

uninteresting Archway Road resplendent with flag-staves bound round with a profusion of red bunting, preparatory to the Lord Mayor's visit on the morrow. True, the same amount of equally inexpensive material might have sheltered hundreds of poor children from the cold; but this is nothing compared with the necessity of agreeably welcoming the City magnate.

As I have the good fortune to live on the borders of these woods, I had a good opportunity of watching the crowds who assembled from the other side of the fence, thereby incurring the sarcasm of a youthful proletarian who ridiculed, in passing, the idea of paying to take a back seat. It was a damp and miserable day, and an appropriately miserable ceremony. Crowds of people lined the sides of the road and thronged the wood; a number of red-coats with a band, and a further detachment of volunteers, marched past; then a number of firemen, but whether a conflagration was expected or no, did not appear. Probably it was thought necessary to have something sensational to arouse enthusiasm, though, as usual on such occasions, absurdity only was attained. What the Lord Mayor, who arrived in his familiar blue-and-silver carriage, did inside the wood, I have no idea; but I gathered from the remarks of passers-by that the whole ceremony passed off satisfactorily, for which we should be very thankful, not knowing what might have happened had it been otherwise.

At all events, there the woods still are, as before; only now they are surrounded by a hideous white wooden fence guarded with gates and padlocks, and broad paths now to intersect them (covered with the contents of dust-bins, so it is rumoured). At a hastily-convened meeting of local ratepayers (since declared illegal) it was resolved to buy a further portion of the woods for £25,000. Doubtless the woods are a great boon to the public (on Sundays), but the spectacle of people pompously and elaborately giving away what never belonged to them is worth looking at.

REGINALD A. BECKETT.

A DREAM OF JOHN BALL.

(Continued from p. 267.)

So now I heard John Ball; how he lifted up his voice and said:

"Ho, all ye good people! I am a priest of God, and in my day's work it cometh that I should tell you what ye should do, and what ye should forbear doing, and to that end I am come hither; yet first if I myself have wronged any man here, let him say wherein my wrongdoing lieth, that I may ask his pardon and his pity."

A great hum of good-will ran through the crowd as he spoke; then he smiled as in a kind of pride, and again he spoke: "Wherefore did ye take me out of the archbishop's prison but three days ago, when ye lighted the archbishop's house for the candle of Canterbury, but that I might speak to you and pray you: therefore I will not keep silence whether I have done ill or whether I have done well. And herein, good fellows and my very brethren, I would have you to follow me; and if there be such here, as I know full well there be some, and may be a good many, who have been robbers of their neighbours (and who is my neighbour? quoth the rich man), or lechers, or despiteful haters, or talebearers, or fawners on rich men for the hurt of the poor (and that is the worst of all)—Ah, my poor brethren who have gone astray, I say not to you, go home and repent lest you mar our great deeds, but rather come afield and there repent. Many a day have ye been fools, but hearken unto me and I shall make you wise above the wisdom of the earth: and if ye die in your wisdom, as God wot ye well may, since the fields ye wend to bear swords for daisies and spears for bents, then shall ye be, though men call you dead, a part and parcel of the living wisdom of all things, very stones of the pillars that uphold the joyful earth.

"Forsooth, ye have heard it said that ye shall do well in this world that in the world to come ye may live happily for ever: do ye well then, and have your reward both on earth and in heaven; for I say to you that earth and heaven are not two, but one; and this one is that which ye know, and are each one of you a part of, to wit, the Holy Church, and in each one of you dwelleth the life of the church, unless ye slay it. Forsooth, brethren, will ye murder the church any one of you, and go forth a wandering man and lonely even as Cain did who slew his brother? Ah, my brothers, what an evil doom is this to be an outcast from the church, to have none to love you and to speak with you, to be without fellowship! Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them, and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on for ever and each one of you part of it, while many a man's life upon the earth from the earth shall wane. Therefore, I bid you dwell not in hell but in heaven, or while ye must, upon earth, which is a part of heaven, and forsooth no foul part. Forsooth, he that waketh in hell and feeleth his heart fail him, shall have memory of the merry days of earth, and how that when his heart failed him there he cried on his fellow, were it his wife or his son or his brother or his gossip or his brother sworn in arms, and how that his fellow heard him and came and they mourned together under the sun, till again they laughed together and were but half sorry between them: this shall he think on in hell and cry on his fellow to help him, and shall find that therein is no help because there is no fellowship, but every man for himself. Therefore, I tell you that the proud, despiteous rich man, though he knoweth it not, is in hell already, because he hath no fellow; and he that

hath so hardy a heart that in sorrow he thinketh of fellowship, his sorrow is soon but a story of sorrow—a little change in the life that knows not ill."

He left off for a little; and indeed for some time his voice had fallen, but it was so clear and the summer evening so soft and still, and the silence of the folk so complete, that every word told. His eyes fell down to the crowd as he stopped speaking, since for some little while they had been looking far away into the blue distance of summer; and the kind eyes of the man had a curious sight before him in that crowd, for amongst them were many who by this time were not dry-eyed, and some wept outright in spite of their black beards, while all had that look as though they were ashamed of themselves and did not want others to see how deeply they were moved, after the fashion of their race when they are strongly stirred. I looked at Will Green beside me; his right hand clutched his bow so tight, that the knuckles whitened; he was staring straight before him, and the tears were running out of his eyes and down his big nose as though without his will, for his face was stolid and unmoved all the time, till he caught my eye, and then he screwed up the strangest face, of scowling brow, weeping eyes, and smiling mouth, while he dealt me a sounding thump in the ribs with his left elbow, which, though it would have knocked me down but for the crowd, I took as an esquire does the accolade which makes a knight of him.

But while I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name—while I pondered all this, John Ball began to speak again in the same soft and clear voice with which he had left off.

"Good fellows, it was your fellowship and your kindness that took me out of the archbishop's prison three days ago, though God wot ye had nought to gain by it save outlawry and the gallows; yet lacked I not your fellowship before ye drew near me in the body, and when between me and Canterbury street was yet a stone wall, and the turnkeys and sergeants and bailiffs. For hearken, my friends and helpers; many days ago, while April was yet young, I lay there, and the heart that I had strung up to bear all things because of the fellowship of men and the blessed saints and the angels and those that are and those that are to be, this heart that I had strung up like a strong bow, fell into feebleness, so that I lay there a-longing for the green fields and the white-thorn bushes and the lark singing over the corn, and the talk of good fellows round the ale-house bench, and the babble of the little children, and the team on the road and the beasts afield, and all the life of earth; and I alone all the while, near my foes and afar from my friends, mocked and flouted and starved with cold and hunger; and so weak was my heart that though I longed for all these things, yet I saw them not nor knew them but as names; and I longed so sore to be gone that I chided myself that I had once done well; and I said to myself: 'Forsooth, hadst thou kept thy tongue between thy teeth thou mightest have been something, if it had been but a parson of a town, and comfortable to many a poor man; and then mightest thou have clad here and there the naked back, and filled the empty belly, and holpen many, and men would have spoken well of thee, and of thyself thou hadst thought well; and all this hast thou lost for lack of a word here and there to some great man, and a little winking of the eyes amidst murder and wrong and un-ruth; and now thou art nought and helpless, and the hemp for thee is sown and grown and heckled and spun, and lo, there the rope for thy gallows-tree!—all for nought, for nought.' Forsooth, my friends, thus I thought and sorrowed in my feebleness that I had not been a traitor to the fellowship of the church, for e'en so evil was my foolish imagination. Yet, forsooth, as I fell a-pondering over all the comfort and help that I might have been and that I might have had if I been but a little of a trembling cur to creep and crawl before abbot and bishop and baron and bailiff, came the thought over me of the evil of the world wherewith I, John Ball, the rascal hedge-priest, had fought and striven in the fellowship of the saints in heaven and poor men upon earth. Yea, forsooth, once again I saw as of old, the great treading down the little, and the strong beating down the weak, and cruel men fearing not, and kind men daring not, and wise men caring not; and the saints in heaven forbearing and yet bidding me not to forbear; forsooth, I knew once more that he who doeth well in fellowship, and because of fellowship, shall not fail though he seem to fail to-day, but in days hereafter shall he and his work yet be alive and men be holpen by them to strive again and yet again; and yet indeed even that was little, since, forsooth, to strive was my pleasure and my life. So I became a man once more, and I rose up to my feet and went up and down my prison what I could for my hopples, and into my mouth came words of good cheer even such as we to-day have sung, and stoutly I sang them, even as we now have sung them; and then did I rest me, and once more thought of those pleasant fields where I would be, and all the life of man and beast about them, and I said to myself that I should see them once more before I died, if but once it were. Forsooth, this was strange, that whereas before I longed for them and yet saw them not, now that my longing was slaked my vision was cleared, and I saw them as though the prison walls opened to me and I was out of Canterbury street and amidst the green meadows of April, and therewithal along with me folk that I have known and who are dead, and folk that are living; yea, and all those of the fellowship on earth and in heaven; yea, and all that are here this day. Over long were the tale to tell of them and of the time that is gone. So thenceforward I wore through the days with no such faint heart, until one day the prison opened verily and in the daylight, and there

were ye, my fellows, in the door—your faces glad, your hearts light with hope, and your hands heavy with wrath; and then I saw and understood what was to do. Now, therefore, do ye understand it!”

His voice was changed, and grew louder than loud now as he cast his hands abroad towards that company with those last words of his; and I could feel that all shame and fear was falling from those men, and that mere fiery manhood was shining through their wonted English shamefaced stubbornness, and that they were moved indeed and saw the road before them. Yet no man spoke, rather the silence of the menfolk deepened, as the sun's rays grew more level and more golden and the swifts wheeled about shriller and louder than before.

Then again John Ball spoke and said: “In good sooth, I deem ye wot no worse than I do what is to do, and first that somewhat we shall do, since it is for him that is lonely or in prison to dream of fellowship, but for him that is of a fellowship to do and not to dream; and next, ye know who is the foeman, and that is the proud man, the oppressor, who scorneth fellowship, and himself is a world to himself and needeth no helper nor helpeth any, but, heeding no law, layeth law on other men because he is rich; and surely every one that is rich is such an one, nor may be other. Forsooth, in the belly of every rich man dwelleth a devil of hell, and when the man would give his goods to the poor, the devil within him gainsayeth it, and saith, ‘Wilt thou then be of the poor, and suffer cold and hunger and mocking as they suffer, then give thou thy goods to them and keep them not.’ And when he would be compassionate, again saith the devil to him, ‘If thou heed these losels and turn on them a face like to their faces and deem of them as men, then shall they scorn thee, and evil shall come of it, and even one day they shall fall on thee to slay thee when they have learned that thou art but as them.’”

Ah, woe worth the while! too oft he sayeth, sooth, as the wont of the devil is, that lies may be born of the barren truth; and sooth it is that the poor deemeth the rich to be other than he, and meet to be his master, as though, forsooth, the poor were come of Adam and the rich of him that made Adam, that is God; and thus the poor man oppresseth the poor man, because he feareth the oppressor. Nought such are ye, my brethren; or else why are ye gathered here in harness to bid all bear witness of you that ye are the sons of one man and one mother, begotten of the earth?”

As he said the words there came a stir among the weapons of the throng, and they pressed closer round the cross, yet witheld the shout as yet which seemed gathering in their bosoms.

And again he said: “Forsooth, too many rich men there are in this realm; and yet if there were but one, there would be one too many, for all should be his thralls. Harken, then, ye men of Kent. For over long belike have I held you with words; but the love of you constrained me, and the joy that a man hath to babble to his friends and his fellows whom he hath not seen for a long season. Now, harken, I bid you: To the rich men that eat up a realm there cometh a time when they whom they eat up, that is the poor, seem poorer than of wont, and their complaint goeth up louder to the heavens; yet it is no riddle to say that oft at such times the fellowship of the poor is waxing stronger, else would no man have heard his cry. Also at such times is the rich man become fearful, and so waxeth in cruelty, and of that cruelty do people misdeem that it is power and might waxing. Forsooth, ye are stronger than your fathers, because ye are more grieved than they, and ye should have been less grieved than they had ye been horses and swine; and then, forsooth, would ye have been stronger to bear; but ye, ye are not strong to bear, but to do. And wot ye why we are come to you this fair eve of holyday? and wot ye why I have been telling of fellowship to you? Yea, forsooth, I deem ye wot well, that it is for this cause, that ye might bethink you of your fellowship with the men of Essex.”

His last word let loose the shout that had been long on all men's lips, and great and fierce it was as it rang shattering through the quiet upland village. But John Ball held up his hand, and the shout was one and no more.

Then he spoke again: “Men of Kent, I wot well that ye are not so hard bested as those of other shires, by the token of the day when behind the screen of leafy boughs ye met Duke William with bill and bow as he wended Londonward from that woeful field of Senlac; but I have told of fellowship, and ye have hearkened and understood what the Holy Church is, whereby ye know that ye are fellows of the saints in heaven and the poor men of Essex; and as one day the saints shall call you to the heavenly feast, so now do the poor men call you to the battle. Men of Kent, ye dwell fairly here, and your houses are framed of stout oak beams, and your own lands ye till; unless some accursed lawyer with his false lying sheep skin and forged custom of the Devil's Manor hath stolen it from you; but in Essex slaves they be and villeins, and worse they shall be, and the lords swear that ere a year be over ox and horse shall go free in Essex, and man and woman shall draw the team and the plough; and north away in the east countries dwell men in poor halls of wattled reeds and mud, and the north-east wind from off the fen whistles through them; and poor they be to the letter; and there him whom the lord spareth, the bailiff squeezeth, and him whom the bailiff forgetteth the Easterling Chapman sheareth; yet be these stout men and valiant, and your very brethren. And yet if there be any man here so base as to think that a small matter, let him look to it that if these necks abide under the yoke, Kent shall sweat for it ere it be long; and ye shall lose acre and close and woodland, and be servants in your own houses, and your sons shall be the lord's lads, and your daughters their lemans, and ye shall buy a bold word with many stripes, and an honest deed with a leap from the gallows tree. Bethink ye, too, that ye have no longer to deal with Duke

William, who, if he were a thief and a cruel lord, was yet a prudent man and a wise warrior; but cruel are these, and headstrong, yea, thieves and fools in one—and ye shall lay their heads in the dust.”

A shout would have arisen again, but his eager voice rising higher yet, restrained it as he said: “And how shall it be then when these are gone? What else shall ye lack when ye lack masters? Ye shall not lack for the fields ye have tilled, or the houses ye have built, or the cloth ye have woven; all these shall be yours, and whatso ye will of all that the earth beareth; then shall no man mow the deep grass for another while his own kine lack cow-meat; and he that soweth shall reap, and the reaper shall eat in fellowship the harvest that in fellowship he hath won; and he that buildeth a house shall dwell in it with those that he biddeth of his free will; and the tithe barn shall garner the wheat for all men to eat of when the seasons are untoward and the rain-drift hideth the sheaves in August, and all shall be without money and without price. Faithfully and merrily then shall all men keep the holidays of the Church in peace of body and joy of heart. And man shall help man and the saints in heaven shall be glad, because men no more fear each other; and the churl shall be ashamed, and shall hide his churlishness till it be gone and he be no more a churl; and fellowship shall be established in heaven and on the earth.”

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

THE IMPRACTICABILITY OF THE PRESS.

SOCIALISTS are frequently encountered with the assertion that their schemes are impracticable. The class of people who make this assertion foolishly suppose that they have a monopoly of practicability and there is none left for Socialists, perhaps it would be instructive to see how much of that quality they really possess. The opinions of this kind of folk are formed, and consequently represented by the daily press, and I will turn to a daily paper to see what it can suggest to cope with the difficulties of our social system.

The *Daily News* of November 3, gives a graphic description of a common lodging-house in Lock's Fields, and the writer depicts in a forcible manner the brutality, wretchedness, and misery of the people who are reduced so low as to have to resort to such lodgings. The writer of the article betook himself to this lodging-house and paid for the best accommodation provided, and lay down in the corner of a large room, on the floor of which “men, women, and children” were passing the night amid the most filthy surroundings, to take notes. He does not appear to have stayed there long; he shortly had to beat a retreat, for a fight took place, and he deemed discretion the better part of valour and fled. In his flight he stumbled into another room where there was no light. However, the moon favoured him, and threw a light into this abode of vice and misery. On the floor of this room he saw “boys and girls from 6 to 16” . . . with “misery, want, and absolute starvation imprinted on nearly all the wizened faces,” taking the rest nature demands.

It is not the business of a descriptive writer on a newspaper staff to suggest remedies for the evils he depicts. He only details what he sees, interspersed occasionally by an exclamation of disgust or otherwise as befits the case. The writer of the article referred to adheres very closely to description, but he asks, “Can such a sight be possible in the year of our Lord, 1886?”

The *Daily News*, in addition to this descriptive article, devotes a leader to it, and to the leader I naturally turn to see what practicable remedies may be suggested for such a barbarous state of things; but there is no suggestion of any kind. It gives vent to a burst or two of disgust, and refers to “good old Hogarth's time, then it was Gin Court, now it is Lock's Fields.” “That is about all the difference,” and goes on. “This note of everlastingness in it is the truly soothing thought.” The language has yet to be invented in which I could express my contempt for the man that could pen such a sentence. Perhaps the exigencies of maintaining a large and increasing circulation demands such an expression.

The closing sentence of the leader is as follows: “One day, perhaps, the true deliverer will come, some man who will know how to make us truly feel for one another, and grow sick and ashamed of most of the vanities of art, science, and literature, as well as of the luxury that at present fills our profitless lives.” So much for the practicability of the *Daily News*. Here is an influential paper dealing with a hideous social sore, and can suggest no remedy, but waits hoping for a man to turn up who will “make us truly feel for one another.” It is a disgrace to the nineteenth century to find in a paper such a farrago of absurdity.

People who are waiting for a man to turn up and put things right will wait in vain, it is too great a task for one man even if he were as strong as Hercules and as rich as Cræsus. One man cannot do it; the present system must be altered if civilisation is not to remain a mockery. What will alter it? The only satisfactory answer is Socialism. J. TOOR.

A clergyman of the Established Church, the Vicar of Eastbourne, is much upset by the lack of piety on the part of his wealthy and respectable congregation. He upbraids them bitterly for the smallness of their contributions. Richly dressed ladies, whose arms are covered with bracelets and bangles, put buttons and bright farthings in the Church plate. This only shows how much the piety of the middle-classes is worth. They improve upon Judas, and would dispose of their Saviour at even a cheaper rate if they could get the chance. If it were not “the proper thing” to go to church very few of them would be found there.