

# Supplement to "The Commonwealth."

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## ATTRACTIVE LABOUR.

IN what I wrote last month I tried to make it clear that under the wages-system labour is bound to be unattractive as well as excessive in quantity and underpaid. The creation of surplus value being the one aim of the employers of labour, they cannot for a moment trouble themselves as to whether the work which creates that surplus value is pleasurable to the worker or not. In fact in order to get the greatest amount possible of surplus value out of the work, and to make a profit in the teeth of competition, it is absolutely necessary that it should be done under such conditions as make (as I wrote in my last) a mere burden which nobody would endure unless upon compulsion. This is admitted on all hands, nay is loudly insisted on by anti-Socialists. The necessity for the existence of class distinctions as a means of compelling people to work is always present in their thoughts; and no wonder, since the only type of worker that they can conceive of is the worker of to-day, degraded by centuries of forced labour, wearisome and hopeless. To such a man, indeed, ever fresh and fresh compulsion must be applied at any cost, at any risk, until the string breaks with the strain. It is no wonder that the bare idea of the destruction of the hierarchy of compulsion terrifies those who rejoice in our modern civilisation. But for us whose business is leading people towards the destruction of that hierarchy, who believe that men's morals, aspirations, and what not, are made by their material surroundings, there is no room for fear of the consequences of revolution. We do not *fear* for the transformation of civilisation, we *hope* for it; nay it is an assured hope for us which consoles us for the disappointments and griefs of the passing day, which makes "life worth living" for us; and my reason for writing this is to do my best to quicken that hope in the minds of our comrades. For that purpose I want if I can to give a very slight sketch of attractive labour which, of course, I presuppose is to be done not for the profit of a master, but for the production of wealth for the use of ourselves and our neighbours.

I can see, without much straining, labour going on under quite the reverse of the circumstances which surround it at present, and yet the world none the poorer for it. It would, one might think, be possible in the first place for a man to choose the work which he could do best; which if he were a healthily constituted man in mind and body, would mean from the outset that his work would be no longer a mere burden to him, since everyone likes to do what he can do well; there is at least some pleasure in such work. This choice of work would not be difficult; for though it may seem under our present profit-ridden conditions that people have little choice in such matters, are listless and don't care what they do, so they can but live by it pretty easily—this state of mind is artificially produced by commercial tyranny. People's innate capacities are pretty much as various as their faces are; but individual character and varied capacity are not cherished by the system which tends to get rid of skilled labour altogether. If a man would live now, as a part of industrial economy, he must submit to be the hundredth part of a machine and swallow any longings he may have to exercise any special faculty.

But in a reasonable community these varied capacities would be looked out for and cultivated; the industrial arts would be an essential part of all education, and not only would they be taught gradually and easily to children, and as a part of their pastime, but grown men also would have opportunities for learning more than one craft. There would be no reason for forcing them to practice one craft only all their lives long. Nay many, or most, men would be carrying on more than one occupation from day to day. Surely almost everyone would wish to take some share in field or garden work besides his indoor occupation, even if it were no more than helping to get in the harvest or *save the hay*; and such occasions would become really the joyous and triumphant festivals which the poets have dreamed of them as being, and of which pleasure there is still some hint or, it may be, survival in *barbarous* countries. But besides such obvious change in work as this, there could certainly be found useful outdoor occupation whereby a person could vary his or her indoor work; helping, for instance, in the work which has to do with the transit of foods. It needs but people to turn their attention to life and not to profit-scraping to find such opportunities.

This matter of fitting people's work to their capacities and not, as now, their capacities to their work, would be the most important reversal of the present system of labour. And though my hint about it has been put in a few words, I beg our readers to consider what a difference it would make in labour if it were carried out. It is not too much to say that the difference would be immeasurable; labour so set about would not differ in degree from our present labour but in kind. But to complete the change, two other elements are necessary: leisure and pleasantness of external surroundings. I need not say much about the first, it may be thought, since among the better-off part of the workers the struggle with the employers about the length of the working-day has been going on so long, and in our own times, so obviously; though even with these it has been and is being fought on the assumption that the wages-system is to endure for ever—that the hierarchy of compulsion is necessary and the shortening of the day's labour has really meant a mere raising of wages.

As for real leisure in work I am afraid I must say that working men do not know what it means; their work being generally an anxious, strained hurry of drudgery, varied by what the natural repulsion to such slavery is sure to bring about as a reflection of it, a listless dawdling through the day, when owing to the due driver not being to the fore they are able to indulge in it. Both of these miseries are miles apart from the way of working when people are not working for wages, but for the wealth of the community: the work would be done deliberately and thoughtfully for the good's sake and not for the profit's sake, but cleanly and briskly too, under the influence of hope and the looking, not to next day's drudgery, but this day's further pleasure by men saying, "Let us get through with this job, and then on to the next piece of our life." In work so done there is no slavery; whereas ordinary work now is nothing but slavery. It is only a question whether the slaves shall be idle or industrious. Perhaps on the whole, looking at the effect on the community, they had better be idle.

Work so done, with variety and intelligently, not intensified to the bursting point of the human machine, and yet with real workmanlike, or rather artistic eagerness, would not be a burden, but an interest added to life quite apart from its necessity; with such work to do we might even bear with equanimity as a temporary evil, some of the discomforts of our town life, though surely not the dreadful squalor which the hierarchy of compulsion condemns us to to-day. But there is no reason why we should bear with the discomforts; it is, for instance, only the necessity for making a profit that compels us to the wretched and even ridiculous want of elbow-room, which is the universal rule in factories.

The crowding up of factories into huge towns, or congeries of towns, is a thing which we shall refuse to bear when we work voluntarily and for the purpose of leading happy lives. A great deal of work is still done on the workshop rather than the factory system. There is no sort of need for these workshops being heaped together in the mass of disorder and misery which we call a big town. Centres of a manageable size would afford all the necessary elements of life and refinement and movement when all were educated and had the leisure which alone can make education valuable, and had the intelligence which, pretty equally distributed among every knot of men and women, would not be repressed by sordid misery. The only thing which makes huge centres desirable to the privileged few at present, is the fact that the lives of the greater part of men are wasted in drudgery. On the other hand, where associated labour on the large scale was necessary, and the factory system in its fullest organisation had to be used, each of those factories highly improved as to the means of production, as it would be, should be itself a town. It should be no mere phalangstery on a philanthropical basis, arranged for the passing an existence somewhat better indeed than our helpless wage-slaves of the mill now live, but bare of the real joys of life; but it should contain in itself all the resources for a refined and well-occupied life—at once manly, restful and eager. There is no reason why it should not be beautiful itself, and the country about it might well be a garden. When we were working for our own wealth, and not the waste of others, we should surely think it well in spending part of our work on housing ourselves decently, and on taking care that we left behind our work no signs of the haste, bred by the terror of ruin and starvation, in the shape of smoke and ash-

heaps and all the unutterable filth which now disgrace our manufacturing districts and distinctly brand the work done there for what it is—work done by helpless slaves for helpless masters.

But work done under such conditions as I have been trying to sketch out would, I am sure, be attractive to all except the exceptions, the monsters of vagabondage and loafing who are now bred by the excessive overwork which is the general lot of the workers or by the privileged idleness of the rich, and whose descendants might last through a few generations, but would soon melt into the general body of people living in the happy exercise of energy.

By such work and such a life we should be set free from intestine warfare among ourselves for the nobler contest with Nature, and should find that she also, when conquered, would be our friend, and not our enemy.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

## WHAT'S TO BE DONE?

AGITATE! EDUCATE! ORGANISE!

### II.

If you wish the revolution of society to evolve apace, *Educate*, though this task be even harder than to *Agitate*, the people.

*Educate!* Reform and train, enlighten and invigorate yourself and fellow-workers in mind and soul and body; for the battling to be done needs men and women of clear intellect, of sympathetic social impulse, of strong determination and enduring frame. *Educate!* Not in the sense and meaning of the Philistine, but right against and in the teeth of him. Not by coating over the savage with an outward gloss of gentility, that will not stand the scratch, but by instilling into the very life-blood of those you are dealing with those elements of reason and emotion which will give them strength to proclaim their convictions, to stand forth in protest and rise in rebellion against the rule of brute force, fraud and hypocrisy!

*Educate!* Though your task be as gigantic and your labours seem as ill-rewarded as the toil of Sisyphus. *Educate!* Although you have not only to undo the work of professional idiots, of quacks and cheats, who do their pernicious business with the approval and subsidy of the State, but you have also to counteract the influence of those very circumstances and surroundings, which are the cause of, and continually recreate, the boundless misery and ignorance of this world.

*Educate!* Learn and teach to combat all prejudice and superstition. Give rational scope to the exercise of your senses so that you may trust and obey them safely and to the exclusion of all and every "authority." Never blindly take for granted anything you hear simply because someone with a name and with a station has asserted it; but doubt and inquire, try and investigate before you judge, so that you may become *convinced* of a truth and need not *believe* it. Study the laws which have been found to determine the phenomena of nature and those of animal life, so that you may willingly comply with them for your sake and the sake of others; observe and study above all the chain of causes and effects which has brought about that form of human organisation which has for its purpose the *production and distribution of wealth: Society*. For it is only when you understand the true nature of this institution, the conditions of its existence and its life, the manner and tendency of its growth and development, that you will be able to gauge the motives of human action, of human passion and desire, of human love and hatred, of human wealth and poverty!

*Educate!* It is *this* knowledge, mainly, or the want of it, which will determine whether our race is to fall into barbarism naked and undisguised, or whether it is to evolve into a higher and nobler form of existence:

*Educate!* Learn and teach that man is eminently a social being; the creature, not of himself, but of society, of its arrangements and opportunities, its liberties and compulsions, its privileges and its constraints. There is no "self-made man" any more than there is, for the matter of that, a "self-grown" flower or a "self-composed" mineral. All his acquirements and shortcomings, all the force or weakness of his character, all his virtues and his vices, and all his luck or misadventures, he owes to his natural inheritance, the circumstances he was born into and the chances he came across in the path of his aggressive or defensive life. The struggle for existence, which in the animal world results on the whole in the survival of the fittest, has in human society, with its artificial divisions, assumed a modified aspect. What with superstition, authoritative rule and capitalism, the struggle for existence between man and man has become a wild and reckless scramble for an *advantageous position*, from the pinnacle of which the favourites of circumstances may with impunity exploit, coerce and rule their

less fortunate fellow-creatures. This unequal battle for an advantageous position is not conducive to the evolution towards perfection of the human kind. Its pressure crushes, rather than gives scope to, noble gifts and humane aspirations, whilst it allows the cunning and unscrupulous to raise themselves to power.

*Educate!* Learn and explain what are your "liberties," and what is meant by "freedom." We are free of mind when our mental faculties are strong and are acting healthily; we are free in body when we enjoy the full use of all the mechanical faculties of our physical frame. But to ensure substantial freedom of mind and body, that is, of ourselves, there is necessary to us another freedom, and that is the *possibility of securing the conditions* which will keep our mind and body in a state of healthy life, namely, *food and shelter*.

This *economical power*, the power of sustaining life and making it worth living, is the *Fountainhead of Freedom*. It is at present the privilege of a few; to make it attainable to everyone, to spread its humanising influence over all the members of society, is the main object of Socialism. History is but the tale of a contest with nature; with the poverty, the ignorance, the helplessness, and with the constraint of every kind which, at the beginning of record, the human species found itself bound by. To gradually overcome such powerlessness it needed the banding together of individuals into social groups, and hence it follows that the aim and purpose of society must be the evolution of all its members to that degree of freedom which, by their isolated individual efforts they would ever fail to attain—to *Social Freedom*. A society in which the few are rich and the many poor; in which the rich are idle and the poor overworked; in which the idle are debauched through abuse of their abundant means, and the overworked are enfeebled and demoralised through want and servitude—such a society fulfils not its purpose; it stands condemned and cursed by its results, and its days are numbered.

*Educate!* For by so doing you will hasten the downfall of the old and the advent of a new form of society—a society in which there is no room for slaves or masters; which knows no private enterprise and risk, no private gain or disadvantage; a society in which both human toil and pain are lessened, and human joys increased a thousandfold, through being shared by all in common; in which, through joint-responsibility of all, a chance to each is given to unfold his natural gifts for good in all their might and splendour, whilst his evil leanings even so for want of chance must perish.

*Educate!* Whilst lifting up your minds and morals in pursuance of our lofty aims, be not neglectful of your bodies; for healthy minds need healthy frames to dwell in, and New Society's birth, perhaps abnormal, may need your help in many ways. 'Tis but too true that most of you have hardly any choice, but let those who have, look not to fashionable food—for that is always dear, like everything the crowd goes after—but here, as in the better food elected for your mind, break up new roads and study that which even for your little means will bring the stronger nourishment. Seek light and air and healthful exercise to gain and keep the funds of strength so needful to the lives of pioneers, and if it be too late to get them for yourselves, strain every nerve to have the healthier conditions for your children. Make them hard of body, clear of head, keen of eye, and warm and steadfast in the love of truth and beauty. Teach them to know no one above nor anyone below them, to neither fear the one, nor threaten the other, but to vie with their equals only in one endeavour: to excel in fitness for the common task, whose fulfilment will bring them happiness. *Educate!* Thus tutored will the generation grow, which is to gain and see, and to enjoy that day of social freedom our souls are longing for!

*Educate! Educate! Educate!*

ANDREAS SCHEU.

With the "pluck" worthy of junior representatives of this great nation, some half-dozen louts belonging to the English middle classes attacked and did to death a small boy a short while ago. The louts were in the "upper forms" of King's College School, their victim in the lower. An official inquiry is to be opened, and the affair is in the hands of the Public Prosecutor. Had the murder occurred in the course of a row between roughs on the Embankment, the perpetrator or perpetrators would doubtless have been singled out and have met with condign punishment. As it is, the criminals being "the sons of gentlemen," and the honour of the functionaries of a high-class public school being at stake, the evidence will as certainly be found "insufficient to procure conviction." The coroner's jury has already considerably returned a verdict of "death from misadventure" in as clear a case of (to say the least) manslaughter as ever came before a jury. But, after all, the country can, perhaps, hardly afford to blight the prospects of these noble youths. They bid fair to make admirable British soldiers—*i.e.*, Arab-shooters.