

LOOKING BACKWARD.

said that the signs of the spread of Socialism among young people are both abundant and striking. This is true; ten years ago the word Socialism was known in this country, even among the "educated" classes knew more about its meaning than Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Gladstone, or Admiral Maxse know now. Whereas at present it is fashionable for even the most fastidious and dinner-parties to affect an interest in and knowledge of it, and this indicates a wide and deep public interest. This interest is so obvious in literature perhaps than in anything else, quite outside of the propagandist tracts issued by definitely Socialist societies. A certain tincture of Socialism, for instance (generally very watery), is almost a necessary ingredient nowadays in a novel which aims at being at once serious and life-like, while more serious treatment of the subject at the hands of non-Socialists is common enough. In short the golden haze of self-satisfaction and content with the best of all possible societies is rolling away before the sun-heat bred of misery and aspiration, and all people above the lowest level of intelligence (which I take to be low gambling and statesmanship) are looking towards the new development, some timorously, some anxiously, some hopefully.

It seems clear to me that the reception which Mr. Bellamy's 'Looking Backward' has received that there are a great many people who are hopeful in regard to Socialism. I am sure that ten years ago it would have been very little noticed, if at all; whereas now several editions have been sold in America, and it is attracting general attention in England, and to anyone not deeply interested in the social question it could not be at all an attractive book. It is true that it is cast into the form of a romance, but the author states very frankly in his preface that he has only given it this form as a sugar-coating to the pill, and the device of making a man wake up in a new world has now grown so common, and has been done with so much more care and art than Mr. Bellamy has used, that by itself this would have done little for it: it is the serious essay and not the slight envelope of romance which people have found interesting to them.

Since, therefore, both Socialists and non-Socialists have been so much impressed with the book, it seems to me necessary that the *Commonweal* should notice it. For it is a 'Utopia.' It purports to be written in the year 2000, and to describe the state of society at that period after a gradual and peaceable revolution has realised the Socialism which to us is but in the beginning of its militant period. It requires notice all the more because there is a certain danger in such books as this: a twofold danger; for there will be some temperaments to whom the answer given to the question "How shall we live then?" will be pleasing and satisfactory, others to whom it will be displeasing and unsatisfactory. The danger to the first is that they will accept it with all its necessary errors and fallacies (which such a book must abound in) as conclusive statements of facts and rules of action, which will warp their efforts into futile directions. The danger to the second, if they are but enquirers or very young Socialists, is that they also accepting its speculations as facts, will be inclined to say, "If that is Socialism, we won't help its advent, as it holds out no hope to us."

The only safe way of reading a utopia is to consider it as the expression of the temperament of its author. So looked at, Mr. Bellamy's utopia must be still called very interesting, as it is constructed with due economical knowledge, and with much adroitness; and of course his temperament is that of many thousands of people. This temperament may be called the unmixed modern one, unhistorical and unartistic; it makes its owner (if a Socialist) perfectly satisfied with modern civilisation, if only the injustice, misery, and waste of class society could be got rid of; which half-change seems possible to him. The only ideal of life which such a man can see is that of the industrious *professional* middle-class men of to-day purified from their crime of complicity with the monopolist class, and become independent instead of being, as they now are, parasitical. It is not to be denied that if such an ideal could be realised, it would be a great improvement on the present society. But can it be realised? It means in fact the alteration of the machinery of life in such a way that all men shall be allowed to share in the fulness of that life, for the production and upholding of which the machinery was instituted. There are clear signs to show us that that very group whose life is thus put forward as an ideal for the future are condemning it in the present, and that they also demand a revolution. The pessimistic revolt of the latter end of this century led by John Ruskin against the philistinism of the triumphant bourgeois, halting and stumbling as it necessarily was, shows that the change in the life of civilisation had begun, before any one seriously believed in the possibility of altering its machinery.

It follows naturally from the author's satisfaction with the best part of modern life that he conceives of the change to Socialism as taking place without any breakdown of that life, or indeed disturbance of it, by means of the final development of the great private monopolies which are such a noteworthy feature of the present day. He supposes that these must necessarily be absorbed into one great monopoly which will include the whole people and be worked for its benefit by the whole people. It may be noted in passing that by this use of the word monopoly he shows unconsciously that he has his mind fixed firmly on the mere *machinery* of life: for clearly the only part of their system which the people would or could take over from the monopolists would be the machinery of organisation, which monopoly is forced to use, but which is not an essential part of it. The essential of monopoly is, "I warm myself by the fire which you have made, and you (very much the plural) stay outside in the cold."

To go on. This hope of the development of the trusts and rings to which the competition for privilege has driven commerce, especially in America, is the distinctive part of Mr. Bellamy's book; and it seems to me to be a somewhat dangerous hope to rest upon, too uncertain to be made a sheet-anchor of. It may be indeed the logical outcome of the most modern side of commercialism—i.e., the outcome that *ought* to be; but then there is its historical outcome to be dealt with—i.e., what *will* be; which I cannot help thinking may be after all, as far as this commercial development is concerned, the recurrence of breaks-up and re-formations of this kind of monopoly, under the influence of competition for privilege, or war for the division of plunder, till the flood comes and destroys them all. A far better hope to trust to is that men having once got it into their heads that true life implies free and equal life, and that is now possible of attainment, they will consciously strive for its attainment at any cost. The economical semi-fatalism of some Socialists is a deadening and discouraging view, and may easily become more so, if events at present unforeseen bring back the full tide of "commercial prosperity"; which is by no means unlikely to happen.

The great change having thus peaceably and fatalistically taken place, the author has to put forward his scheme of the organisation of life; which is organised with a vengeance. His scheme may be described as State Communism, worked by the very extreme of national centralisation. The underlying vice in it is that the author cannot conceive, as aforesaid, of anything else than the *machinery* of society, and that, doubtless naturally, he reads in to the future of a society, which he tells us is unwastefully conducted, that terror of starvation which is the necessary accompaniment of a society in which two-thirds or more of its labour-power is wasted: the result is that though he tells us that every man is free to choose his occupation and that work is no burden to anyone, the *impression* which he produces is that of a huge standing army, tightly drilled, compelled by some mysterious fate to unceasing anxiety for the production of wares to satisfy every caprice, however wasteful and absurd, that may cast up amongst them.

As an illustration it may be mentioned that everybody is to begin the serious work of production at the age of twenty-one, work three years as a labourer, and then choose his skilled occupation and work till he is forty-five, when he is to knock off his work and amuse himself (improve his mind, if he has one left him). Heavens! think of a man of forty-five changing all his habits suddenly and by compulsion! It is a small matter after this that the said persons past work should form a kind of aristocracy (how curiously old ideas cling) for the performance of certain judicial and political functions.

Mr. Bellamy's ideas of life are curiously limited; he has no idea beyond existence in a great city; his dwelling of man in the future is Boston (U.S.A.) beautified. In one passage, indeed, he mentions villages, but with unconscious simplicity shows that they do not come into his scheme of economical equality, but are mere servants of the great centres of civilisation. This seems strange to some of us, who cannot help thinking that our experience ought to have taught us that such aggregations of population afford the worst possible form of dwelling-place, whatever the second-worst might be.

In short, a machine-life is the best which Mr. Bellamy can imagine for us on all sides; it is not to be wondered at then that his only idea of making labour tolerable is to decrease the amount of it by means of fresh and ever fresh developments of machinery. This view I know he will share with many Socialists with whom I might otherwise agree more than I can with him; but I think a word or two is due to this important side of the subject. Now surely this ideal of the great reduction of the hours of labour by the mere means of machinery is a futility. The human race has always put forth about as much energy as it could in given conditions of climate and the like, though that energy has had to struggle against the natural laziness of mankind: and the development of man's resources, which has given him greater power over nature, has driven him also into fresh desires and fresh demands on nature, and thus made his expenditure of energy much what it was before. I believe that this will be always so, and the multiplication of machinery will just—multiply machinery; I believe that the ideal of the future does not point to the lessening of men's energy by the reduction of *labour* to a minimum, but rather to the reduction of *pain in labour* to a minimum, so small that it will cease to be a pain; a gain to humanity which can only be dreamed of till men are even more completely equal than Mr. Bellamy's utopia would allow them to be, but which will most assuredly come about when men are really equal in condition; although it is probable that much of our so-called "refinement," our luxury—in short, our civilisation—will have to be sacrificed to it. In this part of his scheme, therefore, Mr. Bellamy worries himself unnecessarily in seeking (with obvious failure) some incentive to labour to replace the fear of starvation, which is at present our only one, whereas it cannot be too often repeated that the true incentive to useful and happy labour is and must be pleasure in the work itself.

I think it necessary to state these objections to Mr. Bellamy's utopia, not because there is any need to quarrel with a man's vision of the future of society, which, as above said, must always be more or less personal to himself; but because this book, having produced a great impression on people who are really enquiring into Socialism, will be sure to be quoted as an authority for what Socialists believe, and that, therefore, it is necessary to point out that there are some Socialists who do not think that the problem of the organisation of life and necessary labour can be dealt with by a huge national centralisation, working by a kind of magic for which no one feels himself responsible; that on the contrary it will be necessary for the unit of administra-

tion to be small enough for every citizen to feel himself responsible for its details, and be interested in them; that individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on to the shoulders of an abstraction called the State, but must deal with it in conscious association with each other. That variety of life is as much an aim of true Communism as equality of condition, and that nothing but an union of these two will bring about real freedom. That modern nationalities are mere artificial devices for the commercial war that we seek to put an end to, and will disappear with it. And, finally, that art, using that word in its widest and due signification, is not a mere adjunct of life which free and happy men can do without, but the necessary expression and indispensable instrument of human happiness.

On the other hand, it must be said that Mr. Bellamy has faced the difficulty of economical reconstruction with courage, though he does not see any other sides to the problem, such, e.g., as the future of the family; that at any rate he sees the necessity for the equality of the reward of labour, which is such a stumbling-block for incomplete Socialists; and his criticism of the present monopolist system is forcible and fervid. Also up and down his pages there will be found satisfactory answers to many ordinary objections. The book is one to be read and considered seriously, but it should not be taken as the Socialist bible of reconstruction; a danger which perhaps it will not altogether escape, as incomplete systems impossible to be carried out but plausible on the surface are always attractive to people ripe for change, but not knowing clearly what their aim is.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST WORKING-MEN'S CONGRESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF *Justice*.

DEAR COMRADE,—In your issue of June 15—namely, in H. M. Hyndman's article entitled "The International Workers' Congress and the Marxist Clique"—I find it asserted that "both Stepniak and W. Parnell declare in writing that their names were appended to the Marxist circular without their consent." Allow me to say that no such declaration has been made by me and that my name has been appended to the said circular with my full consent.

I was in doubt at one time—and I made no secret of it—whether I have the right of signing such a document, having for obvious reasons no regular mandate from my country. But my scruples have been removed by the secretary of the Organising Commission, who informed me that the Commission will make allowance for the peculiar conditions of countries like Russia—a proceeding which has its precedents in former international congresses, and of which I was very happy to have the benefit. I think that we, the so-called Russian Nihilists, must take every opportunity of showing our solidarity with the great international Socialist movement; and I may be excused, I suppose, for refusing to admit that William Morris, Engels, Lafargue, and Bebel, with the body of German Social-Democratic deputies, have no claim to represent a huge part of this movement.—Yours very truly,
16 June, 1889.
S. STEPNIAK.

The following further adhesions have been received:—

RUSSIA—For the *Russian Social-Democratic Union*: Axelrod, Plechenoff, Véra Sazzoulitch.

SWEDEN—For the *Social-Democratic Party*: Brandtling, Danielson, Palm.

EAST-END CAPMAKERS.—These sweated workers have formed a union on advanced lines, comrade Rochman being elected honorary president. Meets at "Black Swan," Hanbury Street, Spitalfields, every Saturday night. Sixty-three joined at the first meeting, and it is fast growing.

POISONED AT WORK.—In a Nottingham paper is an account of how a workman, Arthur Meakin, died poisoned at his work with nitric acid gas. Arthur Meakin had the job of cleaning out condensing chambers at Old Barford Chemical Works, where the fumes of the gas were strong. He started for his work on Wednesday, June 12th, in his usual health and spirits. He went into the deadly chamber, and on returning home complained to his wife of a pain in his stomach. By 11 o'clock on Thursday morning he was dead. The doctor said he died of congestion of the lungs, which he believed was brought about by his breathing noxious fumes while at work. The coroner, in his charge, of course made it as light as possible for the owners of the chemical works. The man had not taken proper precautions, and so on; but he was forced to admit that the employment was not a "harmless" one, and the jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical testimony. But what of the system that forces men to risk their lives in poisonous work for a scanty pittance? Murdered by competition should have been the verdict.

MURDEROUS SLAVE-DRIVING IN SHOPS.—At a recent meeting of the Protective Association of Warehouse, Stores, and Shop Assistants, the following tale was told by a speaker, for the accuracy of which he vouched:—"I was in the employ, some years ago, of a man who was a regular slave-driver. There was a young lady who was worn out with work. I have seen her drop down behind the counter, and have carried her out myself twice in one day. Well, one day I saw her looking very white, and I said to her: 'Sit down, you'll drop,' and I brought her a stool, and she sat down. And just then the employer came up and saw her sitting down; and he said, 'We can't have these lazy ways here,' and he kicked away the stool from under her, and she fell on the floor. I saw it myself, and she managed to keep about till the end of the week. She had a widowed mother depending on her; they had nothing but what she earned. And on the Monday morning she was ill, and he mother went up and told her it was time to go to the shop, and she said, 'Shop! Oh, mother, I can't go; I can't do it.' And her mother said: Well, you know what it means if you don't; you'll be turned off, and we shall have nothing.' But then she saw how ill she looked, and she said: 'There lie down a bit again, and I'll come up by and by; never mind if you are late.' And she went up half an hour after and found her lying dead. And that man goes on, and has a large business, and he goes to church on Sundays and hears read our: 'Thou shalt do no murder.' But if ever there was a murderer in the sight of heaven, that man is a murderer."

THE STRENGTH OF TYRAN.

(FROM THE *Chartist Circular*, 1841.)

The tyrant's chains are only strong
While slaves submit to wear them;
And who could bind them on the throng
Determined not to bear them?
Then clank your chain; e'en though the links
Were light as fashion's feather,
The heart which rightly thinks and feels
Would cast them altogether.

The lords of earth are only great
While others clothe and feed them!
But what were all their pride and state
Should labour cease to heed them?
The swain is higher than a king:
Before the laws of nature
The monarch were a useless thing,
The swain a useful creature.

We toil, we spin, we delve the mine,
Sustaining each his neighbour;
And who can show a right divine
To rob us of our labour?
We rush to battle, bear our lot
In every ill and danger;
And who shall make the peaceful cot
To homely joy a stranger?

erish all tyrants far and near,
Beneath the chains that bind us;
And perish, too, that *servile fear*
Which makes the slaves they find us.
One grand, one universal claim,
One peal of moral thunder,
One glorious burst in Freedom's name,
And rend our bonds asunder!

CHARLES COLE, *A London Mechanic*.

REVOLUTIONARY CALENDAR.

WEEK ENDING JUNE 29, 1889.

23	Sun.	1789. King declares proceedings of the National Assembly void, and orders them to dissolve. 1848. Workmen's revolt begins at Paris. 1880. Obnorski and other workers tried in St. Petersburg for Socialist propaganda. Sentences: mines, 1; prison, 2. 1883. Louise Michel sentenced to six years' imprisonment.
24	Mon.	1535. Münster re-taken by the Prince-Bishop. 1725. Malt-tax riot at Glasgow. 1797. Thomas Williams tried for publishing Paine's 'Age of Reason.' 1799. William Byrne tried for "rebellion and murder" as leader of the Irish rebels in '98. 1848. Cavaignac dictator of Paris. 1848. First number of the <i>Irish Felon</i> , Dublin, edited by John Martin, 5d. weekly; suppressed July 22. 1877. N. P. Ogareff, Russian revolutionary poet, died an exile in London in great poverty; a very old man, he had lived by mending umbrellas, his extensive property having been confiscated by the Russian Government.
25	Tues.	1830. First number of <i>Cobbett's Twopenny Trash</i> . 1836. Louis Alibaud fired at Louis Philippe. 1848. Archbishop of Paris killed. 1864. Hugo's 'Les Misérables' added to the <i>Index Expurgatorius</i> . 1884. Trial ends of 36 Socialists at Grätz. 1887. Seven more of the conspirators of March 13 privately murdered in prison at St. Petersburg.
26	Wed.	1794. Trial of William Drennan for sedition. 1794. Balloons first used in warfare by French Republican army of the Netherlands at Fleurus. 1800. James Hadfield tried for shooting at George III. in Drury Lane Theatre. 1821. Motion in the House of Commons for "a Commission to visit New Lanark, to examine the condition and treatment of the working-classes in that Establishment, to enquire into any future arrangements which Mr. Owen may propose for the benefit of labourers, and to report the same to the House," negatived without a division. 1839. Robert Owen, introduced by Lord Melbourne, presents to the Queen, at her levee, the address adopted at the Birmingham Congress. 1848. Workmen's revolt suppressed in Paris. 1870. Armand Barbès died. 1881. Edmond Beales died.
27	Thur.	1798. Bagenal Harvey hanged. 1832. First number of the <i>Morning Star</i> , first London penny daily, friendly to the Owenites. 1876. Harriet Martineau died. 1881. Most sentenced in Court of Crown Cases Reserved to 16 months' hard labour.
28	Fri.	1712. Rousseau born. 1792. Lafayette attempts to reinstate authority in Paris and fails. 1795. Middlesex magistrates pronounce certain biscuits "treasonable and seditious," as they bear the cap of liberty. 1816. John Dennis, George Crow, William Beamis, Thomas South, and Isaac Hailey hung for their part in the Fen Riots. 1862. Sliwnitzki, Arnold, and Rostovski shot in Modlin for organising a military revolutionary society (Velikoross); three others flogged with spitz-rattens.
29	Sat.	1688. Seven Bishops acquitted. 1795. Meeting of the London Corresponding Society at St. George's Fields. 1798. Leopardi born. 1849. Baden rising suppressed. 1875. Trial of Diakoff, Seriakoff, and others at St. Petersburg. Sentences: mines, 4; prison, 2. 1879. Conference at Lipetzk of delegates from all Russian revolutionary organisations, where terrorist tactics were resolved on.

The wages of furnace hands in the Chenango Valley, Pa., have been reduced 10 per cent.