IN AND ABOUT COTTONOPOLIS.

On Sunday the 2nd, I delivered my annual lecture to the Sunday Society at Ancoats to an audience larger than usual. These lectures are now of common occurrence, by questions and discussion, so there was not much opportunity for finding out what the audience thought about Socialism. The audience seemed, as usual, much made up of the "lower middle-class", and there was a sprinkling of our comrades of the S.D.F., with whom to help I engaged in a good private discussion at tea (which followed the lecture) with enquirers and carpers, which is also a usual feature of their gatherings. In the evening I went with comrade Hanter Wahta to the rooms of the Manchester Branch of the S.D.F., where I addressed our comrades. The members of the branch were almost all of the non-aristocracy of labour, but many of them were as eager and earnest as could be desired. I take it that the above-said aristocratic flavour of labour in Manchester are very shy of Socialism, though it is making very good progress among the labouring class even in Manchester itself. There is also a good deal of sympathy (as it is called) from the definitely well-to-do, who say here as elsewhere: "We agree with you, but..."

On Monday the 3rd, I went to Bolton and lectured (by request) on "Art and Socialism." The audience was fair only, the room not being full. The chairman was a middle-class man who really seemed in sympathy, and I think the audience was in the main socialist. The condition of labour in Bolton is very instructive; business is brisk thee, very brisk; but there are among the spinners at least 4,000 out of employment, and with no hope of it. Moreover, a great deal of the "employment" that there is, is at starvation wages; the "spinners" often work 14 hours per day and earn only from 5s. to 7s. a week.

On Tuesday the 4th, I went to Blackburn and lectured in the Spinner's Hall, which was not quite filled; our comrade Sharman took the chair. The audience were very eager, and took up all the points well. One or two of the speakers were, however, strongly opposed to the S.D.F., and were led away by the arguments of their masters; which, I must say, is a natural consequence of the spirit of work in a struggle which had no ideal in it, whose aim was the narrow survival of one in this strike.

On Wednesday the 5th, I went to Rochdale and lectured in the Spinners' Hall, which was not quite filled; our comrade Sharman took the chair. The audience were very eager, and took up all the points well. One or two of the speakers were, however, strongly opposed to the S.D.F., and were led away by the arguments of their masters; which, I must say, is a natural consequence of the spirit of work in a struggle which had no ideal in it, whose aim was the narrow survival of one in this strike.

The open-air meetings have been very brisk in Blackburn, where there is a good open space in which no meetings are interfered with. The branch of the S.D.F. is good here, and there is a strong branch of the Workingmen's Club of friendship with the S.D.F.

On the 5th I had to address a very different audience to these; to wit, the ladies and gentlemen gathered together for the rather mild amusement of listening to artists talking about art. I am told that to two sessions I was able to speak in The Cottonopolis, and the use of museums and art education if the social condition of the people remained what it is now! I shall have a few words to say as to the same subject, but that will have to be another week.

The evening of the 5th I went to Rochdale and lectured to an audience fair in numbers and otherwise good. It was followed by a long conversational debate, the questions being, as a matter of course, the usual ones, but, by the working men present, asked and stuck to with the pertinacity and in the good-natured bullying manner with which I am familiar in Lancashire and the North generally. Two or three middle-class opponents were of great use to me in enabling me to state my position again and again. One of these said that as far as Rochdale and the neighbourhood generally was concerned I had exaggerated the poverty of the workers. I am not sure whether this was a conventional truth, the birth of the history of the sham co-operation which began with the good intentions of the Rochdale Pioneers, and has now by the confession of very moderate people become a "necessary" evil. But I was able to show that in "co-op" sharing beaves a favourite occupation among the small capitalists created by the system.

As an illustration of the ordinary post-office value to be had for a fewpence, I will give a very different view of the "prosperity" of the workers of Rochdale, and told me that wages were very low and hours very long, and that in short the masters had it pretty much their own way. The branch of the S.D.F. is strong in numbers, and the working men, in its very nature, very much in sympathy with it.

Altogether, except in Liverpool, where there is nothing doing, the S.D.F. branches are doing well in S. Lancashire; the drawback to their usefulness is that they are not sufficiently "radical," and are not giving a lead to the working classes. It is, in the case of socialists, a curious fact that a course of action which, whatever else may be said about it, must operate upon the time which they have to give to learning Socialism thoroughly, so as to be able to hold their own in argument with the non-socialists around them. I say this in spite of the fact that I talked with some of our comrades who had mastered the subject by dint of very hard work done in the "leisure" which their slavery, allows them.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

LIVERPOOL AND ITS POOL.—The Manchester Guardian lately printed the following letter from a correspondent. —A week or two ago the Clerk of the Liverpool School Board called attention to the amusing fact that Liverpool has no poor-rate in the city. In explanation of the circumstance, he asserted that "the Liverpool Public Assistance Board...is a good thing, and is a joint of good that persons who formerly shrank from horror from "the house" were now flocking in, and were even advising their friends to hasten to take advantage of it." It is very possible that the S.D.F. in Liverpool may perhaps find some more probable explanation of the increase of pauperism than a desire on the part of the poor to rush into what is now the city's second cripple. It is, I think, a matter of some question whether Liverpool will produce in Liverpool a large amount of chronic destitution. One is its geographical position, and the other is the nature of any movement offered by its labouring population. Liverpool is the place to which the Irish peasant, driven from home by bad government and landlord rapacity, first directs his steps. It is, in fact, a kind of junction where the poor, not only of Ireland, but of Europe, change trains. And a very considerable proportion of these unfortunate persons never get any further, but end in swelling the large squalid population. They are tempted to make Liverpool their home because they have in most cases no technical skill, and nothing of a practical standard to offer in the world. Liverpool is a place where a very lop-sided little slice for the skilled artisan; it has no manufactures and no great industries requiring the higher kinds of manual dexterity. Liverpool, on the other hand, has a large pool of labour; desirable labour, and the labourers are employed for men who have nothing to turn into daily bread but brain and muscle. The great crowds of people that flock into the four poor quarters of the city. It is estimated that there are between one and twenty thousand authorities derive) dock labourers and cotton porters in Liverpool, and in the morning, and an amount of work which is done per week in wages. It is obvious that a labourer who has a wife and family, whose earnings do not exceed this sum, who is earning only one-third of the wages which the skilled artisan often—be he face to face with the alternative of starvation or the poorhouse. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is so much poverty in Liverpool than actually exists. New people realise how enormous is the disparity in numbers between the classes which enjoy comfort and competence, where the police are, and the classes which live in fear of the brink of poverty. In Liverpool there are over 600,000 inhabitants, but only about 1,700,000 of them are in employment. That is to say, only about 17,000 persons in Liverpool make £3 a week and over by their daily labour, and of these only 7,000 are returned as earning £5 or over. These men earn an absolute in the price of provisions is sufficient to account for an increase of pauperism, without the existence of any consuming passion on the part of the poor to seek the salutary effects of a Liverpool workhouse.