

conventionally called "good wages," but which mean after all a miserably stinted and pinched life compared to that which, not only they, but all workers ought to attain to, and will attain to when they look from the narrow interests of *their* household, *their* workshop, *their* trade, to the whole world of workers, whose conscious or unconscious struggles are slowly building up the New Society. To these we say: Fellow-workers, do not any longer dissociate yourselves from your less fortunate brethren, from those who have been doomed to feel the whole weight of the burden which sits comparatively lightly on your shoulders. Do you call them thriftless, idle, drunken, brutal, in a word degraded? Perhaps you may call them in one word less *lucky* than yourselves; and remember that the remorseless wheel of competitive commerce is going on grinding everybody beneath it; while you are refusing to learn what your position is, and what your claims ought to be, or while you are halting between two opinions, your great master *Machinery*, which should be your servant, is getting more and more powerful, more and more exacting every day, and in a few years unless you have made up your minds to get rid of mastership, many of you certainly, and probably most of you, will find yourselves no longer skilled workmen but mere labourers cumbering a market which is getting ever more and more overstocked with such common and worthless wares as mere men. And do you think that when you are come to that pass you will be any better than those poor fellows of the fringe of labour whom you now despise? It is not likely—it is not possible. Be wise in time and resolve that you will not come to that pass, which you will be able to avoid by combining together in a steady, continuous, unflinching resistance to the authority of the false society founded on privilege; which makes you inferior beings to the owners of capital or land; which takes from you two-thirds of all you produce; which if any one of those many accidents befall you that in our life of to-day, so hard and full of constant struggle, we are all liable to, throws you into a prison under the name of a workhouse, or lets you rot away body and mind in the street.

It is the business, fellow-workers, of the whole intelligence of the working-classes to see that there are no longer either unemployed, or wage-slaves, or masters.

*On behalf of the Council of the Socialist League,*

HENRY A. BARKER, *Secretary.*

## PRACTICAL POLITICS AT NOTTINGHAM.

THE orthodox Liberals have had a great field day at Nottingham under very brilliant circumstances, all things considered; the democratic portion of the population of England, Scotland, and Wales, and it is even hoped the voters in general who have any claim to be considered Liberals, are prepared to accept Home Rule for other people though they have scarcely begun even to think of it for themselves. This acceptance of Home Rule for Ireland, by everybody who could ever possibly accept it, is so universal that there are no shades of opinion on the subject; the unspoken (nay, sometimes the spoken) word when people meet now is, "You are a Home Ruler and a beast!" "You are a Unionist and a rascal!" Argument is at an end, and people, dog-sick of the question, would be much relieved if it were possible for a thousand champions a-side to meet on Wimbledon Common, or some other suitable place, and there fight it out to the death like Clan Chattan and Clan Quhele of old days; but since civilisation and the natural desire to best one's opponent at no expense to oneself forbids such a proceeding, all people are looking forward with disgust to the long spell of Parliamentary tactics, which will on this occasion as on other similar ones in modern times, take the place of "point and edge" with small advantage to the public generally.

Such a condition of things was, I repeat, most favourable to the occasion, which was certainly made the most of. Mr. Gladstone exhibited himself for the worship of the faithful, which was poured forth on him in the most abundant measure, so that he must have thought it worth while indeed to be a statesman. He exercised the art of oratory if not to the fullest, yet at least as far as need be; the art, I mean, which consists of spinning out two or three sentences of meaning into speeches getting on for two hours long, so that the audiences mostly were thoroughly delighted. Indeed, those of them who had memories capable of resisting the wear and tear of five or six years might have employed the leisure which the great man's flow of speech-words afforded them in blessing their stars and their leader that it was not they but their adversaries this time who were trying to wield the great net of Coercion, with the certainty of their knocking themselves into the water with it. Some of them might also have remembered the roars of joy with which pure Liberal meetings received the news of their present ally Mr. Parnell's arrest and imprisonment; and probably Mr. John Morley was now and then pensively thinking of the evening, when before the electors of Westminster in 1880 he put down his foot on Home Rule in such a clear, brief, and convincing speech, that everybody in the hall, except a few grumblers and Irishmen, shouted for joy.

However, let pardon be given to those who have changed their opinions in the right direction, and let us hope that such changes will be common during the next few years among political men. It is at least satisfactory to see that Mr. Gladstone is doing no backsliding in this Irish matter, that he who is exceedingly slow to perceive that the

enemy must be attacked in front has at last seen it. All that he has to do now is to set his political wits to work to get rid of the Tory majority in the house before some portion of his men, the really anti-Radical part, who much outnumber the Radical, swing in the other direction, and carry him along with their impetus. Don't let him dally with the crisis as he dearly loves to do, like a too artistic angler, who having a good fish on his line plays him showily to show his art, and loses him in the end.

Well, the Irish Question disposed of, what other schemes of reform had this enthusiastic multitude of delegates and notabilities, sitting in the good town of Nottingham, where, forsooth, they might have some rather serious thoughts suggested to them by the locality and its industries. I remember I was there some six years ago, and trade was booming then. I was told, I don't know with how much truth, that an ordinary twister-in, or lace-weaver, could earn £6 a-week; prosperity was great, and the horrible red-brick blue-slatted shanties of a prosperous Midland town were effacing the last remains of the beautiful crocus-meadows, for which the town was once famous; and any hints I ventured timidly to give as to how long this prosperity might last, were received with the contempt which prophecies deserve. Whereas, now it would seem by the weekly trade reports as if the population, high and low, would soon be reduced to living on taking in each other's washing.

Well, as to the reforms to be taken in hand after the carrying of Home Rule, the Liberal Conference at Nottingham has been what its members call bold indeed: venturing to go in for disestablishment of the Welsh Church; the abolition of plural votes, by means of having all the elections on one day, shortening the period of residence which qualifies a voter; free education (important this, at any rate); local option (this also important—for the vote); London government; allotments for labourers (*i.e.*, permission to them to pay their own poor-rates); and what is called "free land"—*i.e.*, all obstacles removed which might stand in the way of Mr. Wynans or his like buying up all England to turn it into a deer-forest.

All this, which is heralded in the Liberal newspapers as an "advanced programme," in all the dignity of extra large type, is indeed quite as far as anyone could have expected the Liberal Party to go as a body—*i.e.*, with the leave of Mr. Gladstone and its other bosses; and one must admit that most of these reforms will have to be done, whether they greatly matter or not. But it is not much wool for so great a cry; and when one thinks that this is received as an "advanced programme" with a regular flourish of trumpets by the party which considers itself the popular party, in righteous opposition to the Tories or reactionists, one cannot help noting how much of an accident it has been that the Liberals have been driven to make peace with Ireland, and that Home Rule once gained the Liberal Party will have performed its functions to the very end, and must either make its exit or must go about with the brains knocked out of it. And that all the more as the Tory Party is quite capable of dishing the Liberals on all these great reforms, and probably will do so.

And meanwhile the trades unions are crying out for a Labour Party, have declared for land nationalisation, and have their faces turned towards Socialism; and all over the country workmen are asking themselves why they are in a position of inferiority to those who do not work. The authorities in London are as afraid to let workmen speak their minds there as the Irish authorities to let the Irish speak, and a terrible winter of misery and want of employment is opening out before us.

Of all these things the Nottingham delegates took as much cognisance as though they were living in another planet. These things, since they concern the daily life and happiness and misery of the working classes, are, forsooth, "not within the scope of practical politics."

Query—What are practical politics? Answer—Vote-catching for election time, so that *we* may be in and *you* may be out.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

## JOHN RUSKIN ON COMMUNISM.

I AM myself a Communist of the old school—reddest of the red. . . Will you be at the pains, now, however, to learn rightly, and once for all, what Communism is? First, it means that everybody must work in common, and do common or simple work for his dinner; and that if any man will not do it he must not have his dinner. . . Second, that the public, or common, wealth, shall be more and statelier in all its substance than private or singular wealth. Then farther, according to old Communism, the private dwellings of uncommon persons—dukes and lords—are to be very simple, and roughly put together—such persons being supposed to be above all care for things that please the commonalty; but the buildings for public or common service, more especially schools, almshouses, and workhouses, are to be externally of a majestic character, as being for noble purposes and charities; and in their interiors furnished with many luxuries for the poor and sick. And finally and chiefly, it is the absolute law of old Communism that the fortunes of private persons should be small, and little account in the State; but that the common treasure of the whole nation should be of superb and precious things in redundant quantity, as pictures, statues, precious books; gold and silver vessels preserved from ancient times; gold and silver bullion laid up for use, in case of any chance need of buying anything suddenly from foreign nations; noble horses, cattle, and sheep, on the public lands; and vast spaces of land for culture, exercise, and garden, round the cities, full of flowers, which, being everybody's property, nobody could gather; and of birds which being everybody's property, nobody could shoot. And, in a word, that instead of a common poverty, or national debt, which every poor person in the nation is taxed annually to fulfil his part of, there should be a common wealth, or national reverse of debt, consisting of pleasant things, which every poor person in the nation should be summoned to receive his dole of, annually; and of pretty things, which everyone capable of admiration, foreigners as well as natives, should unfeignedly admire.—'Fors Clavigera.' Letter vii., dated July 1st, 1871.