WHIGS ASTRAY: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN OWEN MARX BAKOUNINE JONES, an architect (unsuccessful), and—the REV. SWAIN STRIDE, a Nonconformist parson, and | advanced Radicals, Mr. JEREMIAH BROWN, a business man.

SCENE—A comfortable bath-towel-looking room in Mr. Brown’s house, with tobacco and pipes and grog to the fore. Mr. Stride and Mr. Brown sitting on either side of the fire, looking important in private, and self-satisfied. 

Mr. Jones, with an ill-concealed grin on his face; after the usual greetings he sits down and says:

Jones. Well, Mr. Brown, here I am, ready to hear what you have to say to me, and eager to know what you put into you so much good spirits this evening. How are you, Mr. Brown?

Brown. Well, we are; we have been talking about matters that make us hopeful.

Jones. I am glad of that. I see so many doleful faces nowadays, that it does me good to see two cheerful ones, especially as finals to two such pinnacles of the temple as a parson and a man of business.

Stride. I don’t like you to call me a parson, Jones. I am none of your priests; and really I think you know me well enough not to set me down as a relation of Chadband. You know very well that what I really am interested in is politics, and practical at that; and that I want them to be that way. Both for or against; so knowing you for a cantankerous Socialist, I asked Brown to ask you to come here to-night.

Jones. But aside from this compliment—and also for your company: you want to cheer me up, which is kind of you. But you know how curious I am; what can it be? It can’t be politics, for things are looking rather blue for your side of the house. It is business beginning to have its hey-day; and I never thought you had been speculating in a gold mine which is burning up trumps, Stride?

Brown, Perhaps business is a thought better. But that’s not it. You see...

Jones. (interrupting). It so happens that you are out about it’s not being politics. Brown and I think matters are looking much more hopeful of late.

Stride. Indeed! And now I look at you, there is something portentous about your cheerfulness. What’s up? You are going to turn Tory-Democrat, the last refuge for the desperately hopeful! Or does the Salvation Army raise your spirits? Have you got another Gordon on hand to put a stop to war by cutting down the fruit-trees on which potential warriors live, and to put a stop to slavery by killing the negroes before they can be made slaves of? Are you civilising Africa?

Brown. Now don’t be offensive about Gordon: you know I am dead against the whole negro-selling business.

Jones. Yes, but somewhat in favour of the Christian-hero past. Let that boy, Stride! Don’t be too glad of it; you won’t do you Liberals much good. Vic can truly say with King Harry in ‘Chevy Chase,’

“Tis true I have within my realm
An hundred good as he.”

S. (laughing). Hear the spite of the Tory-Democrat! J. (severely). Don’t call bad names, Stride!

B. (anxiously). No, but ain’t you a Tory, Jones? Stride always calls you one.

J. Yes, that comes of your innate wisdom, that does not need vulgar information. I am not a Tory-Democrat, Brown.

B. What do you want then? Don’t it good to see you, Mr. Jones? Stride always calls you one.

J. Yes, that comes of your innate wisdom, that does not need vulgar information. I am not a Tory-Democrat, Brown.

B. Why do you call me a Tory-Democrat? Stride always calls you one.

J. Yes, that comes of your innate wisdom, that does not need vulgar information. I am not a Tory-Democrat, Brown.

S. (interrupting). Come, let’s be serious, Jones. You know I’m a realistic Socialist. J. I didn’t think it! May I ask?

J. (interrupting). No, please don’t interrupt me! I say I am a practical Socialist; and yet I cannot be one of your hard-shell Socialists, with your impossible nostrums of the abolition of capital and oppression, and the community of property, and your false political economy, dead in the teeth of all the accurate thinkers of the day, such as Mill and Tennyson and Ricardo—and Swinburne, a man—Lord Roscoe and Atheron-Bache, but yet, you see, I was bothered that there should be no true Socialist party that I could work with heartily; and now I really think that we are getting one, and I’ve got out a sort of manifesto of it: indeed, I am of this opinion—

J. And you have asked Brown to ask me here to cheer me up with it! How kind of you. Is it in print?

B. No; but any Radical paper will print it.

J. Well, well, things are getting on fast. And Brown is a member of the new party! Are you a Socialist, Brown?

B. Well, where’s the harm of a name? Stride and I thought...

S. (interrupting). We don’t call ourselves Socialists, of course.

B. No, of course not.

S. We call ourselves Advanced Liberals or Radicals.

B. Or perhaps altruistic gravity. Ih! But is that such a great invention in the way of names?

S. That’s just the beauty of it.

J. I grant you the beauty of it must be there—or nowhere.

B. Well, serious, and don’t interrupt!

S. I assure you, Jones—

B. (interrupting). We Socialists who don’t set class against class, unlike you, I think it.

J. (softly). Let the gilded jade winch, my wanderings are unwrung! The ages have done all that for me.

S. (taking up a crapper from the table). Nevertheless we have a clear and definite Creed, which I will now lay before you, Jones.

J. Ah, now I see what makes you look so happy! You are Radicals who have been searching for the planks of your platform, and you have now discovered the necessary timber—(sotto voce) all out of your own heads.

B. (hurriedly, and not listening). Yes, that’s it. Now look here, this is getting gaudy. (Reads) ‘The working classes, and the great mass of manual workers of all men and women whose strength is spent and whose friends are gone.’ Where’s this?...

J. It is nicely written, Stride, and I’m sure that you mean well, so far as you know how to; but you are deceiving yourself very much: can any one of these things be engaged in which you don’t find the ‘victory of the poor’? It is a victory for oppression, and when the classes will cease to exist. This is a riddle you cannot read till you know a little more.

B. Well, well, that’s only the preamble. Wait a bit! Our first plank is ‘Government by the people, for the people, in the interests of the people.’

J. If the people govern themselves for themselves and in their own interest, there is nothing that can be more delightful than such a state! Only it be so while the present system lasts, reformed or not? Your first plank is not a plank, but a phrase, and a phrase without meaning. As long as the working classes are only nurses of the state, and are not able to govern us for their interest, whatever the machinery of their government may be. Mean times the people is but the material for the feeding of the rich,

S. Well, this next is a plank, at all events: ‘The State should as far and as fast as possible delegate to each locality the rights of self-government, and should encourage and protect them in the use of such rights.’

J. County Councils, eh! A Tory measure; and properly so. Bodies with feeble administrative powers in themselves; mere machinery in the hands of the central government; but one which will appear very sensible for it, while in reality they are necessary for nothing. That is what you mean by self-government. If you were to mean more your plank would be a plank to be walked by a representative assembly; where one the State has delegated all its powers to what is the government of it, and what shall we do with it?

S. Hilloa! Since when have you turned Anarchist?

J. Why, I’ll tell you, but you don’t understand me. But, gentlemen,

B. ‘We should lift the burdens as far as possible from the shoulders of the struggling classes’.

J. Stop a bit! That’s good! as far as possible is a good phrase. No one can object to that. And as far as possible. Well, where are you going to put these burdens when you have lifted them as far as possible? I suspect back again.

S. We would put them to a greater extent on the shoulders of those who till not, but without toil having enough and to spare.

J. Well, that I call a great invention; only it smacks somewhat of going about to get something out of nothing. For by the way, do the poor (i.e. producers) have enough and to spare—unless they steal it? In short, your struggling classes are too poor to pay taxes; that you admit (and by the admission admit also that the
whole of the middle-classes or well-to-do are thieves. So you are going to set the other classes to steal from the poor, in order that the taxes may be duly paid. That will bring about no new blessing for the poor. Their misery is already.

S. You needn’t talk nonsense! We believe in a graduated income-tax and graduated death-duties.

J. Just so: to be paid by those who have no income but what they steal. Here is a paradise if citizens never open to talent,” which I believe is still the great maxim of the Radicals. Certainly I need not talk nonsense.

S. No, no, Sir. We are in favour of a reform of the poor-laws.

J. Gently, gently. It is of course necessary to watch carefully lost the path to the poor’s purse or the poor’s house cannot become too easy.

S. No.

J. Of course, of course. Why (also because) of the share of the national purse which the poor get by working hard is only just enough to give them a minimal subsistence. But in this path to that path of bliss, the poor-house, a hard one, that kingdom of heaven would be forever.

S. Well, now I have begun, I suppose I must go on. But how cantankerous you are?

J. I batter myself I am. But go on, pray.

William Morris.

(To be continued.)

REVOLUTIONARY CALENDAR.

WEEK ENDING JANUARY 26, 1889.

Tues. 22.


Wed. 23.

1800. W. Pitt died. 1844. Sir Francis Burdett died. 1806. T. L. Cooke, French spy, was hanged at the Tower. He was dropped from the ladder, and, before he reached the ground, a bullock was yoked to a cannon, and the cannon was fired. No. 4 of Portobello, 1807. J. Biddle, convicted of affray and assault on F. B. 1813. B. S. Rives, the French envoy, was assassinated in Paris.

Thu. 24.

1795. Revolutions in Europe. 1867. Lord Granville triumph over the Nationalists of Belgrade.

Fri. 25.


Sat. 26.

1851. Denis Papin presents the Royal Society, London, the invention of the safety valve. 1838. Ernest Jones died. 1844. Execution of a spy at Kharkoff.

Sir Francis Burdett.—Radical reformer. Born Jan. 25, 1770; died Jan. 23, 1844. One of the most prominent figures in the Reform agitation of the opening years of the nineteenth century. Most of his fellows, he drew his inspiration from the French revolution. On leaving college he went on a European tour, and was resident in Paris during the early days of the revolution. He attended the debates of the Convention and many of the meetings of the club. Returning to England, he opposed, in the year 1793, and three years later entered Parliament as a Reform candidate. He was one of those who pointed out to the Government how deranged and disturbed was the state of French liberty. He went to France to examine the condition of the people, and reported that the revolution there was a complete success.

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