

# Supplement to "The Commonweal."

VOL. 1.—No. 8.

SEPTEMBER, 1885.

## A NEW PARTY.

It would undoubtedly be futile to prophecy as to the immediate results of the forthcoming general elections, or to wager which side may get the majority; but whichever does come uppermost in the struggle, certain tendencies in the elected and the electors are likely to develop in a manner which can fairly be judged of, without pretence to the gift of prophecy, by noting the signs of the times at present; and it is not out of place, even in a Socialist paper, to look into these tendencies, since some of our friends are so anxious to try their luck in the game which is going on at St. Stephens, hoping that they may be allowed to remain Socialists even in the midst of the House of Commons.

It was easy to foresee that when the Tory Ministry came in it would make some attempt to dish the Liberals, though perhaps not quite so easy to foresee their eagerness in that amusement, and still less the speedy revolt of their own friends against it. Coercion in Ireland is turning out as much of a stumbling-block to the Tory party as it was to the Liberals. Lord Randolph Churchill is not to have it all his own way after all; there are Tories who are bent on trying what chance they have of preserving something more of Toryism than its name. There is apparently likely to be as wide a split in the Tory party as there has been for some time past in the Liberal. This has somewhat changed the aspect of affairs. A week or two ago it seemed as if it were a mere struggle between the Liberals and the Radicals, and that the latter depended for their chance of forming a strong party in the next Parliament on the success of the Tories in the elections; that a large Liberal majority would defer the hopes of the Radicals.

But now behold disunion in the hitherto united party, and such a state of parties, such a condition of party strife as seems to a Socialist to offer a most splendid opportunity—for leaving it alone. The "collective wisdom" is falling into chaos quite fast enough without our help.

And yet, it may be said, from out of that chaos something will emerge. Will that something be as favorable to our hopes as the chaos itself? Ought we not to try to bring out of the confusion something which will at all events approach nearer to Socialism than anything which has yet called itself a party?

Well, I think the Liberal split and the Tory revolt against overdoing dishing are merely superficial tokens of the creation of a new party which is now going on. Old Toryism, though not at an end in the country generally, has confessedly no chance of a majority in Parliament. Liberalism as a party has fulfilled its programme, and has nothing left to do. Radicalism is itself divided between the last dregs of the "Manchester school" and the new democracy, with some form of land nationalisation as one of the planks of its platform.

"There are no solid parties, then?" says the Parliamentary Socialist. "Let us go in and make a party and sway Parliament in a Socialist direction."

True, there is as yet no solid party, but I repeat there is one forming, which I believe will be the strongest which our times have seen, and by whatever name it may be called, it will be the party of reaction grown conscious that firm and serious resistance must be made to the claims of labour for equal rights for all. Read the serious articles in the *Standard* and the *St. James' Gazette* on this subject and you will recognise how different they are from the ordinary artificial tongue-in-the-cheek Tory articles. Sensible men of all the *bourgeois* parties are beginning to be alarmed and to see that the business cannot be played with, that Parliament must not be allowed to dally with its true function of seriously considering the best means of upholding our present economical and social conditions, and of using those means in the teeth of all opposition, all sentiment.

The party which this instinct (for such it is) will form will not deal in sensation; it will be peaceful, considerate, philanthropical; it will rally to it all "reasonable" and "practical" men who have to do with public matters; it will doubtless make large concessions to the cries of distress which will swell year by year, and so gather to it more and more the "good" men of the comfortable classes, while it will put down coolly and remorselessly anything which openly wears the token of danger. It will, in a word, govern us, and

will do so as the committee of that Hierarchy of Compulsion which, under various disguises of free trade, personal freedom, and the like, is the one enemy which we Revolutionary Socialists have before us.

And outside this party, what will there be in Parliament to resist it? Nothing but a scattered discontent, which will be helpless there, discredited by all *respectable* persons, who will point to the good deeds of the "party of order," and protest most energetically against any interference with those who are so busy making people happy and "contented." Any attempt to deal with such virtue and consistency from a revolutionary standpoint will be absolutely useless until the Revolutionary Socialists have stirred up and organised the discontent outside Parliament—until the workers have become conscious that their interests must be opposed to those of the governing classes, however anxious the latter may seem to be, or may really be as individuals, to promote their happiness and content; and when that time comes, what need will there be for Parliamentary agitation?

Meanwhile, once more it seems to me that the new party will soon raise its head up, and will put an end to puny opposition in Parliament. It will govern so reasonably and strongly that no one outside our ranks will have a word to say against it. Should that discourage us? By no means; it will unite the suffrages of all respectable people by aiming at bringing about peace by every means except the only one possible—the abolition of classes. It will have a great success, and be blessed by the whole *bourgeois* world, and—will lead us into Revolution.

With its respectable march let us have nothing to do, nor affect to think that it can serve our cause otherwise than by that repression which it will assuredly try. Let all our efforts be directed towards giving it something to repress.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

## THE BLESSINGS OF CIVILISATION.

Of all the phrases with which the masses of the people have been deluded during the present century, probably the one at the head of this article has been oftenest and most successfully used to that end. Yet it would be difficult to find a combination of four words in the English language, so "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." We, the workers are exhorted by our "pastors and masters" to be thankful for the blessings of civilisation, and to aid the political and ecclesiastical quacks, who rob, rule and bamboozle us, in spreading them to heathen lands.

But what is our civilisation, and in what do its blessings consist? To ninety out of every hundred inhabitants of Great Britain the phrase is a mockery as applied to their present condition and environment. Indeed, it requires some considering to get a glimmering of what can possibly be meant by it. I remember, as an apprentice lad, some twenty-five years ago, feeling the irksomeness of the "mill-horse round," which constitutes so large a part of the existence of the modern wage-slave, and recording in a diary my conviction that civilisation was a fraud, and that the freedom of the so-called savage was much to be preferred. To-day, in the light of that twenty-five years' experience, considering my own position as a worker, and reflecting upon the misery and degradation of my poorer brethren who inhabit the slums, with all the sordid, sickening, noisome sounds, sights and smells (products of our vaunted civilisation), which constantly, more or less, obtrude themselves upon my notice—I emphatically endorse my youthful verdict.

Society may be roughly divided into three classes—Outcasts, Wage-slaves, Monopolists. Let us briefly consider the position of each of them in relation to our so-called civilisation. And first as to the outcasts. There are three well-defined grades—(1) the Slum-dwellers, (2) the Nomads, (3) the Tramps. The first of these are the utterly hopeless, helpless residuum, consisting, to a large extent, of the dregs and siftings of the labour-market. The worn-out slaves of the monster, Capital, whose very life-blood has been sucked out of them, they are cast aside (like refuse on a dung-heap) to linger out a miserable existence. The Nomads comprise all that miscellaneous host of vagrants, who wander from town to town and from fair to fair, living precariously by begging, pilfering peddling, tinkering, etc.