THE PILGRIMS OF HOPE.

V.—NEW BIRTH.

It was twenty-five years ago that I lay in my mother's lap
Not born to life, nor knowing one whiff of what that should hap;
That day was a day of comfort, of joy without end;
And twenty-five years ago—when I was born.

I look and behold the days of the years that are passed away,
And my soul is full of their wealth, for oft they blithely and gay
As the hounds of bird and of beast: they have made me calm and strong
To waste the stream of confusion, the river of grief and wrong.

A rich man was my father, but he skulked ere I was born,
And gave my mother money, but left her life to scorn;
And we dwelt alone in our village: I knew not my mother's "shame,"
But her love and her wisdom I know I still have in the parting game.
Then a lawyer paid me money, and I lived awhile at a school,
And learned the lore of the ancients, and how the knife and the fool
Have been mostly the masters of earth: yet the earth seemed fair and good.

With the wealth of field and homestead, and garden and river and wood,
And I was glad amidst it, and little of evil I might do,
Who deemed he shall live for ever.

Till last at last befel on a day
That I came across our Frenchman at the edge of the new-mown hay
A fishing, as he was wont, alone as he always was.
So I helped the dark old man to carry a bush to grass,
And somehow he knew of my birth, and somehow we came to friends,
Till he got to telling me chapters of the tale that never ends;
The birth cried out for a mother, a mother cried out for me.
He told how the weak compass, he told of the fear of the strong;
He told of dreams' grown deeds, deeds done ere time was ripe,
Of hope that in vain we plighted at the melting pipe;
The fight long after hope in the teeth of all despair.

Of battle and prison and death, of life stripped naked and bare.
But to me it all seemed happy, for I gilded all the gold
Of youth that believes not in death, nor knows of hope grown cold
I hearkened and learned, and longed with a longing that had no name,
Till I went my ways to our village and again departure came.

Wide now the world was grown, and I saw things clear and grim,
That awhile ago smiled on me from the dream-mist doubtful and dim.
I knew that the poor were poor, and had no heart or hope;
And I knew that the rich were rich, and had no heart to cope.
So I thought the thoughts of a man, and I fell into bitter mood,
Wherein, except as a picture, there was nought on the earth that was good.

Till I met the woman I love, and she asked, as folk ask of the wise,
Of the root and meaning of things that she saw in the world of lies.
I told her all I knew, and the tale told the load that
That made me less than a man; and she set my feet on the road.

So we left our pleasure behind to seek for hope and for life,
And to London we came, if perchance there smothered the embers of strife
Such as our Frenchman had told of; and I wrote to him to ask
If he would be our master, and set the learners their task.

I was dead, the word on the letter which came back to me,
And all that we saw henceforward with our own eyes must we see.
So we looked on and suffered; sickened not for ourselves indeed;
Put there, if we hear nothing new, at least we shall see a new face.

And besides, away in our village the joiner's craft had I learned,
And I worked as other men work, and money and wisdom I earned.
Yet little from day to day in street or workshop.
To nourish the plant of hope that deep in my heart had been set.
The life of the poor we learned, and to me there was nothing new
In their day of little deeds that ever destined saw.

But new was the horror of London that went on all thewhile
That rich men played at their ease for fame and fame to beguile
The days of their empty lives, and praised the deeds they did,
As though they had been nothing but fashioned the little pipe long used;
Though some of them bethought themselves from hopeless day to day
With the lives of the slaves of the rich and the hell wherein they lay,
They wrought menees as those who should take a bargain with hell,
That it grow a little cooler, and thus for ever dwell.

So passed the world on its ways, and weary with waiting we were.
Men ate and drank and married; no wild cry smote the air,
No great cry went together to greet each other near
And ever more and more seemed the town like a monstrous tomb.
To us, the Pilgrims of Hope, until to-night it came,
And Hope on the stones of the street was written in letters of flame.

This is how it befel: a workmate of mine had heard
Some bitter speech in my mouth, and he took me up at the word,
And said: "Come over to-morrow to our Radical-speaking-place;
Put there, if we hear nothing new, at least we shall see a new face;
He is one of those Communist chefs, and 'tis like that you may agree."
So we went, and the street was as dull and as common as ought you could see.

Dull and dirty the room. Just over the chairman's chair

Was a bust, a Quaker's face with nose cocked up in the air.

There was a bookfair on the table of the party I was at,

And Mazzini dark and lean amid them gone astray.

Some thirty men were of the kind that I knew full well,

Listless, rubbing their eyes going to bed.

My heart sank down as I entered, and wearily there I sat

While the chairman strove to end his manifold of this and of that.

And partly shy he seemed, and partly indeed ashamed

Of the grizzled man beside him as his name to us he named;

He rose, thickest and short, and dressed in shabby blue,

And even as he began it seemed as though I knew

This was the man—though we were heard it before.

He spoke, were it well, were it ill, as though a message he bore,

A word that he could not refrain from many a million of men.

Nor ought seemed the sordid room and the few that were listening than

So the words were towering in the world which was to be.

Bitter to many the message, but sweet indeed unto me,

Of man without a master, and earth without a strife.

And even as sorry in the sweet and bitter of life;

Of peace and good-will, and I told, and I knew that in faith he spoke,

But his words were my very thoughts, and I saw the battle awake,

And I followed from end to end; and triumph grew in my heart

As he called on each that heard him to arise and play his part.

In the tale of the new-told gospel, lest as slaves they should live and die

He ceased, and I thought the bearers would rise up with one cry,

And bid them straight enrol them; but they, they applauded indeed,

For the man was grown full eager, and had made them hearken and hear.

But they sat and made no sign, and two of the glibber kind

Stood up to hear and to carp his fiery words to blind.

I did not listen to them, but failed not his voice to hear

When he spoke, his manner and his words were more clear

That which was clear already; not overwell.

I knew he answered the sneers and the silence, so hot and eager he grew;

But my hope full well he answered, and when he called again

On me, the man that stood in the world that was in vain

In fear lest he should escape me. I rose ere the meeting was done,

And gave him my name and my faith—and I was the only one.

He commanded be he heard the jeers, and there was a shadow

He spoke like a friend long known and I! I was one of the band.

And now the crowd seems grey and the high stars glittering bright;

And I know, I know, my friend, the heart is full of light.

I see the deeds to be done and the day to come on the earth

And riches vanished away and sorrow turned to mirth;

I see the clipped down to the skin of our easy ends

And we a part of it—all we twain no longer alone

In the days to come of the pleasure, in the days that are of the fight—

I was born once long ago: I am born again to-night.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE "PALL MALL GAZETTE."

It has more than once been our duty to fail of the Pall Mall Gazette. Our own situation has been so marked by its absence that we have even been going to bed without its appearance, and have often been surprised that it was not still. And we are in the more anxious to say how sincerely we sympathise with them and thank them for their efforts—not without risk in this land of hypocrisy—to make generally known a condition of things almost too hideous for belief. The Society of Artists has already, through the resolution of its Council, expressed the feeling of its members on this subject. Still, while I believe that I am speaking for many of my fellow-workers, I think it only fair to say that I alone am responsible for what I am about to say.

The Government was, by the action of certain of its own adherents—the virtuous Mr. Cavendish Bentinck to wit—placed in a very awkward position. By its orders a few helpless men and little boys had been arrested for selling copies of a paper containing seditious words. They were charged with regard to the "morality" of moral England. It was clear that if these men and boys were to be prosecuted for merely selling the paper, those who wrote, edited and published it must be prosecuted too. But this was impossible. For the secret de policebinet that many "highly respected" and respectable members of our governing classes would be hopelessly compromised if a prosecution were instituted. The Pall Mall distinctly announced to the world, and wisely so, that it was a question whether individuals were to be made certain persons into the matter, its editors would feel bound to"do this in the event of a prosecution. Prudence is the better part of valor. Stern necessity forced Sir R. Cross to declare, in answer to Mr. Bentinck's question and assist cheers from the "gentlemen," who felt evidently relieved by the decision, "that the Government would not prosecute.

So far so good. To recede is to accord the editors of the Pall Mall of the only fault they could have been accused of—and which

would be indeed a serious one—the invention from purely prurient and base motives, of the matter published in their paper. Whatever doubts may have existed on this head—and how doubt could exist after the facts officially made known four years ago by the Parliamentary Commission is a mystery to me—this paper may take it that the Government and the whole governing classes admit the truth and fidelity of the Pall Mall revelations—which "revelations" are only, alas! stale news to those people who have studied the secret proceedings of the house. The pension will be awarded the men and boys who were prosecuted for selling a paper which the "Government" of the country does not dare to prosecute. Some compensation assuredly is due.

But we Socialists have something more serious to consider than the wrong one. For few boys should have been made to bear such a burden. It is true, the question itself has been "run in." We have to consider the question itself. The Queen, the Marquis of Salisbury, Mr. Gladstone, e tutti quanti, have expressed their sympathy and "horror." The question is therefore not only made respectable, but very sure to be solved like a mystery. And must not these people—and some may really be sincere in their horror—do not know how, or do not dare, to go to the bottom of the question. I have not observed that one single journal originally said that the horror was in the facts set forth, not their crude setting, or that the shame and wrong and woe thus laid bare are due to the whole condition of "Society" as it is to-day, and to a few exceptional cases of immorality.

Then, after the first indifferent protest of outraged British respectability, the middle-class press and the classes it represents, soon recognised, with the perspicacity peculiar to the bourgeoisie of England, that a question which, if taken in hand by the workers themselves may prove dangerous, had better be comfortably killed "by much cherishing" them and by open obstruction or division, etc. Individualism is a "selfish" thing, therefore, been "taken up"—taken up that it may be conveniently dropped so soon as the "sensation" shall have died out. And die it must and will unless the class really concerned—unless the proletarians—has no wish to incite that many of the good men and women whom the Pall Mall revelations have shocked are consciously helping to suppress the "movement" or aiding in the continuation of the very crimes they wish to prevent. I believe this, and I believe the Pall Mall editors would do this also if I believe the Earl of Shaftesbury and Mr. Morley are so. Even I believe that there are people who can honestly "thank God Almighty" for "permitting to come to light" and "horrors which any respectable almighty deity could not have leisure, and women who are convinced that a new Criminal Act, extending the same penalties to men as to women (a suggestion with which I, too, am heartily in sympathy) and raising the age at which girls are supposed to be able to sell, as now may, 18, 15, 18, 21, would do away with the indefensible crimes and misery in our midst.

But is this so? Does not the very fact that these good people admit that many girls must and will at some time sell themselves to women, demand a real and thorough whole system? Does this not at once condemn any scheme of reform they may propose? And let us, for argument's sake, admit a great many improbable things. Let us suppose a Criminal Act has come into effect that embodies all the suggestions (many of which, I repeat, given the conditions of to-day, are no doubt right and just) of the new reformers; let us suppose a new Royal Commission has actually, after a few thousand sittings, done something, and brought some criminals to book; let us suppose Mr. Richard Cross of the Pall Mall, if he had no hands, had only hands, had a right hand and a left hand.

A Criminal Act might have been punished, a few others saved. And after? All would be the same for the great mass of the people as before.

So long as this accursed system of capitalist production holds a curse and a demoralisation alike to all classes, so long must—it is no question of individual will—this condition that is just now shocking us all continue also. So long as the producers are the bond-slaves of the capitalist and land- owning classes, so long will these things be. Let us have: two classes face to face, the one literally in a position to buy, and actually buying, the bodies of the other, so long will the crimes that necessarily result from such a system continue. The special form of crime just now stirring are in the middle-class society, the bourgeoisie. We produce not only the victims, the poor helpless girls and