

dealers, who have sufficient independence left in them to desire freedom, to emancipate themselves from the British yoke. Firstly, the establishment of "the orderly government at Khartoum," otherwise called British supremacy in Eastern Africa, must of necessity be indefinitely postponed. The policy of "butcher and bolt" would have to be pursued—less the "butcher." For there would be no time to give the Mahdi the chance of inflicting that chastisement on the invader he so richly deserves. But the Soudanese would be at least relieved from the immediate danger of having the blessings of civilisation conferred upon them. It would be well to remember, in this connexion also, that the native movement in Egypt proper is not dead but sleeping.

Next, those wicked Irish might possibly not be inclined to cease from troubling and to leave the weary "Castle" at rest just at this precise juncture. Even the presence of "their prince" might not supply that of a military force in keeping down such discontent—such is human perversity. If the "handful of agitators" of which we are sometimes told "disloyal Ireland" consists, chose to take advantage of the political "situation," stirring times might be expected across St. George's Channel.

In the rear of the British armies themselves would be the vast Indian populations, which some who know them say are ready for revolt, others that their "loyalty" to their empress has never been firmer. War in Afghanistan would afford an excellent opportunity of deciding this interesting question. It is unnecessary to do more than allude to the possible action of Irish-Americans in Canada, or the probable prospect of "movements" in South Africa. All things considered, we think we are not far wrong in venturing the prognostication that in the event of a Russian war the "British Empire," speaking generally, is likely to have a warm quarter of an hour.

As regards the immediate aspect of the dispute, it is clear that the Czar and his myrmidons have scored a diplomatic victory. After being peremptorily ordered to evacuate the Zilfilkar Pass by the British Government, the Cossack troops are now permitted by the same Government to remain where they are—for a time at least. Russia's claim, from being dismissed with disdain, has at least reached the stage of argument. Whether it will attain that of acceptance remains to be seen. It is likely enough that by alternate wheedling and blustering the Cabinet at St. Petersburg may win over British Ministers to its opinions.

After all, it is not nice going to war with one's equal or possible superior in strength—so different from those delightful "military operations" which consist in "potting" savages with an amount of danger just sufficient to give a zest to the sport, and no more—and then "nobbling" their territory. Had the Sultan of Soccatoo or the King of Abyssinia insisted on holding positions when ordered to evacuate them, he would have been thrashed, of course. But then the special line the skill of our ablest and most valiant generals takes is that of "thrashing a cannibal" (*pace* Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan). Thrashing a Cossack is a different sort of thing.

The strong point of England is her cheap goods. Cheap "glory" is the latest industrial development of the British capitalistic system. The Englishman has discovered an improved method of manufacturing it *very* cheap, by the application of the latest inventions in war machinery on the raw material of naked savages who can't handle a rifle. Since it is only on these terms that "glory" *pays*, it is hardly likely that any British Government would care to embark in the perilous speculation of producing it on the old method of personal prowess and equal fighting. This would be retrograde. Much as we hate war, we must confess to a species of eager, expectant curiosity, akin to that one feels at the revival of some defunct art, at the prospect of contemplating the figure cut by the "bold Briton" before the foeman when the odds are something less than a thousand to one in his favour. Would we doubt the valour of Britain's sons? *Never!* But as yet we live by faith, and not by sight. That is all.

E. BELFORD BAX.

THE WORKER'S SHARE OF ART.

I CAN imagine some of our comrades smiling bitterly at the above title, and wondering what a Socialist journal can have to do with art; so I begin by saying that I understand only too thoroughly how "unpractical" the subject is while the present system of capital and wages lasts. Indeed that is my text.

What, however, *is* art? whence does it spring? Art is man's embodied expression of interest in the life of man; it springs from man's pleasure in his life; pleasure we must call it, taking all human life together, however much it may be broken by the grief and trouble of individuals; and as it is the expression of pleasure in life generally, in the memory of

the deeds of the past, and the hope of those of the future, so it is especially the expression of man's pleasure in the deeds of the present; in his work.

Yes, that may well seem strange to us at present! Men to-day may see the pleasure of unproductive energy—energy put forth in games and sports; but in productive energy—in the task which must be finished before we can eat, the task which will begin again to-morrow, and many a to-morrow without change or end till *we* are ended—pleasure in that?

Yet I repeat that the chief source of art is man's pleasure in his daily necessary work, which expresses itself and is embodied in that work itself; nothing else can make the common surroundings of life beautiful, and whenever they are beautiful it is a sign that men's work has pleasure in it, however they may suffer otherwise. It is the lack of this pleasure in daily work which has made our towns and habitations sordid and hideous, insults to the beauty of the earth which they disfigure, and all the accessories of life mean, trivial, ugly—in a word, *vulgar*. Terrible as this is to endure in the present, there is hope in it for the future; for surely it is but just that outward ugliness and disgrace should be the result of the slavery and misery of the people; and that slavery and misery once changed, it is but reasonable to expect that external ugliness will give place to beauty, the sign of free and happy work.

Meantime, be sure that nothing else will produce even a reasonable semblance of art; for, think of it! the workers, by means of whose hands the mass of art must be made, are forced by the commercial system to live, even at the best, in places so squalid and hideous that no one could live in them and keep his sanity without losing all sense of beauty and enjoyment of life. The advance of the industrial army under its "captains of industry" (save the mark!) is traced, like the advance of other armies, in the ruin of the peace and loveliness of earth's surface, and nature, who will have us live at any cost, compels us to *get used* to our degradation at the expense of losing our manhood, and producing children doomed to live less like men than ourselves. Men living amidst such ugliness cannot conceive of beauty, and, therefore, cannot express it.

Nor is it only the workers who feel this misery (and I rejoice over that, at any rate). The higher or more intellectual arts suffer with the industrial ones. The artists, the aim of whose lives it is to produce beauty and interest, are deprived of the materials for their works in real life, since all around them is ugly and vulgar. They are driven into seeking their materials in the imaginations of past ages, or into giving the lie to their own sense of beauty and knowledge of it by sentimentalising and falsifying the life which goes on around them; and so, in spite of all their talent, intellect and enthusiasm, produce little which is not contemptible when matched against the works of the non-commercial ages. Nor must we forget that whatever is produced that is worth anything is the work of men who are in rebellion against the corrupt society of to-day—rebellion sometimes open, sometimes veiled under cynicism, but by which in any case lives are wasted in a struggle, too often vain, against their fellow-men, which ought to be used for the exercise of special gifts for the benefit of the world.

High and low, therefore, slaveholders and slaves, we lack beauty in our lives, or, in other words, man-like pleasure. This absence of pleasure is the second gift to the world which the development of commercialism has added to its first gift of a propertiless proletariat. Nothing else but the grinding of this iron system could have reduced the civilised world to vulgarity. The theory that art is sick *because* people have turned their attention to science is without foundation. It is true that science is allowed to live because profit can be made of her, and men, who must find some outlet for their energies, turn to her, since she exists, though only as the slave (but now the rebellious slave) of capital; whereas when art is fairly in the clutch of profit-grinding she dies, and leaves behind her but her phantom of *sham* art as the futile slave of the capitalist.

Strange as it may seem, therefore, to some people, it is as true as strange, that Socialism, which has been commonly supposed to tend to mere Utilitarianism, is the only hope of the arts. It may be, indeed, that till the social revolution is fully accomplished, and perhaps for a little while afterwards, men's surroundings may go on getting plainer, grimmer, and barer. I say for a little while afterwards, because it may take men some time to shake off the habits of penury on the one hand and inane luxury on the other, which have been forced on them by commercialism. But even in that there is hope; for it is at least possible that all the old superstitions and conventionalities of art have got to be swept away before art can be born again; that before that new birth we shall have to be left bare of everything that has been called art; that we shall have nothing left

us but the materials of art, that is the human race with its aspirations and passions and its home, the earth; on which materials we shall have to use these tools, leisure and desire.

Yet, though that may be, it is not likely that we shall quite recognise it; it is probable that it will come so gradually that it will not be obvious to our eyes. Maybe, indeed, art is sick to death even now, and nothing but its already half-dead body is left upon the earth: but also, may we not hope that we shall not have to wait for the new birth of art till we attain the peace of the realised New Order? Is it not at least possible, on the other hand, that what will give the death-blow to the vulgarity of life which enwraps us all now will be the great tragedy of Social Revolution, and that the worker will then once more begin to have a share in art, when he begins to see his aim clear before him—his aim of a share of real life for all men—and when his struggle for that aim has begun? It is not the excitement of battling for a great and worthy end which is the foe to art, but the dead weight of sordid, unrelieved anxiety, the anxiety for the daily earning of a wretched pittance by labour degrading at once to body and mind, both by its excess and by its mechanical nature.

In any case, the leisure which Socialism above all things aims at obtaining for the worker is also the very thing that breeds desire—desire for beauty, for knowledge, for more abundant life, in short. Once more, that leisure and desire are sure to produce art, and without them nothing but sham art, void of life or reason for existence, can be produced: therefore not only the worker, but the world in general, will have no share in art till our present commercial society gives place to real society—to Socialism. I know this subject is too serious and difficult to treat properly in one short article. I will ask our readers, therefore, to consider this as an introduction to the consideration of the relations of industrial labour to art.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

EAST-END WORKERS.—III.

In writing this article on "sweating," I speak with authority as a *bona fide* working tailor for eleven years, working in the sweater's den in the East-end of London. I have endeavoured to gather facts to lay them before the public. The community at large is ignorant of the cruelty that takes place in these fever dens, and it is the oppressed worker who alone knows his grievances; but unfortunately, for fear of being discharged from employment, he has to remain silent, and thus the evil of sweating is extensively carried on, which is nothing more nor less than *slow murder*. I know there are men and women ready to assist in advocating the people's cause. It is my duty as a Socialist to lay before the public their grievances and also to say to what they are subjected.

Dealing with the deplorable condition of the working tailoresses in East London, their wretched pay, their miserable meals, their captivity, approaching to slavery, in places the most dangerous and unhealthy, dimly reveals but one aspect of the misery existing in parts of East London, the natural outgrowth of the sweating system. Without entering at length in the course of the present article into the many details of the sweating system, it will be sufficient to indicate the growth of one of the most miserable conditions of things in the East-end of London, and some of the mischief to which it has given rise. "Sweaters," then, it may be well to mention at the outset, has a technical meaning, as applied to those engaged in the tailoring trade, a class of men who, receiving a certain amount of cloth from the large clothing establishments in the metropolis, for which security is given, agree to work that cloth into garments, or parts of garments, for a certain price. This assertion, however, must be qualified to some extent, for sweaters thus receiving the cloth direct from the establishment are far from being in the majority. A certain amount of small influence is necessary to obtain "orders" or contracts, and the knowledge of this fact has given rise to a class of "middlemen," who, obtaining the cloth from the establishment, hand it over in their turn to the sweaters for a consideration. To these "middlemen" may, in reality, be traced the existence of the evil of low prices and wretched workshops. The sweaters, having to do the work at a less price because of the existence of these middlemen, and naturally desirous of putting as much of the money as possible into their own pockets, screw their workpeople down to the lowest wages possible, and work the "concern" as cheaply as they can. It may be mentioned, too, that the capital required to start a sweating shop is insignificant. The sweater, having received his orders, is immediately favoured with the attentions of an agent from a firm of sewing-machine manufacturers, who supply him with as many machines as he may require, at weekly payments of from one shilling to half-a-crown each, easily deducted from the profits

he may pocket at the end of each week. His next move is to strike off a few bills or to advertise for "hands," who are usually forthcoming. With these he strikes a bargain for a daily wage, screwed down to the utmost farthing, and allowing the sweaters a tolerably good profit. A few gas-burners are knocked up; the two wretched rooms of which the dilapidated house can boast are furnished with a few deal tables and chairs. Each room is filled with eight or ten persons, mostly girls, to whom, indeed, the sweater is rather partial, since they can do with less wages. The work is given out, the sewing-machine strikes up its rattling noise, and another sweating-shop is started somewhere in the streets right and left of Bethnal Green, Hackney Road and Whitechapel, in Princess Street, Church Street and Spitalfields. But wherever the shop may be, the sanitary conditions are invariably bad. Starting with little or no capital, the sweater cannot afford to make the rooms fit for the use to which they have been put. Consequently eight or ten persons are crowded into a room barely fit for three persons. The work being continued till late at night, three or four gas-jets may be seen flaring in one room; a coke fire may be seen dimly burning in the wretched fireplace; sinks are untrapped, closets are without water, and altogether the sanitary conditions are abominable. In this matter the inspectors under the Factory Acts are powerless, sanitation remaining exclusively under local authority, whose functions are limited. Moreover, the workpeople, being for the most part foreigners—Dutch, Polish, Russian—who migrating into this country fancy they have arrived at the El Dorado of their hopes, uneducated, and ignorant of the simplest of sanitary laws, do much by their own ignorance to complete the wreck and ruin of their own constitution, started by the sweaters, with the result that over 50 per cent. suffer in a short time from heart and lung disease.

LEWIS LYONS.

IRISH NOTES.

We have received the following notes from a friend in Ireland. They are interesting as dealing with the past treatment of her country by England. We look forward to having a regular series of notes from the same source on the condition of events in Ireland at the present time.

English people, as a rule, will not read Irish newspapers, if the latter have the least National tendency; and as we Irish wish the English nation to know some of the truths concerning the wrongs we have laboured under for centuries, we shall give a few facts—not theories, but hard facts—which can be proved from both the English Government side and the National side.

In the last century, Dean Swift was a good friend to the suffering Irish. He always upheld the cause of the oppressed, and on one occasion said that the confiscated lands which were given by William III. of England, to his English followers, were given to highwaymen; inasmuch as he considered the recipients must have been stopped and slain on Hounslow Heath on their way to Ireland, and the highwaymen came in their stead.

William III., when memorialised by the people of Bristol to stop the importation of Irish manufactures, replied: "I shall do my best to hinder and obstruct the woollen trade of Ireland, and to promote that of England."

Shortly afterwards, Dean Swift at a public dinner was asked to drink the toast "Prosperity to Ireland." "No," replied the witty Dean, "I never drink memories."

A quotation from a letter written by the Lord-Deputy, about the year 1607, will show the spirit in which the inhabitants of Ireland were regarded by their English rulers:—"I have often said and written, it is *famine that must consume the Irish*, as our *swords* and other endeavours worked not that speedy effect which is expected; *hunger* would be a better, because a speedier, weapon to employ against them than the sword. . . . I burned all along the Lough [Neagh] within four miles of Dungannon, and killed 100 people, sparing none, of what quality, age, or sex soever, besides many burned to death. We killed man, woman and child, horse, beast, and whatsoever we could find."

During the rebellion of 1798, the soldiers upon one occasion tied a man and his three sons to trees, and then before their eyes, violated the mother and four young sisters. I can give my authorities for this.

E. OWENS BLACKBURNE.

"Unnecessary railways have been thrown into distant lands, while steamships have been too largely constructed in British ports. . . . America has had large crops, is well supplied with most things necessary to its population at a range of prices unusually cheap, and yet it felt the depression of prices because of inability to sell its surplus produce abroad at profitable prices. . . . The railways are cutting each other's throats, or rather dividends, in their frantic attempts to obtain traffic"—Trade and Finance, *Daily News*.