



"HAVE YOU NOT HEARD HOW IT HAS GONE WITH MANY A CAUSE BEFORE NOW: FIRST, FEW MEN HEED IT; NEXT, MOST MEN CONTEMN IT; LASTLY, ALL MEN ACCEPT IT—AND THE CAUSE IS WON!"

Communications are invited from all concerned with social questions. They should be written on one side of the paper only and should be addressed to the Editors of the COMMONWEAL, 13 Farringdon Road, E.C. They must be accompanied by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication.

As all articles are signed, no special significance should be attached to them because of the position they may occupy in these pages. None, therefore, are to be taken as more than in a general manner expressing the views of the League as a body, except it be so explicitly declared by the Editors.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

NOTICE TO ALL SOCIALISTIC NEWSPAPERS.—The *Commonweal* will be regularly sent to all Socialistic Contemporaries throughout the world, and it is hoped that they on their side will regularly provide the Socialist League with their papers as they may appear.

QUESTIONS bearing upon the principles propounded and the objects had in view by the *Commonweal*, will be welcomed by the Editors.

CHUMP.—If you will kindly put your objections into publishable shape, we shall be pleased to insert any letter of reasonable length, if the conditions at the head of this column are complied with. No good purpose can be served by anonymous letters addressed to an individual.

RECEIVED—*England*: Anarchist—Worker's Friend—Daylight (Norwich)—Christian Socialist—Church Reformer—National Review—Republican—Journal of Vigilance Association—Justice—To-Day—Freethinker—Practical Socialist—Leicester Co-operative Record—Imperial Federation. *Belgium*: Le Chante-Clair (Bruxelles). *Canada*: L'Union Ouvrière (Montreal). *France*: Paris: Cri du Peuple (daily)—La Revue Socialiste—Le Révolté—Le Socialiste—La Tribune des Peuples—Revue du Mouvement Social—La Citoyenne. Le Devoir (Guise)—Le Forçat du Travail (Bordeaux). *Germany*: Neue Zeit (Stuttgart). *Holland*: Recht voor Allen. *Hungary*: Arbeiter-Wochen-Chronik (Buda-pest). *India*: Voice of India (Bombay)—Hindu Patriot (Calcutta)—People's Friend (Madras). *Italy*: Il Fascio Operaio (Milan)—La Lotta (Ancona). *New Zealand*: Watchman. *Portugal*: O Campino—Voz do Operario—O Protesto Operario (Lisbon). *Spain*: El Angel del Hogar—Revista Social—Acracia—La Justicia Humana (Barcelona)—Bandera Social—El Socialista (Madrid)—El Socialismo (Cadiz)—La Perseverancia (Huelva). *Switzerland*: Sozial Demokrat (Zürich). *U. S. A.*: (New York): Volkszeitung—Der Sozialist—Freiheit—Progress—John Swinton's Paper—Spread the Light—Our Country—Amerikanische Arbeiterzeitung—Truthseeker. (Boston): Liberty—Woman's Journal. Denver (Col.): Labor Inquirer—Little Socialist—Chicago (Ill.): Alarm—Detroit (Mich.): Labor Leaf—Princeton (Mass.): Word—Cleveland (O.): Carpenter. Cincinnati (O.): Unionist—Stockton (Cal.) Mail—Petersburg (Ill.) Voice of Labor—New Haven (Conn.) Workmen's Advocate—St. Louis (Mo.): Altruist. Kansas (Mo.): Sun—Pittsburg (Pa.) Labor Herald—Baltimore (Md.) Labor Free Press—Valley Falls (Kan.) Lucifer Newfoundland (Pa.) La Torpille—Litchfield (Minn.) Radical—Manchester (N. H.) Weekly Budget—Evansville (Ind.) Neue Zeit Milwaukee (Wis.) Volksblatt.

ARTICLES RECEIVED.—Will appear: "Malthusianism." Under consideration: "Labour Troubles in Dublin"—"Moderation." Declined with thanks: "Remarks on Socialism."

HOME RULE OR HUMBUG.

It would be but waste of time to go through all the election addresses of even the principal leaders of parties which have been put before the public during the last few days; but those addresses, and the reception of Mr Gladstone on his journey northward, seem to foreshadow the nature and issue of the coming contest, and a few words seem desirable about it. Mr Gladstone has definitely given up his Bill, and takes his stand on the principle of a parliament for Ireland. It is clear that this may mean compromise—that he is prepared to accept something less like independence than the Bill intended; but it may not mean anything more than electioneering vagueness, trying to make the sweep of the net as wide and inclusive as possible,—a dangerous manœuvre, but which will always be tried at elections, and by Mr Gladstone.

The point is, whether the Irish people are prepared to accept anything less like independence than the Bill; or rather, will the march of Parliamentary events compel them to do so. The Chamberlainites have the power, perhaps, of forcing them to accept a compromise. The immediate purpose of Mr Gladstone's declaration of the death of the

Bill is an olive-branch to Radical dissentients. If they accept it as a body, the whole Liberal-Radical party (outside Lord Hartington's Whigs) will be pledged to shaving down the measure for the new Parliament to something less than the defunct Bill. The Irish, at all events their central group, will shrink from the attitude of irreconcilability if the shaving down is not very flagrant, especially if it gives them, as it almost certainly will do, an immediate opportunity for carrying on the agitation. Unless, therefore, the Chamberlainites are dead against any real Home-Rule, they will give up their present opposition to Mr Gladstone, and leave their Tory-Whig friends in the lurch.

It is much to be hoped that they will not take this course, for in their coming into the Gladstonian camp again lies the real danger to the success of Irish independence. Whether Mr Gladstone is strong enough to win in the elections or not, he will at least have at his back a minority strong enough in opposition to prevent the passing of a measure intended for the complete shelving of the question, which would have to be enforced by the usual method by which English gifts are presented to Ireland—coercion, to wit. But on the other hand, a majority of men merely pretending to support Home Rule, joined to the usual amount of waverers, might so dally with the question as practically to draw us back again into the trouble from which we have seemed to be emerging. A firm and strong minority would educate people somewhat: a sloppy majority would wear them out and make them languid as to the whole subject.

Meanwhile it is observable that no party professes to intend shelving the question; and further, that in spite of all the bluster of the Tory press, the Tories are beginning to see the impossibility of dragooning Ireland in the future, and are loudly disclaiming coercion. Even the *St James's Gazette* is driven to this retreat, and talks about Lord Salisbury's "unguarded moment,"—the moment in which he very frankly expressed the intentions or hopes of the Tory party as regards Ireland; intentions which would have to become those of Whigs and Jingo-Radicals if they were to succeed in getting support enough to impose their schemes on that country. This looks very like throwing up the sponge. Things have come to this point, that even those who, if they could, would coerce Ireland by any and every means, including a scheme of depopulation, which Lord Salisbury is now driven to disavow, perceive that the thing is impossible in the face of the gathering instinct of the English people against their forcible benevolence in favour of the landlords.

It is becoming impossible then to impose the rule of the English bureaucracy in its worst form on Ireland. What alternative is left then to the reactionists in dealing with her? Apparently, to involve the whole question in a hopeless, lawyer-like muddle, so as to sicken people of it, and to get up the old cry of the impossibility of dealing with the Irish. This is what is being attempted; and, on the whole, Mr Gladstone's answer to it must be considered an effective one, and none the less so because of its simplicity; he has for once thrown off all finesse, and puts the broad question before the country of Home Rule or Humbug; it was necessary to do this in order to break through the network of evasions, intrigue, and compromise that the end of last Session had woven round the question. It is no use prophecying as to the result of the elections, but if they go against Home Rule this simplifying of the present issue will give force and distinctness to the powerful opposition which, as above said, is the alternative to a success at the polling booths.

One may say about the Radicals generally, looking at them from the Socialist point of view, that they may be divided into two sections. The first are the pedantic Radicals with certain party shibboleths on their tongues, and in their hearts bitter hostility to everything which seems to interfere even temporarily with the party game which they are playing. Between them and us there is and must be mere war; they will not even listen to us. They look upon us with more hatred than they do upon the Tories, for without the latter they could not carry on their game. But besides these pedantic Radicals, there is another Radical section who are on the look out for progressive ideas, and are the representatives of advancing Democracy. These may, and often do, oppose us as inconvenient impracticable persons, who interfere with what they have learned to consider progress, but they are not really unfriendly and are willing to hear us, and when they have done so they will find, many of them, that they are Socialists after all.

Well, the Chamberlainite Unionist Radicals, many of whom are quite fanatical in their opposition to Home Rule, do on this occasion represent to us the hostile pedantic Radicals, while those who are championing Home Rule represent our Radical friends, who are waiting to be told what Socialism really is, or at any rate waiting to find

out what it is, and who when they have found out will become Socialists. As Socialists, therefore, we are bound to wish the utmost success to those who can at least see that it is necessary for Ireland to take her own affairs into her own hands, whatever the immediate results may be. To the pedantic Radicals, the new Jingoese, we need scarcely wish ill-success, for as things are going they are getting themselves deeper into the mire at every step.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

RUSKIN AS A REVOLUTIONARY PREACHER.

I.

"ILLOGICAL, incoherent, and dogmatic, yet with so much of beauty both of ideals and of words; unreasonable in much, but yet so full of pity for the evils all around and so sincere in desire to remove them, it is much to be regretted that this writer has prevented the full knowledge of his works to be spread. Ruskin professes to be a Communist, and seems to have some amount of dread at the spread of Socialism" (see Guild of St George, Master's Report, 1885, p. 3). In no one thing do his peculiar notions and contradictions shine out more than in his ideas on publication and selling his books.

I propose to put before the readers of the *Commonweal* the most extreme passages of this writer, and to give them a weapon which the original maker has allowed to get into hands little likely to use.

Over and over again does he pour out his wrath on capitalists, landlords, financiers—"these swine of the five per cent.," as he calls them ('Fors Clavigera,' No. 8, p. 11, Aug. 1871). I have sometimes thought that his method of issuing his books was to prevent too many of the workers knowing the truth; that he felt compelled to write the truth, but hoped it would not spread too fast. This idea is again and again suggested by his continual opposition of desire for improvement and extreme mistrustfulness of the workers. As to his ideas of publishing, in 'Fors,' No. 6, June 1871, he has the following:

"It is no affair of mine whether you attend to me or not, but yours wholly. My hand is weary of pen-holding, my heart is sick of thinking; for my own part, I would not write you these pamphlets, though you would give me a barrel of beer instead of two pints for them,—I write them wholly for your sake. I choose that you shall have them decently printed on cream-coloured paper, and with a margin underneath, which you can write on if you like. That is also for your sake: it is a proper form of book for any man to have who can keep his books clean; and if he cannot, he has no business with books at all. It costs me ten pounds to print a thousand copies, and five more to give you a picture; and a penny off my seven pence to send you the book. A thousand sixpences are twenty-five pounds: when you have bought a thousand 'Fors' of me, I shall therefore have five pounds for my trouble, and my single shopman, Mr. Allen, five pounds for his. We won't work for less, either of us: not that we would not, were it good for you, but it would be by no means good." [It is just here the debatable point comes in.] "And I mean to sell all my large books, henceforward, in the same way,—well printed, well bound, and at a fixed price; and the trade may charge a proper and acknowledged profit for their trouble in retailing the book. Then the public know what they are about, and so will the tradesman. I, the first producer, answer, to the best of my power, for the quality of the book—paper, binding, eloquence and all. The retailer charges what he ought to charge, openly; and if the public do not choose to give it, they can't get the book. This is what I call legitimate business."

And so, I take it, will most readers of this paper. The unfortunate thing is, that as legitimate business is not very general, all those who set themselves against the general current are badly placed. This has been proved by Ruskin. The book-trade practically boycotted him out of the market, and by the difficulties placed in the way of getting his books, added to their very high price, his writings are not well known. Here, too, it may be interesting to mention that even John Ruskin had in time to give in to surroundings. The passage I have quoted was stringently acted upon for some years; but I have before me as I write one of his circulars, dated July 1882, announcing that in future a discount would be allowed to booksellers and librarians. To some the connection may seem remote, but to me it seems a very positive proof that in the long-run environment is the stronger, and what a farce freedom of contract is in relation to the worker really depending on his work for bread.

Ruskin is constantly saying hard things about scientists, and yet by his exquisite mixing-up of poetry, painting, geology, botany, and political economy, proves to completeness the doctrine of eternity and interchangeability. In his 'Queen of the Air' (Smith, Elder, and Co., 1869—I shall always quote from this edition), p. 134, is the following, which many of the nostrum-mongers on trade depression will do well to take to heart:

"It is not political economy to put a number of strong men down on an acre of ground, with no lodging and nothing to eat. Nor is it political economy to build a city on good ground and fill it with store of corn and treasure, and put a score of lepers to live in it. Political economy creates together the means of life and the living persons who are to use them; and of both the best and the most that it can, but imperatively the best, not the most: a few good and healthy men, rather than a multitude of diseased rogues, and a little real milk and wine rather than much chalk and petroleum. But the gist of the whole business is, that the men and their property must both be produced together, not one to the loss of the other. Property must not be created in lands desolate by exile of their people, nor multiplied and depraved humanity in lands barren of bread."

Following on this, he has something on "wealth" and "money," too long to give now, but from which I give just one sentence, showing how opposed he is to the orthodox economists: "A thing is worth precisely

what it can do for you, not what you chose to pay for it" (p. 140). "The wealth of the nation, then, first, and its peace and well-being besides, depend on the number of persons it can employ in making good and useful things" (p. 141). A few pages on in this same book is something on how to employ all the people; but I leave that for the present, to give a few quotations on the land and rent question. "It begins to be asked on many sides how the possessors of the land became possessed of it, and why they should still possess it, more than you or I; and Ricardo's 'theory' of rent, though, for an economist, a very creditably ingenious work of fiction, will not much longer be imagined to explain the 'practice' of rent. The true answer, in this matter as in all others, is the best. Some land has been bought, some won by cultivation, but the greater part, in Europe, seized by force of hand" ('Fors,' No. 2, Feb. 1871, p. 6). He breaks down in the next, for he goes on to qualify in a very weak manner. He does not try to explain of whom any land was originally bought, or who originally had any right to sell land to all eternity.

The next quotation is rather long, but as it cuts to the very core of so much bourgeois teaching, it is exceedingly useful. In 'Fors,' No. 4, April 1871, he is mostly occupied in poking fun at John Stuart Mill and Co., and their peculiar use of such words as "utilities," "commodities," and the like. Particularly he wants to know what "money" is, and what he may do with it, also where he gets it from. He says he is afraid to give it away, even to give a penny in charity, without looking up and down the street first, to see if a "clergyman is coming." He gave thirty pounds for some geological specimens, and that was, "if you must have the truth, because I was a fool."

"But if I hadn't bought it, what would you have had me do with my money? keep that in the drawer instead? Or at my banker's, till it grew out of thirty pounds into sixty and a hundred, in fulfilment of the law respecting seed sown in good ground? Doubtless, that would have been more meritorious for the time. But when I had got the sixty or the hundred pounds, what should I have done with them? . . . Of course, I know I might buy as many iron railings as I please, and be praised; but I've no room for them. I can't well burn more coals than I do, because of the blacks, which spoil my books; and the Americans won't let me buy any blacks alive, or else I would have some black dwarfs with parrots, such as one sees in the pictures of Paul Veronese. I should of course like myself, above all things, to buy a pretty white girl, with a title; and I should get great praise for doing that,—only I haven't money enough. White girls come dear, even when one buys them only like coals, for fuel. The Duke of Bedford, indeed, bought Joan of Arc from the French, to burn, for only ten thousand pounds and a pension of three hundred a-year to the Bastard of Vendôme; and I could and would have given that for her, and not burnt her; but one hasn't such a chance every day."

"Will you, . . . I challenge you, . . . tell me what I am to do with my money? I mean, indeed, to give you my own poor opinion on the subject in May; though I feel the more embarrassed in the thought of doing so, because, in this present April, I am so much a fool as not even to know clearly whether I have got any money or not. I know, indeed, that things go on at present as if I had; but it seems to me that there must be a mistake somewhere, and that some day it will be found out. For instance, I have seven thousand pounds in what we call the Funds or founded things, but I am not comfortable about the founding of them. All that I can see of them is a square bit of paper, with some ugly printing on it; and all that I know of them is that this bit of paper gives me a right to tax you every year, and make you pay me two hundred pounds out of your wages; which is very pleasant for me: but how long will you be pleased to do so? Suppose it should occur to you, any summer's day, that you had better not? Where would my seven thousand pounds be? In fact, where are they now? We call ourselves a rich people; but you see this seven thousand pounds of mine has no real existence—it only means that you, the workers, are poorer by two hundred pounds a-year than you would be if I hadn't got it. And this is surely a very odd kind of money for a country to boast of. Well, then, besides this, I have a bit of low land at Greenwich, which, as far as I see anything of it, is not money at all, but only mud,—would be of as little use to me as my handful of gravel in the drawer, if it were not that an ingenious person has found out that he can make chimney-pots of it; and every quarter, he brings me fifteen pounds off the price of his chimney-pots; so that I am always sympathetically glad when there's a high wind, because then I know my ingenious friend's business is thriving. But suppose it should come into his head, in any less windy month than this April, that he had better bring me none of the price of his chimneys? And even though he should go on—as I hope he will—patiently (and I always give him a glass of wine when he brings me the fifteen pounds), is this really to be called money of mine? And is the country any richer because, when anybody's chimney-pot is blown down in Greenwich, he must pay something extra to me before he can put it on again?"

Than the above, I take it, it will be hard to put together a neater summing-up of the villainy of our national debt, and also of mining royalties—methods of taxing the workers without making anybody the richer. Surely, as he says in another place, a strange wealth to guard with iron railings—*i.e.*, bayonets. But he has not done with rent yet. He goes on:

"Then, also, I have some houses in Marylebone, which, though indeed very ugly and miserable, yet, so far as they are actual beams and brick-bats put into shape, I might have imagined to be real property; only, you know, Mr. Mill says that people who build houses don't produce a commodity, but only do us a service. So I suppose my houses are not 'utilities embodied in material objects' (and indeed they don't look much like it); but I know I have the right to keep anybody from living in them unless they pay me; only suppose some day the Irish faith—that people ought to be lodged for nothing—should become an English one also, where would my money be? Where is it now, except as a chronic abstraction from other people's earnings? So, again, I have some land in Yorkshire, some bank 'stock' (I don't in the least know what that is), and the like; but whenever I examine into these possessions, I find they melt into one or another form of future taxation, and that I am always sitting (if I were working I shouldn't mind, but I am only sitting) at the receipt of Custom, and a Publican as well as a Sinner. And then, to embarrass the business further yet, I am quite at variance with other