THE REWARD OF LABOUR.

A DIALOGUE.

Persons: An Earnest Enquirer, an East-End Weaver, a West-End Landowner.

Scene: Outside a philanthropical meeting on Social Science.

Earnest Enquirer. Excuse me, gentle—him, gentlemen! neither of you, I am sure, quite quit of the noble sentiment that there should exist between the rich and the poor, and the inculcation of altruism, and self-sacrifice on both sides, which we have heard in there. You, sir (to the Wester), whom I take to be a soldier—ADMITTED. I want to know just what, I do not say how—silk, even if I may say so. And you, sir (to the Landowner), you also—ADMITTED. I have not a million, perhaps, but I have not a cell of you—silk, perhaps, even if I care to say so.

E. E. That one.

W. William.

E. E. Well, wait a bit, I'll tell you what I mean. I've got to sit and look at my loom many and many a day! I should think it is a good years' work in which I got nine months full employment. I'll say £60 if you like—and don't I wish I may get it, year in and year out?

E. W. Have you a family?

E. E. Wife and five children.

E. E. Do they make anything?

W. My wife gets a job now and then weaving plain silk or winding, and then the old lady and the children help. We make a bit; a bit altogether; £75 a year, since we must put it in the grand style, will cover it all.

E. E. H'm, well (sideways: Poor devil!). Kent's cheap, I suppose, in comparison with the London rents; is it

W. Low rent, never mind.

E. E. If you wish, and then the whole of my house together isn't as big as your drawing-room.

E. E. Well what sort of a house is your house?

W. Good enough for me, I suppose; it's a weaver's house.

E. E. (with sudden interest) Dear me, I should like to see it; it must be quite curious.

W. Should you! Well I shouldn't like to see it: it isn't fit for public inspection.

E. E. (to L.) Excuse me, sir, let me have our friend to myself; think about the sort of questions I am likely to be asking you presently.

L. (To W.) Well, certainly, sir; whenever you please which I think you have a right to claim as a representative of that noble army of labour which we all praise so highly—especially at election time.

William Morris.

(A To be continued.)

AGRICultural COMMUNITIES IN ITALY.

In Italy, as in all other countries, one finds everywhere below the surface, so to speak, of the existing social organisation based on individual property and exploitation of labour, the community of the peasants, which is the natural form of the human being under the condition of the distribution of the land among the cultivators. All the culture, thought, light and leading which is the glory of Humanity. What did you think of all that?

W. What's the use of asking me such questions as that? I shall go away at once if you haven't got something more than to say to me.

L. (to W.) My dear sir, if you would but pay a little more attention to such speeches as that which this gentleman is speaking of, it would be a very good one for you.

W. Think so? Do you know what he meant by it?

L. Yes, I think I do.

W. (to E.) Do you know what he meant by it?

E. E. Too slow, too slow.

W. Well, I think I do. Besides, it ain't quite new to me, you see. But that's neither here nor there; don't waste your time by asking me what I think of a vote-of-thanks speech, but ask me something about my work and my earnings, and the sort of way I live in.

E. E. Well, well, I was going to, but allow me a little explanation. I want to find out something about that compensation which our altruistic friends in there did apparently think was due to you for your apparently inferior position; which, indeed, so far as I can see, is abundantly apparent to me. Your clothes are old, worn, and when they were new they were bad; you're not very clean, you don't speak like an educated man (though you are in some of you the intellectual centre which this educated man here spoke about so paternally) and, worst of all you don't look properly grown or healthy; you are sullen, sorrowful, and ugly—there, don't box your ears up to me! I cannot fail to see that you are not well. I am forced to believe this, as I suppose, is the result of your being the foundation of the progress of civilization, and a bearer of the palm branch of martyrdom for the belief of the re- ligion of Humanity. No, no, no! That vote-of-thanks speech will stick in my memory, as meaningless words often will, when they are spoken according to art. What I want to get at is how you get that compensation above spoken of. So here goes for my definitive conclusions: I cannot acceptation.

W. I am a silk weaver.

E. E. Is that difficult? Does it take skill to do it?

E. E. Is that so? The silk weaver at work taking care that his pattern doesn't work out longer or shorter than it should; mending half a dozen of the fine silk threads of the warp, for instance.

W. It's a difficult as a barrister's work, for instance!

E. W. I'm sure I don't know—it's not so easy as at any rate, but don't get off the subject.

E. E. It is a useful occupation! ,

W. It seems so. People will have silk; and why not since they can! It is pretty stuff and clean, and wears well. Didn't you notice the lack of dust in there? The young and pretty one, who went to sleep during the lecture, and how nice she looked in her new silk gown.

L. Well, I wove her gown.

E. E. Well, your work is useful and requires skill; it's set one thing which you carry it on. How many hours a day do you work?

W. As many as I can. That's none too many as things go I assure you.

E. E. You mean to say that you are sometimes out of work.

W. Sometimes!

E. E. And you take all the work you can get? You're not one of those lazy ones of which I have heard a good deal?

W. Well, if I want to work—yes, but I am not—no; and I really think you don't believe that 'good deal' you have heard.

E. E. Well, no 'I don't. But tell me, you would work, money a day if you could?

W. Eight hours? I shouldn't get a job if I didn't put it through as quick as I could; ten at the very least.

E. E. Well, now as to payment. Suppose you worked ten hours a day all the year round, how much would you earn?

W. From 35s. to 40s. a-week.

E. E. Say £20 a-year?

W. No, I won't say £20. Haven't I just told you that I've got to sit and look at my loom many and many a day? I should think it is a good years' work in which I got nine months full employment. I'll say £60 if you like—and don't I wish I may get it, year in and year out! What do you have a family?

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William Morris.

(A To be continued.)

DEATHS FROM STARVATION IN THE METROPOLIS.—A return issued shows that the number of deaths from starvation in the Metropolis during the year 1866 in the metropolis area was 40. In the eastern division of Middlesex there were 16 deaths; in the central division, 15; and in the western division, 1. In the city and liberty of Westminster, the Greenwhich division of Kent, and the city and borough of Southwark, 2 each; in the Newington division of Surrey and the liberty of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1 each.