

## NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

## AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. VII.—TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

AND now again I was busy looking about me, for we were quite clear of Piccadilly Market, and were in a region of elegantly-built much ornamented houses, which I should have called villas if they had been ugly and pretentious, which was very far from being the case. Each house stood in a garden carefully cultivated, and running over with flowers. The blackbirds were singing their best amidst the garden-trees, which, except for a bay here and there, and occasional groups of limes, seemed to be all fruit-trees: there were a great many cherry-trees, now all laden with fruit; and several times as we passed by a garden we were offered baskets of fine fruit by children and young girls. Amidst all these gardens and houses it was of course impossible to trace the sites of the old streets: but it seemed to me that the main roadways were the same as of old.

We came presently into a large open space, sloping somewhat toward the south, the sunny site of which had been taken advantage of for planting an orchard, mainly, as I could see, of apricot-trees, in the midst of which was a pretty gay little structure of wood, painted and gilded, that looked like a refreshment-stall. From the southern side of the said orchard ran a long road, chequered over with the shadow of tall old pear-trees, at the end of which showed the tall tower of the Parliament House, or Dung Market.

A strange sensation came over me; I shut my eyes to keep out the sight of the sun glittering on this fair abode of gardens, and for a moment there passed before them a phantasmagoria of another day. A great space surrounded by tall ugly houses, with an ugly church at the corner and a nondescript ugly cupolaed building at my back; the roadway thronged with a sweltering and excited crowd, dominated by omnibuses, crowded with spectators. In the midst a paved be-fountain square, populated only by a few men dressed in blue, and a good many singularly ugly bronze images (one on the top of a tall column). The said square guarded up to the edge of the roadway by a four-fold line of big men clad in blue, and across the southern roadway the helmets of a band of horse-soldiers, dead white in the greyness of the chilly November afternoon—

I opened my eyes to the sunlight again and looked round me, and cried out amongst the whispering trees and odorous blossoms, "Trafalgar Square!"

"Yes," said Dick, who had drawn rein again, "so it is. I don't wonder at your finding the name ridiculous: but after all, it was nobody's business to alter it, since the name of a dead folly doesn't bite. Yet sometimes I think we might have given it a name which would have commemorated the great battle which was fought on the spot itself in 1952,—that was important enough, if the historians don't lie."

"Which they generally do, or at least did," said the old man. "For instance, what can you make of this, neighbours? I have read a muddled account in a book—O a stupid book!—called James' Social Democratic History, of a fight which took place here in or about the year 1887 (I am bad at dates). Some people, says this story, were going to hold a ward-mote here, or some such thing, and the Government of London, or the Council, or the Commission, or what not other barbarous half-hatched body of fools, fell upon these citizens (as they were then called) with the armed hand. That seems too ridiculous to be true; but according to this version of the story, nothing much came of it, which certainly is too ridiculous to be true."

"Well," quoth I, "but after all your Mr. James is right so far, and it is true; except that there was no fighting, merely unarmed and peaceable people attacked by ruffians armed with bludgeons."

"And they put up with that?" said Dick, with the first unpleasant expression I had seen on his good-tempered face.

Said I, reddening: "We had to put up with it; we couldn't help it."

The old man looked at me keenly, and said: "You seem to know a great deal about it, neighbour! And is it really true that nothing came of it?"

"This came of it," said I, "that a good many people were sent to prison because of it."

"What, of the bludgeoners?" said the old man. "Poor devils!"

"No, no," said I, "of the bludgeoned."

Said the old man rather severely: "Friend, I expect that you have been reading some rotten collection of lies, and have been taken in by it too easily."

"I assure you," said I, "what I have been saying is true."

"Well, well, I am sure you think so, neighbour," said the old man, "but I don't see why you should be so cocksure."

As I couldn't explain why, I held my tongue. Meanwhile Dick, who had been sitting with knit brows, cogitating, spoke at last, and said gently and rather sadly:

"How strange to think that there have been men like ourselves, and living in this beautiful and happy country, who I suppose had feelings and affections like ourselves, who could yet do such dreadful things."

"Yes," said I, in a didactic tone; "yet after all, even those days were a great improvement on the days that had gone before them. Have you not read of the Mediæval period and the ferocity of its

criminal laws; and how in those days men fairly seem to have enjoyed tormenting their fellow men?—nay, for the matter of that, they made their God a tormentor and a jailer rather than anything else."

"Yes," said Dick, "there are good books on that period also, some of which I have read. But as to the great improvement of the nineteenth century, I don't see it. After all, the Mediæval folk acted after their conscience, as your remark about their God (which is true) shows, and they were ready to bear what they inflicted upon others; whereas the nineteenth century ones were hypocrites, and pretended to be humane, and yet went on tormenting those whom they dared to treat so by shutting them up in prison, for no reason at all, except that they were what they themselves, the prison-masters, had forced them to be. O, it's horrible to think of!"

"But perhaps," said I, "they did not know what the prisons were like."

Dick seemed roused, and even angry. "More shame for them," said he, "when you and I know it all these years afterwards. Look you, neighbour, they couldn't fail to know what a disgrace a prison is to the Commonwealth at the best, and that their prisons were a good step on towards being at the worst."

Quoth I: "But have you no prisons at all now?"

As soon as the words were out of my mouth I felt that I had made a mistake, for Dick flushed red and frowned, and the old man looked surprised and pained; and presently Dick said angrily, yet as if restraining himself somewhat—

"Man alive! how can you ask such a question? Have I not told you that we know what a prison means by the undoubted evidence of really trustworthy books, helped out by our own imaginations? And haven't you specially called me to notice that the people about the roads and streets look happy; and how could they look happy if they knew that their neighbours were shut up in prison, while they bore such things quietly? And if there were people in prison, you couldn't hide it from folk, like you may an occasional man-slaying; because that isn't done of set purpose, with a lot of people backing up the slayer in cold blood, as this prison business is. Prisons, indeed! O-no, no, no!"

He stopped, and began to cool down, and said in a kind voice: "But forgive me! I needn't be so hot about it, since there are *not* any prisons: I'm afraid you will think the worse of me for losing my temper. Of course, you coming from the outlands cannot be expected to know about these things. And now I'm afraid I have made you feel uncomfortable."

In a way he had; but he was so generous in his heat, that I liked him the better for it, and I said: "No, really 'tis all my fault for being so stupid. Let me change the subject, and ask you what the stately building is on our left just showing at the end of that grove of plane-trees?"

"Ah," he said, "that is an old building built quite in the beginning of the twentieth century, and as you see, in a queer fantastic style—not over beautiful; but there are some fine things inside it, too, mostly pictures, some very old. It is called the National Gallery; I have sometimes puzzled as to what the name means: anyhow, nowadays wherever there is a place where pictures are kept as curiosities permanently it is called a National Gallery, perhaps after this one. Of course there are a good many of them up and down the country."

I didn't try to enlighten him, feeling the task too heavy; but I pulled out my magnificent pipe and fell a-smoking, and the old horse jogged on again. As we went, I said—

"This pipe is a very elaborate toy, and you seem so reasonable in this country, and your architecture is so good, that I rather wonder at your turning out such trivialities."

It struck me as I spoke that this was rather ungrateful of me, after having received such a fine present; but Dick didn't seem to notice my bad manners, but said:

"Well, I don't know; it is a pretty thing, and since nobody need make such things unless they like, I don't see why they shouldn't make them, if they like. Of course, if carvers were scarce they would all be busy on the architecture, as you call it, and then these 'toys' (a good word) would not be made; but since there are plenty of people who can carve—in fact, almost everybody, and as work is somewhat scarce, or we are afraid it may be, folk do not discourage this kind of petty work."

He mused a little, and seemed somewhat perturbed; but presently his face cleared, and he said: "After all, you must admit that the pipe is a very pretty thing, with the little people under the trees all cut so clean and sweet;—too elaborate for a pipe, perhaps, but—well, it is very pretty."

"Too valuable for its use, perhaps," said I.

"What's that?" said he; "I don't understand."

I was just going in a helpless way to try to make him understand, when we came by the gates of a big rambling building, in which work of some sort seemed going on. "What building is that?" said I, eagerly, for it was a pleasure amidst all these strange things to see something a little like what I was used to: "it seems to be a factory."

"Yes," he said, "I think I know what you mean, and that's what it is; but we don't call them factories now, but Banded-workshops: that is, places where people collect who want to work together."

"I suppose," said I, "power of some sort is used there?"

"No, no," said he. "Why should people collect together to use power, when they can have it at the places where they live, or hard by, any two or three of them; or any one, for the matter of that? No; folk collect in these Banded-workshops to do hand-work in which working together is necessary or convenient; such work is often very

pleasant. In these, for instance, they make pottery and glass,—there, you can see the tops of the furnaces. Well, of course it's handy to have fair-sized ovens and kilns and glass-pots, and a good lot of things to use them for: though of course there are a good many such places, as it would be ridiculous if a man had a liking for pot-making or glass-blowing that he should have to live in one place or be obliged to forego the work he liked."

"I see no smoke coming from the furnaces," said I.

"Smoke?" said Dick; "why should you see smoke?"

I held my tongue, and he went on: "It's a nice place inside, though as plain as you see outside. As to the crafts, throwing the clay must be jolly work: the glass-blowing is rather a sweltering job; but some folk like it very much indeed; and I don't much wonder: there is such a sense of power, when you have got deft in it, in dealing with the hot metal. It makes a lot of pleasant work," said he, smiling, "for however much care you take of such goods, break they will one day or another, so there is always plenty to do."

I held my tongue and pondered,

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### THE PARTICK ELECTION.

BLESSED are those Socialists who have been several hundred miles at least away from Partick during these last three weeks. I cannot help thinking that their favourable impression of human nature will be directly as the square of their distance from the area of the conflict. Those who, like myself, have had to endure in the midst of it, have been sadly shocked with the appalling spectacle of human folly and downright knavery exhibited in that "free fight" for political advantage. The hair-brained enthusiasm of the working-class electorate who caught the fever of the fight, and the wolfish cunning and ferocity of the professional politicians and their hireling press, have been quite phenomenal. Paid agitators of every degree and description, and from every quarter of the kingdom, bull-dozed the electors nightly for fourteen days with lies, promises and threats, and every conceivable device of electioneering oratory. On the election-day carriages, cabs, dog-carts, brakes, vans, and lorries—furnished by supporters within a radius of five miles—were used by both parties to bring the electors to the poll. Canvassers, paid and unpaid, prowled from house to house beseeching the voters to vote; and every known method of cajoling and coercing the free and enlightened citizens of Partick was resorted to. Intelligent opinion, or a sense of public duty on the part of the working-class, had no more to do with the result of the contest than they had to do with the swindling vagaries of that poor idiot—Jubilee Benzon.

That Sir Charles Tennant was defeated is, however, a matter for congratulation. No more worthless Home Ruler, and no worse enemy of the interests of the workers could have been selected to fight the battle for the Liberals. The chairman of half-a-dozen large public companies, the director of as many more, and the head partner of the St. Rollox Chemical Works, which employs men at from 12s. 8d. to £1 per week to work amongst poisonous materials, his adoption as the Liberal candidate was a flagrant affront upon the democratic sentiment of our day. Mr. Parker-Smith, though a professed Liberal (Unionist), is recognised as a Tory—and his return as such can do little harm meanwhile; but the return of Sir Charles Tennant as a Radical and Home Ruler would certainly have done all the harm that a selfish capitalist, steeped to the lips in profit-mongering and the sweating of the poor, can do, when masquerading in the disguise of a champion of progress and a friend of freedom.

That his defeat was due to the fact of his being a capitalist and sworn foe of the workers is, I regret, an opinion that cannot be entertained. Most of the Liberal voters who would have voted in any case, voted, I believe, for him. His defeat was due mainly to the fact that the electorate is composed very largely of the wealthy residents of the west-end district of Glasgow, who, being always alert to their own interests, and conceiving that an anti-Home Ruler anti-Gladstonian was their safest man, voted *en masse* for Parker-Smith.

That Liberal papers in Glasgow and throughout the country should attribute the Liberal defeat to the advocacy of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who was publicly charged with allowing articles to appear in the *Star*, expressing sympathy with the Portuguese and denouncing British missionary brigandage, shows the opinion which those enlightened prints have of the intelligence and fair-play of the Liberal electorate. Let me say that I do not believe that, stupid and ignorant as average Liberal electors are, the sentiments expressed in the *Star* articles were unfavourably regarded by the mass of them; and I am certainly of the opinion that the fact of Mr. O'Connor's connection with those articles did not turn a single vote against the Liberals.

J. BRUCE GLASIER.

SLAUGHTER OF SIBERIAN PRISONERS.—We have received two pamphlets from "Friends of Russian Freedom" on this subject. Those who are willing to aid in the dissemination of information on the subject should communicate with Robert Spence Watson, Bensham Grove, Gateshead-on-Tyne.

We have received an interesting report from the Cremation Society (8 New Cavendish Street, Portland Place, W.) on the valuable work they are doing in bringing about a common-sense disposal of the dead. It contains a useful bibliography of the subject, and much cognate matter.

In *Lippincott's* this month is a suggestive article by Francis Galton, F.R.S., which might be made the text for a good deal of Socialistic moralising. "Why do we measure mankind?" is the question he answers: if a parallel development-chart of a worker and an ordinarily wholesome middle-class man were made it would show some startling results. There is a good deal of material to be got; could not some of our scientific comrades put it in shape for us?

Let not anyone pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends than that others should look on and do nothing. He is not a good man who, without a protest, allows wrong to be committed in his name, and with the means he helps to supply, because he will not trouble himself, and use his mind on the subject.—*John Stuart Mill, Inaugural Address, St. Andrews, 1867.*

### IN AUSTRALIA.

THIS is a cutting from last week's *Boomerang*, the most powerful weekly in Queensland:

"We like men to be a little consistent, even in labour matters. At the time of the printers' strike the *Boomerang* was called all sorts of names for declaring that the men were right, that solidarity was an essential for the securing of a basis for conciliation between Labour and Capital. The Master Printers' Association would then get no nearer to that than talking about liberty and about permitting no interference in the internal affairs of an office. Now, having thrashed their employés on this question, they are coming the same capers themselves, and without anything like the same excuse, are trying to put the screw on non-association masters. The *Boomerang* and, we presume, other non-association firms, have received a circular informing us that, unless we join the M. P. A. before 1st January, the members of the association will 'decline to quote prices to, or execute work for, . . . any firm in the printing trade not being members of the Master Printers' Association.' There is an explanation pointing out that irremovable canvassers are 'cutting down prices' and 'blackmailing the public,' just as competing shipping companies are, we suppose; and this beautiful explanation is capped by another, declaring that the price-list agreed on in July shall not be binding upon members—in other words, that the cut-throat competition against which the association was formed shall proceed unchecked! We have reason to believe that the more thoughtful of the master printers disapprove of this circular; but whether they do or not, the *Boomerang* can't be bull-dozed in this fashion. When the Master Printers' Association recognises the solidarity principle, when it concedes to the journeymen the solidarity it demands for the employers, and acts accordingly and consistently, then the *Boomerang* will gladly join it and be loyal to it—but not till then."

The Australian labour movement just now seems to be in a constant state of progress, showing a strong and widespread tendency towards federation, the bringing of all wage-earners within one fold. The draymen of the far northern port of Cairns have written to some of the labour leaders in Brisbane seeking advice and have been recommended to throw in their lot with the General Labourers' Union. The draymen and carters of Brisbane have also come to the sound conclusion that caste has too long been the enemy of the common weal, and have decided to swell the ranks of what promises to be the strongest section of the proposed Federation—the General Labourers' Union.

The following letter has been sent by the South Australian Railway Commissioners to the Railway Service Mutual Association:

"The Commissioners have duly considered the communications made by you subsequent to the interview this morning—viz., that unless the Commissioners pay 6s. per day to probationary porters in future, all the employés, members of the association, would cease work to-morrow morning. I have to inform you that under the existing circumstances the Commissioners will not accept the responsibility of throwing the railway service into confusion and of causing such a dislocation of the public traffic as must be attended with serious loss and injury to many people wholly unable to protect themselves. The Commissioners therefore will adopt the following scale of wages for porters from January 1 next: First year, 6s. per day; second year, 6s. 6d. per day; third year and thereafter, 7s. per day. This scale to apply to the existing staff. The Commissioners must leave to the country and Parliament to decide whether, having regard to the position assumed by a certain section of the employés and the outside assistance rendered and promised, any other course was open to them."

The Brisbane Wharf-labourers' Union, having found that the rule providing for fifteen minutes' respite for "smoke, oh!" when engaged in working coals or heavy bagged goods was being infringed, has made an effort to enforce the rule. This "smoke" or breathing time is regarded by many people who know nothing of a wharf-labourer's occupation as an unnecessary interruption with "discipline," but these know-nothings should take a walk down to the wharves and watch the men at work for an hour or two.

I am told that the officers of the Australian coasting steamers have very frequently to work from thirty to forty hours straight off before sailing, and are completely exhausted before they go to sea. At the highest rate of pay, chief officers receive a fraction over 9d. per hour; seconds, 6d.; and thirds, a fraction over 5d. an hour.

How does this strike you, culled from the highly-respectable, vice-suppressing *Sydney Morning Herald*, the great upholder here of religion and property, which denounces us Socialists for our "immoral teachings":

WET-NURSE Wanted; young, unmarried preferred; arrangements made for nurse's child. Apply between 9 and 12, Mrs. —, —, Park-road, Burwood.

I hear of what seems to be a general determination to cut wages on all the mining fields. What with exemptions and reductions the miner will be a pretty much sat-on workman soon if he doesn't wake up.

The Brisbane Building Trades Council is the first to adopt the Labour Paper Conference report, of which I told you the other week.

After a "brief but lively" existence of thirteen weeks, the *Trades and Labour Advocate* has come to an end, "defeated, but not disgraced." The editor says in his valedictory:

"We are heartily sorry that we have been defeated in our attempt to establish a genuine labour newspaper, for there are many abuses that require to be shown up, many shams that it is necessary for the public good to expose. The sweating system is rampant in the city at the present time, and requires drastic treatment. The nigger-driving draper and late-hour shopkeeper are in want of severe castigation. One public disgrace in the shape of a gigantic business firm, who compel their employés to dine on the premises off a few small 'chunks' of mutton and a lone potato each, while the lynx-eyes of sycophantic shopwalkers watch lest the slave-driven employés shall dare, like Oliver Twist, to ask for 'More'—requires that the light of the public press shall be shed on the Siberian rigour of its 'discipline.' But all must go unscathed, and why? Because we who have the courage to denounce these people, in spite of libel actions, cannot carry on for want of capital. The daily press who have the capital but not the courage, will not refer to these abuses; for daily papers are run to make money, and no matter how earnestly the editor and his literary satellites may desire to carry out the noble work of elevating humanity by exposing its wrongs, the editor is controlled by his manager or directors, at the back of whom is a greedy body of shareholders or wealthy private firm of two or three, who clamour for 10, 15, or 20 per cent. dividends, dividends which cannot be produced unless advertisers are conciliated; and, as fully half the advertisers are the persons who carry on the nigger-driving, sweating, and starvation-wage system in conducting their emporiums, warehouses, establishments, shops, manufactories, etc., it is not to be wondered that the daily press is silent on the dark deeds that are being perpetrated on a large number of the working-classes in 'beautiful Sydney.' . . . We believe that the Labour party will never be able to assert its full strength until it has an established newspaper to give voice to its wants and requirements."

To which I say "Hear, hear!"  
Sydney, N.S.W., Jan. 2, 1890.

CORNSTALK.