

advantage of their less fortunate fellow-creatures. Socialism, I again repeat, does *not* seek to command, but portrays a method whereby men may become the helpmates and teachers each of each. Is this not preferable to the prevailing system which permits of no alternative save that of slave or master? Socialism is the inspiration of Justice, Truth, and Love. All that is noble, good, and true in the cause of which this teacher of individual liberty is so ardent an advocate is embodied in Socialism. Again, in answer to a question put forth in the discussion, he gave us the idea that he is a staunch supporter of competition. Now what could be more inconsistent? Here is one who denounces the right of one man to possess power or command over his fellow, and shortly after he declares that he will support competition, which is a system that offers to the cunning and fraudulent a means of obtaining power over their less crafty and more helpless fellow-creatures. Competition, as it now exists, is the greatest scourge that a people could be afflicted with. With competition for nobleness of heart and mind all Socialists would heartily agree; but with the fratricidal struggle for advantage that now rages, or with any attempted modification of it, a Socialist can but wage unrelenting war. Even granting that quite free competition is not necessarily an evil, it cannot be attained until Socialism is realised. If all those gentlemen who devote their talents and education to threshing straw would work for Socialism, the happiness of the world would be brought nearer.

JOHN DENBY (Preston).

A DREAM OF JOHN BALL.

(Continued from p. 275)

HE left off as one who had yet something else to say; and, indeed, I thought he would give us some word as to the trysting-place, and whither the army was to go from it; because it was now clear to me that this gathering was but a band of an army. But much happened before John Ball spoke again from the cross, and it was on this wise. When there was silence after the last shout that the crowd had raised a while ago, I thought I heard a thin sharp noise far away, somewhat to the north of the cross, which I took rather for the sound of a trumpet or horn, than for the voice of a man or any beast. Will Green also seemed to have heard it, for he turned his head sharply, and then back again, and looked keenly into the crowd as though seeking to catch some one's eye. There was a very tall man standing by the prisoner on the horse near the outskirts of the crowd, and holding his bridle. This man, who was well-armed, I saw say something to the prisoner, who stooped down and seemed to whisper him in turn. The tall man nodded his head and the prisoner got off his horse, which was a cleaner-limbed, better-built beast than the others belonging to the band, and the tall man quietly led him a little way from the crowd, mounted him, and rode off northward at a smart pace.

Will Green looked on sharply at all this, and when the man rode off, smiled as one who is content, and deems that all is going well, and settled himself down again to listen to the priest.

But now when John Ball had ceased speaking, and after another shout, and a hum of excited pleasure and hope that followed it, there was silence again, and the priest addressed himself to speaking once more. He paused and turned his head toward the wind, as if he heard something, which certainly I heard, and belike every one in the throng, though it was not over loud, far as sounds carry in such clear quiet evenings. It was the thump-a-thump of a horse drawing near at a hand-gallop along the grassy upland road; and I knew well it was the tall man coming back with tidings, the purport of which I could well guess.

I looked up at Will Green's face. He was smiling as one pleased, and said softly as he nodded to me, "Yea, shall we see the grey goose fly this eve?"

But John Ball said in a great voice from the cross, "Hear ye the tidings on the way, fellows! Hold ye together and look to your gear; yet hurry not, for no great matter shall this be. I wot well there is little force between Canterbury and Kingston, for the lords are looking north of Thames toward Wat Tyler and his men. Yet well it is, well it is!"

The crowd opened and spread out a little, and the men moved about in it, some tightening a girdle, some getting their side arms more in reach of their right hands, and those who had bows stringing them.

Will Green set hand and foot to the great shapely piece of polished red yew, with its shining horn tips, which he carried, and bent it with no seeming effort; then he reached out his hand over his shoulder and drew out a long arrow, smooth, white, beautifully balanced, with a barbed iron head at one end, a horn nock and three strong goose feathers at the other. He held it loosely between the finger and thumb of his right hand, and there he stood with a thoughtful look on his face, and in his hands one of the most terrible weapons which a strong man has ever carried, the English long-bow and cloth-yard shaft.

But this while the sound of the horse's hoofs was growing nearer, and presently from the corner of the road amidst the orchards broke out our long friend, his face red in the sun near sinking now. He waved his right hand as he came in sight of us, and sang out, "Bills and bows! bills and bows!" and the whole throng turned towards him and raised a great shout.

He reined up at the edge of the throng, and spoke in a loud voice, so that all might hear him:

"Fellows, these are the tidings; even while our priest was speaking

we heard a horn blow far off; so I bade the sergeant we have taken, and who is now our fellow in arms, to tell me where away it was that there would be folk a-gathering, and what they were, and he did me to wit that mayhap Sir John Newton was stirring from Rochester Castle; or, maybe it was the sheriff and Rafe Hopton with him; so I rode off what I might towards Hartlip, and I rode warily, and that was well, for as I came through a little wood between Hartlip and Guildstead, I saw beyond it the gleam of steel, and lo! in the field there a company, and a penon of Rafe Hopton's arms, and that is blue and thereon three silver fish; and a penon of the sheriff's arms, and that is a green tree; and withal another penon of three red kine, and whose they be I know not.¹ There tied I my horse in the middle of the wood, and myself I crept along the dyke to see more and to hear somewhat; and no talk I heard to tell of save at whiles a big knight talking to five or six others, and saying somewhat wherein came the words London and Nicholas Bramber, and King Richard; but I saw that of men-at-arms and sergeants there might be a hundred, and of bows not many, but of those outland arbalests maybe a fifty; and so, what with one and another of servants and tip-staves and lads, some three hundred, well armed, and the men-at-arms of the best. Forsooth, my masters, there had I been but a minute, ere the big knight broke off his talk, and cried out to the music to blow up, "And let us go look on these villeins," said he; and withal the men began to gather in a due and ordered company, and their faces turned thitherward; forsooth, I got to my horse, and led him out of the wood on the other side, and so to saddle and away along the green roads; neither was I seen or chased. So look ye to it, my masters, for these men will be coming to speak with us; nor is there need for haste, but rather for good speed; for in some twenty or thirty minutes will be more tidings to hand."

By this time one of our best armed men had got through the throng and was standing on the cross beside John Ball. When the long man had done, there was confused noise of talk for a while, and the throng spread itself out more and more, but not in a disorderly manner; the bowmen drawing together toward the outside, and the billmen forming behind them. Will Green was still standing beside me and had hold of my arm, as though he knew both where he and I were to go.

"Fellows," quoth the captain from the cross, "belike this stour shall not live to be older than the day, if ye get not into a plump together for their arbalesters to shoot bolts into, and their men-at-arms to thrust spears into. Get you to the edge of the crofts and spread out there six feet between man and man, and shoot, ye bowmen, from the hedges, and ye with the staves keep your heads below the level of the hedges, or else for all they be thick a bolt may win its way in." He grinned as he said this, and there was laughter enough in the throng to have done honour to a better joke. Then he sung out, "Hob Wright, Rafe Wood, John Pargetter, and thou Will Green, bestir ye and marshall the bow-shot; and thou Nicholas Woodyer shall be under me Jack Straw in ordering of the staves. Gregory Tailor and John Clark, fair and fine are ye clad in the arms of the Canterbury bailiffs; ye shall shine from afar; go ye with the banner into the highway, and the bows on either shall ward you; yet jump lads, and over the hedge with you when the bolts begin to fly your way! Take heed, good fellows all, that our business is bestride the highway, and not let them get in on our flank the while; so half to the right, half to the left of the highway. Shoot straight and strong, and waste no breath with noise; let the loose of the bow-string cry for you: and look you! think it no loss of manhood to cover your bodies with tree and bush; for one of us who know is worth a hundred of those proud fools. To it lads, and let them see what the grey goose bears between his wings! Abide us here, brother John Ball, and pray for us if thou wilt; but for me, if God will not do for Jack Straw what Jack Straw would do for God were he in like case, I can see no help for it."

"Yea, forsooth," said the priest, "here will I abide you my fellows if ye come back; or if ye come not back, here will I abide the foe. Depart, and the blessing of the fellowship be with you."

Down then leapt Jack Straw from the cross, and the whole throng set off without noise or hurry, soberly and steadily in outward seeming. Will Green led me by the hand as if I were a boy, yet nothing he said, being forsooth intent on his charge. We were some four hundred men in all; but I said to myself that without some advantage of the ground we were lost men before the men-at-arms that long Gregory Tailor had told us of; for I had not seen as yet the yard-long shaft at its work.

We and somewhat more than half of our band turned into the orchards on the left of the road, through which the level rays of the low sun shone brightly. We kept pretty near to the road till we had got through all the closes save the last, where we were brought up by a hedge and a dyke, beyond which lay a wide open nearly treeless space, not of tillage, as at the other side of the place, but of pasture, the common grazing ground of the township. A little stream wound about through the ground, with a few willows here and there; there was only a thread of water in it in this hot summer tide, but its course could easily be traced by the deep blue-green of the rushes that grew plenteously in the bed. Geese were lazily wandering about and near this brook, and a herd of cows, accompanied by the town bull, were feeding quietly still, their heads all turned one way; while half a dozen calves marched close together side by side like a plump of soldiers, their tails swinging in a kind of measure to keep off the flies, of which there was great plenty. Three or four lads and girls were sauntering about, heeding or not heeding the cattle. They looked

¹ Probably one of the Calverlys, a Cheshire family, one of whom was a noted officer in the French wars.—Ed.

up toward us as we crowded into the last close, and slowly loitered off toward the village. Nothing looked like battle; yet battle sounded in the air; for now we heard the beat of the horse-hoofs of the men-at-arms coming on towards us like the rolling of distant thunder, and growing louder and louder every minute; we were none too soon in turning to face them. Jack Straw was on our side of the road, and with a few gestures and a word or two he got his men into their places. Six archers lined the hedge along the road where the banner of Adam and Eve rising above the grey leaves of the apple-trees challenged the new comers; and of the billmen also he kept a good few ready to guard the road in case the enemy should try to rush it with the horsemen. The road, not being a Roman one, was, you must remember, little like the firm smooth country roads that you are used to; it was a mere track between the hedges and fields, partly grass-grown, and cut up by the deep sunk ruts hardened by the drought of summer. There was a stack of faggot and small wood on the other side, and our men threw themselves upon it and set to work to stake the road across for a rough defence against the horsemen.

What befell more on the road itself I had not much time to note, for our bowmen spread themselves out along the hedge that looked into the pasture-field, leaving some six feet between man and man; the rest of the billmen went along with the bowmen, and halted in clumps of some half-dozen along their line, holding themselves ready to help the bowmen if the enemy should run up under their shafts, or to run on to lengthen the line in case they should try to break in on our flank. The hedge in front of us was of quick. It had been strongly plashed in the past February, and was stiff and stout. It stood on a low bank; and besides the level of the orchard was some thirty inches higher than that of the field, and the ditch was some two foot deeper than the face of the field. The field went winding round to beyond the church, making a quarter of a circle about the village, and at the western end of it were the butts whence the folk were coming from shooting when I first came into the village street. Altogether, to me who knew nothing of war the place seemed defensible enough. I have said that the road down which Long Gregory came with his tidings went north; and that was its general direction; but its first reach was nearly east, so that the low sun was not in the eyes of any of us, and where Will Green took his stand, and I with him, it was nearly at our backs.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

IS SOCIALISM SPREADING?

MR. BRADLAUGH, if a recently reported interview in the *Evening News* be not a joke, has been trying to calm the fears of the "respectable" building-society, bank depositing, shopocracy and petty bourgeois, to whom he has now rattled, by assuring them that Socialists are either crack-brained enthusiasts or canting rogues, and that Socialism is not making and cannot make any perceptible progress in this country. If Socialists were at all likely to be discouraged, or to do anything but laugh at such utterances from such a quarter, they might take heart again to find another proof amongst many of the spread of Socialistic opinion in the following very unorthodox sentiments, which are taken from a leading article in the *Daily News* of November 25:—

"People who have once found that they can support themselves in idleness by sending their children to beg will not return to industry. They are as demoralised as the indolent younger son who has been at Eton and cannot imagine why he should ever be doing any harder work than is demanded from a decorative private secretary. The street cadgers are not morally one whit worse than this desultory young gentleman, and as long as we cannot help supporting them they will go on begging."

Again:

"We cannot do this, and we cannot do that," people cry, because it is 'economically unsound.' But this is no reason for never doing anything at all. If nearly everything that is proposed be economically unsound, what is left that is economically sound? Is it to extort the utmost possible percentage out of work paid for at wages which must be eked out by prostitution, theft, and beggary? If that kind of economy be sound economically, it is rotten every other way. One might feel it a relief to do something positive that was wrong, rather than to sit still for ever doing nothing in the odour of economical sanctity. It is not institutions, enactments, and laws that can destroy poverty of the blackest sort; it is nothing but a sense of brotherhood and a sense of honour. Who does not denounce the usurer who makes thirty per cent. out of the folly and ignorance of undergraduates? If that money stinks, as *Vespasian* said a certain revenue did not stink, why should twenty per cent. made out of work paid at starvation wages be acceptable and honourable? Not many of us, perhaps, would like to be wealthy on little rents screwed out of starving peasants. Are the rents of plague-stricken and poisonous hovels in London more free from stain? Is it impossible in the nature of things that human beings should extend universally to such gains the odium that already attaches to exorbitant usury? Is wealth acquired by a system of artificially nursing superfluous public-houses honourably got? Should gentlemen keep and stimulate the demand for liquor? These are matters that divines may put to the consciences of their flocks. The prospects of Society will begin to improve when men agree to say of money thus gotten, *Olet!*"

T. B.

Some unemployed men were charged at West Ham Police-court the other day with begging. What on earth are the unemployed to do? They can't get work, and they must not beg or steal. Their numbers increase rapidly, and they are not likely much longer to be content to slink away and die quietly in the slums. Who can doubt that at some not distant day they will "arise in unvanquishable number," and claim their places at Nature's table, now denied them by the rapacious classes who "rob and rule" us!

NO POOR.

AH, BROTHERS, when the world is wise,
Will want and woe endure?
There dawns a day before our eyes
When earth shall have no poor;
God gives enough of good for all,
And some day soon, we trust,
An equal share to all will fall,
And men to men be just;
The day of justice comes at last,
The People's day, be sure,
When want shall be but of the past,
And earth shall have no poor.

We have been blind—we have been dumb;
At length we've eyes that see;
At last our time to speak has come
And men we claim to be;
What care we for your prate and fuss
Of who are out or in,
Unless your ruling give to us
The lives we mean to win?
The rags—the hunger of the past
No longer must endure;
The People throned in power at last
Will see there are no poor.

W. C. BENNETT.

Lissagaray's 'History of the Commune.'

THIS important work has at last appeared in English, and we do not hesitate to say that it ought to be in the hands of every Socialist. The history of the Commune, as presented in the generally unbiased narrative of Lissagaray, bears a profound moral with it. It is the story of the struggle of noble enthusiasm, genuine disinterestedness and devotion, and, in the ordinary sense, great opportunities, with foolish vanity, personal squabbles, inefficiency of organisation, and pedantry, resulting in the ascendancy of the latter, and consequent general collapse. The Versailles entered upon a victory already prepared for them. And it will be so again in the next great popular movement, should due subordination of function and organisation not be able to keep the whip-hand of mere confusion, cliquishness, and faddism. But the moral to be drawn is of more immediate application than to the next popular rising. To compare small matters with great, there are Socialist organisations (save the mark!) in existence to-day which are literally qualifying for disaster when the time comes. We see precisely the same elements at work in them which caused the fall of the Commune with the horrors of the "bloody week." Again and again as he reads the story of the tragedy of '71, the friend of the Cause feels inclined to wring his hands over the opportunities lost. Lost because everything was in confusion, nearly everybody was wanting to do everybody else's work, and consequently doing no work at all, and in many cases doubtless with the best intentions. Even at the supreme hour, when the Versailles were actually inside Paris, there was a chance of rolling back the invasion by means of a cross fire between Montmartre and the Pantheon, had these portions been properly fortified and garrisoned; but there was no one there. Again, when the Commune was in death-throes, street after street was sacrificed because officers and others carrying important messages were stopped and forced to assist in the ordinary work of barricade making—the last defences being thus literally immolated before a false and idiotic notion of equality.

We wish that every true Socialist at heart whose head is led astray by disintegrative tendencies would read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the important lessons of this volume. The cause was wrecked in 1871, in great part at least, not because of spies or traitors, for there were marvellously few of those who took any prominent part in the movement who can fairly be accused of sinister motives, or of attempts to make personal gain out of it—but because of well-meaning conceited, faddy, cantankerous persons, who wasted time in long-winded speeches about personal matters, etc., and who would neither do any work themselves nor let any one else do it. Other follies there were of course, although they were doubtless partly caused by the above, such as making decrees and not getting them respected. The case of the hostages was one of the most fatal of these. Had the archbishop been shot on the first corroboration of the fact that Federal prisoners were being butchered at Versailles, the butcheries might have been checked. As it was, he was reserved only to be shot after there was no good to be got by shooting him at all, save to give the civilised world an opportunity of displaying its capacities in shamming horror. The translation of the book, we should say, is excellent.

E. B. BAX.

If your assembly can't agree about its duty in politics, drop the subject and go ahead in the study of the principles until all learn more of the *Industrial News*.

"Where," cried Abe Hewitt, "where is the man who said that the 68,000 gentlemen who voted for our admirable friend Henry George were anarchists and communists! My feet are cold, and I would like to warm them by kicking the curmudgeon who slandered these 68,000 gentlemen."—*John Swinton's Paper*.