COUNTING NOSES.

Mr. Chamberlain... believed that the experience of the United States and their own, so far as it had gone, went to show that when people were constantly being called on to vote, the whole matter fell into the hands of caucuses and machine politicians.

Thus the reporters of the House of Commons give us the present view of the situation. The socialist, the advocate of the ransoming of the upper classes; and, on page 299, at the “ironical cheers and laughter” of the opposition that followed the expression of opinion from the once darling of the caucuses, the once leading member of the midland-county machine politicians. “That would lead,” said this right honourable, “to a state of things which had never existed in this country, and which for one he would extremely detest.”

“Remonstrance” followed this brilliant joke, which seems to have been taken by surprise even people so used to impudence as M.P.’s are.

Perhaps, though, the laughter was not so much at what Mr. Chamberlain said as at what he meant in reference to his present position; the Devil preaching a serious sermon on sin without himself laughing at his humbug is proverbially an amusing business, and Mr. Chamberlain’s contradiction of his first sentence by his second doubtless makes it more amusing; but except for that second sentence, in which he spoke of the reign of caucuses and machine politicians as a state of things which had never existed in this country, I think we may go one way in agreeing with him, even without attacking the nostrum of triennial parliaments, introduced and pushed by the leader of the midland-county machine politicians. “That would lead,” said this right honourable, “to a state of things which had never existed in this country, and which for one he would extremely detest.”

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But though we don’t vote often, I really do not see how we could be “machi- nized” more than we are at present, even if we voted every day. In the metaphorical “society” (if one must abuse that good word by using it for that which might be ruled by the government clerk and the policeman) the whole political duty of man is to vote; that is once the healing faith, and the fruits worthy of salvation put before us by our political church to-day, and the priests of that church are for ever engaged in bribing people to vote and intimidating them to vote, and then.Items into their lists, and 3000 men in the West of Wales have been given to Germany and also in receiving their votes, and received and the representative is elected by them, then he has to put up his whole soul in squaring his conduct in accordance with the wishes of the next election and the hopes of again obtaining votes.

Under this system how is a political party be other than mechanical? So far from his trying to abate party spirit, and try to be useful, it is business carefully to push anything that has a tendency to become humbug and to lose the real interest of the voter, where the battle of nose-counting is being fought. Administration became the theme of the Metropolitan Board of Works the true image of official business. The party cries are allowed to shout down all suggestions of the true issues of political life. The leaders are at once the work of the political machine and profess ignorance (like Mr. Morley the other day) of a great part of the events happening under their very noses, and as to their ignorance is so complete that it cries out for all men to take note of. In this blind, ignorant party warfare, the issues put before us are so futile and wide of the real point, that historical and statistical and are compelled to spin and pass by. Here, say the politicians, vote for us or for that. Is there no third course, you say, but to vote for a piece of reaction or a piece of inaction? Note, they answer; your business is to have your nose counted on one side or other of the business that we nose-counters have made for you; if you object, you are a fascist, a crank, a person ignorant of practical politics.

This is the way that the representatives are manufactured, that the “great representative body” is manufactured; and after all it must be said that if it does not represent us, it represents our condition. It is the fact that the House of Commons does little or nothing, well, what in the name of patience can it do? There the vast accumulation of commerce at work day by day, hour by hour, taking care that the year for riches amongst the members of the classes privileged to “employ” shall be the one by the members of the classes that are employed shall gain nothing more than bare subsistence in competition with one another; turning to their own advantage, not only the work of the workers, but their love of pleasure and longing for ease which forbids them to take up consciously the struggle which they must carry on unconsciously; their sense of justice and aspirations for a decent life, which makes them averse to violence; may, they can even turn the struggle for wages and the trade combinations to their advantage by being a weapon to note how far they can venture to go in the robbery of the useful class; and their political classes the capitalist representatives can use in the same way; they can discover by the vote-catching and the vote-casting shall be played in order to lull the workers to sleep while their pockets are being picked—of well-being and happiness.

They need do nothing else except keep a large force of policemen and a tolerable army on foot, together with the criminal courts and the due amount of middle-class jurymen in case the victims should wake up and get restive.

I say again if the Parliament manufactured by the nose-counting which is manufactured by caucuses, Primrose Leagues, election agents, the last corruption of hero-worship, and the rest of it, does not represent us, it represents our condition. It is the fact that the House of Commons does little or nothing, and so does not represent the class it is privileged class robbing us, destroying, if not our lives, yet certainly the reason for diagnosis, the social class asthetic because it is used to the miserable life it leads. A class these not know what happiness is, and therefore will not seek the means of obtaining it.

Surely the time will come when the mere struggle for bare livelihood will force on us the knowledge of the means not merely of obtaining bare livelihood but of happiness also, and then what a force will seem to us that “representation” formed on “machinery” and the count of noses of unhappy people driven and cheated into voting for this or that form of the continuance of their own unhappiness.

William Morris.

PIECE-WORK.

Trades Unionists are often blamed for opposing piece-work, even by those who are genuinely anxious for the welfare of the workers—notably by the late William Morris, who looked upon piece-work as the means which would enable the workers in time to displace the capitalists and employers altogether, chiefly by using their intelligent and business faculty, and also by giving them higher wages and so compelling them to put their cards amongst the workers themselves have opposed piece-work, especially the unionists, and are useful for us to see on what grounds such opposition can be justified.

There are several forms which piece-work assumes in various industries; first there is the piece-work pure and simple when a worker can do so much at so much, so much a dozen, or so much a gross, he makes as many as he likes, and takes paid according to what he works the hardest, the longest time, and with the greatest skill, gets the most pay what more can the Trades Unionist want). Making match-boxes at 2d, a gross would come under this class, or riveting ships at so much per hundred rivets. The second class is where a whole job is subcontracted to a small contractor; for instance, large work generally sublet their building to little masters, who either contract to do it at so much a cubic yard, or else so much for the job; they find...