

# THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

## NOTES.

The hot words and straightforward quarrelling which took place at the miners' gala on July 31st at Blyth Links, were not more than might have been expected from our downright brethren of the north. Some people will be lamenting the appearance of disunion amongst a most important body of workers after a defeat in an ordinary labour struggle. But it is rather a matter of certainty than of hope that there is more at the bottom of it than that. That the indignation of the more thoughtful of the men at the "soft-fighting" of their leaders shows a gathering determination for real union founded on a complete sense of the fact that the interests of all workers are the same, and that workers, organisations cannot stop short at merely fighting a matter of wages in the passing day; but must aim at the one thing worth aiming at, a condition of things in which the workers should control their own affairs, and not as now pay the heavy price of slavery to the employers for managing matters for them.

Mr. Fenwick who (very naturally certainly) seems to have got very angry at the attacks made on him, and who attacked our comrade Mahon in turn, got much mixed up in talking on Socialism. He seemed to feel that a defence of the capitalists as masters was not likely to be well-received by such an audience, so he attempted the defence of capital by enrolling the workers also in the capitalist army on the grounds of their invested savings. This sort of thing catches those who do not understand (as probably Mr. Fenwick himself doesn't) that it is the individualistic capital itself and not the holders of it, that is the enemy we are fighting against. The working classes by the practice of "thrift," which to a man who knows what the life of an honest man, duly contributing his share of labour to the world should be, is horrible even to think of, manage to save a little money, which under the present system they are compelled to "invest," that is, to hand over to be used by the very monopoly which prevents them from managing their own affairs.

The capital earned by the labour of the working-classes will not be taken away from them; on the contrary, it will be resumed by them. Each man will not have a special portion of it to call his own, *i.e.*, to have the power of preventing other people from using it; but each person will have the full share that he needs for developing his powers of producing wealth in concert with his fellows—that is, *he will have as much of the means of production as he can use.* Which means in other words that not only he need no longer have a scanty livelihood won by over-toil, but also that his livelihood *will be no longer precarious.* "Thrift" in the sense in which that much abused word is used, meaning saving, will be transferred from the individual to the community.

In short, instead of the chance which Mr. Fenwick offers to the workers as bait to them to hook themselves on to capitalism—the chance, *viz.*, of becoming owners of a very very small share of the privilege to make people pay for the right of working, Socialism offers to every one of them his full share of all that he needs in order to work like a man and live like a man

There is an interesting article in the current number of the *Contemporary* on the Great Depression in Trade, by Mr. Wells, which is well worth the attention of a Socialist. Beginning by pointing out what a serious blow the opening of the Suez Canal was to the warehousing business of England, he goes on to show the great "displacement" of human labour which has taken place during the last ten or twelve years, owing to the rapid strides towards the perfecting of machinery which has been forced on civilisation by the competition of the world-market. The facts he gives tend to show that the last decade has introduced a new revolution in industry (a new phase in its evolution, to speak more correctly) approaching in importance to that of the introduction of modern machinery itself, the phase of the perfecting of machinery and the acquirement of the knowledge of its full commercial use.

Mr. Wells is a cheerful specimen of the commercial optimist, and does not trouble himself with the consequences of this new phase, except to sing in an undertone, as it were, a quiet hymn on the enormous cheapening of wares that is resulting from it. But a Socialist

<sup>1</sup> "Thrift" means the art of thriving, not the practice of starving yourself into a mummy while you are young to prevent the robber class from sending you to the workhouse-prison when you are old.

will be inclined to ask him, "How long do you think you can prevent those that do work and those that could work if you would allow them, from sharing in these advantages? For if you the monopolist owners of the civilised world are so incapable of organising the labour whose fruits you are so jubilant over, that there are vast numbers of unemployed and starving people in civilised countries, and a far vaster number much below anything approaching to a reasonable standard of well-being, amidst all this so easily created wealth, then the facts condemn you as incapable to carry affairs on much longer, and you and your monopoly are hastening to an end."

One other Socialist deduction from such facts. The pace of the march towards the change in the basis of society is increasing decade by decade; if we are not prepared to deal with the crisis when it comes, we shall make but a sorry job of "the morrow of the revolution." Surely we ought to make no delay in doing our very utmost in getting the workers to see their real position, and as a consequence uniting together in a great and inclusive federation of labour which should form a new society under the old dying one with its parliaments and artificial "laws"—a new society which would form habits of thought and action that would be "laws" indeed without being called so, and which would take the place of the old society of monopoly and usurpation naturally and surely, whether that takes place with or without a dramatically obvious crisis.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

## MEN WHO ARE NOT SOCIALISTS.

### II.

MR. JOHN HOPE occupied an office next door to the one in which I served my apprenticeship. He was a man of some 45 or 50 years, of a robust and somewhat intellectual appearance; and although, at the time referred to, his business—that of a commission agent—was apparently not of a very lucrative order, yet he was esteemed in the neighbourhood as being a man of some ability.

I observed that he generally invited his customers to a restaurant over the way, and that he invariably issued therefrom engaged in what appeared to be a political or religious discussion, as he seldom liberated his friends' hands with a final hearty wring until he had imparted half an hour's speech to them on the pavement. I learnt that he devoted some attention to spiritualism, and that he was a devout believer in phrenology.

I frequently met him on the stair, and although I was but a lad he always gave me a friendly nod as he passed. This circumstance induced me to form a favourable opinion of Mr. Hope, for I esteemed his taking notice of me as due to his detecting in my youthful physiognomy indications of that early genius which, I was then secretly convinced, I possessed in a marked degree.

My esteem for Mr. Hope was greatly increased by an incident that occurred. One day, coming into the office in which I was employed, to borrow a measuring tape, and my master happening to be out, he asked permission to "read my bumps." My heart fluttered, and I tremulously wondered whether he would pronounce me to be a coming great poet or the future founder of a new school of philosophy—my mind at that time not being quite made up as to which of those high intellectual altitudes my genius was most gifted to ascend; although, having read the life of Shelley, I had a humble confidence that I might achieve equal distinction in either or in both.

After a lengthened topographical survey of my cranium with his fingers, he said: "Well, my laddie, you've rather a strange kind of a head; its not like anybody else's that I've felt before, and I'm somewhat puzzled with it. Some parts are like my son James', and he's a young man of great promise. You're high in the crown—the bump of veneration—a grand sign in young folks; you've a capital crop of hair too, and the outside thatch is often not a bad indication of the folk you'll meet with inside the house." This deliverance pleased me; for although he did not tell me point-blank that I was a prodigy, I set the omission down either to his imperfect skill or his fear of ministering to my youthful vanity.

Some time afterwards, Mr. Hope removed his place of business, and I heard little of him for several years. One day, however, I noticed in the newspapers that he had successfully sued a railway company for some £1,500 as compensation for injuries received in a collision on the company's lines. I subsequently learnt that his injuries had in no