SOCIALISTS AT PLAY.*

(Prologue spoken at the Entertainment of the Socialist League at South Place Institute, June 11, 1885.)

Friends, we have met amidst our busy life To rest an hour from turmoil and from strife, To cast our care aside while song and verse Touches our hearts, and lulls the ancient curse. And yet—what's this? To no luxurious mood By what we hear to-night shall we be so good, War, love freedom, noble words are these; But must we hymn them in our hours of ease?— We must be men. You comrades, you who came In truth of England's ancient honoured name Unto the home of freedom over the seas "This loosener of the fetters of the slave," E'en here have felt the petty tyrant's will, Who robs and worries where he may not kill. We must be men, or we shall find one day Our boasted safe asylums swept away: The blue-coat's staff, the spy's report, shall be Emblems of England's saved society.

Yet more, what's this? The wall shall reach your ears Wherewith Hood moved the listening town to tears— But not to deeds: and your familiar friend Shall hear his rough rhymes with your longrungs blend, A shamed to think how little he may do. To share his lot with labour and with you. Lastly, we pray you ere we part to raise Your voices once more in the "Marseillaise," The ghost strain with that other spirit foretold The hope now multiplied a thousand-fold: Nay, hope transfigured; since at last we know The world our country, and the rich our foe.

So through our play, as in our work, we see The strife that is, the Peace that is to be. We are as warriors waiting for the word That breaks the true heart soars above all word: Gay is their life and merry men they are, But all about them savours of the war. Their glittering arms are all their children's toys, Amidst their ballad sings the trumpet's voice; Amidst the keep-cocket's song for war. Pale gleams the glave above the seed they sow.

All this is good; let other men forget! Let others rest while they are living yet! But we, but we—what time have we for rest, Who see the worst, who see the coming best? Long is our task, and soon the day is o'er, And our destined counsels must be foretold. How good the stroke once struck! How good the deed Done once for all! How good the help at need! So be we gay; but yet, amidst our mirth, Remember how the sorrow of the earth Has called upon us till we hear and know, And save as dostards never back may go! Why, then, should we forget? Let the cause cling About the book we read, the song we sing, Close to our cup and hover o'er our plate, And by our bed at morn and even wait. Let the sun shine upon it; let the night Weave happy tales of our fulfilled delight! The child we cherish and the love we love, Let these our hearts to deeper daring move; Let deedful life be sweet and death no dread, For us, the last men risen from the dead! Thus shall we barter what poor ease and rest Is yet our own amidst a world opposed For glorious strag that lovers must foretell. How clear if far off the better days to be; And live like men nor lack for helpful friends Whatever fate the time upon us sends. There! let the peeling world go staggering by, Propped up by lies and vain hypocrisy, While here we stand amidst the scorn and hate, Crying aloud the certainty of fate. Biding the happy day when sword, in hand, Shall greet the sun and bless the tortured land. WILLIAM MORRIS.

* The "Pilgrims of Hope" will be continued in the August Number.