

Shields Branch of the Socialist League will communicate with him. Unfortunately, I was not able to hold a meeting in Newcastle, time not allowing. That town, however, has a Society for the discussion of Socialistic questions.

My visit to the North has taught me that the men there are too important to be neglected. They do not need agitation, for they are keenly alive to their wrongs; they do not need organisation, for they are splendidly united. In this matter they set us a fine example. What they need is education in the truths of Socialism; tell the people of these in a stirring and proper manner and they will gladly accept them. They have led the way in many a struggle to emancipate labour, and I believe that when the great and final battle comes they will not be found in the background.

W. A. CHAMBERS.

A DREAM OF JOHN BALL.

Continued from p. 291.)

I GOT into my old place again on the steps of the cross, Will Green beside me and above me John Ball and Jack Straw again. The moon was half-way up the heavens now, and the short summer night had begun, calm and fragrant, with just so much noise outside our silent circle as made one feel the world alive and happy.

We waited silently until we had heard John Ball and the story of what was to do; and presently he began to speak.

"Good people it is begun, but not ended. Which of you is hardy enough to wend the road to London to-morrow?" "All! All!" they shouted. "Yea," said he, "even so I deemed of you. Yet forsooth hearken! London is a great and grievous city; and mayhappen when ye come thither it shall seem to you over great to deal with when ye remember the little townships and the cots ye came from. Moreover, when ye dwell here in Kent ye think forsooth of your brethren in Essex or Suffolk, and there belike an end. But from London ye may have an inkling of all the world, and over burdensome maybe shall that seem to you, a few and a feeble people. Nevertheless I say to you remember the fellowship, in the hope of which ye have this day conquered; and when ye come to London be wise and wary; and that is as much as to say be bold and hardy; for in these days are ye building a house which shall not be overthrown, and the world shall not be too great or too little to hold it: for indeed it shall be the world itself, set free from evil-doers for friends to dwell in it."

He ceased awhile, but they hearkened still as if something more was coming. Then he said:

"To-morrow we shall take the road for Rochester; and most like it were well to see what Sir John Newton in the castle may say to us: for the man is no ill man, and hath a tongue well shapen for words; and it were well that we had him out of the castle and away with us, and that we put a word in his mouth to say to the King. And wot ye well, good fellows, that by then we come to Rochester we shall be a goodly company, and ere we come to Blackheath a very great company; and at London Bridge who shall stay our army? Therefore there is nought that can undo us except our own selves and our hearkening to soft words from those who would slay us. They shall bid us go home and abide peacefully with our wives and children while they, the lords and councillors and lawyers, imagine council and remedy for us; and even so shall our own folly bid us; and if we hearken thereto we are undone indeed; for they shall fall upon our peace with war, and our wives and children they shall take from us, and some of us they shall hang and some they shall scourge, and the others shall be their yoke-beasts—yea, and worse, for they shall lack meat more. To fools hearken not, whether they be yourselves or your foemen, for either shall lead you astray. With the lords parley ye not, for ye know already what they would say to you, and that is, 'Churl, let me bridle thee and saddle thee, and eat thy livelihood that thou winnest, and call thee hard names because I eat thee up; and for thee, speak not and do not, save as I bid thee.' All that is the end of their parleying. Therefore be ye bold, and again bold, and thrice bold! Grip the bow, handle the staff, draw the sword, and set on in the name of the fellowship!"

He ended amid loud shouts; but straightway answering shouts were heard, and a great noise of the winding of horns, and I misdoubted a new onslaught; and some of those in the throng began to string their bows and handle their bills; but Will Green pulled me by the sleeve and said, "Friends are these by the winding of their horns; thou art quit for this night, old lad." And then Jack Straw cried out from the cross: "Fair and softly, my masters! These be men of our fellowship, and are for your guests this night; they are from the bents this side of Medway, and are with us here because of the pilgrimage road, and that is the best in these parts, and so the shortest to Rochester. And doubt ye nothing of our being taken unawares this night; for I have bidden and sent out watchers of the ways, and neither a man's son nor a mare's son may come in on us without espial. Now make we our friends welcome. Forsooth, I looked for them an hour later; and had they come an hour earlier yet, some heads would now lie on the cold grass which shall lie on the feather bed to-night. But let be, since all is well! Now get we home to our houses, and eat and drink and slumber this night if never once again amid the multitude of friends and fellows; and yet soberly and without riot, since so much work is to hand. Moreover the priest saith, bear ye the dead men, both friends and foes, into the chancel of the church, and there this night he will wake them: but after to-morrow let the dead abide to bury their dead!"

Therewith he leapt down from the cross, and Will and I bestirred ourselves and mingled with the new comers. They were some three

hundred strong, clad and armed in all ways like the people of our township, except some half dozen whose armour shone cold like ice under the moonbeams. Will Green soon had a dozen of them by the sleeve to come home with him to board and bed, and then I lost him for some minutes, and turning about saw John Ball standing behind me looking pensively on all the stir and merry humours of the joyous uplanders. "Brother from Essex," said he, "shall I see thee again to-night? I were fain of speech with thee; for thou seemest like one that has seen more than most." "Yea," said I, "if ye come to Will Green's house, for thither am I bidden." "Thither shall I come," said he, smiling kindly, "or no man I know in field. Lo you, Will Green looking for something, and that is me. But in his house will be song and the talk of many friends; and forsooth I have words in me that crave to come out in a quiet place where they have each one his own answer. If thou art not afraid of dead men who were alive and wicked this morning, come thou to the church when supper is done, and there we may talk all we will."

Will Green was standing beside us before he had done, with his hand laid on the priest's shoulder, waiting till he had spoken out; and as I nodded Yea to John Ball he said: "Now master priest, thou hast spoken enough this two or three hours, and this my new brother must tell and talk in my house; and there my maid will hear his wisdom which lay still under the hedge e'en now when the bolts were abroad. So come ye, and ye good fellows, come!"

So we turned away together into the little street. But while John Ball had been speaking to me I felt strangely, as though I had more things to say than the words I knew could make clear: as if I wanted to get from other people a new set of words. Moreover, as we passed up the street again I was once again smitten with the great beauty of the scene; the houses, the church with its new chancel and tower, snow-white in the moonbeams now; the dresses and arms of the people, men and women (for the latter were now mixed up with the men); their grave sonorous language, and the quaint and measured forms of speech were again become a wonder to me and affected me almost to tears.

I walked along with the others musing and as if I did not belong to them, till we came to Will Green's house. He was one of the wealthier of the yeomen, and his house was one of those I told you of, the lower story of which was built of stone. It had not been built long, and was very trim and neat. The fit of wonder had worn off me again by then I reached it, or perhaps I should give you a closer description of it, for it was a handsome yeoman's dwelling. The house on the other side of it, the last house in the village, was old or even ancient; all built of stone, and except for a newer piece built on to it—a hall, it seemed—had round arches, some of them handsomely carved. I knew that this was the parson's house; but he was another sort of priest than John Ball, and what for fear, what for hatred, had gone back to his monastery with the two other chantrey priests who dwelt in that house: so that the men of the townships, and more especially the women, were thinking gladly how John Ball should say mass in their new chancel on the morrow.

Will Green's daughter was waiting for him at the door and gave him a close and eager hug, and had a kiss to spare for each of us withal; a strong girl she was, as I have said, and sweet and wholesome also. She made merry with her father; yet it was easy to see that her heart was in her mouth all along. There was a younger girl some twelve summers old, and a lad of ten, who were easily to be known for his children; an old woman also, who had her livelihood there, and helped the household; and moreover three long young men, who came into the house after we had sat down, to whom Will nodded kindly. They were brisk lads and smart, but had been afield after the beasts that evening, and had not seen the fray.

The room we came into was indeed the house, for there was nothing but it on the ground floor, but a stair in the corner went up to the rooms above. It was much like the room at the Rose, but bigger; the cupboard better wrought, and with more vessels on it, and handsomer. Also the walls, instead of being panelled, were hung with a coarse loosely-woven stuff of green worsted with birds and trees woven into it. There were flowers in plenty stuck about the room, mostly of the yellow blossoming flag, but in the window near the door was a pot full of those same white poppies I had seen when I first woke up; and the table was all set forth with meat and drink, a big salt-cellar of pewter in the middle, covered with a white cloth.

We sat down, the priest blessed the meat in the name of the Trinity, and we crossed ourselves and fell to. The victual was plentiful of broth and flesh-meat and bread and cherries, so we ate and drank, and talked lightly together when we were full. Yet was not the feast so gay as might have been. Will Green had me to sit next to him, and on the other side sat John Ball; but the priest had grown somewhat distraught, and sat as one thinking of somewhat that was like to escape his thought. Will Green looked at his daughter from time to time, and while his eyes glanced round the fair chamber as one who loved it, and his kind face grew sad, yet never sullen. When the herdsmen came into the hall they fell straightway to asking questions concerning those of the fellowship who had been slain in the fray, and of their wives and children; so that for a while thereafter no man cared to jest, for they were a neighbourly and kind folk, and were sorry both for the dead, and the living that should suffer from that day's work. So then we sat silent awhile. The unseen moon was bright over the roof of the house, so that outside all was gleaming bright save the black shadows, though the moon came not into the room, and the white wall of the tower was the whitest and the brightest thing we could see. Wide open were the windows, and the scents of the

fragrant night floated in upon us, and the sounds of the men at their meat or making merry about the township; and whiles we heard the gibber of an owl from the trees westward of the church, and the sharp cry of a blackbird made fearful by the prowling stoat, or the far lowing of a cow from the upland pastures; or the hoofs of a horse trotting on the pilgrimage road (and one of our watchers would that be). Thus we sat a while, and once again came that feeling over me of wonder and pleasure at the strange and beautiful sights, mingled with the sights and sounds and scents beautiful indeed, yet not strange, but rather long familiar to me.

But now Will Green started in his seat where he sat with his daughter hanging over his chair, her hand amidst his thick black curls, and she weeping softly I thought; and his rough strong voice broke the silence. "Why lads and neighbours, what ails us? If the knights who fled from us this eve were to creep back hither and look in at the window they would deem that they had slain us after all, and that we were but the ghosts of the men who fought them. Yet, forsooth, fair it is at whiles to sit with friends and let the summer night speak for us and tell us its tales. But now, sweetling, fetch the mazer and the wine."

"Forsooth," said John Ball, "if ye laugh not over much now, ye shall laugh the more on the morrow of to-morrow, as ye draw nearer to the play of point and edge."

"That is sooth," said one of the upland guests. "So it was seen in France when we fought there; and the eve of fight was sober, and the morn was merry." "Yea," said another, "but there, forsooth, it was for nothing ye fought; and to-morrow it shall be for a fair reward." "It was for life we fought," said the first. "Yea," said the second, "for life; and leave to go home and find the lawyers at their fell game. Ho, Will Green, call a health over the cup!"

For now Will Green had a bowl of wine in his hand. He stood up and said: "Here, now, I call a health to the wrights of Kent who be turning our plough-shares into swords and our pruning-hooks into spears! Drink around, my masters!"

Then he drank, and his daughter filled the bowl brimming again and he passed it to me. As I took it I saw that it was of light polished wood curiously speckled, with a band of silver round it on which was cut the legend, "*In the name of the Trinity fill the cup and drink to me.*" And before I drank, it came upon me to say, "To-morrow, and the fair days afterwards!" Then I drank a great draught of the strong red wine, and passed it on; and every man said something over it, as "The road to London Bridge!" "Hob Carter and his mate!" and so on, till last of all John Ball drank, saying "Ten years hence, and the freedom of the fellowship!" Then he said to Will Green: "Now Will, must I needs depart to go and wake the dead both friend and foe in the church yonder; and whoso of you will be shriven let him come to me thither in the morn, nor spare for as little after sunrise as it may be. And this our friend and brother from over the water of Thames, he hath will to talk with me and I with him; so now will I take him by the hand: and so God keep you fellows!"

I rose to meet him as he came round the head of the table, and took his hand. Will Green turned round to me and said: "Thou wilt come back again timely, old lad; for betimes on the morrow must we rise if we shall dine at Rochester." I stammered as I yea-said him; for John Ball was looking strangely at me with a half smile, and my heart beat anxiously and fearfully: but we went quietly to the door and so out into the bright moonlight. I lingered a little when we had passed the threshold, and looked back at the yellow-lighted window and the shapes of the men that I saw therein with a grief and longing that I could not give myself a reason for, since I was to come back so soon. John Ball did not press me to move forward, but held up his hand as if to bid me hearken. The folk and guests there had already shaken themselves down since our departure, and were gotten to be reasonably merry it seemed; for one of the guests, he who had spoken of France before, had fallen to singing a ballad of the war to a wild and melancholy tune. I remember the first rhymes of it, which I heard as I turned away my head and we moved on toward the church:

*"On a fair field of France we fought on a morning
So lovely as it lieth along by the water.
There was many a lord there moved men in the medley,
Amidst the banners of the barons and bold men of the knight hood,
And spearmen and sergeants and shooters of the shaft."*

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

The brass workers of New York, who have been on a strike for two months, propose to establish a co-operative factory.

At the partial municipal elections in Brussels a workman professing Socialist opinions has been returned for the first time.

A writer in the *Hull Express* protests against the Socialist attacks on the labour M.P.'s, but discreetly leaves those attacks unanswered. Of course it is well known that trades' unionists generally are ashamed of their representatives in Parliament. The *Express* thinks Socialists ought to be grateful to Broadhurst and Burt for their help in passing such Socialistic measures as the Employers' Liability and Mines Regulation Acts. But these Acts are not Socialistic, and, anyhow, were not the particular progeny of the two Whig gentlemen who represent "labour" in St. Stephen's. The whole of the factory legislation is merely a proof of the admitted rottenness and iniquity of the capitalist system, and an attempt to make it bearable rather than to destroy it. It is rather late in the day to defend the labour M.P.'s. Their want of spirit and their unvarying readiness to act as bootblacks to the Liberal leaders has damned them, and their meek acceptance of Government patronage has double-damned them.—J. L. M.

BE CONTENT.

SAID the parson, "Be content,
Pay your tithe-dues, pay your rent;
They that earthly things despise
Shall have mansions in the skies;
Though your back with toil be bent,"
Said the parson, "be content."

Then the parson feasting went,
With my lord who lives by rent;
And the parson laughed elate,
For my lord has livings great.
They that earthly things revere,
May get bishops' mansions here.

Be content! be content!
Till your dreary life is spent;
Lowly live and lowly die,
All for mansions in the sky.
Castles here are much too rare;
All may have them—in the air.

T. MAGUIRE.

'Echoes of Truth.'

PUBLISHED as a memento of a well-known and much-lamented comrade, this volume of twenty-four sermons selected from the posthumous papers of E. M. Geldart, has a special interest for Socialists. With whatsoever of speculative opinion finds place in these discourses the *Commonweal* has nothing to do, there is little in them for either orthodox or heretic to cavil over or condemn, but in a thousand places there speaks out the warm strong heart of a man who felt and fought for freedom and truth, who knew no country but the world and no shibboleth that could mark him off from all humanity.

"The name of freedom is a glorious name; the voice of freedom is a mighty voice. Thrones shake and tyrants tremble at the sound. With liberty there dwells a talismanic power which leads forlornest fortunes to sure victory. The raising of its standard makes its armies strong, and spreads in hostile camps confusion and dismay. The peaks and valleys of fair Switzerland once leapt to hear its cry, and the hosts of the despot oppressor shrank cowering and withered at the blast. As its champion, Napoleon conquered; as its foe, at last he fell. In many a war of independence, in many a great rebellion, it has approved itself of all inspiring causes the most invincible. Beaten down to the earth, it arises in a while more terrible; crushed for a season by superior force, it smoulders like a smothered fire, only to break forth, ere long, once more in an all-devouring flame. It is a buckler of impenetrable steel on the breast of its dauntless heroes; it makes a giant of a single man, and one a match for a thousand. The pride of kings and emperors, the pomp of prelacy, the craft of priests are powerless before it. Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, John Huss at the Council of Constance, were more than conquerors; the enemies of freedom were cheated of their prey. The one they browbeat, but they could not bend; the other, though they burnt, they could not bury."

"Denounce sharp practice in trade, and decline to connive at the maxim of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, irrespective of all considerations; at the ways and means which bulls and bears invent for cheapening the commodities which they wish to buy, and enhancing the value of the articles which they desire to sell. Avow your conviction that the usurer who decoys his game into nets of extravagance and folly, with the certainty of ample reprisals at the hands of parents and guardians; that the broker who negotiates transactions for a wretched clerk, which he knows he can only pay for with the money of his firm; that the tradesman who walks to chapel in his smiling Sunday face, and blandly deposits in the missionary-box some fragment of the savings earned by shallow measures and short lengths, worn weights and adulterated goods; that the swindler who, having purchased what he never hoped to pay for, sells up for a shilling in the pound with the air of an injured man, and after concealment of his assets, or settlement timely and adroit, contrives to rise from the ashes of his bankruptcy like a Phoenix repairing his plumes,—is not one whit a more respectable person than the footpad, whose blow with a bludgeon, for the sake of a wayfarer's purse, is rewarded by strict incarceration, hard labour, and the lash."

"The strength of a cause is, that it can stand alone; the force of a movement is its native vigour; the power of truth is that it proves itself, and needs the fulcrum of no foreign aid."

Passages pregnant with virile wisdom abound, and the whole book may be read with an abiding pleasure. It is published at 6s. by Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., Paternoster Square, and may be obtained from them or from Mrs. Geldart, 82 Lansdowne Road, Croydon.

H. H. SPARLING.

With the present power of the machinery of the world to furnish things of use and beauty for the service of mankind, what superabundant supplies for every conceivable earthly want might be enjoyed by the whole human race under a logical system of production and distribution!—*John Swinton's Paper.*

The *Weekly Bulletin*, "a journal of finance and investment," published in London, has in its issue of 4th inst. some curiously naïve admissions as to the unscrupulous thieving that goes on among those gentlemen who—"for a consideration"—are kind enough to help commerce along by dealing in stocks and shares. "It is within our knowledge that as much as £10,000 has been spent in London on a single project which did not float"; "£5000 would be a very common drop in unsuccessful exploitation." Every item in this paper illustrates well the solemn assurance with which the bourgeois swindles his fellow—or is swindled—out of wealth which he did not produce and cannot use when he has it, save to begin again the same process or to expend it upon surroundings that shall be in keeping with the loathsome hypocrisy of his life.