OF THE DAYS TO COME

« Brother », said John Ball, « how deemest thou of our adventure ? I do not ask thee if thou thinkest we are right to play the play like men, but whether playing like men we shall fail like men. »

« Why dost thou ask me ? » said I ; « how much further than beyond this church can I see ? »

« Far further », quoth he, « for I wot that thou art a scholar and hast read books ; and withal, in some way that I cannot name, thou knowest more than we ; as though with thee the world had lived longer than with us. Hide not, therefore, what thou hast in thine heart, for I think after this night I shall see thee no more, until we meet in the heavenly Fellowship. »

« Friend », I said, « ask me what thou wilt ; or rather ask thou the years to come to tell thee some little of their tale ; and yet methinks thou thyself mayest have some deeming thereof. »

He raised himself on the elbow of the stall and looked me full in the face, and said to me :

« Is it so after all that thou art no man in the flesh, but art sent to me by the Master of the Fellowship, and the King's Son of Heaven, to tell me what shall be ? If that be so tell me straight out, since I had some deeming hereof before ; whereas thy speech is like ours an yet unlike. and thy face hath something in it which is not after the fashion of our day. And yet take heed, if thou art such an one, I fear thee not, nay, nor him that sent thee ; nor for thy bidding, nor for his, will I turn back from London Bridge but will press on, for I do what is meet and right. »

« Nay », said I, « did I not tell thee e'en now that I knew life but not death ? I am not dead ; and as to who hath sent me, I say not that I am come by my own will ; for I know not ; yet also I know not the will that hath sent me hither. And this I say to thee, moreover, that if I know more than thou, I do far less ; therefore thou art my captain and I thy minstrel. »

He sighed as one from whom a weight had been lifted, and said : ' Well, then, since thou art alive on the earth and a man like myself, tell me how deemest thou of our adventure : shall we come to London, and how shall we fare there ? »

Said I, « What shall hinder you to come to London ,and to fare there as ye will ? For be sure that the Fellowship in Essex shall not fail you ; nor shall the Londoners who hate the king's uncles withstand you ; nor hath the Court any great force to meet you in the field ; ye shall cast fear and trembling into their hearts. »

« Even so, I thought », said he ; « but afterwards what shall betide ? »

Said I, ' It grieves my heart to say that which I think. Yet hearken ; many a man's son shall die who is now alive and happy, and if the soldiers be slain, and of them most not on the field, but by the lawyers, how shall the captains escape ? Surely thou goest to thy death. »

He smiled very sweetly, yet proudly, as he said :

« Yea, the road is long, but the end cometh at last. Friend, many a day have I been dying ; for my sister, with whom I have played and been merry in the autumn tide about the edges of the stubble-fields ; and we gathered the nuts and bramble-berries there, and started thence the missel-trush, and wondered at his voice and thought him big ; and the sparrow-hawk wheeled and turned over the hedges and the weasel ran across the path, and the sound of the sheep-bells came to us from the downs as we sat happy on the grass ; and she is dead and gone from the earth, for she pined from famine after the years of the great sickness ; and my brother was slain in the French wars, and none thanked him for dying save he that stripped him of his gear ; and my unwedded wife with whom I dwelt in love after I had taken the tonsure, and all men said she was good and fair, and true she was and lovely ; she also is dead and gone from the earth ; and why should I abide save for the deeds of the flesh which must be done ? Truly, friend, this is but an old tale that men must die : and I will tell thee another, to wit, that they live : and I live now and shall live. Tell me then what shall befall. »

Somehow I could not heed him as a living man as much as I had done, and the voice that came from me seemed less of me as I answered :

« These men are strong and valiant as any that have been or shall be, and good fellows also and kindly ; but they are simple, and see no great way, before their own noses. The victory shall they have and shall not know what to do with it ; they shall fight and overcome, because of their lack of knowledge, and because of their lack of knowledge shall they be cozened and betrayed when their captains are slain, and all shall come to nought by seeming ; and the king's uncles shall prevail, that both they and the kind may come to the shame that is appointed for them. And yet when the lords have vanquished, and all England lieth under them again, yet shall their victroy be fruitless ; for the free men that hold unfree lands shall they not bring under the collar again, and villeinage shall slip from their hands, till there be, and not long after ye are dead, but few unfree men in England ; so that your lives and your deaths both shall bear fruit. »

« Said I not », quoth John Ball, « that thou wert a sending from other times ? Good is thy message, for the land shall be free. Tell on now. »

He spoke eagerly, and I went on somewhat sadly : « The times shall better, though the king and lords shall worsen, the Gilds of Craft shall wax and become mightier ; more recourse shall there be of foreign merchants. There shall be plenty in the land and not famine. Where a man now earneth two pennies he shall earn three. »

« Yea », said he, « then shall those that labour become strong and stronger, and so soon shall it come about that all men shall work and none make to work, and so shall none be robbed, and at last shall all men labour and live and be happy, and have the goods of the earth without money and without price. »

« Yea », said I, « that shall indeed come to pass, but not yet for a while, and belike a long while. »

And I sat for long without speaking, and the church grew darker as the moon waned yet more.

Then I said : « Bethink thee that these men shall yet have masters over them, who have at hand many a law and custom for the behoof of masters, and being masters can make yet more laws in the same behoof ; and they shall suffer poor people to thrive just so long as their thriving shall profit the mastership and no longer : and so shall it be in those days I tell of ; for there shall be king and lords and knights and squires still, with servants to do their bidding, and make honest men afraid ; and all these will make nothing and eat much as aforetime, and the more that is made in the land the more shall they crave. »

« Yea », said he, « that wot I well, that these are of the kin of the daughters of the horse-leech ; but how shall they slake their greed, seeing that as thou sayest villeinage shall be gone ? Belike their men shall pay them quit-rents and do them service, as free men may, but all this according to law and not beyond it ; so that though the workers shall be richer than they now be, the lords shall be no richer, and so all shall be on the road to being free and equal. »

Said I, « Look you, friend ; aforetime the lords, for the most part, held the land and all that was on it, and the men that were on it worked for them as their horses worked, and after they were fed and housed all was the lords' ; but in the time to come the lords shall see their men thriving on the land and shall say once more, 'These men have more than they need, why have we not the surplus since we are their lords ?'

« Moreover, in those days shall betide much chaffering for wares between man and man, and country and country ; and the lords shall note that if there were less corn and less men on their lands there would be more sheep, that is to say more wool for chaffer, and that thereof they should have abundantly more than aforetime ; since all the land they own, and it pays them quit-rent or service, save here and there a croft or a close of a yeoman ; and all this might grow wool for them to sell to the Easterlings. Then shall England see a new thing, for whereas hitherto men have lived on the land and by it,

the land shall no longer need them, but many sheep and a few shepherds shall make wool grow to be sold for money to the Easterlings, and that money shall the lords pouch : for, look you, they shall set the lawyers a-work and the strong hand moreover, and the land they shall take to themselves and their sheep ; and except for these lords of land few shall be the free men that shall hold a rood of land whom the word of their lord may not turn adrift straightway. »

« How mean you ? said John Ball : « shall all men be villeins again ? »

« Nay, said I, « there shall be no villeins in England. »

« Surely then », said he, « it shall be worse, and all men save a few shall be thralls to be bought and sold at the cross. »

« Good friend », said I, « it shall not be so ; all men shall be free even as ye would have it ; yet, as I say, few indeed shall have so much land as they can stand upon save by buying such a grace of their masters. »

« And now », said he, « I wot not what thou sayest. I know a thrall, and he is, his master's every hour, and never his own ; and a villein I know, and whiles he is his own and whiles his lord's ; and I know a free man, and he is his own always ; but how shall he be his own if he have nought whereby to make his livelihood ? Or shall he be a thief and take from others ? Then is he an outlaw. Wonderful is this thou tellest of a free man with nought whereby to live ! »

« Yet so shall it be », said I, « and by such free men shall all wares be made. »

« Nay, that cannot be ; thou art talking riddles », said he ; « for how shall a wood-wright make a chest without the wood and the tools ? »

Said I, « He must needs buy leave to labour of them that own all things except himself and such as himself. »

« Yea, but wherewith shall he buy it ? » said John Ball. « What hath he except himself ? »

« With himself then shall he buy it », quoth I, « with his body and the power of labour that lieth therein ; with the price of his labour shall he buy leave to labour. »

« Riddles again ! » said he ; « how can he sell his labour for aught else but his daily bread ? He must win by his labour meat and drink and clothing and housing ! Can he sell his labour twice over ? »

« Not so », said I, « but this shall he do belike ; he shall sell himself, that is the labour that is in him, to the master that suffers his to work, and that master shall give to him from out of the waes he maketh enough to keep him alive, and to beget children and nourish them till they be old enough to be sold like himself, and the residue shall the rich man keep to himself. »

John Ball laughed aloud, and said : « Well, I perceive we are not yet out of the land of riddles. The man may well do what thou sayest and live, but he may not do it and live a free man. »

« Thou sayest sooth », said I.

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HARD IT IS FOR THE OLD WORLD TO SEE THE NEW

He held his peace awhile, and then he said :

« But no man selleth himself and his children into thraldom uncompelled ; nor is any fool so great a fool as willingly to take the name of freeman and the life of a thrall as payment for the very life of a freeman. Now would I ask thee somewhat else ; and I am the readier to do so since I perceive that thou art a wondrous seer ; for surely no man could of his own wit have imagined a tale of such follies as thou hast told me Now well I wot that men having once shaken themselves clear of the burden of villeinage, as thou sayest we shall do (and I bless thee for the word), shall never bow down to this worser tyranny without sore strife in the world ; and surely so sore shall it be, before our valiant sons give way, that maids and little lads shall take the sword and the spear, and in many a field men's blood and not water shall turn the grist-mills of England.

« But when all this is over, and the tyranny is established, because here are but few men in the land after the great war, how shall it be with you then ? Will there not be many soldiers and sergeants and few workers ? Surely in every parish ye shall have the constables to see that the men work ; and they shall be saying every day, 'Such an one, hast thou yet sold thyself for this day or this week or this year ? Go to now, and get thy bargain done, or it shall be the worse for thee'.

« And wheresoever work is going on there shall be constables again, and those that labour shall labour under the whip like the Hebrews in the land of Egypt. And every man that may, will steal as a dog snatches at a bone ; and there again shall ye need more soldiers and more constables till the land is eaten up by them ; nor shall the lords and the masters even be able to bear the burden of it ; nor will theig gains be so great, since that which each man may do in a day is not right great when all is said. »

« Friend », said I, « from thine own valiancy and high heart thou speakest, when thou sayest that they who fall under this tyranny shall fight to the death against it. Wars indeed there shall be in the world, great and grievous, and yet few on this score ; rather shall men fight as they have been

fighting in France at the bidding of some lord of the manor, or some king, or at last at the bidding of some usurer and forestaller of the market. Valiant men, forsooth, shall arise in the beginning of these evil times, but though they shall die as ye shall, yet shall not their deaths be fruitful as yours shall be ; because ye, forsooth, are fighting against villeinage which is waning, but they shall fight against usury which is waxing.

« And, moreover, I have been telling thee how it shall be when the measure of the times is full ; and we, looking at these things from afar, can see them as they are indeed ; but they who live at the beginning of those times and amidst them, shall not know what is doing around them ; they shall indeed feel the plague and yet not know the remedy ; by little and by little they shall fall from their better livelihood, and weak and helpless shall they grow, and have no might to withstand the evil of this tyranny ; and then again when the times mend somewhat and they have but a little more ease, then shall it be to them like the kingdom of heaven, and they shall have no will to withstand any tyranny, but shall think them elves happy that they be pinched somewhat less.

« Also whereas thou sayest that there shall be for ever constables and sergeants going to and fro to drive men to work, and that they will not work save under the lash, thou art wrong and it shall not be so ; for there shall ever be more workers than the masters may set to work, so that men shall strive eagerly for leave to work ; and when one says, I will sell my hours at such and such à price, then another will say, and I for so much less ; so that never shall the lords lack slaves willing to work, but often the slaves shal lack lords to buy them. »

« Thou tellest marvels indeed », said he ; « but how then ? if all the churls work not, shall there not be famine and lack of wares ? »

« Famine enough », said I, « yet not from lack of wares ; it shall be clean contrary. What wilt thou say when I tell thee that in the latter days there shall be such traffic and such speedy travel across the seas that most wares shall be good cheap, and bread of all things the cheapest ? »

Quoth he : « I should say that then there would be better livelihood for men, for in times of plenty it is well ; for then men eat that which their own hands have harvested, and need not to spend of their substance in buying of others. Truly, it is well for honest men, but not so well for forestallers and regraters*.

But who heeds what befalls such foul swine, who filch the money from people's purses, and do not one hair's turn of work to help them ? »

« Yea, friend », I said, « but in those latter days all power shall be in the hands of these foul swine, and they shall be the rulers of all ; therefore, hearken, for I tell thee that times of plenty shall in those days be the times of famine, and all shall pray forthe prices of wares to rise, so that the forestallers and regraters may thrive, and that some of their well-doing may overflow on to those on whom they live. »

« I am weary of thy riddles », he said. « Yet at least I hope that there may be fewer and fewer folk in the land ; as may well be, if life is then so foul and wretched. »

« Alas, poor man ! » I said ; « nor mayst thou imagine how foul and wretched it may be for many of the folk ; and yet I telle thee that men shall increase and multiply, till where there is one man in the land now, there shall be twenty in those days—yea, in some places ten times twenty. »

« I have but little heart to ask thee more questions », said he ; « and when thou answerest, thy words are plain, but the things they tell of I may scarce understand. But tell me this : in those days will men deem that so it must be for ever, as great men even now tell us of our ills, or will they think of some remedy ? »

« John Ball », said I, « I have told thee that thy death will bring about that which thy life has striven for : thinkest thou that the thing which thou strivest for is worth the labour ? or dost thou believe in the tale I have told thee of the days to come ? »

He said : « I tell thee once again that I trust thee for a seer ; because no man could make up such a tale as thou ; the things which thou tellest are too wonderful for a minstrel, the tale too grievous. And whereas thou askest as to whether I count my labour lost, I say nay ; if so be that in those latter times (and worser than ours they will be) men shall yet seek a remedy : therefore again I ask thee, is it so that they shall ? »

« Yea », said I, « and their remedy shall be the same as thine, although the days be different : for if the folk be enthralled, what remedy save that they be set free ? and if they have tried many roads towards freedom, and found that they led nowhither, then shall they try yet another. Yet in the days to come they shall be slothful to try it, because their masters shall be so much mightier than thine, that they shall not need to show the high hand, and until the

(*) Forestaller, one who buys up goods when they are cheap, and so raises the price for his own benefit ; forestalls the due and real demand. Regrater, one who both buys and sells in the same market, or within five miles thereof ; buys, say a ton of cheese at 10 A. M. and sells it at 5 P. M. a penny a pound dearer without moving from his chair. The word « monopolist » will cover both species of thief.

days get to their evilest, men shall be cozened into thinking that it is of their own free will that they must needs buy leave to labour by pawning their labour that is to be. Moreover, your lords and masters seem very mighty to you, each one of them, and so they are, but they are few ; and the masters of the days to come shall not each one of them seem very mighty to the men of those days, but they shall be very many, and they shall be of one intent in these matters without knowing it ; like as one sees the oars of a galley when the rowers are hidden. that rise and fall as it were with one will. »

« And yet », he said, « shall it not be the same with those that these men devour ? shall not they also have one will ? »

« Friend », I said, « they shall have the will to live, as the wretchedest thing living has : therefore shall they sell themselves that they may live, as I told thee ; and their hard need shall be their lord's easy livelihood, and because of it he shall sleep without fear, since their need compelleth them not to loiter by the way to lament with friend or brother that they are pinched in their servitude, or to devise means for ending it. And yet indeed thou sayest it : they also shall have one will if they but knew it ; but for a long while they shall have but a glimmer of know-ledge of it : yet doubt it not that in the end they shall come to know it clearly, and then shall they bring about the remedy ; and in those days shall it be seen that thou hast not wrought for nothing, because thou hast seen beforehand what the remedy should be, even as those of later days have seen it. »

We both sat silent a little while. The twilight was gaining on the night, though slowly.

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ILL WOULD CHANGE BE AT WHILES WERE IT NOT FOR THE CHANGE BEYOND THE CHANGE

He said : « Many strange things hast thou told me that I could not understand ; yea, some my wit so failed to compass, that I cannot so much as ask thee questions concerning them ; but of some matters would I ask thee, and I must hasten, for in very sooth the night is worn old and grey. Whereas thou sayest that in the days to come, when there shall be no labouring men who are not thralls after their new fashion, their lords shall be many and very many, it seemeth to me that these same lords, if they by many, shall hardly be rich, or but very few of them, since they must verily feed and clothe and house their thralls, so that that which they take from them, since it will have to be dealt out amongst many, will not be enough to make many rich ; since out of one man ye may get but one man's work ; and pinch him never so sorely, still as aforesaid ye may not pinch him so sorely as not to feed him. Therefore, though the eyes of my mind may see a few lords and many slaves, yet can they not see many lords as well as many slaves ; and if the slaves be many and the lords few, then some day shall the slaves make an end of that mastery by the force of their bodies. How then shall thy mastership of the latter days endure ? »

« John Ball », said I, « mastership hath many shifts whereby it striveth to keep itself alive in the world. And now hear a marvel : whereas thou sayest these two times that out of one man ye may get but one man's work, in days to come one man shall do the work of a hundred men—yea, of a thousand or more : and this is the shift of mastership that shall make many masters and many rich men. »

John Ball laughed. « Great is my harvest of riddles to-night », said he ; « for even if a man sleep not, and eat and drink while he is a-working, ye shall but make two men, or thee at the most, out of him. »

Said I : « Sawest thou ever a weaver at his loom ? »

« Yea », said he, « many a time ».

He was silent a little, and then said : « Yet I marvelled not at it ; but now I marvel, because I know what thou wouldst say. Time was when the shuttle was thou wouldst say. Times was when the shuttle was thrust in and out of all the thousand threads of the warp, and it was long to do ; but now the spring-staves go up and down as the man's feet move, and this and that leaf of the warp cometh forward and the shuttle goeth in one shot through all the thousand warps. Yea, so it is that this multiplieth a man many times. But look you, he is so multiplied already ; and so hath he been, meseemeth, for many hundred years. »

« Yea », said I, « but what hitherto needed the masters to multiply him more ? For many hundred years the workman was a thrall bought and sold at the cross ; and for other hundreds of years he hath been a villein—that is, a working-beast and a part of the shock of the manor on which he liveth ; but then thou and the like of thee shall free him, and then is mastership put to its shifts ; for what should avail the mastery then, when the master no longer owneth the man by law as his chattel, nor any longer by law owneth him as stock of his land, if the master hath not that which he on whom he liveth may not lack and live withal, and cannot have without selling himself ? »

He said nothing, but I saw his brow knitted

and his lips pressed together as though in anger ; and again I said :

« Thou hast seen the weaver at his loom : think how it should be if he sit no longer before the web and cast the shuttle and draw home the sley, but if the shed open of itself and the shuttle of itself speed through it as swift as the eye can follow, and the sley come home of itself ; and the weaver standing by and whistling *The Hunt's Up!* the while, or looking to half-a-dozen looms and bidding them what to do.

« And as with the weaver so with the potter, and the smith, and every worker in metals, and all other crafts, that it shall be for them looking on and tending, as with the man that sitteth in the cart while the horse draws.

« Yea, at last so shall it be even with those who are mere husbandmen ; and no longer shall the reaper fare afield in the morning with his hook over his shoulder, and smite and bind and smite again till the sun is down and the moon is up ; but he shall draw a thing made by men into the field with one or two horses, and shall say the word and the horses shall go up and down, and the thing shall reap and gather and bind, and do the work of many men.

« Imagine all this in thy mind if thou canst, at least as ye may imagine a tale of enchantment told by a minstrel, and then tell me what shouldst thou deem that the life of men would be amidst all this, men such as these men of the township here, or the men of the Canterbury gilds. »

« Yea », said he ; « but before I tell thee my thoughts of thy tale of wonder, I would ask thee this : In those days when men work so easily, surely they shall make more wares than they can use in one country-side, or one good town, whereas in another, where things have not gone as well, they shall have less than they need ; and even so it is with us now, and thereof cometh scarcity and famine ; and if people may not come at each other's goods, it availeth the whole land little that one country-side hath more than enough while another hath less ; for the goods shall abide there in the storehouses of the rich place till they perish. So if that be so in the days of wonder ye tell of (and I see not how it can be otherwise), then shall men be but little holpen by making all their wares so easily and with so little labour. »

I smiled again and said : « Yea, but it shall not be so ; not only shall men be multiplied a hundred and a thousand fold, but the distance of one place from another shall be as nothing ; so that the wares which lie ready for market in Durham in the evening may be in London on the morrow morning ; and the men of Wales may eat corn of Essex and the men of Essex wear wool of Wales ; so that, so far as the flitting of goods to market goes, all the land shall be as one parish. Nay, what say I ? Not as to this land only shall it be so, but even the Indies, and far countries of which thou knowest not, shall be, so to say, at every man's door, and wares which now ye account precious and dear-bought, shall then be common things bought and sold for little price at every huckster's stall. Say then, John, shall not those days be merry, and plentiful of ease and contentment for all men ? »

« Brother », said he, « meseemeth some doleful mockery lieth under these joyful tidings of thine ; since thou hast already partly told me to my sad bewilderment what the life of man shall be in those days. Yet will I now for a little set all that aside to consider thy strange tale as of a minstrel from over sea, even as thou biddest me. Therefore I say, that if men still abide men as I have known them, and unless these folk of England change as the land changeth—and forsooth of the men, for good and for evil, I can think no other than I think now, or behold them other than I have known them and loved them—I say if the men be still men, what will happen except that there should be all plenty in the land, and not one poor man therein, unless of his own free will he choose to lack and be poor, as a man in religion or such like ; for there would then be such abundance of all good things, that, as greedy as the lords might be, there would be enough to satisfy their greed and yet leave good living for all who laboured with their hands ; so that these should labour far less than now, and they would have time to learn knowledge, so that there should soon be no learned or unlearned, for all should be learned ; and they would have time also to learn how to order the matters of the parish and the hundred, and of the parliament of the realm, so that the king should take no more than his own ; and to order the rule of the realm, so that all men, rich and unrich should have part therein ; and so by undoing of evil laws and making of good ones, that fashion would come to an end whereof thou speakest, that rich men make laws for their own behoof ; for they should no longer be able to do thus when all had part in making the laws ; whereby it would soon come about that there would be no men rich and tyrannous, but all should have enough and to spare of the increase of the earth and the work of their own hands.

« Yea surely, brother, if ever it cometh about that men shall be able to make things, and not men, work for their superfluities, and that the length of travel from one place to another be made of no account, and all the world be a market for all the world, then all shall live in health and wealth ; and envy and grudging shall

perish. For then shall we have conquered the earth and it shall be enough ; and then shall the kingdom of heaven be come down to the earth in very deed. Why lookest thou so sad and sorry ? what sayest thou ? »

I said : « Hast thou forgotten already what I told thee, that in those latter days a man who halth nought save his own body (and such men shall be far the most of men) must needs pawn his labour for leave to labour ? Can such a man be wealthy ? Hast thou not called him a thrall ? »

« Yea », he said ; « but how could I deem that such things could be when those days should be come wherein men could make things work for them ? »

« Poor man ! » said I. « Learn that in those very days, when it shall be with the making of things as with the carter in the cart, that there he sitteth and shaketh he reins and the horse draweth and the cart goeth ; in those days, I tell thee, many men shall be as poor and wretched always, year by year, as they are with thee when there is famine in the land ; nor shall any have plenty and surety of livelihood save those that shall sit by and look on while others labour ; and these, I tell thee, shall be a many, so that shall see to the making of all laws, and in their hands shall be all power, and the labourers shall think that they cannot do without these men that live by robbing them, and shall praise them and wellnigh pray to them as ye pray to the land shall be he who by forestalling and regrating hath gotten to him the most money ».

« Yea », said he, « and shall they who see themselves robbed worship the robber ? Then indeed shall men be changed from what they are now, and they shall be sluggards, dolts, and cowards beyond all the earth hath yet borne. Such are not the men I have known in my life-days, and that now I love in my death. »

« Nay », I said, « but the robbery shall they not see ; or have I not told thee that they shall hold themselves to be free men ? And for why ? I will tell thee : but first tell me how it fares with men now ; may the labouring man become a lord ? »

He said : « The thing hath been seen that churls have risen from the dortoir of the monastery to the abbot's chair and the bishop's throne ; yet not often ; and whiles hath a bold sergeant become a wise captain, and they have made him squire and knight ; and yet but very seldom. And now I suppose thou wilt tell me that the Church will open her ams wider to this poor people, and that many through her shall rise into lordship. But what availeth that ? Nought were it to me if the Abbot of St. Alban's with his golden mitre sitting guarded by his knights and sergeants, or the Prior of Merton with his hawks and his hounds, had once been poor men, if they were now tyrants of poor men ; nor would it better the matter if there were ten times as many Houses of Religion in the land as now are, and each with a churl's son for abbot or prior over it. »

I smiled and said : « Comfort thyself ; for in those days shall there be neither abbey nor priory in the land, nor monks nor friars, nor any religious. »

He started as I spoke.

« But thou hast told me that hardly in these days may a poor man rise to be a lord : now I tell thee that in the days to come poor men shall be able to become lords and masters and do-nothings ; and oft will it be seen that they shall do so ; and it shall be even for that cause that their eyes shall be blinded to the robbing of themselves by others, because they shall hope in their souls that they may each live to rob others : and this shall be the very safeguard of all rule and law in those days. »

« Now am I sorrier than thou hast yet made me », said he ; « for when once this is established, how then can it be changed ? Strong shall be the tyranny of the latter days. And now meseems, if thou sayest sooth, this time of the conquest of the earth shall not bring heaven down to the earth, as erst I deemed it would, but rather that it shall bring hell up on to the earth. Woe's me, brother, for thy sad and weary foretelling ! And yet saidst thou that the men of those days would seek a remedy. Canst thou yet tell me, brother, what that remedy shall be, lest the sun rise upon me made hopeless by thy tale of what is to be ? And, lo you, soon shall she rise upon the earth. »

In truth the dawn was widening now, and the colours coming into the pictures on wall and in window ; and as well as I could see through the varied glazing of these last (and one window before me had as yet nothing but white glass in it), the ruddy glow, which had but so little a while quite died out in the west, was now beginning to gather in the east—the new day was beginning. I felt anxious to speak to my companion and tell him much, and withal I felt that I must hasten, or for some reason or other I should be too late ; so I spoke at last loud and hurriedly :

« John Ball, be of good cheer ; for once more thou knowest, as I know, that the Fellowship of Men shall endure, however many tribulations it may have to wear through.

« Look you, a while ago was the light bright about us ; but it was because of the moon, and the night was deep notwithstanding, and when the moonlight waned and died and there was but a little glimmer in place of the bright light, yet was the world glad because all things knew

that the glimmer was of day and not of night. Lo you, an image of the times to betide the hope of the Fellowship of Men. Yet forsooth, it may well be that this bright day of summer which is now dawning upon us is no image of the beginnig of the day that shall be ; but rather shall that day-dawn be cold and grey and surly ; and yet by its light shall men see things as they verily are, and no longer enchanted by the gleam of the moon and the glamour of the dreamtide.

« By such grey light shall wise men and valiant souls see the remedy, anddeal with it, a real thing that may be touched and handled, and no glory of the heavens to be worshipped from afar off.

« And what shall it be, as I told thee before, save that men shall be determined to be free ; yea, free as thou wouldst have them, when thine hope rises the highest, and thou art thinking not of the king's uncles, and pollgroat bailiffs, and the villeinage of Essex, but of the end of all, when men shall have the fruits of the earth and the fruits of their toil thereon, without money and without price.

« The time shall come, John Ball, when that dream of thine that this shall one day be shall be a thing that men shall talk of soberly, and as a thing soon to come about, as even with thee they talk of the villeins becoming tenants paying their lord quit-rent ; therefore, hast thou done well to hope it ; and, if thou heedest this also, as I suppose thou heedest it little, thy name shall abide by the hope in those days to come, and thou shalt not be forgotten. »

A King's Lesson

It is told of Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary—the Alfred the Great of his time and people — that he once heard (once *only ?*) that some (only *some*, my lad ?) of his peasants were over-worked and under-fed. So he sent for his Council, and bade come thereto also some of the mayors of the good towns, and some of the lords of land and their bailiffs, and asked them of the truth thereof ; and in diverse ways they all told one and the same tale, how the peasant carles were stout and well able to work and had enough and to spare of meat and drink, seeing that they were but churls ; and how if they worked not at the least as hard as they did, it would be ill for them and il for their lords ; for that the more the churl hath the more he asketh ; and that when he knoweth wealth, he knoweth the lack of it also, as it fared with our first parents in the Garden of God. The King sat and said but little while they spake, but he misdoubted them that they were liars. So the Council brake up with nothing done ; but the King took the matter to heart, being, as kings go, a just man, besides being more valiant than they mostly were, even in the old feudal time. So within two or three days, says the tale, he called together such lords and councillors as he deemed fittest, and bade busk them for a ride ; and when they were ready he and they set out, over rough and smooth, decked out in all the glory of attire which was the wont of those days. Thus they rode till they came to some village or thorpe of the peasant folk, and through it to the vineyards where men were working on the sunny southern slopes that went up from the river : my tale does not say whether that were Theiss, or Donau, or what river. Well, I judge it was late spring or early summer, and the vines but just beginning to show their grapes ; for the vintage is late in those lands, and some of the grapes are not gathered till the first frost have touched them, whereby the wine made from them is the stronger and sweeter. Anyhow there were the peasants, men and women, boys and young maidens, toiling and swinking ; some hoeing between the vine-rows, some bearing baskets of dung up the steep slopes, some in one way, some in another, labouring for the fruit they should never eat, and the wine they should never drink. Thereto turned the King and got off his horse and began to climb up the stony ridges of the vineyard, and his lords in like manner followed him, wondering in their hearts what was toward ; but to the one who was following next after him he turned about and said with a smile, « Yea, lords, this is a new game we are playing to-day, and a new knowledge will come from it. » And the lord smiled, but somewhat sourly.

As for the peasants, great was their fear of those gay and golden lords. I judge that they did not know the King, since it was little likely that any one of them had seen his face ; and they knew of him but as the Great Father, the mighty warrior who kept the Turk from harrying their thorpe. Though, forsooth little matter was it to any man there whether Turk or Magyar was their over-lord, since to one master or another they had to pay the due tale of labouring days in the year, and hard was the livelihood that they earned for themselves on the days when they worked for themselves and their wives and children.

Well, belike they knew no the King ; but amidst those rich lords they saw and knew their own lord, and of him they were sore afraid. But nought it availed them to flee away from those strong men and strong horses—they who had been toiling from before the rising of the sun, and

now it wanted little more than an hour of noon : besides, with the King and lords was a guard of crossbowen, who were left the other side of the vineyard wall,—keen-eyed Italians of the mountains, straight shooters of the bolt. So the poor folk fled not ; nay they made as if all this were none of their business, and went on with their work. For indeed each man said to himself, « If I be the one that is not slain, to-morrow I shall lack bread if I do not work my hardest to-day ; and maybe I shall be headman if some of these be slain and I live. »

Now comes the King amongst them and says : « Good fellows, which of you is the headman ? »

Spake a man, sturdy and sunburnt, well on in years and grizzled : « I am the headman, lord. ».

« Give me thy hoe, then », says the King ; « for now shall I order this matter myself, since these lords desire a new game, and are fain to work under me at vine-dressing. But do thou stand by me and set me right if I order them wrong : but the rest of you go play ! »

The carle knew not what to think, and let the King stand with his hand stretched out, while he looked askance at his own lord and baron, who wagged his head at him grimly as one who says, « Do it, dog ! »

Then the carle lets the hoe come into the King's hand ; and the King falls to, and orders his lords for vine-dressing, to each his due share of the work : and whiles the carle said yea and whiles nay to his ordering. And then ye should have seen velvet cloaks cast off, and mantles of fine Flemish scarlet go to the dusty earth ; as the lords and knights busked them to the work.

So they buckled to ; and to most of them it seemed good game to play at vine-dressing. But one there was who, when his scarlet cloak was off, stood up in a doublet of glorious Persian web of gold an silk, such as men make not now, worth a hundred florins the Bremen ell. Unto him the King with no smile on his face gave the job of toing and froing up and down the hill with the biggest and the frailest dung-basket that there was ; and thereat the silken lord screwed up a grin, that was sport to see, and all the lords laughed ; and as he turned away he said, yet so that none heard him, « Do I serve this son's son of a whore that he should bid me carry dung ? « For you must know that the King's father, John Hunyad, one of the great warriors of the world, the Hammer of the Turks, was not gotten in wedlock, though he were a king's son.

Well, they sped the work bravely for a while, and loud was the laughter as the hoes smote the earth and the flint stones tinkled and the cloud of dust rose up ; the brocaded dung-bearer went up and down, cursing and swearing by the White God and the Black ; and one would say to another, « See ye how gentle blood outgoes churls » blood, even when the gentle does the churls' work : these lazy loons smote but one stroke to our three'. But the King, who worked no worse than any, laughed not at all ; and meanwhile the poor folk stood by, not daring to speak a word one to the other ; for they were still sore afraid, not now of being slain on the spot, but this rather was in their hearts : « These great and strong lords and knights have come to see what work a man may do without dying : if we are to have yet more days added to our year's tale of lords' labour, then are we lost without remedy. » And their hearts sank within them.

So sped the work ; and the sun rose yet higher in the heavens, and it was noon and more. And now there was no more laughter among those toiling lords, and the strokes of the hoe and mattock came for slower, while the dung-bearer sat down at the bottom of the hill and looked out on the river ; but the King yet worked on doggedly, so for shame the other lords yet kept at it. Till at last the next man to the King let his hoe drop with a clatter, and swore a great oath. Now he was a strong black-bearded man in the prime of life, a valiant captain of that famous Black Band that had so often rent the Turkish array ; and the King loved him for his sturdy valour ; so he says to him, « Is aught wrong, Captain ? »

« Nay, lord », says he, « ask the headman carle yonder what ails us ».

« Headman », says the King, « what ails these strong knights ? Have I ordered them wrongly ? »

« Nay, but shirking ails them, lord », says he, « for they are weary : and no wonder, for they have been playing hard, and are of gentle blood ».

« Is that so, lords », says the King, « that ye are weary already ? »

Then the rest hung their heads and said nought, all save that captain of war ; and he said, being a bold man and no liar : « King, I see what thou wouldst be at ; thou hast brought us here to preach us a sermon from that Plato of thine ; and to say sooth, so that I may swink no more, and go eat my dinner, now preach thy worst ! Nay, if thou wilt be priest I will be thy deacon. Wilt thou that I ask this labouring carle a thing or two ? »

« Yea », said the King. And there came, as it were, a cloud of thought over his face.

Then the captain straddled his legs looked big, and sait to the carle : « Good fellow, how long have we been working here ? »

« Two hours or thereabout, judging by the sun above us », says he.

« And how much of thy work have we done in that while ? » says the captain, and winks his eye at him withal.

« Lord », says the carle, grinning a little despite himself, « be not wroth with my word. In the first half-hour ye did five-and-forty minutes, work of ours, and in the next half-hour scant a thirty minutes, work, and the third half-hour a fifteen minutes, work, and in the fourth halfhour two minutes' work'. The grin now had faded from his face, but a gleam came into his eyes as he said : « And now, as I suppose, your day's work is done, and ye will go to your dinner, and eat the sweet and drink the strong ; and we shall eat a little rye-bread, and then be working here till after the sun has set and the moon has begun to cast shadows. Now for you, I wot not how ye shall sleep nor where, nor what white body ye shall hold in your arms while the night flits and the stars shine ; but for us, while the stars yet shine, shall we be at it again, and bethink ye for what ! I know not what game and play ye shall be devising for to-morrow as ye ride back home ; but for us when we come back here tomorrow, it shall be as if there had been no yesterday and nothing done therein, and that work of that to-day shall be nought to us also, for we shall win no respite from our toil thereby, and the morrow fo to-morrow will all be to begin again once more, and so on and on till no tomorrow abideth us. Therefore, if ye are thinking to lay some new tax or tale upon us, think twice of it, for we may not bear it. And all this I say with the less fear, because I perceive this man here beside me, in the black velvet jerkin and the gold chain on his neck, is the King ; nor do I think he will slay me for my word since he hath so many a Turk before him and his mighty sword ! »

Then said the captain : « Shall I smite the man, O king ? or hath he preached thy sermon for thee ? »

« Smite not, for he hath preached it », said the King. « Hearken to the carle's sermon, lords and councillors of mine ! Yet when another hath spoken our thought, other thoughts are born therefrom, and now have I another sermon to preach ; but I will refrain me as now. Let us down and to our dinner. »

So they went, the King and his gentles, and sat down by the river under the rustle of the poplars, and they ate and drank and were merry. And the King bade bear up the broken meats to the vine-dressers, and a good draught of the archer's wine and to the headman he gave a broad gold piece, and to each man three silver pennies. But when the poor folk had all that under their hands, it was to them as though the kingdom of heaven had come down to earth.

In the cool of the evening home rode the King and his lords. The King was distraught and silent ; but at last the captain, who rode beside him, said to him : « Preach me now thine after-sermon, O king ! »

« I think thou knowest it already », said the king, « else hadst thou not spoken in such wise to the carle ; but tell me what is thy craft and the craft of all these, whereby ye live, as the potter by making pots, and so forth ? »

Said the captain : « As the potter lives by making pots, so we live by robbing the poor. »

Again said the King : « And my trade ? »

Said he, « Thy trade is to be a king of such thieves, yet no worser than the rest ».

The king laughed.

« Bear that in mind », said he, « and then shall I tell thee my thought while yonder carle spake. « Carle », I thought, « were I thou or such as thou, then would I take in my hand a sword or a spear, or were it only a hedge-stake, and bid others do the like, and forth would we go ; and since we would be so many, and with nought to lose save a miserable life, we would do battle and prevail, and make an end of the craft of kings and of lords and of usurers, and there should be but one craft in the world, to wit, to work merrily for ourselves and to live merrily thereby ».

Said the captain : « This then is thy sermon. Who will heed it if thou preach it ? »

Said the King : « They who will take the mad king and put him in a king's madhouse, therefore do I forbear to preach it. Yet it *shall* be preached. »

« And not heeded », said the captain, « save by those who head and hang the settters forth of new things that are good for the world. Our trade is safe for many and many a generation. »

And therewith they came to the King's palace, and they ate and drank and slept, and the world wen on its ways. — *Usually printed as a supplemen to « The Dream of John Ball ».*

MONOPOLY ;

or,

HOW LABOUR IS ROBBED.

(*A lecture delivered before the Hammexsmith Socialist Society*, 1893)

I want you to consider the position of the working-classes generally at the present day : not to dwell on the progress that they may (or may not) have made within the last five hundred or the last fifty years ; but to consider what their

position is, relatively to the other classes of which our society is composed : and in doing so I wish to guard against any exaggeration as to the advantages of the position of the upper and middle-classes on the one side, and the disadvantages of the working-classes on the other : for in truth there is no need for exaggeration ; the contrast between the two positions is sufficiently startling when all admissions have been made that can be made. After all, one need not go further than the simple statement of these few words : *The workers are in an inferior position to that of the non-workers.*

When we come to consider that everyone admits nowadays that labour is the source of wealth—or, to put it in another way, that it is a law of nature for man generally, that he must labour in order to live—we must all of us come to the conclusion that this fact, that the workers' standard of livelihood is lower than that of the non-workers, is a startling fact. But startling as it is, it may perhaps help out the imaginations of some of us—at all events of the well-to-do, if I dwell a little on the details of this disgrace, and say plainly what it means.

To begin, then, with the foundation ; the workers eat inferior food and are clad in inferior clothes to those of the non-workers. This is true of the whole class : but a great portion of it are so ill-fed that they not only live on coarser or nastier victuals than the non-producers, but have not enough, even of these, to duly keep up their vitality ; so that they suffer from the diseases and the early deaths which come of semi-starvation : or why say *semi*-starvation ? let us say plainly that most of the workers are starved to death. As to their clothing, they are so ill-clad that the dirt and foulness of their clothes forms an integral part of their substance, and is useful in making them a defence against the weather ; according to the ancient proverb, « Dirt and grease are the poor man's apparel. »

Again, the housing of the workers is proportionally much worse, so far as the better-off of them go, than their food or clothing. The best of their houses or apartments are not fit for human beings to live in, so crowded as they are. They would not be, even if one could step out of their doors into gardens or pleasant country, or handsome squares ; but when one thinks of the wretched sordidness and closeness of the streets and alleys that they actually do form, one is almost forced to try to blunt one's sense of fitness and propriety, so miserable are they. As to the lodgings of the worse-off of our town workers, I must confess that I only know of them by rumour, and that I dare not face them personally ; though I think my imagination will carry me a good way in picturing them to me. One thing, again, has always struck me much in passing through poor quarters of the town, and that is the noise and unrest of them, so confusing to all one's ideas and thoughts, and such a contrast to the dignified calm of the quarters of those who can afford such blessings.

Well ! food, clothes, and housing—those are the three important items in the material condition of men, and I say flatly that the contrast between those of the non-producers and those of the producers is *horrible*, and that the word is no exaggeration. But is there a contrast in nothing else—education, now ? Some of us are in the habit of boasting about our elementary education : perhaps it is good so far as it goest (and perhaps it isn't), but why doesn't it go further ? Why is it elementary ? In ordinary parlance *elementary* is contrasted with *liberal* education. You know that in the class to which I belong, the professional or parasitical class, if a man cannot make some pretence to read a Latin book, and doesn't know a little French or German, he is very apt to keep it dark as something to be ashamed of, unless he has some real turn towards mathematics or the physical sciences to cover his historical or classical ignorance ; whereas if a working-man were to know a little Latin and a little French, he would be looked on as a very superior person, a kind of genius—which, considering the difficulties that surround him, he would be : inferiority again, you see, clear and plain.

But after all, it is not such scraps of ill-digested knowledge as this that give us the real test of the constrast ; this lies rather in the taste for reading and the habit of it, and the capacity for the enjoyment of refined thought and the expression of it, which the more expensive class really has (in spite of the disgraceful sloppiness of its education), and which unhappily the working or un-expensive class lacks. The immediate reason for that lack, I know well enough, and that forms another item of contrast : it is the combined leisure and elbow-room which the expensive class considers its birthright, and without which, education, as I have often had to say, is a mere mockery ; and which leisure and elbow-room the working class lacks, and even « social reformers » expect them to be contented whith that lack. Of course, you understand that in speaking of this item I am thinking of the well-to-do artizan, and not the squalid, hustled-about, misery-blinded and hopeless wretch of the fringe of labour—*i.e.*, the greater part of labour.

Just consider the contrast in the mere matter of holidays. Leisure again ! If a professionnal man (like myself, for instance) does a little more than his due daily grind—dear me, the fuss his friend make of him ! how they are always urging him not to overdo it, and to consider his precious

health, and the necessity of rest and so forth ! and you know the very same persons, if they found some artizan in their employment looking towards a holiday, how sourly they would treat his longings for *rest*, how they would call him (perhaps not to his face) sot and sluggard and the like ; and if he has it, he has got to take it against both his purse and his conscience ; whereas in the professional class the yearly holiday is part of the payment for services. Once more, look at the different standard for the worker and the non-worker !

What can I say about popular amusements that would not so offend you that you would refuse to listen to me ? Well, I must say something at any cost—viz., that few things sadden me so much as the amusements which are thought good enough for the workers ; such a miserable killing—yea, murder—of the little scraps of their scanty leisure time as they are. Though, indeed, if you say that there is not so much contrast here between the workers' public amusements and those provided for the middle-classes, I must admit it, with this explanation, that owing to the nature of the case, the necessarily social or co-operative method of the getting up and acceptation of such amusements, the lower standard has pulled down the whole of our public amusements ; has made, for instance, our theatrical entertainments the very lowest expression of the art of acting which the world has yet seen.

Or again, a cognate subject, the condition of the English language at present. How often I have it said to me, You must not write in a literary style if you wish the working-classes to understand you. Now at first sight that seems as if the worker were in rather the better position in this matter ; because the English of our drawing-rooms and leading articles is a wretched mongrel jargon that can scarcely be called English, or indeed language ; and one would have expected, *a priori*, that what the workers needed from a man speaking to them was plain English : but alas ! 'tis just the contrary. I am told on all hands that my language is too simple to be understood by working-men ; that if I wish them to understand me I must use an inferior quality of the newspaper jargon, the language (so called) of critics and « superior persons » ; and I am almost driven to believe this when I notice the kind of English used by candidates at election time, and by political men generally—though of course this is complicated by the fact that these gentlemen by no means want to make the meaning of their words too clear.

Well, I want to keep as sternly as possible to the point that I started from—viz., that there is a contrast between the position of the working classes and that of the easily-living classes, and that the former are in an inferior position in all ways. And here, at least, we find the so-called friends of the working classes telling us that the producers are in such a miserable condition that, if they are to understand our agitation, we must talk *down* to their slavish condition, not straightforwardly to them as friends and neighbours—as *men*, in short. Such advice I neither can nor will take ; but that this should be thought necessary shows that, in spite of all hypocrisy, the master-class know well enough that those whom they « employ » are their slaves.

To be short, then, the working classes are, relatively to the upper and middle-classes, in a degraded condition, and if their condition could be much raised from what it is now, even if their wages were doubled and their work-times halved, they would still be in a degraded condition, so long as they were in a position of inferiority to another class—so long as they were dependent on them—unless it turned out to be a law of nature that the making of useful things necessarily brought with it such inferiority !

Now, once again, I ask you very seriously to consider what that means, and you will, after consideration, see clearly that it must have to do with the way in which industry is organised amongst us, and the brute force which supports that organisation. It is clearly no matter of race ; the highest noble in the land is of the same blood, for all he can tell, as the clerk in his estate office, or his gardener's boy. The grandson or even the son of the « self-made man » may be just as refined—and also quite as unenergetic and stupid—as the man with twenty generations of titled fools at his back. Neither will it do to say, as some do, that it is a matter of individual talent or energy. He who says this, practically asserts that the whole of the working classes are composed of men who individually do not rise above a lowish average, and that all of the middle-class men rise above it ; and I don't think anyone will be found who will support such a proposition, who is himself not manifestly below even that lowish average. No ! you will, when you think of this contrast between the position of the producing and the non-producing classes, be forced to admit first that it is an evil, and secondly that it is caused by artificial regulations ; by customs that can be turned into more reasonable paths ; by laws of man that can be abolished, leaving us free to work and live as the laws of nature would have us. And when you have come to those two conclusions, you will then have either to accept Socialism as the basis for a new order of things, or to find some better basis than that ; but you will not be able to accept the present basis of society unless you are prepared to say that

you will not seek a remedy for an evil which you know can be remedied. Let me put the position once more as clearly as I can, and then let us see what the remedy is.

Society to-day is divided into classes, those who render services to the public and those who do not. Those who render services to the community are in an inferior position to those who do not, though there are various degrees of inferiority amongst them, from a position worse than that of a savage in a good climate to one not much below that of the lower degree of the unserviceable class ; but the general rule is, that the more undeniably useful a man's services are, the worse his position is ; as, for example, the agriculturald labourers who raise our most absolute necessaries are the most poverty-stricken of all our slaves.

The individuals of this inferior or serviceable class, however, are not deprived of a hope. That hope is, that if they are successful they may become unserviceable ; in which case they will be rewarded by a position of ease, comfort, and respect, and may leave this position as an inheritance to their children. The preachers of the unserviceable class (which rules all society) are very eloquent in urging the realisation of this hope, as a pious duty, on the members of the serviceable class. They say, amidst various degrees of rigmarole : « My friends, thrift and industry are the greatest of the virtues; exercise them to the uttermost, and you will be rewarded by a position which will enable you to throw thrift and industry to the winds. »

However, it is clear that this doctrine would not be preached by the unserviceable if it could be widely practised, because the result would then be that the serviceable class would tend to grow less and less and the world be undome ; there would be nobody to make things. In short, I must say of this hope, « What is that among so many ? » Still it is a phantom which has it uses—to the unserviceable.

Now this arrangment of society appears to me to be a mistake (since I don't want to use strong language)—so much a mistake, that even if it could be shown to be irremediable, I should still say that every honest man must needs be a rebel against it ; that those only could be contented with it who were, on the one hand, dishonest tyrants interested in its continuance ; or, on the other hand(the cowardly and helpless slaves of tyrants—and both contemptible. Such a world, if it cannot be mended, needs no hell to supplement it.

But, you see, all people really admit that it can be remedied ; only some don't want it to be, because they live easily and thoughtlessly in it and by means of it ; and others are so hard-worked and miserable that they have no time to think and no heart to hope, and yet I tell you that if there were nothing between these two sets of people it would be remedied : even then should w have a new world. But judge you with what wreck and ruin, what fire and blood, its birth would be accompanied !

Argument, and appeals to think about these matters, and consciously help to bring a better world to birth, must be addressed to those who lie between these two dreadful products of our system, the blind tyrant and his blind slave. I appeal, therefore, to those of the unserviceable class who are ashamed of their position, who are learning to understand the crime of living without producing, and would be serviceable if they could ; and, on the other hand, to those of the serviceable class who by luck maybe, or rather maybe by determination, by sacrifice of what small leisure or pleasure our system has left them, are able to think about their position and are intelligently discontented with it.

To all these I say : You well know that there must be a remedy to the present state of things. For nature bids all men to work in order to live, and that command can only be evaded by a man or a class forcing others to work for it in its stead ; and, as a matter of fact, it is the few that compel and the many that are compelled ; as indeed the most must work, or the work of the world couldn't go on. Here, then, is your remedy within sight surely ; for why should the many allow the few to compel them to do what nature does herself compel them to do ? It is only by means of superstition and ignorance that they can do so ; for observe that the existence of a superior class living on an inferior implies that there is a constant struggle going on between them ; whatever the inferior class can do to better itself at the expense of the superior it both can and must do. just as a plant must needs grow towards the light ; but its aim must be proportionate to its freedom from prejudice and its knowledge. If it is ignorant and prejudiced it will aim at some mere amelioration of its slavery ; when it ceases to be ignorant, it will strive to throw off its slavery once for all.

Now, I may assume that the divine appointment of misery and degradation as accompaniments of labour is an exploded superstition among the workers ; and, furthermore, that the recognition of the duty of the working-man to raise his class, apart from his own individual advancement, is spreading wider and wider amongst the workers. I assume that most workmen are conscious of the inferior position of their class, athough they are not and cannot be fully conscious of the extent of the loss which they and the whole world suffer as a consequence, since they cannot see and feel

the better life they have not lived. But before they set out to seek a remedy they must add to this knowledge of their position and discontent with it, a knowledge of the means whereby they are kept in that position in their own despite ; and that knowledge it is for us Socialists to give them, and when they have learned it then the change will come.

One can surely imagine the workman saying to himself, « Here am I, a useful person in the community, a carpenter, a smith, a compositer, a weaver, a miner, a ploughman, or what not, and yet, as long as I work thus and am useful, I belong to the lower class, and am not respected like yonder squire or lord's son who does nothing yonder gentleman who receives his quatterly dividends, yonder lawyer or soldier who does worse than nothing, or yonder manufacturer, as he calls himself, who pays his managers and foremen to do the wordk he pretends to do ; and in all ways. I live worse than he does, and yet I *do* and he lives on my *doings*. And furthermore, I know that not only do I know my share of my work, but I know that if I were to combine with my fellow-workmen, we between us could carry on our business and earn a good livelihood by it without the help (?) of the squire's partridge-shooting, the gentleman's dividend-drawing, the lawyer's chicanery, the soldier's stupidity, or the manufacturer's quarrel with his brother manufacturer. Why, then, am I in an inferior position to the man who does nothing useful, and whom, therefore, it is clear that I *keep* ? He says he *is* useful, to me, but I know I am useful to him or he would not employ me, and I don't perceive his utility. How would it be if I were to leave him severely alone, to try the experiment of living on his usefulness while I lived on mine, and worked *with* those that are useful *for* those that are useful ? Why can't I do this ? » My friend, because since you live by your labour, you are not free. And if you ask me, Who is my master ? who owns me ? I answer *Monopoly*. Get rid of Monopoly, and you will have overthrown your present tyrant, and will be able to live as you please, within the limits which nature prescribed to you while she was your master, but which limits you, as man, have enlarged so enormously by almost making her your servant.

And now, what are we to understand by the word Monopoly ? I have seen it defined as the selling of wares at an enhanced price without the seller having added any additional value to them ; which may be put again in this way, the habit of receiving rewards for services never performed or intended to be performed ; for imaginary services, in short.

This definition would come to this, that Monopolist is *cheat* writ large ; but there is an element lacking in this definition which we must presently supply. We can defend ourselves against this cheat by using our wits to find out that his services are imaginary, and then refusing to deal with him ; his instrument is fraud only. I should extend the definition of the Monopolist by saying that he was one who was *priviliged* to *compel* us to pay for imaginary services. He is, therefore, a more injurious person than a mere cheat, against whom we can take precautions, because his instrument for depriving us of what we have earned is no longer mere fraud, but fraud with *violence* to fall back on. So long as his privilege lasts we have no defence against him ; if we want to do business in his line of things, we must pay him the toll which his privilege allows him to claim of us, or else abstain from the article we want to buy. If, for example, there were a Monopoly of champagne, silk velvet, kid gloves, or dolls' eyes, when you wanted any of those articles you would have to pay the toll of the Monopolist, which would certainly be as much as he could get, beside their cost of production and distribution ; and I imagine that if any such Monopoly were to come to light in these days, there would be a tremendous to-do about it, both in and out of Parliament. Nevertheless, there is little to-do about the fact that all society to-day is in the grasp of *Monopoly*. Monopoly is our master, and we do not know it.

For the privilege of our Monopolists does not enable them merely to lay a toll on a few matters of luxury or curiosity which people can do without. I have stated, and you must admit, that everyone must labour who would live, unless he is able to get somebody to do his share of labour for him—to be somebody's pensioner in fact. But most people cannot be the pensioners of others ; therefore, they have to labour to supply their wants ; but in order to labour usefully two matters are required : 1st, The bodily and mental powers of a human being, developed by training, habit and tradition ; and 2nd, Raw material on which to exercise those powers, and tools wherewith to aid them. The second matters are absolutely necessary to the first ; unless the two come together, no commodity can be produced. Those, therefore, that must labour in order to live, and who have to ask leave of others for the use of the instruments of labour, are not free men but the dependents of others, *i.e.*, their slaves ; for, the commodity which they have to buy of the monopolists is no less than life itself.

Now, I ask you to conceive of a society in which all sound and sane persons can produce by their labour on raw materials, aided by fitting tools, a due and comfortable livelihood, and which possesses a sufficiency of raw materials and tools. Would you think it unreasonable or unjust, that

such community should insist on every sane and sound person working to produce wealth, in order that he might not burden the community; or, on the other hand, that it should insure a comfortable livelihood to every person who worked honestly for that livelihood, a livelihood in which nothing was lacking that was necessary to his development as a healthy human animal, with all its strange complexity of intellectual and moral habits and aspirations?

Now, further, as to the raw material and tools of the community, which, mind you, are necessary to its existence: would you think it unreasonable, if the community should insist that these precious necessaries, things without which it could not live, should be *used* and not *abused*? Now, raw material and tools can only be *used* for the production of useful things; a piece of tillage, for instance, is not used by sowing it with thistles and dock and dodder, nor a bale of wool by burning it under your neighbour's window to annoy him; this is abuse, not use, of all these things, and I say that our community will be right in forbidding such abuse.

Again, would it be unreasonable for the community to say that these means of production, if they are to be used and not abused, must be used by those who *can* use them, that is, by all the sane and sound persons engaged in earning their livelihood in concert; that they are to be so used according to fair and natural regulations agreed upon by the whole community in its sane mind; and that, furthermore, since they are to be used by all, they must not be exclusively possessed, *i.e.*, owned by any; because, if any private persons, or groups of such, held the exclusive possession or ownership of them, they could withhold the use of them from those who could use them, except on terms which would place the useful persons in a position of inferiority to the useless; in other words they would be their masters, and would impose such a life on them as they chose. Therefore, I say, those raw materials and tools would be the property of the whole community, and would be used by every one in it, on the terms that they should repair the waste in them and not engross undue shares of them.

Here, then, is our reasonable community, in which all can produce, all do produce, no one has to pay poll-tax to be allowed to work, that is to live; in which no man need be badly off, unless by his own will; a society whose aim it is to make the most of its natural conditions and surroundings for the benefit of each and all of its members. These people I call reasonable men; but they have been called by other names, as breakers of the eighth commandment (or of all the commandments in the lump), brigands, assassins, greedy pillagers, enemies of society,—in a word, Socialists.

Look at another society, and see if we like it better. In it, as in our first one, all sane and sound persons can produce wealth by their labour on raw material aided by tools; nor is there any lack of raw materials and tools in *this* society; yet there the resemblance ceases; for, one part of those who could do useful work will not, and consequently, another part cannot; some of this second part can get no work to do, and are starved outright; others can get nothing but useless work to do, and thereby help to starve their brethren; and all those who produce anything, as we have seen before, are in an inferior position to those who do not.

The law of nature, that livelihood follows labour, is thus reversed, since those who work hardest get least, and those who work least fare best. Is this reasonable? Yet it is the direct and necessary result of those rights of property which the whole of our army, navy, police, judges, lawyers, parsons, etc. ,are banded together to sustain, by whatever amount of fraud and violence may be necessary for its safeguarding. It is the result of monopoly; for now the field is no longer used only for its primary use, the growing of corn, the feeding of beasts, the building of a house upon it; it is also *abused* by being employed as a rent-squeezing machine for the supposed benefit of an individual; and the like is the case with the tools of labour; the stored up labour of past generations, the machinery, the means of transit, all these things are no longer used merely as means of production; that has now become their secondary use, which the law does not trouble itself with at all, since it has all its attention turned to its enforcing their abuse (now become their primary use) for the benefit of the owners; their abuse as instruments for squeezing rent, interest, and profit out of the producers.

Those that thus, according to the (middle-class) ten commandments, are so anxious to prevent what they call theft, are thus the masters—nay, the owners—of all society under our present system; outside them there is nothing whatever but machinery, metal, brutal, and human, for enabling them to produce, not the greatest amount of wealth, but the greatest amount of profit; and when the masters fall short in getting what they consider the due amount of profit produced by this said machinery, they say times are bad: even though the warehouses and granaries are full, and the power of producing wealth with decreasing labour is every day growing. High prices to them and also, unluckily, to their human machines, mean prosperity, because these latter are not in the least in the world rewarded for producing wealth for themselves, but for produ-

cing profits for their masters. The destruction of wealth by war and other calamities is good for their profit-grinding, therefore we have war. The waste of labour in all kinds of stupidities and fatuities is good for trade, therefore we have sham literature, sham art, sham enjoyment, newspapers, advertisements, jubilees, and all kinds of disgraces, to help our failing system to totter on a little longer, so that our sons instead of ourselves may have to face the inevitable ruin which, on these terms, must bring about the peace to come.

What help is there out of it all? I have spoken of the workers as the helpless machinery of commerce; and helpless they are so long as they are apathetically accepting their position *as* mere machinery in the hands of the masters of society; and yet it is they who have to bring about the change, and sweep away manopoly. The capitalists for any radical change are far more helpless than they are; because, as capitalists, as a class, they cannot even conceive of any other means of living except as pensioners on others, and it is their accepted duty, nay, their religion, to resist all change in this direction; nor as individuals have they any means of earning their livelihood, if you take away their pensions before you have begun to reconstruct a new world in which they would find a place liker other people, it is, therefore, impossible that the change can be made from above to below. No, it is the classes which are necessary to what of real society still hangs together behind the monstrous machinery of monopoly, it is the workers themselves that must bring about the change. And it is at least an incidental purpose of Socialist propaganda that the change should be, if possible, brought about or at least guided by the conscious intelligence of the workers, that it may not be left altogether to the blind forces of hunger, misery, and despair, which the capitalist system is so steadily piling up for its own overthrow. Apart from all the conscious politics, all the pushing this way and that, of semi-extinct Toryism and vague crude democracy, which is undoubtedly paving the way for revolution, the time is coming when the monopoly of the means of production will lose its value, when the employers will begin to cease to employ. Cut-throat competition, ever cheapening means of production, and exhausting markets on one hand; on the other, the unceasing struggle of the workers to improve their condition at the expense of the capitalists, will make employment for profit more difficult both to get and to give: will, in fact, bring about deadlock and ruin in spite of occasional improvements in trade. But if the workers have learned to understand their position, which means if they have become determined to make the best of the nature which they have so far conquered, in despite of artificial restrictions on labour for the benefit of a class, they need not fear the coming crisis. That very increase in the productivity of labour, which will ruin capitalism, will make Socialism possible, and it cannot be doubted that the progress of the cheapening of production will be quickened prodigiously in the very first days of the new social order, and we shall all find it easy enough to live a very few years after the time when we found it so difficult to make profits.

Nevertheless, it would be disinguenuous if I seemed to try to create the impression that the abolition of monopoly—of the artificial restrictions on production—would be plain sailing, that it would come quite peacefully and without strenuous effort of various kinds. Things now going on do not encourage one to think that: hypocrisy where the movement seems weak in power or limited in aim, unscrupulous and relentless repression where it seems threatening and well instructed; no real signs of privilege yielding a jot without compulsion. And you must remember that all our law and government, from Parliament to a County Court, has now got to be just an elaborate defence of that very monopoly which it is our business to clear away, though they by no means began with that. True it is, that if the whole class of workers could be convinced on one day or in one year of the necessity of abolishing monopoly, it would pass away like the clouds of night. But the necessities of the miserable, and the aspirations of the intelligent, will outrun the slower process of gradual conversion, and the anti-monopolists will find themselves in a position in which they will be forced to try to get hold of the executive, in order to destroy it and thus metamorphose society, not in order to govern by it and as they are now governed; in other words, they will have to sweep away all the artificial restrictions that stand in the way of free labour, and they will have to *compel* this step by some means or other. Those who set before them this necessity will doubtless differ at present as to the means whereby this will be done; but they should at least agree, and will agree when the time comes for action, that any means that are means, and are not unhuman, are good to use.

I have, then, tried to point out to you that the producing or useful class are in an inferior position to the non-producing or useless class; that this is a reverseal of the law of nature which bids all to labour in order to live. That this monstrosity is the necessary result of private persons being allowed to treat the matters that are necessary to the fructification of labour as their *property*, and to abuse them by employing them as mere means of compulsion on the worker

to pay tribut for leave to live. I have asked you to learn to agree with us Socialists in thinking it necessary to abolish this monopoly, and to combine together for its abolition and the reconstruction of society on the basis of the freedom of labour and the abolition of all privilege. I must add further, that no programme is worthy the acceptance of the working-classes that stops short of the abolition of private property in the means of production. Any other programme is misleading and dishonest ; it has two faces to it, one of which says to the working-man, « This is Socialism or the beginning of it » (which it is not), and the other says to the capitalist, « This is sham Socialism ; if you can get the workers, or part of them, to accept this, it will create a new lower middle class, a buffer, to push in between Privilege and Socialism, and save you, if only for a while. »

But this true programme, which means the abolition of privilege, is enough, for it must and will lead directly to full Socialism. It will draw the teeth of the dragon of capitalism, and make a society of equality possible ; a society in which, instead of living among enemies in a state of things where there is nothing but a kind of armed truce between all men, we shall live among friends and neighbours, with whom indeed our passions or folly may sometimes make us quarrel, but whose interests cannot really be dissociated from our own.

Useful work vesus Useless toil.

An essay read before the Hammersmith Socialist Society, 1893

The above title may strike some of my readers as strange. It is assumed by most people now-a-days that all work is useful, and by most *well-to-do* people that all work is desirable. Most people, well-to-do or not, believe that, even when a man* is doing work which appears to be useless, he is earning his livelihood by it—he is « employed », as the phrase goes ; and most of those who are well-to-do cheer on the happy worker with congratulations and praises, if he is only « industrious » enough and deprives himself of all pleasure and holidays in the sacred cause of labour. In short it has become an article of the creed of modern morality that all labour is good in itself—a convenient belief to those who live on the labour of others. But as to those on whom they live, I recommend them not to take it on trust, but to look into the matter a little deeper.

Let us grant, first, that the race of man must either labour or perish. Nature gives us absolutely nothing gratis ; we must win it by toil of some sort or degree. Let us see, then, if she does not give us some compensation for this compulsion to labour, since certainly in other matters she takes care to make the acts necessary to the continuance of life in the individual and the race not only endurable, but even pleasurable.

Yet, first, we must say in the teeth of the hypocritical praise of all labour, whatsoever it may be, of which I have made mention, that there is some labour which is so far from being a blessing that it is a curse ; that it would be better for the community and for the worker if the latter were to fold his hands and refuse to work, and either die or let us pack him off to the workhouse or prison—which you will.

Here, you see, are two kinds of work—one good, the other bad : one not far removed from a blessing, a lightening of life ; the other a mere curse, a burden to life.

What is the difference between them, then ? This : one has hope in it, the other has not. It is manly to do the one kind of work, and manly also to refuse to do the other.

What is the nature of the hope which, when it is present in work, makes it worth doing ?

It is threefold, I think — hope of rest, hope of product, hope of pleasure in the work itself ; and hope of these also in some abundance and of good quality ; rest enough and good enough to be worth having ; product worth having by one who is neither a fool nor an ascetic ; pleasure enough for all for us to be conscious of it while we are at work ; not a mere habit, the loss of which we shall feel as a fidgetty man feels the loss of the bit of string he fidgets with.

I have put the hope of rest first because it is the simplest and most natural part of our hope. Whatever pleasure there is in some work, there is certainly some pain in all work, the beast-like pain of stirring up our slumbering energies to action, the beast-like dread of change when things are pretty well with us ; and the compensation for this animal pain is animal rest. We must feel while we are working that the time will come when we shall not have to work. Also the rest, when it comes, must be long enough to allow us to enjoy it ; it must be longer than is merely necessary for us to recover the strength we have expended in working, and it must be animal rest also in this, that it must not be disturbed by anxiety, else we shall not be able to enjoy it. If we have this amount and kind of rest we shall, so far, be no worse off than the beasts.

* When the word « man » or « men » is used in the following pages, it is intended to include both sexes, unless otherwise stated.

As to the hope of product. I have said that nature compels us to work for that. It remains for *us* to look to it that we *do* really produce something, and not nothing, or at least nothing that we want or are allowed to use. If we look to this and use our wils we shall, so far, be better than machines.

The hope of pleasure in the work itself : how strange that hope must seem to some of my readers—to most of them ! Yet I think that to all living things there is a pleasure in the exercise of their energies, and that even beasts rejoice in being lithe and swift and strong. But a man at work, making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as of his body. Memory and imagination help him as he works. Not only his own thoughts, but the thoughts of the men of past ages guide his hands ; and, as a part of the human race, he creates. If we work thus we shall be men, and our days will be happy and eventful.

Thus worthy work carries with it the hope of pleasure in rest, the hope of the pleasure in our using what it makes, and the hope of pleasure in our daily creative skill.

All other work but this is worthless ; it is slaves' work—mere toiling to live, that we may live to toil.

Therefore, since we have, as it were, a pair of scales in which to weigh the work now done in the world, let us use them. Let us estimate the worthiness of the work we do, after so many thousand years of toil, so many promises of hope deferred, such boundless exultation over the progress of civilisation and the gain of liberty.

Now, the first thing as to the work done in civilisation and the easiest to notice is that it is portioned out very un-equally amongst the different classes of society. First, there are people—not a few — who do no work, and make no pretence to doing any. Next, there are people, and very many of them, who work fairly hard, though with abundant easements and holidays, claimed and allowed ; and lastly, there are people who work so hard that they may be said to do nothing else than work, and are accordingly called « the working classes », as distinguished from the middle classes and the rich, or aristocracy, whom I have mentioned above.

It is clear that this inequality presses heavily upon the « working » class, and must visibly tend to destroy their hope of rest at least, and so, in that particular, make them worse off than mere beasts of the field ; but that is not the sum and end of our folly of turning useful work into useless toil, but only the beginning of it.

For first, as to the class of rich people doing no work we all know that they consume a great deal while they produce nothing. Therefore, clearly, they have to be kept at the expense of those who do work, just as paupers have, and are a mere burden on the community. In these days there are many who have learned to see this, though they can see no further into the evils of our present system, and have formed no idea of any scheme for getting rid of this burden ; though perhaps they have a vague hope that changes in the system of voting for members of the House of Commons may, as if by magic, tend in that direction. With such hopes or superstitions we need not trouble ourselves. Moreover, this class, once thought most necessary to the State, is scant of numbers, and has now no power of its own, but depends on the support of the class next below it—the middle class. In fact, it is really composed either of the most successful men of that class, or of their immediate descendants.

As to the middle class including the trading, manufacturing and professional people of our society, they do, as a rule, seem to work quite hard enough, and so at first sight might be thought to help the community, and not burden it. But by far the greater part of them, though they work, do not produce, and even when they do produce, as in the case of those engaged (wastefully indeed in the distribution of goods, or doctors, or (genuine) artists and literary men, they consume out of all proportion to their due share. The commercial and manufacturing part of them, the most powerful part, spend their lives and energies in fighting amongst themselves for their respective shares of the wealth which they *force* the genuine workers to provide fro them ; the others are almost wholly the hangers-on of these : they are the parasites of property, sometimes, as in the case of lawyers, undisguisedly so ; sometimes, as the doctors and others above-mentioned, professing to be useful but too often of no use save as supporters of the system of folly fraud and tyranny of which they form a part. And all these we must remember, have, as a rule, one aim in view : not the production of utilities, but the gaining of a position eiher for themselves or their children in which they will not have to work at all. It is their ambition and the end of their whole lives to gain, if not for themselves yet at least for their children, the proud position of being obvious burdens on the community. For their work itself, in spite of the sham dignity with which they surround it, they care nothing : save a few enthusiasts, men of science, art or letters, who, if they are not the salt of the earth, are at least (and O, the pity of it !) the salt of the miserable system of which they are the slaves, which hinders and thwarts them at every turn and even sometimes corrupts them.

Here then is another class, this time very numerous and all-powerful, which produces very little and consumes enormously, and is therefore supported, as paupers are, by the real producers. The class that remains to be considered produces all that is produced, and supports both itself and the other classes, though it is placed in a position of inferiority to them ; real inferiority, mind you, involving a degradation both of mind and body. But it is a necessary consequence of this tyranny and folly that again many of these workers are not producers. A vast number of them once more are merely parasites of property, some of them openly so, as the soldiers by land and sea who are kept on foot for the perpetuating of national rivalries and enmities, and for the purposes of the national struggle for the share of the product of unpaid labour. But besides this obvious burden on the producers and the scarcely less obvious one of domestic servants, there is first the army of clerks, shop-assistants and so forth who are engaged in the service of the private war for wealth, which as above said, is the real occupation of the well-to-do middle class. This is a larger body of workers than might be supposed, for it includes mongst others all those engaged in what I should call competitive salesmanship, or, to use a less dignified word, the puffery of wares, which has now got to such a pitch that there are many things which cost far more to sell than they do to make.

Next there is the mass of people employed in making all those articles of folly and luxury, the demand for which is the outcome of the existence of the rich non-producing classes ; things which people leading a manly and uncorrupted life would not ask for or dream of. These things, whoever may gainsay me, I will for ever refuse to call wealth : they are not wealth, but waste. Wealth is what nature gives us and what a reasonable man can make out of the gifts of nature for his reasonable use. The sunlight, the fresh air, the unspoiled face of the earth, food, raiment and housing, necessary and decent ; the storing up of knowledge of all kinds, and the power of disseminating it ; means of free communication between man and man ; works of art, the beauty which man creates when he is most a man most aspiring and thoughtful—all things which serve the pleasure of people, free, manly and uncorrupted. This is wealth. Nor can I think of anything worth having which does not come under one or other of these heads. But think, I beseech you, of the product of England, the workshop of the world, and wil you not be bewildered, as I am, at the thought of the mass of things which no sane man could desire, but which our useless toil makes—and sells ?

Now, further, there is even a sadder industry yet forced on many, very many, of our workers—the making of wares which are necessary to them and their brethren, *because they are an inferior class*. For if many men live without producing, nay, must live lives so empty and foolish that they *force* a great part of the workers to produce wares which no one needs, not even the rich, it follows that most men must be poor ; and, living as they do on wages from those whom they support, cannot get for their use the *goods* which men naturally desire, but must put up with miserable make-shifts for them, with coarse food that does not nourish, with rotten raiment which does not shelter, with wretched houses which may well make a town-dweller in civilisation look back with regret to the tent of the nomad tribe, or the cave of the pre-historic savage. Nay, the workers must even lend a hand to the great industrial invention of the age—adulteration, and by its help produce for their own use shams and mockeries of the luxury of the rich ; for the wage-earners must always live as the wage-payers bid them, and their very habits of life are *forced* on then by their masters.

But it is waste of time to try to express in words due contempt of the productions of the much-praised chea ness of our epoch. It must be enough to say that this cheapness is necessary to the system of exploiting on which modern manufacture rests. In other words, our society includes a great mass of slaves, who must be fed, clothed, housed and amused as slaves, and that their daily necessity compels them to make the slave-wares whose use is the perpetuation of their slavery.

To sum up, then, concerning the manner of work in civilised states, these states are composed of three classes—a class which does not even pretend to work, a class which pretends to work but which produces nothing, and a class which works, but is compelled by the other two classes to do work which is often unproductive.

Civilisation therefore wastes its own resources, and will do so as long as the present system lasts. These are cold words with which to describe the tyranny under which we suffer ; try then to consider what they mean.

There is a certain amount of natural material and of natural forces in the world and a certain amount of labour-power inherent in the persons of the men that inhabit it. Men urged by their necessities and desires have laboured for many thousands of years at the task of subjugating the forces of nature and of making the natural material useful to them. To our eyes, since we cannot see into the future, that struggle with nature seems nearly over, and the victory of the human race over her nearly complete. And, looking backwards to the time when history first began, we note that the progress of that victory

has been far swifter and more startling within the last two hundred years than ever before. Surely, therefore, we moderns ought to be in all ways vastly better off than any who have gone before us. Surely we ought, one and all of us, to be wealthy, to be well furnished with the good things which our victory over nature has won for us.

But what is the real fact ? Who will dare to deny that the great mass of civilised men are poor ? So poor are they that it is mere childishness troubling ourselves to discuss whether perhaps they are in some ways a little better off than their forefathers. They are poor ; nor can their poverty be measured by the poverty of a resourceless savage, for he knows of nothing else than his poverty ; that he should be cold, hungry, houseless, dirty, ignorant, all that is to him as natural as that he should have a skin. But for us, for the most of us, civilisation has bred desires which she forbids us to satisfy, and so is not merely a niggard but a torturer also.

Thus then have the fruits of our victory over nature been stolen from us, thus has compulsion by nature to labour in hope of rest, gain, and pleasure been turned into compulsion by man to labour in hope—of living to labour !

What shall we do then, can we mend it ?

Well, remember once more that it is not our remote ancestors who achieved the victory over nature, but our fathers, nay, our very selves. For us to sit hopeless and helpless then would be a strange folly indeed : be sure that we can amend it. What, then, is the first thing to be done ?

We have seen that modern society is divided into two classes, one of which is *privileged* to be kept by the labour of the other—that is, it forces the other to work for it and takes from this inferior class everything that it *can* take from it, and uses the wealth so taken to keep its own members in a superior position, to make them beings of a higher order than the others : longer lived, more beautiful, more honoured, more refined than those of the other class. I do not say that it troubles itself about its members being *positively* long lived, beautiful or refined, but merely insists that they shall be so *relatively* to the inferior class. As also it cannot use the labour-power of the inferior class fairly in producing real wealth it wastes it wholesale in the production of rubbish.

It is this robbery and waste on the part of the minority which keeps the majority poor ; if it could be shown that it is necesary for the preservation of society that this should be submitted to, little more could be said on the matter, save that the despair of the oppressed majority would probably at some time or other destroy Society. But it has been shown, on the contrary, even by such incomplete experiments, for instance, as Co-operation (so-called) that the existence of a privileged class is by no means necessary for the production of wealth, but rather for the « government » of the producers of wealth, or, in other words, for the upholding of privilege.

The first step to be taken then is to abolish a class of men privileged to shirk their duties as men, thus forcing others to do the work which they refuse to do. All must work according to their ability, and so produce what they consume—that is, each man should work as well as he can for his own livelihood, and his livelihood, should be assured to him ; that is to say, all the advantages which society would provide for each and all of its members.

Thus, at last, would true Society be founded. It would rest on equality of condition. No man would be tormented for the benefit of another—nay, no one man would be tormented for the benefit of Society. Nor, indeed, can that order be called Society which is not upheld for the benefit of every one of its members.

But since men live now, badly as they live, when so many people do not produce at all, and when so much work is wasted, it is clear that, under conditions where all produced and no work was wasted, not only would everyone work with the certain hope of gaining a due share of wealth by his work, but also he could not miss his due share of rest. Here, then, are two out of the three kinds of hope mentioned above as an essential part of worthy work assured to the worker. When class robbery is abolished, every man will reap the fruits of his labour, every man will have due rest—leisure, that is. Some Socialists might say we need not go any further than this ; it is enough that the worker should get the full produce of his work, and that his rest should be abundant. But though the compulsion of man's tyranny is thus abolished, I yet demand compensation for the compulsion of nature's necessity. As long as the work is repulsive, it will still be a burden which must be taken up daily, and even so would mar our life, though it be not of long daily duration. What we want to do is to is to add to our wealth without diminishing our pleasure. Nature will not be finally conquered till our work becomes a part of the pleasure of our lives.

That first step of freeing people from the compulsion to labour needlessly will at least put us on the way towards this happy end ; for we shall then have time and opportunities for bringing it about. As things are now, between the waste of labour-power in mere idleness and its waste in unproductive work, it is clear that the world of civilisation is supported by a small part of its people ; when *all* were working *usefully* for its

support, the share of work which each would have to do would be but small, if our standard of life were about on the footing of what well-to-do and refined people now think desirable. We shall have labour-power to spare, and shall, in short, be as wealthy as we please. It will be easy to live. If we were to wake up some morning now, under our present system, and find it « easy to live », that system would force us to set to work at once and make it hard to live ; we should call that « developing our resources », or some such fine name. The multiplication of labour has become a necessity for us, and as long as that goes on no ingenuity in the invention of machines will be of any real use to us. Each new machine will cause a certain amount of misery among the workers whose special industry it may disturb ; so many of them will be reduced from skilled to unskilled workmen, and then gradually matters will slip into their due grooves, and all will work apparently smoothly again ; and if it were not that all this is preparing revolution, things would be, for the greater part of men, just as they were before the new wonderful invention.

But when revolution has made it « easy to live », when all are working harmoniously together and there is no one to rob the worker of his time, that is to say his life ; in those coming days there will be no compulsion on us to go on producing things we do not want, no compulsion on us to labour for nothing, we shall be able calmly and thoughtfully to consider what we shall do with our wealth of labour-power. Now, for my part, I think the first use we ought to make of that wealth, of that freedom,should be to make all our labour, even the commonest and most necessary, pleasant to everybody ; for thinking over the matter carefully, I can see that the one course which will certainly make life happy in the face of all accidents and troubles is to take a pleasurable interest in all the details of life. And lest perchance you think that an assertion too universally accepted to be worth making, let me remind you how entirely modern civilisation forbids it ; with what sordid, and even terrible, details it surrounds the life of the poor, what a mechanical and empty life she forces on the rich ; and how rare a holiday it is for any of us to feel ourselves a part of nature, and unhurriedly, thoughtfully, and happily to note the course of our lives amidst all the little links of events which connect them with the lives of others, and build up the great whole of humanity.

But such a holiday our whole lives might be, if we were resolute to make all our labour reasonable and pleasant. But we must be resolute, indeed ; for no half measures will help us here. It has been said already that our present joyless labour, and our lives scared and anxious as the life of a hunted beast are forced upon us by the presents system of producing for the profit of the privileged classes. It is necessary to state what this means. Under the present system of wages and capital the « manufacturer » (most absurdly so-called, since a manufacturer means a person who makes with his hands) having a monopoly of the means whereby the power to labour inherent in every man's body can be used for production, is the master of those who are not so privileged ; he, and he alone, is able to make use of this labour-power, which, on the other hand, is the only commodity by means of which his « capital », that is to say the accumulated product of past labour, can be made productive. He therefore buys the labour-power of those who are bare of capital and can only live by selling it to him ; his purpose in this transaction is to increase his capital, to make it breed. It is clear that if he paid those with whom he makes his bargain the full value of their labour, that is to say all that they produced, he would fail in his purpose. But since he is the monopolist of the means of productive labour, he can *compel* them to make a bargain better for him and worse for them than that ; which bargain is that after they have earned their livelihood, estimated according to a standard high enough to ensure their peaceable submission to his mastership, the rest (and by far the larger part as a matter of fact) of what they produce shall belong to him, shall be his *property* to do as he likes with, to use or abuse at his pleasure ; which property is, as we all know, jealously guarded by army and navy, police and prison ; in short, by that huge mass of physical force which superstition, habit, fear of death by starvation—IGNORANCE, in on word, among the propertyless masses enables the propertied classes to use for the subjection of—their slaves.

Now, at other times, other evils resulting from this system may be put forward. What I want to point out now is the impossibility of our attaining to attractive labour under this system, and to repeat that it is this robbery (there is no other word for it) which wastes the available labour-power of the civilised world, forcing many men to do nothinfi, and many, very many more to do nothing useful ; and forcing those who carry on really useful labour to most burdensome overwork. For understand once for all that the « manufacturer » aims primarily at producing, by means of the labour he has stolen from others, not goods but profits, that is, the « wealth » that is produced over and above the livelihood of his workmen. Whether that « wealth » is real or sham matters nothing to him. If it sells and yields him a « profit » it is all right. I have said

that, owing to there being rich people who have more money than they can spend reasonably, and who therefore buy sham wealth, there is waste on that side ; and also that, owing to there being poor people who cannot afford to buy things which are worth making, there is waste on that side. So that the « demand » which the capitalist « supplies » is a false demand. The market in in which he sells is « rigged » by the miserable inequalities produced by the robbery of the system of Capital and Wages.

It is this system, therefore, which we must be resolute in getting rid of, if we are to attain to happy and useful work for all. The first step towards making labour attractive is to get the means of making labour fruitful, the Capital, including the land, machinery, factories, etc., into the hands of the community, to be used for the good of all alike, so that we might all work at « supplying » the real « demands » of each and all—that is to say, work for livelihood, instead of working to supply the demand of the profit market—instead of working for profit,—*i.e.*, the power of compelling other men to work against their will.

When this first step has been taken and men begin to understard that nature wills all men either to work or starve, and when they are no longer such fools as to allow some the alternative of stealing, when this happy day is come, we shall then be relieved from the tax of waste, and consequently shall find that we have, as aforesaid, a mass of labour-power available, which will enable us to live as we please within reasonable limits. We shall no longer be hurried and driven by the fear of starvation, which at present presses no less on the greater part of men in civilised communities than it does on mere savages. The first and most obvious necessities will be so easily provided for in a community in which there is no waste of labour, that we shall have time to look round and consider what we really do want, that can be obtained without over-taxing our energies ; for the often-expressed fear of mere idleness falling upon us when the force supplied by the present hierarchy of compulsion is withdrawn, is a fear which is but generated by the burden of excessive and repulsive labour, which we most of us have to bear at present.

I say once more that, in my belief, the first thing which we shall think so necessary as to be worth sacrificing some idle time for, will be the attractiveness of labour. No very heavy sacrifice will be required for attaining this object, but some will be required. For we may hope that men who have just waded through a period of strife and revolution will by the last to put up long with a life of mere utilitarianism though Socialists are sometimes accused by ignorant persons of aiming at such a life. On the other hand, the ornamental part of modern life is already rotten to the core, and must be utterly swept away before the new order of things is realised. There is nothing of it—there is nothing which could come of it that could satisfy the aspirations of men set free from the tyranny of commercialism.

We must begin to build up the ornamental part of life—its pleasures, bodily and mental, scientific and artistic, social and individual—on the basis of work undertaken willingly and cheerfully, with the consciousness of benefiting ourselves and our neighbours by it. Such absolutely necessary work as we should have to do would in the first place take up but a small part of each day, and so far would not be burdensome ; but it would be a task of daily recurrence, and therefore would spoil our day's pleasure unless it were made at least endurable while it lasted. In other words, all labour, even the commonest, must be made attractive.

How can this be done ?—is the question the answer to which will take up the rest of this paper. In giving some hints on this question, I know that, while all Socialists will agree with many of the suggestions made, some of them may seem strange and venturesome. These must be considered as being given without any intention of dogmatising, and as merely expressing my own personal opinion.

From all that has been said already it follows, that labour, to be attractive, must be directed towards some obviously useful end, unless in cases where it is undertaken voluntarily by each individual us a pastime. This element of obvious usefulness is all the more to be counted on in sweetening tasks otherwise irksome, since social morality, the responsibility of man towards the life of man, will, in the new order of things, take the place of theological morality, or the responsibility of man to some abstract idea. Next, the day's work will be short. This need not be insisted on. It is clear that with work unwasted it *can* be short. It is clear also that much work which is now a torment, would be easily endurable if it were much shortened.

Variety of work is the next point, and a most important one. To compel a man to do day after day the same task, without any hope of escape or change, means nothing short of turning his life into a prison-torment. Nothing but the tyranny of profit-grinding makes this necessary. A man might easily learn and practice at least three crafts, varying sedentary occupation with outdoor—occupation calling for the exercise of strong bodily energy for work in which the mind had more to do. There are few men, for instance,

who would not wish to spend part of their lives in the most necessary and pleasantest of all work —cultivating the earth. One thing which will make this variety of employment possible will be the form that education will take in a socially-ordered community. At present all education is directed towards the end of fitting people to take their places in the hierarchy of commerce — these as masters, those as workmen. The education of the masters is more ornamental than that of the workmen, but it is commercial still ; and even at the ancient universities learning is but little regarded, unless it can in the long run be made *to pay*. Due education is a totally different thing from this, and concerns itself in finding out what different people are fit for, and helping them along the road which they are inclined to take. In a duly-ordered society, therefore, young people would be taught such handicrafts as they had a turn for as a part of their education, the discipline of their minds and bodies ; and adults would also have opportunities of learning in the same schools, for the development of individual capacities would be of all things chiefly aimed at by education, instead, as now, the subordination of all capacities to the great end of « money-making » for oneself—or one's master. The amount of talent, and even genius, which the present system crushes, and which would be drawn out by such a system, would make our daily work easy and interesting.

Under this head variety I will note one product of industry which has suffered so much from commercialism that it can scarcely be said to exist, and is, indeed, so foreign from our epoch that I fear there are some who will find it difficult to understand what I have to say on the subject, which I neverthless must say, since it is really a most important one, I mean that side of art which is, or ought to be, done by the ordinary workman while he is about his ordinary work, and which has got to be called, very properly, Popular Art. This art, I repeat, no longer exists now, having been killed by commercialism. But from the beginning of man's contest with nature till the rise of the present capitalistic system, it was alive, and generally flourished. While it lasted, everything that was made by man was adorned by man, just as everything made by nature is adorned by her. The craftsman, as he fashioned the thing he had under his hand, ornamented it so naturally and so entirely without conscious effort, that it is often difficult to distinguish where the mere utilitarian part of his work ended and the ornamental began. Now the origin of this art was the necessity that the workman felt for variety in his work, and though the beauty produced by this desire was a great gift to the world, yet the obtaining variety and pleasure in the work by the workman was a matter of more importance still, for it stamped all labour with the impress of pleasure. All this has now quite disappeared from the work of civilisation. If you wish to have ornament, you must pay specially for it, and the workman is compelled to produce ornament, as he is to produce other wares. He is compelled to pretend happiness in his work, so that the beauty produced by man's hand, which was once a solace to his labour, has now become an extra burden to him, and ornament is now but one of the follies of useless toil, and perhaps not the least irksome of its fetters.

Besides the short duration of labour, its conscious usefulness, and the variety which should go with it, there is another thing needed to make it attractive, and that is pleasant suroundings. The misery and squalor which we people of civilisation bear with so much complacency as a necessary part of the manufacturing system is just as necessary to the community at large as a proportionate amount of filth would be in the house of a private rich man. If such a man were to allow the cinders to be raked all over his drawing-room, and a privy to be established in each corner of his dining-room, if he habitually made a dust and refuse heap of his once beautiful garden, never washed his sheets or changed his table-cloth, and made his family sleep five in a bed, he world surely find himself in the claws of a commission *de lunatico*. But such acts of miserly folly are just what our present society is doing daily under the compulsion of a supposed necessity, which is nothing short of madness. I beg you to bring your commission of lunacy against civilisation without more delay.

For all our crowded towns and bewildering factories are simply the outcome of the profit system. Capitalistic manufacture, capitalistic landowning and capitalistic exchange force men into big cities in order to manipulate them in the interests of capital ; the same tyranny contracts the due space of the factory so much that (for instance) the interior of a great weaving-shed is almost as ridiculous a spectacle as it is a horrible one. There is no other necessity for all this, save the necessity for grinding profits out of men's lives, and of producing cheap goods for the use (and subjection) of the slaves who grind. All labour is not yet driven into factories ; often where it is there is no necessity for it, save again the profit-tyranny. People engaged in all such labour need by no means be compelled to pig together in close city quarters. There is no reason why they should not follow their occupations in quiet country homes, in industrial colleges, in small towns, or, in short, where they find it happiest for them to live.

As to that part of labour which must be associated on a large scale, this very factory-system, under a reasonable order of things (though to my mind there might still be drawbacks to it), would at least offer opportunities for a full and eager social life surrounded by many pleasures. The factories might be centres of intellectual activity also, and work in them might well be varied very much : the tending of the necessary machinery might to each individual be but a short part of the day's work. The other work might vary from raising food from the surrounding country to the study and practice of art and science. It is a matter of course that people engaged in such work, and being the masters of their own lives, would not allow any hurry or want of foresight to force them into enduring dirt, disorder, or want of room. Science duly applied would enable them to get rid of refuse, to minimise, if not wholly to destroy, all the inconveniences which at present attend the use of elaborate machinery, such as smoke, stench and noise ; nor would they endure that the buildings in which they worked or lived should be ugly blots on the fair face of the earth. Beginning by making their factories, buildings and sheds decent and convenient like their homes, they would infallibly go on to make them not merely negatively good, inoffensive merely, but even beautiful, so that the glorious art of architecture, now for some time slain by commercial greed, would be born again and flourish.

So, you see, I claim that work in a duly-ordered community should be made attractive by the consciousness of usefulness, by its being carried on with intelligent interest, by variety, and by its being exercised amidst pleasurable surroundings. But I have also claimed, as we all do, that the day's work should not be wearisomely long. It may be said, « How can you make this last claim square with the others ? If the work is to be so refined, will not the goods made be very expensive ? »

I do admit, as I have said before, that some sacrifice will be necessary in order to make labour attractive. I mean that, if we *could* be contented in a free community to work in the same hurried, dirty, disorderly, heartless way as we do now, we might shorten our day's labour very much more than I suppose we shall do, taking all kinds of labour into account. But if we did, it would mean that our new-won freedom of condition would leave us a anxious, listless and wretched as we are now, which I hold is simply impossible. We should be contented to make the sacrifices necessary for raising our condition to the standard called out for as desirable by the whole community. Nor only so. We should, individually, be emulous to sacrifice quite freely still more of our time and our ease towards the raising of the standard of life. Persons, either by themselves or associated for such purposes, would freely, and for the love of the work and for its results—stimulated by the hope of the plasure of creation — produce those ornaments of life for the service of all, which they are now brided to produce (or pretend to produce) for the service of a few rich men. The experiment of a civilised community living wholly without art or literature has not yet been tried. The past degradation and corruption of civilisation may force this denial of pleasure upon the society which will arise from its ashes. If ism as a foundation for the art which is to be. If the cripple and the starveling disappear from our streets, if the earth nourish us all alike, if the sun shine for all of us alike, if to one and all of us the glorious drama of the earth—day and night, summer and winter—can be presented as a thing to understand and love, we can afford to wait awhile till we are purified from the shame of the past corruption, and till arti arises again amongst people freed from the terror of the slave and the shame of the robber.

Meantime, in any case, the refinement, thoughtfulness and deliberation of labour must indeed be paid for, but not by compulsion to labour long hours. Our epoch has invented machines which would have appeared wild dreams to the men of past ages, and of those machines we have as yet *made no use*.

They are called « labour-saving » machines—that phrase commonly used implies what we expect of them ; but we do not get what we expect. What they really do is to reduce the skilled labourer to the ranks of the unskilled, to increase the number of the « reserve army of labour », — that is to increase the precariousness of life among the workers and to intensify the labour of those who serve the machines (as slaves their masters). All this they do by the way, while they pile up the profits fo the employers of labour or force them to expend those profits in bitter commercial war with each other. In a true society these miracles of ingenuity would be for the first time used for minimising the amount of time spent in unattractive labour which by their means might be so reduced as to be but a very light burden on each individual. All the more as these machines would most certainly be very much improved when it was no longer a question as to whether their improvement would « pay » the individual, but rather whether it would benefit the community.

So much for the ordinary use of machinery, which would probably, after a time, be somewhat restricted when men found out that there was no need for anxiety as to mere subsistence, and

learned to take an interest and pleasure in handiwork which, done deliberately and thoughtfully, could be made more attractive than machine work.

Again, as people freed from the daily terror of starvation find out what they really wanted, being no longer compelled by anything but their own needs, they would refuse to produce the mere inanities which are now called luxuries, of the poison and trash now called cheap wares. No one would make plush breeches when there were no flunkies to wear them, nor would anybody waste his time over making oleomargerine when nos one was *compelled* to abstain from real butter. Adulteration laws are only needed in a society of thieves—and in such a society they are a dead letter.

Socialists are often asked how work of the rougher and more repulsive kind could be carried out in the new condition of things. To attempt to answer such questions fully or authoritatively would be attempting the impossibility of constructing a scheme of a new society out of the materials of the old, before we knew which of those materials would disappear and which endure through the evolution which is leading us to the great change. Yet it is not difficult to conceive of some arrangement whereby those who did the roughest work, should work for the shortest spells And again, what is said above of the variety of work aplies specially here. Once more I say, that for a man to be the whole of his life hopelessly engaged in performing one repulsive and never-ending task, is an arrangement fit enough for the hell imagined by theologians, but scarcely fit for any other form of society. Lastly, if this rougher work were of any special kind we may suppose that special volunteers would be called on to perform it, who would surely be forthcoming, unless men in a state of freedom should lose the sparks of manliness which they possessed as slaves.

And yet if there be any work which cannot be made other than repulsive, either by the shortness of its duration or the intermittancy of its recurrence, or by the sense of special and peculiar usefulness (and therefore honour) in the mind of the man who performs it freely. If there be any work which cannot be but a torment to the worker, what then ? Well, then, let us see if the heavens will fall on us if we leave it undone, for it were beter if they should. The produce of such work cannot be worth the price of it.

Now we have seen that the semi-theological dogma that all labour under any circumstances, is a blessing to the labourer, is hypocritical and false ; that on the other hand labour is good when due hope of rest and pleasure accompanies it. We have weighed the work of civilisation in the balance and found it wanting, since hope is mostly lacking to it, and therefore we see that civilisation has bred a dire curse for men. But we have seen also that the work of the world might be carried on in hope and with pleasure if it were not wasted by folly and tyranny, by the perpetual strife of opposing classes.

It is Peace, therefore which we need in order that we may live and work in hope and with pleasure. Peace so much desired, if we may trust men's words, but which has been so continually and steadily rejected by them in deeds. But for us, let us set our hearts on it and win it at whatever cost.

What the cost may be, who can tell ? Will it be possible to win peace peaceably ? Alas, how can it be ? We are so hemmed in by wrong and folly, that in one way or other we must always be fighting against them : our own lives may see no end to the struggle, perhaps no obvious hope of the end. It may be that the best we can hope to see is that struggle getting sharper and bitterer day by day, until it breaks out openly at last into the slaughter of men by actual warfare instead of by the slower and crueller methods of « peaceful » commerce. If we live to see that, we shall live to see much ; for it will mean the rich classes grown conscious of their own wrong and robbery, and consciously defending them by open violence ; and then the end will be drawing near.

But in any case, and whatever the nature of our strife for peace may be, if we only aim at it steadily and with single ness of heart, and ever keep it in view, a reflection from that peace of the future will illumine the turmoil and trouble of our lives, whether the trouble be seemingly petty, or obviously tragic ; and we shall, in our hopes at least, live the lives of men : nor can the present times give us any reward greater than that.

True and False Society.

(*A lecture delivered before the Hammersmith Socialist Society*, 1893)

I have been asked to give you the Socialist view of the Labour Question. Now in some ways that is a difficult matter to deal with—far beyond my individual capacities—and would also be a long business ; yet in another way, as a matter of principle, it is not difficult to understand or long to tell of, and does not need previous study or acquaintance with the works of specialists or philosophers. Indeed, if it did, it would not be a political subject, and I hope to show you that it is pre-eminently political in the sense in which

I should use the word ; that is to say, it is a matter which concerns everyone, and has to do with the practical everyday relations of his life, and that not only as an individual, but as a member of a body corporate, nay, as a member of that great corporation—humanity. Thus considered, it would be hard indeed if it could not be understood readily by a person of ordinary intelligence who can bring his mind to bear upon it without prejudice. Such a person can learn the basis of the opinion in even an hour's talk, if the matter be clearly put before him. It is my task to attempt this ; and whether I fail or succeed, I can at least promise you to use no technical phrases which would require explanation ; nor will I, as far as I can help, go into any speculative matter, but will be as plain and practical as I can be.

Yet I must warn you that you may be disappointed when you find that I have no elaborate plan, no details of a new society to lay before you, that to my mind to attempt this would be putting before you a mere delusion. What I ask you to consider is in the main the clearing away of obstacles that stand in the way of the due and unwasteful use of labour—a task not light indeed, nor to be accomplished without the most strenuous effort in the teeth of violent resistance, but yet not impossible for humanity as we know it, and as I firmly believe not only necessary, but, as things now are, the one thing essential to be undertaken.

Now you all know that, taking mankind as a whole, it is necessary for man to labour in order to live. Certainly not all things that we enjoy are the works of man's labour ; the beauty of the earth, and the action of nature on our sensations, are always here for us to enjoy, but we can only do so on the terms of our keeping ourselves alive and in good case by means of labour, and no inventions can set aside that necessity. The merest savage has to pluck the berry from the tree, or dig up the root from the ground before he can enjoy his dog-like sleep in sun or shade ; and there are no savages Who have not got beyond that stage ; while the progressive races of mankind have for many ages got a very long way beyond it, so that we have no record of any time when they had not formed some sort of society, whose aim was to make the struggle with nature for subsistence less hard than it otherwise would have been, to win a more abundant livelihood from her.

We cannot deal at any length with the historical development of society ; our object is simply to inquire into the constitution of that final development of society under which we live. But one may first ask a few questions :—1st, Since the community generally must labour in order that the individuals composing it may subsist, and labour harder in order that they may attain further advantages, ought not a really successful community so to arrange that labour that each capable person should do a fair share of it and no more ? 2nd, Should not a really successful community—established surely for the benefit of all its members—arrange that everyone who did his due share of labour should have his due share of the wealth earned by that labour ? 3rd, If any labour were wasted, such waste would throw an additional burden on those who produced what was necessary and pleasant to existence. Should not a successful community, therefore, so organise its labour that it should not be wasted ? You must surely answer Yes to each of these three questions. I will assert, then, that a successful society—a society which fulfilled its true functions—would take care that each did his due share of labour, that each had his due share of wealth resulting from that labour, and that the labour of persons generally was not wasted. I ask you to remember those three essentials of a successful society throughout all that follows ; and to let me apply them now as a test of success to the society in which we live, the latest development of so many ages of the struggle with nature, our elaborate and highly-organised civilisation.

In our society, does each capable person do his fair share of labour ? Is his share of the wealth produced proportionate to his labour ? Is the waste of labour avoided in our society ?

You may perhaps hesitate in your answer to the third question : you cannot hesitate to say No to the two first. I think, however, I shall be able to show you that much labour is wasted, and that, therefore, our society fails in the three essentials necessary for a successful society. Our civilisation, therefore, though elaborate and highly organised, is a failure ; that is, supposing it to be the final development of society, as some people, nay, most people, suppose it to be.

Now a few words as to the course of events which have brought us to the society of the present day. In periods almost before the dawn of continuous history the early progressive races from which we are descended were divided into clans or families, who held their wealth, such as it was, in common within the clan, while all outside the clan was hostile, and wealth not belonging to the clan was looked upon as prize of war. There was consequently continual fighting of clan with clan, and at first all enemies taken in war were slain. But after a while, as man progressed and got defter with his hands, and learned how to make more effective tools, it began to be found out that, so working, each man could do more than merely sustain himself ; and then some of the prisoners of war, instead of being slain on the field, were made slaves of ; they had become

valuable for work, like horses. Out of the work they produced their masters or owners gave them sustenance enough to live on, and took the rest for themselves. Time passed, and the complexity of society grew; the early barbarism passed through many stages into the ancient civilisations, of which Greece and Rome were the great representatives; but this civilisation was still founded on slave labour. Most of its wealth was created by men who could be sold in the market like cattle. But as the old civilisations began to decay, this slave labour became unprofitable; the countries comprised in the Roman Empire were disturbed by constant war; the governments, both central and provincial, became mere tax-gathering machines, and grew so greedy tha things became unbearable. Society became a mere pretext for tax-gathering, and fell to pieces, and chattel slavery fell with it, since under all these circumstances slaves were no longer valuable.

Then came another change. A new society was formed, partly out of the tribes of barbarians who had invaded the Roman Empire, and partly out of the fragments of that empire itself; the feudal system arose, bearing with it new ideas, which I have not time to deal with here and now. Suffice it to say that in its early days mere chattel slavery gave place to serfdom. Powerful men, privileged men, had not forgotten that men can produce more by a day's labour than will keep them alive for a day; so now they settled their labourers on certain portions of land, stocked their land with them, in fact, and on these lands they had leave to live as well as they might on the condition that they should work a certain part of their time on the land which belonged to their lords. The average condition of these serfs was better than that of the chattel slaves. They could not be bought and sold personally, they were a part of the manor on which they lived, and they had as a class a tendency to become tenants by various processes. In one way or another these serfs got gradually emancipated, and during a transitional period, lasting through the two last centuries of the Middle Ages, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the labour classes were in a far better position than they had been before, and in some ways than they have been since; suffering more from spasmodic arbitrary violence than from chronic legal oppression. The transition from this period to our own days is one of the most interesting chapters of history; but it is impossible for me to touch on it here. All I can say is that the emancipated serfs formed one of the elements that went to make up our present middle class, and that a new class of workers grew up beneath them men who were not owned by anyone, who were bound by no legal ties to such and such a manor, who might earn what livelihood they could for themselves under certain conditions, which I will presently try to lay before you, and which are most important to be considered; for this new class of so-called free labourers has become our modern working class.

Now it will be clear to you, surely, how much and how grievously both the classical period, with its chattel slavery, and the feudal system, with its serfdom, fell short of the society which we have set before us as reasonable successful. In each of them there was a class obviously freed from the necessity of labour by means of the degradation of another class which laboured excessively and reaped but a small reward for its excessive labour. Surely there was something radically wrong in these two societies. From the fact that labour is necessary for man's life on earth, and that nature yields her abundance to labour only, one would be inclined to deduce the probability that he who worked most would be the best off. But in these slave and serf societies the reverse was the case: the man of leisureless toil lived miserably, the man who did nothing useful lived abundantly. Then, again, as to our third test, was there no waste of labour? Yes, indeed, there was waste most grievous. I have said that the slave-owner or the lord of the manor did nothing useful, and yet he did something; he was bound to do something, for he was often energetic, gifted, full of character; he made war ceaselessly, consuming thereby the wealth which his slaves or his serfs created, and forcing them to work the more grievously. Here was waste enough, and lack of organisation of labour.

Well, all this people find no great difficulty in seeing, and few would like, publicly at least, to confess a regret for these conditions of labour, although in private some men, less hypocritical or more logical than the bulk of reactionists, admit that they consider the society of cultivated men and chattel slaves the best possible for weak human nature. Yet though we can see what has been, we cannot so easily see what is; and I admit that it is especially hard for people in our civilisation, with its general freedom from the ruder forms of violence, its orderly routine life, and, in short, all that tremendous organisation whose very perfection of continuity prevents us from noticing it—I say it is hard for people under the quiet order and external stability of modern society to note that much the same thing is going on in the relations of employers to the employed as went on under the slave society fo Athens or under the self-sustained baronage of the thirteenth century.

For I assert that with us, as with the older societies, those who work hardest fare the worst; those who produce the least get the most; while as to the waste of labour that goes on, the waste

of times past is as nothing compared with what is wasted to-day.

I must now justify this view of mine, and, if possible, get you to agree with it by pointing out to you how society at the present day is constituted.

Now, as always, there are only two things essential to the production of wealth, labour, and raw material: everyone can labour who is not sick or in nonage, therefore everyone, except those, if he can get at raw material, can produce wealth; but without that raw material he cannot produce anything—anything, that is, that man can live upon; and if he does not labour he must live at the cost of those that do; unless, therefore, everyone can get at the raw material and instruments of production, the community in general will be burdened by the expense of so many useless mouths, and the sum of its wealth will be less than it ought to be. But in our civilised society to-day the raw material and the instruments of production are monopolised by a comparatively small number of persons, who will not allow the general population to use them for production of wealth unless they pay them tribute for doing so; and since they are able to exact this tribute, they themselves are able to live without producing, and consequently are a burden on society. Nor are these monopolists content with exacting a bare livelihood from the producers, as mere vagabonds and petty thieves do; they are able to get from the producers in all cases an abundant livelihood, including most of the enjoyments and advantages of civilisation, and in many cases a position fo such power that they are practically independent of the community and almost out of reach of its laws, although, indeed, the greater part of those laws were made for the purpose of upholding this monopoly; and wherever necessary they do now use the physical force, which, by one means or another, they have under their control, for such upholding.

These monopolists, or capitalists, as one may call them broadly (for I will not at present distinguish the land capitalists from the money capitalists), are in much the same position as the slave-owners of ancient Greece and Rome, or the serf-masters of the thirteenth century; but they have this advantage over them, that though really they sustain their position by mere compulsion, just as the earlier masters did, that compulsion is not visible as the compulsion of the earlier times was; and it is very much their business to prevent it becoming visible, as may well be imagined. But as I am against monopoly and in favour of freedom, I must try to get you to see it, since seeing it is the first step towards feeling it, which, in its turn, is sure to lead to your refusing to bear it.

I have spoken of the tribute which the capitalists exact as the price of the use of those means of production which should be as free to all as the air we breathe is, since they are as necessary to our existence as it is; how do they exact the tribute? They are, to start with, in a good position, you see, because even without anyone's help they could use the labour-power in their own bodies on the raw material they have, and so earn their livelihood; but they are not contented with that, as I hinted above—they are not likely to be, because their position, legalised and supported by the whole physical force of the State, enables them «to do better for themselves», as the phrase goes; they can use the labour-power of the disinherited, and force them to keep them without working for production. Those disinherited, however, they must keep alive to labour, and they must allow them also opportunity for breeding—these are necessities that pressed equally on the ancient slave-owner or the mediæval lord of the manor, or, indeed, that press on the owner of draught cattle; they must at least do for the workers as much as for a machine—supply them with fuel to enable them to work. Nor need they do more if they are dealing with men who have no power of resistance. But these machines are human ones, instinct with desire and passions, and therefore, they cannot help trying to better themselves; and they cannot better themselves except at the expense of the masters, because whatever they produce more than the bare necessaries of lif the masters will at once take from them if they can; therefore they have always resisted the full exercise of the privilege of the masters, and have tried to raise their standard of livelihood above the mere subsistence limit. Their resistance has taken various forms, from peaceful strikes to open war, but it has always been going on, and the masters, when not driven into a corner, have often yielded to it, although unwillingly enough; but it must be said that mostly the workers have claimed little more than mere slaves would, who might mutiny for a bigger ration. For, in fact, this wage paid by our modern master is nothing more than the ration of the slave in another form; and when the masters have paid it, they are free to use all the rest that the workers produce, just as the slave-owner takes all that the slave produces. Remember at this point, therefore, that everything more than bare subsistence which the workers gain to-day they gain by carrying on constant war with their masters. I must add that their success in this war is often more apparent than real; that too often it means little more than shifting the burden of extreme poverty from one group of workers to another; the unskilled labourers, of whom the supply is unlimited, do not gain by it, and their numbers have a ten-

dency to increase, as the masters, driven to their shifts, use more elaborate machines in order to dispense with skilled labour, and also use the auxiliary labour of women and children, to whom they do *not* pay subsistence wages, thereby keeping down the wages of the head of the family, and depriving him and them of the mutual help and comfort in the household which would otherwise be gained from them.

Thus, then, the capitalists, by means of their monopoly of the means of production, compel the worker to work for less than his due share of the wealth which he produces—that is, for less than he produces. He must work, he will die else ; and as they are in possesion of the raw material, he must agree to the terms they enforce upon him. This is the « free contract » of which we hear so much, and which, to speak plainly, is a capitalist lie. There is no way out of this « freedom » save rebellion of some kind or other : strike rebellion, which impoverishes the workers for the time, whether they win the strike or lose it ; or the rebellion of open revolt, which will be put down always until it is organised for a complete change in the basis of society.

Now to show you another link or two of the chain which binds the workers. There is one thing which hampers this constant struggle of the workers towards bettering their condition at the expense of their masters, and that is competition for livelihood amongst them. I have told you that unskilled labour is practically unlimited ; and machines, the employment of women and children, long hours of work, and all that cheapening of production so much bepraised now, bring about this state of things, that even in ordinary years there are more hands than there is work to give them. This is the great instrument of compulsion of modern monopoly ; people undersell one another in our modern slave market, so that the employers have no need to use any visible instrument of compulsion in driving them towards work ; and the invisibility of this whip, the fear of death by starvation, has so muddled people's brains that you can hear men, otherwise intelligent, e.g., answering objections to the uselessness of some occupation by saying, « But you see it gives people employment »,although they would see that if three of them had to dig a piece of ground, and one of them knocked off, and was « employed » in throwing chuckie stones into the water, the other two would have to do his share of the work as well as their own.

Another invisible link of the chain is this, that the workman does not really know his own master ; the individual employer may be and often is on good terms with his men, and really unconscious of the war between them, although he cannot fail to know that if he pays more wages to his men than other employers in the same line of business as himself do, he will be beaten by them. But the workman's real master is not his immediate employer but his *class*, which will not allow even the best intentioned employer to treat his men otherwise than as profit-grinding machines. By his profit, made out of the unpaid labour of his men, the manufacturer must live, unless he gives up his position and learns to work like one of his own men, which indeed, as a rule, he could not do, as he has usually not been taught to do any useful work ; therefore, as I have said, he must reduce his wages to the lowest point he can, since it is on the margin between his men's production and their wages that his profit depends ; his class, therefore, compel his workmen to accept as little as possible. But further, the workman is a consumer as well as a producer, and in that character he has not only to pay rent to a landlord (and far heavier proportionately than rich people have to pay), and also a tribute to the middleman who lives without producing, and without doing service to the community, by passing money from one pocket to another ; but he also has to pay (as consumer) the profits of the other manufacturers who superintend the production of the goods he uses. Again, as a mere member of society, a should-be citizen, he has to pay taxes, and a great deal more than he thinks ; he has to pay for wars, past, present, and future, that were and are never meant to benefit him but to force markets for his masters, nay, to keep him from rebellion, from taking his own at some date ; he has also ta pay for the thousand and one idiocies of parliamentary government, and ridiculous monarchical and official state ; for the mountain of precedent, nonsense and chicanery with *its* set of officials whose business it is under the name of law to prevent justice being done to any one. In short, in one way or another, when he has by dint of constant labour got his wages into his pocket, he has them taken away from him again by various occult methods, till it comes to this at last, that he really works an hour for one-third of an hour's pay, while the two-thirds go to those who have not produced the wealth which they consume.

Here, then, as to the first and second conditions of a reasonable society. 1st, That the labour should be duly paportioned. 2nd, That the wealth should be duly apportioned. Our society does not merely fail in them, but positively inverts them ; with us those who consume most produce least , those who produce most consume least.

There yet remains something to be said on the third condition of a fair state of society, that it should look to it that labour be not wasted. How does civilisation fare in that respect ? I have told

you that war was the occupation of the ancient slaveholders, set free by slave-labour from the necessity of producing ; similarly, the mediæval baron, set free from the necessity of producing by the labour of the serfs, who tilled his lands for him, occupied himself with fighting for more serf-tilled land either for himself or his suzerain. In our own days we see that there is a class freed from the necessity of producing by the tribute paid by the wage-earner ; what does *our* free class do, how does it occupy the life-long leisure which it forces toil to yield to it ?

Well, it chiefly occupies itself in war like those earlier non-producing classes, and very busy it is over it. I know indeed that there is a certain portion of the dominant class that does not pretend to do anything at all, except perhaps a little amateur reactionary legislation ! yet even of that group I have heard that some of them are very busy in their estate offices trying to make the most of their special privilege, the monopoly of the land ; and taking them altogether they are not a very large class. Of the rest some are busy in taxing us and repressing our liberties directly, as officers in the army and navy, magistrates, judges, barristers, and lawyers ; they are the salaried officers on the part of the masters in the great clas struggle. Other groups there are, as artists and literary men, doctors, schoolmasters, etc., who occupy a middle position between the producers and the non-producers ; they are doing useful service, and ought to be doing it for the community at large, but practically they are only working for a class, and in their present position are little better than hangers-on of the non-producing class, from whom they receive a share of their position as gentlemen—heaven save the mark ! But the great mass of the non-producing class, from whom they receive a share of their privilege, together with a kind of contemptuous recognition of their position as gentlemen—heaven save the mark ! But the great mass of the non-producing classes are certainly not idle in the ordinary sense of the word ; they could not be, for they include men of great energy and force of character, who would, as all reasonable men do, insist on some serious or exciting occupation ; and I say once again their occupation is war, though it is « writ large », and called competition. They are, it is true, called organisers of labour, and sometimes they do organise it, but when they do they expect an extra reward for so doing outside their special privilege. A great many of them, though they are engaged in the war, sit at home at ease and let their generals—their salaried managers, to wit—wage it for them. I am meaning here shareholders or sleeping partners ; but whenever they are active in business they are really engaged in organising the war with their competitors, the capitalists in the same line of business as themselves ; and if they are to be successful in that war, they must not be sparing of destruction, either of their own or other people's goods ; nay, they not unseldom are prepared to further the war of sudden, as opposed to that of lingering death, and of late years they have involved pretty nearly the whole of Europe in attacks on barbarian or savage peoples, which are only distinguishable from sheer piracy by their being carried on by nations instead of individuals. But all that is only by the way ; it is the ordinary and necessary outcome of their operations that there should be periodical slackness of trade following on times of inflation, from the fact that everyone tries to get as much as he can of the market to himself at the expense of everyone else, so that sooner or later the market is sure to be overstocked, so that wares are sold sometimes at less than the cost of production, which means that so much labour has beenwasted on them by misdirection. Nor is that all ; for they are obliged to keep an army of clerks and such like people, who are not necessary either for the production of goods or their distribution, but are employed in safe-guarding their masters' interests against their masters' competitors. The waste is further increased by the necessity of these organisers of the commercial war for playing on the ignorance and gullibility of the consumers by two processes, which in their perfection are specialities of the present century, and even, it may be said, of this latter half of it—to wit, adulteration and puffery. It would be hard to say how much ingenuity and painstaking have been wasted on these incidents in the war of commerce, and I am wholly unable to get any statistics of them : but we all know that an enormous amount of labour is spent on them, which is at the very best as much wasted as if those engaged on them were employed in digging a hole and filling it up again.

But further ; there is yet another source of waste involved in our present society. The grossly unequal distribution of wealth forces the rich to get rid of their surplus money by means of various forms of folly and luxury, which means further waste of labour. Do not think I am advocating asceticism. I wish us all to make the utmost of what we can obtain from nature to make the utmost of what we can obtain from nature to make us happier and more contented while we live ; but apart from reasonable comfort and real refinement, there is, as I am sure no one can deny, a vast amount of sham wealth and sham service created by our miserable system of rich and poor, which makes no human being the happier, on the one hand, while on the other it withdraws vast numbers of workers from the production of real utilities, and so casts a heavy

additional burden of labour on those who are producing them. I have been speaking hitherto of a producing and a non-producing class, but I have been quite conscious all the time that though the first class produces whatever wealth is created, a very great portion of it is prevented from producing wealth at all, are being set to nothing better than turning a wheel that grinds nothing—save the worker's lives. Nay, worse than nothing. I hold that this sham wealth is not merely a negative evil (I mean in itself), but a positive one. It seems to me that the refined society of to-day is distinguished from all others by a kind of gloomy cowardice—a stolid but timorous incapacity of enjoyment. He who runs may read the record of the unhappy rich not less than that of the unhappy poor in the futility of their amusements, and the degradation of their art and literature.

Well, then, the third condition of a reasonable society is violated by our present so called society; the tremendous activity, energy, and invention of modern times is to a great extent wasted; the monopolists force the workers to waste a great part of their labour power, while they waste almost the whole of theirs. Our society, therefore, does not fulfil the true functions of society. Now, the constitution of all society requires that each individual member of it should yield up a part of his liberty in return for the advantages of mutual help and defence; yet at bottom that surrender should be part of the liberty itself; it should be voluntary in essence. But if society does not fulfil its duties towards the individual, it wrongs him, and no man voluntarily submits to wrong—nay, no man ought to. The society, therefore, that has violated the essential conditions of its existence must be sustained by mere brute force, and that is the case with our modern society no less than that of the ancient slave-holding and the mediæval serf-holding societies. As a practical deduction, I ask you to agree with me that such a society should be changed from its base up, if it be possible. And further, I must ask how, by what, and by whom, such a revolution can be accomplished? But before I set myself to deal with these questions, I will ask you to believe that though I have tried to argue the matter on first principles, I do not approach the subject from a pedantic point of view. If I could believe that, however wrong it may be in theory, our present system works well in practice, I should be silenced. If I thought that its wrongs and anomalies were so capable of palliation that people generally were not only contented, but were capable of developing their human faculties duly under it, and that we were on the road to progress without a great change, I for one would not ask anyone to meddle with it. But I do not believe that, nor do I know of any thoughtful person that does. In thoughtful persons I can see but two attitudes; on the one hand, the despair of pessimism, which I admit is common, and on the other a desire and hope of change. Indeed, in years like these few last, when one hears on all sides and from all classes of what people call depression of trade, which, as we too well know, means misery at least as great as that which a big war bears with it, and when on all sides there is ominous grumbling of the coming storm, the workers unable to bear the extra burden laid upon them by the «bad times»,—in such years there is, I do not say no hope, but at least no hope except in those changes, the tokens which are all around us.

Therefore, again I ask how, or by what, or by whom, the necessary revolution can be brought about? What I have been saying hitherto has been intended to show you that there has always been a great class struggle going on which is still sustained by our class of monopoly and our class of disinheritance. It is true that in former times no sooner was one form of that class struggle over than another took its place; but in our days it has become much simplified, and has cleared itself by progress through its various stages of mere accidental circumstances. The struggle for political equality has come to an end, or nearly so; all men are (by a fiction it is true) declared to be equal before the law, and compulsion to labour for another's benefit has taken the simple form of the power of the possessor of money, who is all powerful; therefore, if, as we Socialists believe, it is certain that the class struggle must one day come to an end, we are so much nearer to that end by the passing through of some of its necessary stages; history never returns on itself.

Now, you must not suppose, therefore, that the revolutionary struggle of to-day, though it may be accompanied (and necessarily) by violent insurrection, is paralleled by the insurrections of past times. A rising of the slaves of the ancient period, or of the serfs of the mediæval times, could not have been permanently successful, because the time was not ripe for such success, since the growth of the new order of things Was not sufficiently developed. It is indeed a terrible thought that, although the burden of injustice, and suffering was almost too heavy to be borne in such insurrectionary times,and although all popular uprisings have right on their side, they could not be successful at the time, because there was nothing to put in the place of the unjust system against which men were revolting. And yet it is true, and it explains the fact that the class antagonism is generally more felt when the oppressed class is bettering its condition than when it is at its worst. The consciousness of oppression then takes

the form of hope, and leads to action, and is indeed the token of the gradual formation of a new order of things underneath the old decaying order.

I told you that I was not prepared to give you any details of the arrangement of a new state of society ; but I am prepared to state the principles on which it would be founded, and the recognition of which would make it easy for serious men to deal with the details of arrangement. Socialism asserts that everyone should have free access to the means of production of wealth—the raw material and the stored-up force produced by labour ; in other words, the land, plant, and stock of the community, which are now monopolised by certain privileged persons, who force others to pay for their use. This claim is founded on the principle which lies at the bottom of Socialism, that the right to the possession of wealth is conferred by the possessor having worked towards its production, and being able to use it for the satisfaction of his personal needs. The recognition of this right will be enough to guard against mere confusion and violence. The claim to property on any other grounds must lead to what is in plain terms robbery ; which will be no less robbery because it is organised by a sham society, and must no less be supported by violence because it is carried on under the sanction of the law.

Let me put this with somewhat more of detail. No man has made the land of the country, nor can he use more than a small portion of it for his personal needs ; no man has made more than a small portion of its fertility, nor can use personally more than a small part of the results of the labour of countless persons, living and dead, which has gone to produce that fertility. No man can build a factory with his own hands, or make the machinery in it, nor can he use it, except in combination with others. He may call it his, but he cannot make any use of it as his alone, unless he is able to compel other people to use it for his benefit ; this he does not do personally, but our sham society has so organised itself that by it means he can compel this unpaid service from others. The magistrate, the judge, the policeman, and the soldier are the sword and pistol of this modern highwayman, and I may add that he is also furnished with what he can use as a mask under the name of morals and religion.

Now if these means of production, the land, plant, and stock, were really used for their primary uses, and not as means for extracting unpaid labour from others, they would be used by men working in combination with each other, each of whom would receive his due share of the results of that combined labour ; the only difficulty would then be what would be his due share, because it must be admitted on all hands that it is impossible to know how much each individual has contributed towards the production of a piece-of co-operative labour. But the principle once granted that each man should have his due share of what he has created by his labour, the solution of the difficulty would be attempted, nay, is now hypothetically attempted, in various ways—in two ways mainly. One view is that the State—that is, society organised for the production and distribution of wealth—would hold all the means of the production and distribution of wealth in its hands, allowing the use of them to whomsoever it thought could use them, charging rent, perhaps, for their use, but which rent would be used again only for the benefit or the whole community, and therefore would return to the worker in another form. It would also take on itself the organisation of labour in detail, arranging the how, when, and where for the benefit of the public ; doing all this, one must hope, with as little centralisation as possible ; in short, the State, according to this view, would be the only employer of labour. No individual would be able to employ a workman to work for him at a profit, *i.e.*, to work for less than the value of his labour (roughly estimated), because the State would pay him the full value of it ; nor could any man let land or machinery at a profit, because the State would let it without the profit. It is clear that, if this could be carried out, no one could live without working. When a man had spent the wealth he had earned personally, he would have to work for more, as there would be no tribute coming to him from the labour of past generations. On those terms he could not accumulate wealth, nor would he desire to ; for he could do nothing with it except satisfy his personal needs with it, whereas at present he can turn the superfluity of his wealth into capital, *i.e.*, wealth used for the extraction of profit. Thus society would be changed. Everyone would have to work for his livelihood, and everybody would be able to do so, whereas at present there are people who refuse to work for their livelihood and forbid others to do so. Labour would not be wasted, as there would be no competing employers gambling in the market and using the real producer and the consumer as their milch cows. The limit of price would be the cost of production, so that buying and selling would be simply the exchange of equivalent values, and there would be no loss on either side in the transaction. Thus there would be a society in which everyone would have an equal chance for well-doing, for, as a matter of course, arrangements would be made for the sustaining of people in their nonage, for keeping them in comfort if they were physically incapacitated from working, and also for educating everyone accord-

ing to his capacities. This would at the least be a society which would try to perform those functions of seeing that everyone did his due share of work and no more, and had his due share of wealth and no less, and that no labour was wasted, which I have said were the real functions of a true society.

But there is another view of the solution of the difficulty as to what constitutes the due share of the wealth created by labour. Those who take it say, since it is not really possible to find out what proportion of combined labour each man contributes, why profess to try to do so? In a properly ordered community all work that is done is necessary on the one hand, and on the other there would be plenty of wealth in such a community to satisfy all reasonable needs. The community holds all wealth in common, but has the same right to holding wealth that the individual has, namely, the fact that it has created it and uses it; but as a community it can only use wealth by satisfying with it the needs of every one of its members—it is not a true community if it does less than this—but their needs are not necessarily determined by the kind or amount of work which each man does, though of course, when they are, that must be taken into account. To say the least of it, men's needs are much more equal than their mental or bodily capacities are: their ordinary needs, granting similar conditions of climate and the like, are pretty much the same, and could, as above said, be easily satisfied. As for special needs for wealth of a more special kind, reasonable men would be contented to sacrifice the thing which they needed less for that which they needed more; and for the rest the varieties of temperament would get over the difficulties of this sort. As to the incentives to work, it must be remembered that even in our sham society most men are not disinclined to work, so only that their work is not that which they are compelled to do; and the higher and more intellectual the work is, the more men are resolved to do it, even in spite of obstacles. In fact, the ideas on the subject of the reward of labour in the future are founded on its position in the present. Life is such a terrible struggle for the majority that we are all apt to think that a specially gifted person should be endowed with more of that which we are all compelled to struggle for—money, to wit—and to value his services simply by that standard. But in a state of society in which all were well-to-do, how could you reward extra services to the community? Give your good worker immunity from work? The question carries with it the condemnation of the idea, and, moreover, that will be the last thing he will thank you for. Provide for his children? The fact that they are human beings with a capacity for work is enough; they are provided for in being members of a community which will see that they neither lack work nor wealth. Give him more wealth? Nay, what for? What can he do with more than he can use? He cannot eat three dinners a day, or sleep in four beds. Give him domination over other men? Nay, if he be more excellent than they are in any art, he must *influence* them for his good and theirs if they are worth anything; but if you make him their arbitrary master, he will govern them, but he will not influence them; he and they will be enemies, and harm each other mutually. One reward you can give him, that is, opportunity for developing his special capacity; but that you will do for everybody, and not the excellent only. Indeed, I suppose he will not, if he be excellent, lack the admiration, or perhaps it is better to say the affection, of his fellow men, and he will be all the more likely to get that when the relations between him and them are no longer clouded by the fatal gift of mastership.

Moreover, those who see this view of the new society believe that decentralisation in it would have to be complete. The political unit with them is not a Nation, but a Commune; the whole of reasonable society would be a great federation of such communes, federated for definite purposes of the organisation of livelihood and exchange. For a mere nation is the historical deduction from the ancient tribal family in which there was peace between the individuals composing it and war with the rest of the world. A nation is a body of people kept together for purposes of rivalry and war with other similar bodies, and when competition shall have given place to combination, the function of the nation will be gone.

I will recapitulate, then, the two views taken among Socialists as to the future of society. According to the first, the State—that is, the nation organised for unwasteful production and exchange of wealth—will be the sole possessor of the national plant and stock, the sole employer of labour, which she will so regulate in the general interest that no man will ever need to fear lack of employment and due earnings therefrom. Everybody will have an equal chance of livelihood, and, except a a rare disease, there would be no harding of money or other wealth. This view points to an attempt to give everybody the full worth of the productive work done by him, after having ensured the necessary preliminary that he shall always be free to work.

According to the other view, the centralised nation would give place to a federation of communities who would hold all wealth in common and would use that wealth for satisfying the needs of each member, only exacting from each that he should do his best according to his

capacity towards the production of the common wealth. Of course, it is to be understood that each member is absolutely free to use his share of wealth as he pleases, without interference from any, so long as he really uses it, that is, does not turn it into an instrument for the oppression of others. This view intends complete equality of condition for everyone, though life would be, as always, varied by the differences of capacity and disposition; and emulation in working for the common good would supply the place of competition as an incentive.

These two views of the future of society are sometimes opposed to each other as Socialism and Communism, but to my mind the latter is simply the necessary development of the former, which implies a transition period, during which people would be getting rid of the habits of mind bred by the long ages of tyranny and commercial competition, and be learning that it is to the interest of each that all should thrive.

When men had lost the fear of each other engendered by our system of artificial famine, they would feel that the best way of avoiding the waste of labour would be to allow every man to take what he needed from the common store, since he would have no temptation or opportunity of doing anything with a greater portion than he really needed for his personal use. Thus would be minimised the danger of the community falling into bureaucracy, the multiplication of boards and offices, and all the paraphernalia of official authority, which is, after all, a burden, even when it is exercised by the delegation of the whole people and in accordance with their wishes.

Thus have I laid before you, necessarily briefly, a Socialist's view of the present condition of labour and its hopes for the future. If the indictment against the present society seem to you to be of undue proportions compared with the view of that which is to come, I must again remind you that we Socialists never dream of building up by our own efforts in one generation a society altogether anew. All I have been attacking has been the exercise of arbitrary authority for the supposed benefit of a privileged class. When we have got rid of that authority and are free once more, we ourselves shall do whatever may be necessary in organising the real society which even now exists under the authority which usurps that title. That true society of loved and lover, parent and child, friend and friend, the society of well-wishers, of reasonable people conscious of the aspirations of humanity and of the duties we owe to it through one another—this society, I say, is held together and exists by its own inherent right and reason, in spite of what is usually thought to be the cement of society, arbitrary authority to wit, that is to say, the expression of brute force under the influence o unreasoning habit. Unhappily though societ exists, it is in an enslaved and miserable condi tion, because that same arbitrary authority say to us practically: « You may be happy if you ca afford it, but, unless you have a certain amoun of money you shall not be allowed the exercis of the social virtues; sentiment, affection, goo manners, intelligence even, to you shall be mer words; you shall be less than men, because yo are needed as machines to grind on in a syster which has come upon us we scarce know how, an which compels us as well as you. This is the rea continuously-repeated proclamations of law an order to the most part of men who are under th burden of that hierarchy of compulsion whic governs us under the usurped and false title o society, and which all true Socialists or supporter of real society are bound to do their best to get ri of, so as to leave us free to realise to the full tha true society which means well-being and well doing for one and all.

THREE ESSAYS WRITTEN AFTER THE RETUN TO PARLIAMENTARISM

(Reprinted from *Justice*)

I. — HOW I BECAME A SOCIALIST

I am asked by the Editor to give some sort o a history of the above conversion, and I feel tha it may be of some use to do so, if my reader will look upon me as a type of a certain grou of people, but not so easy to do clearly, brie fly, and truly. Let me however, try. But first, will say what I mean by being a Socialist, sinc I am told that the word no longer expresses def nitely and with certainty what it did ten year ago. Well, what I mean by Socialism is a condi tion of society in which there should be neithe rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man neither idle nor overworked, neither brain sic brain workers nor heart-sick hand workers, in word, in which all men would be living i equality of condition, and would manag their affairs unwastefully, and with the ful consciousness that harm to one would mean harn to all—the realisation at last of the meaning o the word COMMONWEALTH.

Now this view of Socialism which I hold to-day and hope to die holding, is what I began with I had no transitional period, unless you ma call such a brief period of political radicalisn during which I saw my ideal clear enough, bu had no hope of any realisation of it. That cam to an end some months before I joined the (then Democratic Federation, and the meaning of m joining that body was that I had conceived

hope of the realisation of my ideal. If you ask me how much of a hope, or what I thought we Socialists then living and working would accomplish towards it, or when there would be affected any change in the face of society, I must say, I do not know. I can only say that I did not measure my hope, nor the joy that it brought me at the time. For the rest when I took that step I was blankly ignorant of economics ; I had never so much as opened Adam Smith, or heard of Ricardo, or of Karl Marx. Oddly enough I *had* read some of Mill, to wit, those posthumous papers of his (published was it in the *Westminster Review* or the *Fortnightly* ?) in which he attacks Socialism in its Fourierist guise. In those papers he put the arguments, as far as they go, clearly and honestly, and the result so far as I was concerned was to convince me that Socialism was a necessary change, and that is was possible to bring it about in our own days. Those papers put the finishing touch to my conversion to Socialism. Well, having joined a Socialist body (for the Federation soon became definitely Socialist), I put some conscience into trying to learn the economical side of Socialism, and even tackled Marx, though I must confess that, whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of « Capital », I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of that great work. Anyhow, I read what I could, and will hope that some information stuck to me from my reading ; but more, I must think, from continuous conversation with such friends as Bax and Hyndman and Scheu, and the brisk course of propaganda meetings which were going on at the time, and in which I took my share. Such finish to what of education in practical Socialism as I am capable of I received afterwards from some of my Anarchist friends, from whom I learned, quite against their intention, that Anarchism was impossible, much as I learned from Mill against *his* intention that Socialism was necessary.

But in thus telling how I fell into *practical* Socialism I have begun, as I perceive, in the middle, for in my position of a well-to-do man, not suffering from the disabilities which oppress a working man at every step, I feel that I might never have been drawn into the practical side of the question if an ideal had no forced me to seek towards it. For politics as politics, *i.e.*, not regarded as a necessary if cumbersome and disgustful means to an end, would never have attracted me, nor when I had become conscious of the wrongs of society as it now is, and the oppression of poor people, could I have ever believed in the possibility of a *partial* setting right of those wrongs. In other words, I could never have been such a fool as to believe in the happy and « respectable » poor.

If, therefore, my ideal forced me to look for practical Socialism, what was it that forced me to conceive of an ideal ? Now, here comes in what I said of my being (in this paper) a type of a certain group of mind.

Before the uprising of *modern* Socialism almost all intelligent people either were, or professed themselves to be, quite contented with the civilisation of this century. Again, almost all of these really were thus contented, and saw nothing to do but to perfect the said civilisation by getting rid of a few ridiculous survivals of the barbarous ages. To be short, this was the Whig frame of mind, natural to the modern prosperous middle-class men, who, in fact, as far as mechanical progress is concerned, have nothing to ask for, if only Socialism would leave them alone to enjoy their plentiful style.

But besides these contented ones there were others who were not really contented, but had a vague sentiment of repulsion to the triumph of civilisation, but were coerced into silence by the measureless power of Whiggery. Lastly there were a few who were in open rebellion against the said Whiggery—a few, say two, Carlyle and Ruskin. The latter, before my days of practical Socialism, was my master towards the ideal aforesaid, and, looking backward, I cannot help saying, by the way, how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago but for Ruskin ! It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent, which I must say was not by any means vague. Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilisation. What shall I say of it now, when the words are put into my mouth, my hope of its destruction—what shall I say of its supplanting by Socialism ?

What shall I say concerning its mastery of, and its waste of mechanical power, its commonwealth so poor, its enemies of the commonwealth so rich, its stupendous organisation—for the misery of life ! Its contempt of simple pleasures which everyone could enjoy but for its folly ? Its eyeless vulgarity which has destroyed art, the one certain solace of labour ? All this I felt then as now, but I did not know why it was so. The hope of the past times was gone, the struggles of mankind for many ages had produced nothing but this sordid, aimless, ugly confusion ; the immediate future seemed to me likely to intensify all the present evils by sweeping away the last survivals of the days before the dull squalor of civilisation had settled down on the world. This was a bad look out indeed, and, if I may mention myself as a personality and not as a

mere type, especially so to a man of my disposition, careless of metaphysics and religion, as well as of scientific analysis, but with a deep love of the earth and the life on it, and a passion for the history of the past of mankind. Think of it ! Was it all to end in a counting-house on the top of a cinder-heap, with Podsnap's drawing-room in the offing, and a Whig committee dealing out champagne to the rich and margarine to the poor in such convenient proportions as would make all men contented together, though the pleasure of the eyes was gone from the world, and the place of Homer was to be taken by Huxley. Yet believe me, in my heart when I really forced myself to look towards the future, that is, what I saw in it, and, as far as I could tell, scarce anyone seemed to think it worth while to struggle against such a consummation of civilisation. So there I was in for a fine pessimistic end of life, if it had not somehow dawned on me, that amidst all this filth of civilisation the seeds of a great chance, what we others call Social Revolution, were beginning to germinate. The whole face of things was changed to me by that discovery, and all I had to do then in order to become a Socialist was to hook myself on to the practical movement, which, as before said, I have tried to do as well as I could.

To sum up, then, the study of history and the love and practice of art forced me into a hatred of the civilisation, which, if things were to stop as they are, would turn history into inconsequent nonsense, and make art a collection of the curiosities of the past, which would have no serious relation to the life of the present.

But the consciousness of revolution stirring amidst our hateful modern society prevented me, luckier than many others of artistic perceptions, from crystallising into a mere railer against « progress » on the one hand, and on the other from wasting time and energy in any of the numerous schemes by which the quasi-artistic of the middle-classes hope to make art grow when it has no longer any root, and thus I became a practical Socialist.

A last word or two. Perhaps some of our friends will say, what have we to do with these matters of history and art ? We want by means of Social-Democracy to win a decent livelihood, we want in some sort to live and that at once. Surely any one who professes to think that the question of art and cultivation must go before that of the knife and fork (and there are some who do propose that) doest not understand what art means, or how that its roots must have a soil of a thriving and unanxious life. Yet it must be remembered that civilisation has reduced the workman to such a skinny and pitiful existence, that he scarcely knows how to frame a desire for any life much better than that which he now endures perforce. It is the province of art to set the true ideal of a full and reasonable life before him, a life to which the perception and creation of beauty the enjoyment of real pleasure that is, shall be felt to be as necessary to man as his daily bread, and that no man, and no set of men can be deprived of this except by mere opposition, which should be resisted to the utmost.

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MAY DAY, 1895

II. — CHANGE OF POSITION—NOT CHANGE OF CONDITION

To the Socialist, who is earnest in wishing to stimulate the genuine and practical desire of the workers towards freedom, and who knows well that no mere good nature of individuals can make a system tolerable which is designed for the benefit of the privileged classes only—to the Socialist the aim is not the improvement of condition but *the change in position* of the working classes. For he has full confidence that the change in position must have the immediate consequence of the bettering of condition. I am aware that to many or most of the readers of JUSTICE these remarks will seem trite, yet I think some form of the thought in them is necessary to be put before people at present. For, to say the truth, if I were a non-Socialist, and were interested in the preservation of the society of privilege, I should conceive a hope from the present situation of the possibility of hoodwinking the working men into accepting what I should name (to them) a kind of semi or demi-semi-Socialism, which would do no sort of harm to the society of privilege. I should condescend to Socialism, and pat it on the back. I should say, as, indeed, I have heard such worthies say, « Socialism, my friends, cannot give you what it promises, but I am pleased to see you Socialists, because all this labour agitation will call people's attention to the « condition of the working classes », and will « improve it ». You will find that you must work *with* the capitalists and not *against* them, so that you may extend markets, contend successfully with other nations, and improve business. By that means, though this Socialist agitation is founded on principles which are wrong, and cannot be carried out in practice, yet it will have given you enhanced wages, reduction of the hours of labour, more permanency of employment, better housing, gas and water galore, and an extended franchise. And then (but I don't know when) you will be happy and contented, and, which is more to the point, so shall we. »

That, I say will be the sort of line to take for those who wish to keep labour — *i e.*, usefulness

—out of its heritage. And I think it will be taken, I fear not wholly unsucessfully. For the present necessities of working people are so great that they must take what they can get, and it is so hard for them in their miserable condition to have any vivid conception of what a life of freedom and equality can give them that they can scarcely, the average of them, turn their hopes to a future which they may never see.

And yet if that future is not to be indefinitely postponed they must repudiate this demi-semi-Socialism. They must say : « £ 2 aweek instead of £ 1 ; eight hours work instead of nine, ten, twelve ; out of-door relief galore to supplement the out-of-work periods ; comfortable (Lord help us !) lodging found by the municipality—all these are fine things indeed. But we will not even think of them unless we can use them for getting all the benefits which we *know* will follow on the abolition of privilege and the realisation of equality. That is, in short, what we mean to have. What those benefits may be we cannot imagine in detail ; but we know that the sum of them will mean a decent self-respecting life for us all. We are Socialists and believe in Socialism, and the day will come when we shall partly be able to estimate our gains by looking back and wondering that we once thought is worth while to strive for such petty advantages as those you have been telling us of. »

And again and again it must be said that in this determination we shall be justified when the working-classes make it their determination ; and further, for last word, that the first step towards this consummation is the union in one party of all those in the movement who take that view of the movement, and not merely the gas and water and improved trade union view. The view not of improved condition for the workers but of essentially changed position.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

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III. — THE PROMISE OF MAY (1896)

Certainly May Day is above all days of the year fitting for the protest of the disinherited against the system of robbery that shuts the door betwixt them and a decent life. The day when the promise of the year reproaches the waste inseparable from the society of inequality, the waste which produces our artificial poverty of civilisation, so much bitterer for those that suffer under it than the natural poverty of the rudest barbarism. For it is undoubtedly true that full blown capitalism makes the richest country in the world as poor as, nay poorer than, the poorest, for the life of by far the greater part of its people.

Are we to sit down placidly under this hoping that some blessing will drop down from heaven upon us which will bring content and self-respect and a due share of the beauties and joys of the eart to the classes that produce all that is produced, while it will bring no lessening of the dignity and ease and sweetness of life with which the possessing (and wasting) classes are now endowed ?

Most of you will smile at that question, but remember that this opinion was not long ago universally held, and is still held by many.

They think that civilisation will grow so speedily and triumphantly, and production will become so easy and cheap, that the posessing classes will be able to spare more and more from the great heap of wealth to the producing classes, so that at least these latter will have nothing left to wish for, and all will be peace and prosperity. A futile hope indeed ! and one which a mere glance at past history will dispel. For we find, as a matter of fact, that when we were scarcely emerging from semi-barbarism, when open violence was common, and privilege need put on no mask before the governed classes, the workers were not worse off than now, but better. In short, not all the discoveries of science, not all the tremendous organisation of the factory and the market will produce true wealth, so long as the end and aim of it all is the production of profit for the privileged classes.

And I say this is an irresistible instinct on the part of the capitalists, an impulse like hunger, and I believe that it can only be met by another hunger the hunger for freedom and fair play for all, both people and peoples. Anything less than that the capitalist power will brush aside, but that they cannot ; for what will it mean ? The most important part of their machinery, the « hands » becoming MEN, and saying, « Now at last we will it ; we will produce no more for profit but for *use*, for *happiness*, for LIFE. »

COMMUNISM.

Delivered before the Hammersmith Socialist Society, 1893. Morris left the Socialist League in 1890, and proceeded to form the useful educational but unambitious Hammersmith Socialist Society, under whose auspices he delivered so many excellent lectures. *Ed.*

While I think that the hope of the new-birth of society is certainly growing, & that speedily, I must confess myself puzzled about the means toward that end which are mostly looked after now ; and I am doubtful if some of the measures which are pressed, mostly, I think, with all honesty of purpose, and often with much ability, would, if gained, bring us any further on the direct road to a really new-born society, the only society which can be a new birth, a society of

practical equality. Not to make any mystery about it, I mean that the great mass of what most non-socialists at least consider at present to be socialism, seems to me nothing more than a *machinery* of socialism, which I think it probable that socialism *must* use in its militant condition ; and which I think it *may* use for some time after it is practically established ; but does not seem to me to be of its essence. Doubtless there is good in the schemes for substituting business-like administration in the interests of the public for the old Whig muddle of *laissez faire* backed up by coercion and smoothed by abundant corruption, which, worked all of it in the interest of successful business men, was once thought such a wonderful invention, and which certainly was the very cement of society as it has existed since the death of feudalism. The London County Council, for instance, is not merely a more useful body for the administration of public business than the Metropolitan Board of Works was : it is instinct with a different spirit ; and even its general *intention* to be of use to the citizens and to heed their wishes, has in it a promise of better days, and has already done something to raise the dignity of life in London amongst a certain part of the population, and down to certain classes. Again, who can quarrel with the attempts to relieve the sordidness of civilized town life by the public acquirement of parks and other open spaces, planting of trees, establishment of free libraries and the like ? It is sensible and right for the public to push for the attaintment of such gains ; but we all know very well that their advantages are very unequally distributed, that they are gains rather for certain portions of the middle-classes than for working people. Nay, this socialist machinery may be used much further : it may gain higher wages and shorter working hours for the working men themselves : industries may be worked by municipalities for the benefit both of producers and consumers. Working-people's houses may be improved, and their management taken out of the hands of commercial speculators. More time might be insisted on for the education of children ; and so, and so on. In all this I freely admit a great gain, and am glad to see schemes tried which would lead to it. But great as the gain would be, the ultimate good of it, the amount of progressive force that might be in such things would I think, depend on *how* such reforms were done ; in what spirit ; or rather what else was being done, while these were going on, which would make people long for equality of condition ; which would give them faith in the possibility and workableness of socialism ; which would give them courage to strive for it and labour for it ; and which would do this for a vast number of people, so that the due impetus might be gained for the sweeping away of all privilege. For we must not lose sight of the very obvious fact that these improvements in the life of the larger public can only be carried out at the expense of some portion of the freedom and fortunes of the proprietary classes. They are, when genuine, one and all attacks I say on the « liberty and property » of the non-working or useless classes, as some of those classes see clearly enough. And I admit that if the sum of them should become vast and deep reaching enough to give to the useful or working classes intelligence enough to conceive of a life of equality & co-operation ; courage enough to accept it and to bring the necessary skill to bear on working it ; and power enough to force its acceptance on the stupid and the interested, the war of classes would speedily end in the victory of the useful class, which would then become the new Society of Equality.

Intelligence enough to conceive, courage enough to will, power enough to compel. If our ideas of a new Society are anything more than a dream, these three qualities must animate the due effective majority of the working-people ; and then, I say, the thing will be done.

Intelligence, courage, power *enough*. Now that *enough* means a very great thing. The effective majority of the working people must I should think be something as great in numbers as an actual mechanical majority ; because the non working classes (with, mind you, their sworn slaves and parasites, men who can't live without them) are even numerically very strong, and are stronger still in holding in their hand the nine points of the law, possession to wit ; and as soon as these begin to think there is any serious danger to their privilege—i.e., their livelihood—they will be pretty much unanimous in defending it, and using all the power which they possess in doing so. The neessary majority therefore of intelligence, courage & power is such a big thing to bring about, that it will take a long time to do so ; and those who are working for this end must clearly not throw away time and strength by making more mistakes than they can possibly help in their efforts for the conversion of the working people to an ardent desire for a society of equality. The question then, it seems to me, about all those partial gains above mentioned, is not so much as to what advantage they may be to the public at large in the passing moment, or even to the working people, but rather what effect they will have towards converting the workers to an understanding of, and ardent desire for Socialism ; true and complete Socialism I mean, what I should call Communism. For though making a great many poor people, or even a few, somewhat more comfortable than they are now, somewhat less miserable, let us say, is not in itself a light good ; yet it would be a heavy evil, if it did anything

towards dulling the efforts of the whole class of workers towards the winning of a real society of equals. And here again come in those doubts and the puzzlement I began by talking about. For I want to know and to ask you to consider, how far the betterment of the working people might go and yet stop at last without having made any progress on the *direct* road to Communism. Whether in short the tremendous organization of civilized commercial society is not playing the cat and mouse game with us socialists. Whether the Society of inequality might not accept the quasi-socialists machinery above mentioned, and work it for the purpose of upholding that society in a somewhat shorn condition, maybe, but a safe one. That seems to me possible, and means the other side of the view: instead of the useless classes being swept away by the useful, the useless classes gaining some of the usefulness of the workers, and *so* safeguarding their privilege. The workers better treated, better organised, helping to govern themselves, but with no more pretence to equality with the rich, nor any more hope for it than they have now. But if this be possible, it will only be so on the grounds that the working people have ceased to desire real socialism and are contented with some outside show of it joined to an increase in prosperity enough to satisfy the cravings of men who do not know what the pleasures of life might be if they treated their own capacities & the resources of nature reasonably with the intention and expectation of being happy. Of course also it could not be possible if there be, as we may well hope, an actual necessity for new development of society from out of our present conditions: but granting this necessity, the change may and will be exceedingly slow in coming if the working people do not show their sense of the necesssity by being overtaken by a longing for the change & by expressing that longing. And moreover it will not only be slow in coming but also in that case it can only come through a period of great suffering & misery, by the ruin of our present civilization: and surely reasonable men must hope that if the Socialism be necessary its advent shall both the speedy & shall be marked by the minimum of suffering and by ruin not quite complete. Therefore, I say, what we have to hope for is that the inevitable advance of the society of equality will speedily make itself felt by the consciousness of its necessity being impressed upon the working people, and that they will consciously and not blindly strive for its realization. That in fact is what we mean by the education into Socialism of the working classes. And I believe that if this is impossible at present, if the working people refuse to take any interest in Socialism, if they practically reject it, we must accept that as a sign that the necessity for an essential change in society is so far distant, that we need scarcely trouble ourselves about it. This is the test; and for this reason it is so deadly serious for us to find out whether those democratic tendencies & the schemes of new administration they give birth to are really of use in educating the people into *direct* Socialism. If they are not, they are of use for nothing else; and we had best try if we can't make terms with intelligent Tories and benevolent Whigs, and beg them to unite their intelligence and benevolence, and govern us as kindly and wisely as they can, and to rob us in moderation only. But if they are of use, then in spite of their sordid and repellent details, and all the sickness of hope deferred that the use of such instruments assuredly brings us, let use them as far as they will go, and refuse to be disappointed if they will not go very far: which means if they will not in a decade turn into a united host of heroes and sages a huge mass of men living under a system of society so intricate as to look on the surface like a mere chance-hap muddle of many millions of necessitous people, oppressed indeed, and sorely, not by obvious individual violence and ill-will, but by an economic system so far reaching, so deeply seated, that it may well seem like the operation of a natural law to men so uneducated that they have not even escaped the reflexion of the so-called education of their masters, but in addition to their other mishaps are saddled also with the superstitions and hypocrisies of the upper classes, with scarce a whit of the characteristic traditions of their own class to help them: an intellectual slavery which is a necessary accompaniment of their material slavery. That as a mass is what revolutionists have got to deal with: such a mass indeed I think could and would be vivified by some spark of enthusiasm, some sudden hopeful impulse towards aggression, if the necessity for sudden change were close at hand. But is it? There are doubtless not a few in this room, myself perhaps amongst them (I say *perhaps* for one's old self is apt to grow dim to one)—some of us I say once believed in the inevitableness of a sudden and speedy change. That was no wonder with new enligtenment of socialism gilding the dulness of civilization for us. But if we must now take soberer views of our hopes, do not reproach us with that. Remember how hard other tyrannies have died, though to the economical oppression of them was added obvious violent individual oppression, which as I have said is lacking to the heavy tyranny of our times; and can we hope that it will be speedier in its ending than they? I say that the time is not now for the sudden kindling of the impulse of direct aggression amongst the mass of the workmen. But what then! are we to give up all hope of educating them into Socialism? Surely not. Let

us use all means possible for drawing them into socialism, so that they may at last find themselves in such a position that they understand themselves to be face to face with false society, them selves the only possible elements of true society.

So now I must say that I am driven to the conclusion that those measures I have been speaking of, anything that under any reasonable form does tend towards socialism (present conditions being understood) *are* of use toward the education of the great mass of the workers ; that it is necessary in the present to give form to vague aspiration which are in the air about them, and to raise their aims above the mere businesslike work of the old trades unions of raising wages with the consent (however obtained) of the employers ; of making the workers see other employers — The public to wit, i.e., the workers themselves in their other position of consumers — than those who live on the profit wrung out of their labour. I think that taking up such measures, directly tending towards Socialism, is necessary also in getting working people to raise their standard of livelihood so that they may claim more and yet more of the wealth produced by society, which as aforesaid they can only get at the expense of the non-producing classes who now rob them. Lastly, such measures, with all that goes towards getting them carried, will train them into organisation and administration ; and I hope that no one here will assert that they do not need such training, or that they are not at a huge disadvantage from the lack of it as compared with their masters who have been trained in these arts.

But this education by political and corporate action must, as I hinted above, be supplemented by instilling into the minds of the people a knowledge of the aims of socialism, and a longing to bring about the complete change which will supplant civilization by communism. For the Social-democratic measures above mentioned are all of them either make-shift alleviations to help us through the present days of oppression, or means for landing us in the new country of equality. And there is a danger that they will be looked upon as ends in themselves. Nay it is certain that the greater number of those who are pushing for them will at the time be able to see no further than them, and will only recognise their temporary character when they have passed beyond them, and are claiming the next thing. But I must hope that we can instil into the mass of people some spirit of expectation, however vague, beyond the needs of the year ; and I know that many who are on the road to socialism will from the first and habitually look toward the realization of the society of equality, & try to realise it for themselves—I mean they will at least try to think what equality will turn out to be, and will long for it above all things. And I look to this spirit to vivify the striving for the mere machinery of Socialism ; and I hope and believe that it will so spread as the machinery is attained that however much the old individualist spirit may try to make itself master of the corporate machinery, and try by means of the public to govern the public in the interests of the enemies of the public, it may be defeated.

All this however is talking about the possible course of the Socialist movement ; but since, as you have just heard, it seems to me necessary that in order to make any due use of socialist machinery one should have some sort of idea as to the life which is to be the result of it, let me now take up the often told tale of what we mean by communism or socialism ; for between complete Socialism and Communism there is no difference whatever in my mind. Communism is in fact the completion of Socialism : when that ceases to be militant & becomes triumphant, it will be communism.

The Communist asserts in the first place that the resources of nature, mainly the land and those other things which can only be used for the reproduction of wealth and which are the effect of social work, should not be owned in severalty, but by the whole community for the benefit of the whole. That where this is not the case the owners of these means of production must of necessity be the masters of those who do not own a sufficiency of them to free them from the need of paying with a portion of their labour for the use of the said means of production ; and that the masters or owners of the means of production do practically own the workers ; very practically, since they really dictate to them the kind of life they shall lead, and the workers cannot escape from it unless by themselves becoming owners of the means of production i.e. of other men. The resources of nature therefore, and the wealth used for the production of further wealth, the plant & stock in short, should be communized. Now if that were done, it would at once check the accumulation of riches. No man can become immensely rich by the storing up of wealth which is the result of the labour of his own brain and hands : to become very rich he must by cajolery or force deprive others of what their brains or hands have earned for them : the utmost that the most acquisitive man could do would be to induce his fellow citizens to pay him extra for his special talents, if they specially longed for his productions. But since no one could be very rich, and since talent for special work is never so very rare, and would tend to become less rare as men were freer to choose the occupations most suitable for them, producers of specialities could not exact *very* exorbitant payment, so that the aristocracy of talent, even if it appeared, would tend to disap-

pear, even in this first state of incomplete Communism. In short there would be no very rich men : and all would be well off : all would be far above the condition of satisfaction of their material necessities. You may say how I know that ? The answer is because there could not be so much waste as there is now. Waste would tend to disappear. For what is waste ? First, the causeless destruction of raw material ; and secondly, the diverting of labour from useful production. You may ask me what is the standard of usefulness in wares ? It has been said, and I suppose the common view of that point is, that the price in the market gives us the standard ; but is a loaf of bread or a saw less useful than a Mechlin lace veil or a diamond necklace ? The truth is that in a society of inequality, a society in which there are very rich people and very poor ones, the standard of usefulness is utterly confused : in such a society the market price of an article is given us by the necessities of the poor and the inordinate cravings of the rich ; or rather indeed *their necessity* for spending their wealth—*nay* their riches—somehow : by no means necessarily in pleasure. But in a society of equality the demand for an article *would* be a standard of its usefulness in one way or other. And it would be a matter of course that untill every body had his absolute necessities and his reasonable comforts satisfied, there would be no place for the production of luxuries ; and always labour would be employed in producing things that people (all the people, since classes would have disappeared (really want.

Remember what the waste of a society of inequality is : 1st : The production of sordid makeshifts for the supply of poor folk who cannot afford the real article. 2nd : the production of luxuries for rich folk, the greater part of which even their personal folly does not make them want. And 3rdly : the wealth wasted by the salesmanship of competitive commerce, to which the production of wares is but a secondary object, its first object being the production of a profit for the individual manufacturer. You understand that the necessary distribution of goods is not included in this waste ; but the endeavour of each manufacturer to get as near as he can to a monopoly of the market which he supplies.

The minimization of waste therefore, which would take place in the incomplete 1st stages of a society of equality—a society only *tending* to equality—would make us wealthy : labour would not be wasted : work men would not be employed in producing either slave wares, or toys for rich men : their genuine well made wares would be made for other workmen who would know what they wanted. When the wares were of such a kind as required very exquisite skill and long training to produce, or when the material used was far fetched and dear bought, they would not cease to be produced, even though private citizens could not acquire them : they would be produced for the public use, and their real value be enormously increased thereby, and the natural and honest pride of the workman duly satisfied. For surely wealthy people will not put up with sordid surrounding or stinginess in public institution : they will assuredly have schools, libraries, museums, parks and all the rest of it real & genuine, not makeshifts for such things : especially as being no longer oppressed by fears for their livelihood, and all the dismal incidents of the battle for mere existence, they will be able to enjoy these things thoroughly : they will be able in fact to use them, which they cannot do now. But in all I have been saying about this new society hitherto I have been thinking I must remind you of its inchoate and incomplete stages. The means of production communized but the resulting wealth still private property. Truth to tell, I think that such a state of things could only embrace a very short period of transition to complete communism : a period which would only last while people were shaking down into the new Society ; for if there were no poor people I don't see how there could be any rich. There would indeed be a natural compulsion, which would prevent any man from doing what he was not fitted for, because he could not do it usefully ; and I need not say that in order to arrive at the wealth I have been speaking of we must all work usefully. But if a man does work usefully you can't do without him ; and if you can't do without him you can only put him into an inferior position to another useful citizen by means of compulsion ; and if you compel him to it, you at once have your privileged classes again. Again, when all people are living comfortably or even handsomely, the keenness of the strife for the better positions, which doenit involve a life of idleness or power over ones neighbours, will surely tend to abate : men get rich now in their struggles not to be poor, and because their riches shield them from suering from the horrors which are a necessary accompaniment of the existence of rich men ; e.g., the sight of slums, the squalor of a factory country, the yells and evil language of drunken and brutalized poor people & so forth. But when all private life was decent and, apart from natural accident, happy ; and when public institutions satisfied your craving for splendour and completeness ; and when no one was allowed to injure the public by defiling the natural beauty of the earth, or by forbidding mens cravings for making it more beautiful to have full sway, what advantage would there be in having more nominal wealth than your neighbour ? Therefore, as on the one hand men whose work was acknowledged

as useful would scarcely subject themselves to a new system of caste ; and, on the other, people living happily with all their reasonable needs easily satisfied would hardly worry themselves with worrying others into giving them extra wealth which they could not use, so I think the communization of the means of industry would speedily be followed by the communization of its product: that is that there would be complete equality of condition amongst all men. Which again does not mean that people would (all round) use their neighbours coats, or houses or tooth brushes, but that every one, whatever work he did, would have the opportunity of satisfying all his reasonable needs according to the admitted standard of the society in which he lived: i.e., without robbing any other citizen. And I must say it is in the belief that this is possible of realization that I continue to be a socialist. Prove to me that it is no ; and I will not trouble myself to do my share towards altering the present state of society but will try to live on, as little a pain to myself and a nuisance to my neighbour as I may. But yet I must tell that I shall be more or less both a pain to myself (or at least a disgrace) and a nuisance to my neighbour. For I do declare that any other state of society but communism is grievous & disgraceful to all belonging to it.

Some of you may expect me to say something about the machinery by which a communistic society is to be carried on. Well, I can say very little that is not merely negative. Most anti-socialists and even some socialists are apt to confuse, as I hinted before, the co-operative machinery towards which modern life is tending with the essence of socialism itself ; and its enemies attack it, and sometimes its friends defend it on those lines ; both to my mind committing a grievous error, especially the latter. E.g. An anti-socialist will say How will you sail a ship in a socialist condition ? How ? Why with a captain and mates & sailing master and engineer (if it be a steamer) and ABs and stokers & so on and so on. *Only* there will be no 1st 2nd and 3rd class among the passengers : the sailors & stokers will be as well fed & lodged as the captain or passengers ; and the Captain and the stoker will have the same pay.

There are plenty of enterprizes which will be carried on then, as they are now, and probably must be, to be successful, under the guidance of one man. The only difference between then and now will be, that he will be chosen because he is fit for the work, & not because he must have a job found for him ; and that he will do his work for the benefit of each and all, and not for the sake of making a profit. For the rest, time will teach us what new machinery may be necessary to the new life ; reasonable men will submit to it without demur ; and unreasonable ones will find themselves compelled to by the nature of things, and can only I fear console themselves, as the philosopher did when he knocked his head against the door post, by damning the Nature of things.

Well, since our aim is so great and so much to be longed for, the substituting throughout all society of peace for war, pleasure and self-respect for grief and disgrace, we may well seek about strenuously for some means for starting our enterprise ; and since it is just these means in which the difficulty lies, I appeal to all socialists, while they express their thoughts & feelings about them honestly and fearlessly, not to make a quarrel of it with those whose aim is one with theirs, because there is a difference of opinion between them about the usefulness of the details of the means. It is difficult or even impossible not to make mistakes about these, driven as we are by the swift lapse of time and the necessity for doing something amidst it all. So let us forgive the mistakes that others make, even if we make none ourselves, and be at peace amongst ourselves, that we may the better make War upon the monopolist.

Lo, When we Wade the Tangled Wood.

Lo, when we wade the tangled wood,
  In haste and hurry to be there,
Nought seem its leaves and blossoms good,
  For all that they be fashioned fair.

But looking up, at last we see
  The glimmer of the open light,
From o'er the place where we would be :
  Then grow the very brambles bright.

So now, amidst our day of strife,
  With many a matter glad we play,
When once we see the light of life
  Gleam through the tangle of to-day.

Come, Comrades, Come!

Come, comrades, come, your glasses clink ;
Up with your hands a health to drink—
The health of all that workers be,
In every land, on every sea.

Chorus—And he that will this health deny,
  Down among the dead men, down among the dead men,
  Down, down, down, down,
  Down among the dead men let him lie !

Well done ! Now drink another toast,
And pledge the gathering of the host—
The people, armed in brain and hand,
To claim their rights in every land.

There's liquor left ; come, let's be kind,
And drink the rich a better mind—
That when we knock upon the door,
They may be off and say no more.

Now, comrades, let the glass blush red ;
Drink we the unforgotten dead
That did their deeds and went away,
Before the bright sun brought the day.

The Day ? Ah, friends, late grows the night ;
Drink to the glimmering spark of light,
The herald of the joy to be,
The battle-torch of thee and me !

Take yet another cup in hand,
And drink in hope our little band ;
Drink strife in hope while lasteth breath,
And brotherhood in life and death.

The Day is Coming.

Come hither, lads, and hearken, for a tale there is to tell,
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.
And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England in the days that are to be.
There more than one in a thousand in the days that are yet to come
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some joy of the ancient home.
For then—laugh not, but listen, to this strange tale of mine—
All folk that are in England shall be better lodged than swine.
Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,
Nor yet come home in the even too faint and weary to stand.
Men in that time a-coming shall work and have no fear
For to-morrow's lack of earning and the hunger-wolf a-near.
I tell you this for a wonder, that no man then shall be glad
Of his fellow's fall and mishap, to snatch at the work he had.
For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that soweth no seed.
O strange, new, wonderful justice ! But for whom shall we gather the gain ?
For ourselves and for each of our fellows, and no hand shall labour in vain.
Then all Mine and Thine shall be Ours, and no more shall any man crave
For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.
And what wealth then shall be left us when none shall gather gold
To buy his friends in the market, and pinch and pine the sold !
Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy fields we till.
And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the mighty dead ;
And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's teeming head ;
And the painter's hand of wonder ; and the marvellous fiddle-bow,
And the banded choirs of music : all those that do and know.
For all these shall be ours and all men's, nor shall any lack a share
Of the toil and the gain of living in the days when the world grows fair.

Ah ! such are the days that shall be ! But what are the deeds of to-day,
In the days of the years we dwell in, that wear our lives away ?
Why, then, and for what are we waiting ? There are three words to speak :
WE WILL IT, and what is the foeman but the dream-strong wakened and weak ?
O why and for what are we waiting ? while our brothers droop and die,
And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by.
How long shall they reproach us where crowd on crowd they dwell,
Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-crushed hungry hell ?
Through squalid life they laboured, in sordid grief they died,
Those sons of a mighty mother, those props of England's pride.
They are gone ; there is none can undo it, nor save our souls from the curse ;
But many a million cometh, and shall they be better or worse ?
It is we must answer and hasten, and open wide the door
For the rich man's hurrying terror, and the slow-foot hope of the poor.
Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched, and their unlearned discontent,
We must give it voice and wisdom till the wainting tide be spent.
Come, then, since all things call us, the living and the dead,
And o'er the weltering tangle a glimmering light is shed.
Come, then let us cast off fooling, and put by ease and rest,
For the CAUSE alone is worthy till the good days bring the best.
Come, join in the only battle wherein no man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his deed shall still prevail.
Ah ! come, cast off all fooling, for this at least we know :
That the Dawn and the Day is coming, and forth the Banners go.

May Day.

THE WORKERS.

O Earth, once again cometh Spring to deliver
Thy winter-worn heart, O thou friend of the Sun ;
Fair blossom the meadows from river to river
And the birds sing their triumph o'er winter undone.

O Earth, how a-toiling thou singest thy labour
And upholdest the flower-crowned cup of thy bliss
As when in the peast-tide, drinks neighbour to neighbour,
And all the words are joyful, and nought is amiss.

But we, we, O Mother, through long generations,
We have toiled and been fruitful, but never with thee
Might we raise up our bowed heads and cry to the nations
To look on our beauty and hearken our glee.

Unlovely of aspect, heart-sick and aweary
On the season's fair pageant all dim-eyed we gaze ;
Of thy fairness we fashion a prison-house dreary
And in sorrow wear over each day of our days.

THE EARTH.

O children ! O toilers, what foemen beleaguer
The House I have built you, the Home I have won ?
Full great are my gifts, and my hands are all eager
To fill every heart with the deeds I have done.

THE WORKERS.

The foemen are born of thy body, O mother
In our shape are they shapen, their voice is the same ;
And the thought of their hearts is as ours and no other ;
It is they of our own house that bring us to shame.

THE EARTH.

Are ye few ? Are they many ? What words have ye spoken
To bid your own brethren remember the Earth ?
What deeds have ye done that the bonds should be broken,
And men dwell together in good-will and mirth ?

THE WORKERS.

They are few, we are many : and yet, O our Mother,
Many years were we wordless and nought was our deed,
But now the word flitteth from brother to brother :
We have furrowed the acres and scattered the seed.

THE EARTH.

Win on, then, unyielding, through fair and foul wealther,
And pass not a deed that your day shall avail.
And in hope every spring-tide come gather together
That unto the Earth ye may tell all your tale.

Then this shall I promise, that I am abiding
The day of your triumph, the ending of gloom,
And no wealth that ye will then my hand shall be hiding
And the tears of the spring into roses shall bloom.

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