A DREAM OF JOHN BALL.

December 18, 1886.

Shields Branch of the Socialist League will communicate with him. Unfortunately, I was not able to hold a meeting in Newcastle, time not having been found, however, a Society for the discussion of Socialist 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 keen and alive to the conditions of life in which they are placed, and 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 the North of the shabbiness of the old, of the在一个． When they have led the way in a many 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.
‘Echoes of Truth.’

PUBLISHED as a mezenote of a well-known and much-lamented comrade, this volume of the Conventicle is perhaps second in importance to the pamphlets of E. M. Goldart, has a special interest for Socialists. With whatever of speculative opinion finds place in these discourses the 'Common-Weal' has nothing to do, there is little in them for either orthodox or socialistic, for any; any of these societies; but here one speaks the truth, a strong 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 Monody is a glorious name; the voice of freedom is a mighty voice. Thrones and thrones are war by the sound. With liberty there dwells a talismanic power which leads forebore centuries to come. Victory is not a thing of the same kind. The thing of it is a thing of the kind of a man with a thousand sons.

It is in the hands of the upland guests. ‘So it was seen in France when we fought there; and the eve of fight was sober, and the forest was merry.’ ‘Yes,’ said another, ‘but there, forsooth, it was for nothing ye fought; and to-morrow it shall be for a real reward.’ ‘It is but for the first, ’ said the first apologist, ‘and for the rest, ’ said the first apologist, ‘for life; and to leave to home and find the lawyers at their full 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 you to say to them who are turning our ploughshares into swords and our pruning-hooks into spears! Drink around, my masters!’

Then 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 is 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 was right and in keeping among the righteous. Hob Carter and his mate! and so on, till all of last 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 relative, that they might also have a share in the wine of the world, and pass on to his other master, and could make his way to me thither in the morn, nor spare for as little after rise as it may be. And this our friend and brother from over the water of Thames, he hath will to talk with me and with him; so now take this cup and pass it on to him, and he will pass it on to the next, and so on, till all have tasted of this cup. And with it, he passed me the bowl.

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 staggered as I said, saying, 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 out into the night. I found there was nothing to do but bear 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 bear to return for, since I was to come back so soon. John Ball did not proceed to the tavern, but stood up half an hour and then went to bid me hearten. The folk and guests there had already shaken themselves down since our departure, and were gotten to be reasonably merry as the night came on.

From France, before had fallen to singing a ballad of the war to a wild and milt to choly 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 few of us, so many of the enemy,
Threw down our swords, that none could win and none could win,
And with the victors we won the day.

William Morris.

‘(To be continued.)’

The brass workers of New York, who have been on strike for two months, propose to establish a cooperative. At the partial municipal elections in Brussels a workman professoring Socialist opinions was elected to the municipal council for the first time.

A writer in the Hull Express protests against the Socialist attacks on the late L.P.S., but discreetly leaves those attacks unanswered. Of course it is well known that the L.P.S. are more or less the dead leaves of the Gentile Parliaments in Parliament. The Express thinks Socialists ought to be grateful to Reforms for their help in passing such Socialist measures as the Employers’ Liability and Mines Regulation Acts. But these Acts are not Socialist, and, anyhow, were not the particular purgery of the two Whits, nor by any means the work of the L.P.S. The whole of the factory legislation is merely a work of the Liberal retention of the ineptitude of the capitalist system, and an attempt to make it bearable rather than destroy it. It is rather late in the day to defend the labour of L.P.S. Their want of spirit and their unwavering readiness to act as backboards to the Liberal leaders has dammed them, and their meek acceptance of Government patronage has well deserved them.—J. M. L.

December 18, 1886.

The Commonweal.

299

BE CONTENT.

Said the parson, "Be content.

Pay your tithe-dues, pay your rent;

They that earthly things desire

Shall have mansions in the skies;

And the fervent, the poor, the brave,

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.

Be content! be content!

All may have them—in the air.

T. MacRae.

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 Stuart Mill.

Paper.

Woolly Bulletin, "a journal of finance and investment," published in London, has in its issue of Thursday an extremely naive admission as to the unscrupulous thieving that goes on among those gentlemen who—"for a consideration"—are kind enough to help commerce along. Many stock-jobbers, the Bulletin adds, are kept in the 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;" £2000 would be sufficient to seduce a man into buying shares in anything, the Bulletin adds; and that an honest man's purse is well within the reach of a swindler—"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."