

It behoves us, then, to watch heedfully that the same hand, having emptied the heavens, does not touch the lowly but life-illuminating lights of earth. The fairest of these lights is Liberty, the principle of natural freedom and equality, without which individual growth would be impossible, and social organisation, as we now understand it, an impossibility." T. S.

NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. V.—CHILDREN ON THE ROAD.

PAST the Broadway there were fewer houses on either side. We presently crossed a pretty little brook that ran across a piece of land dotted over with trees, and a while after came to another market and town-hall, as we should call it. Although there was nothing familiar to me in its surroundings, I knew pretty well where we were, and was not surprised when my guide said briefly, "Kensington Market."

Just after this we came into a short street of houses; or rather, one long house on either side of the way, built of timber and plaster, and with a pretty arcade over the footway before it.

Quoth Dick: "This is Kensington proper. People are apt to gather here rather thick, for they like the romance of the wood; and naturalists haunt it, too; or it is a wild spot even here, what there is of it; for it does not go far to the south: it goes from here northward and west right over Paddington and a little way down Notting Hill: thence it runs east to Primrose Hill, and so on; rather a narrow strip of it gets through Kingsland to Stoke-Newington and Clapton, where it spreads out along the heights above the Lea marshes, on the other side of which, as you know, is Epping Forest holding out a hand to it. This part we are just coming to is called Kensington Gardens; though why 'gardens' I don't know."

I rather longed to say, "Well, I know"; but there were so many things about me which I did *not* know, in spite of his assumptions, that I thought it better to hold my tongue.

The road plunged at once into a beautiful wood spreading out on either side, but obviously much further on the north side, where even the oaks and sweet chestnuts were of a good growth; while the quicker-growing trees (amongst which I thought the planes and sycamores too numerous) were very big and fine-grown.

It was exceedingly pleasant in the dappled shadow, for the day was growing as hot as need be, and the coolness and shade soothed my excited mind into a condition of dreamy pleasure, so that I felt as if I should like to go on for ever through that balmy freshness. My companion seemed to share in my feelings, and let the horse go slower and slower as he sat inhaling the green forest scents, chief amongst which was the smell of the trodden bracken near the way-side.

Romantic as this Kensington wood was, however, it was not lonely. We came on many groups both coming and going, or wandering in the edges of the wood. Amongst these were many children from six or eight years old up to sixteen or seventeen. They seemed to me especially fine specimens of their race, and were clearly enjoying themselves to the utmost; some of them were hanging about little tents pitched on the greensward, and by some of these fires were burning, with pots hanging over them gipsy fashion. Dick explained to me that there were scattered houses in the forest, and indeed we caught a glimpse of one or two. He said they were mostly quite small, such as used to be called cottages when there were slaves in the land, but they were pleasant enough and fitting for the wood.

"They must be pretty well stocked with children," said I, pointing to the many youngsters about the way.

"O," said he, "these children do not all come from the near houses, the woodland houses, but from the countryside generally. They often make up parties and come to play in the woods for weeks together in summer-time, living in tents, as you see. We rather encourage them to it; they learn to do things for themselves, and get to notice the wild creatures; and, you see, the less they stew inside houses the better for them. Indeed, I must tell you that many grown people will go to live in the forests through the summer; though they for the most part go to the bigger ones, like Windsor or the Forest of Dean or the northern wastes. Apart from the other pleasures of it, it gives them a little rough work, which I am sorry to say is getting a little scarce for these last fifty years."

He broke off, and then said, "I tell you all this, because I see that if I talk I must be answering questions, which you are thinking, even if you are not speaking them out; but my kinsman will tell you more about it."

I saw that I was likely to get out of my depth again, and so merely for the sake of tiding over an awkwardness and to say something, I said—

"Well, the youngsters here will be all the fresher for school when the summer gets over, and they have to go back again."

"School?" he said; "yes, what do you mean by that word? I don't see how it can have anything to do with children. We talk, indeed, of a school of herring, and a school of painting, and in the former sense we might talk of a school of children—but otherwise," said he, laughing, "I must own myself beaten."

Hang it! thought I, I can't open my mouth without digging up

some new complexity. I wouldn't try to set my friend right in his etymology; and I thought I had best say nothing about the boy-farms which I had used to call schools, as I saw pretty clearly that they had disappeared; so I said after a little fumbling, "I was using the word in the sense of a system of education."

"Education?" said he, meditatively, "I know enough Latin to know that the word must come from *educere*, to lead out; and I have heard it used; but I have never met anybody who could give me a clear explanation of what it means."

You may imagine how my new friends fell in my esteem when I heard this frank avowal; and I said, rather contemptuously, "Well, education means a system of teaching young people."

"Why not old people also?" said he, with a twinkle in his eye. "But," he went on, "I can assure you our children learn, whether they go through a 'system of teaching' or not. Why you will not find one of these children about here, boy or girl, who cannot swim; and every one of them has been used to tumbling about the little forest ponies—there's one of them now! They all of them know how to cook; the bigger lads can mow; many can thatch and do odd jobs at carpentering; or they know how to keep shop. I can tell you they know plenty of things."

"Yes, but their mental education, the teaching of their minds," said I, kindly translating my phrase.

"Guest," said he, "perhaps you have not learned to do these things. I have been speaking about; and if that's the case, don't you run away with the idea that it doesn't take some skill to do them, and doesn't give plenty of work for one's mind: you would change your opinion if you saw a Dorsetshire lad thatching, for instance. But however, I understand you to be speaking of book-learning; and as to that, it is a simple affair. Most children, seeing books lying about, manage to read by the time they are four years old; though I am told it has not always been so. As to writing, we do not encourage them to scrawl too early, though scrawl a little they will, because it gets them into a habit of ugly writing; and what's the use of a lot of ugly writing being done, when rough printing can be done so easily. You understand that handsome writing we like, and many people will write their books out when they make them, or get them written; I mean books of which only a few copies are needed—poems, and such like, you know. However, I am wandering from my lambs; but you must excuse me, for I am interested in this matter of writing, being myself a fair writer."

"Well," said I, "about the children; when they know how to read and write, don't they learn something else—languages, for instance?"

"Of course," he said; "sometimes even before they can read, they can talk French, which is the nearest language talked on the other side of the water; and they soon get to know German also, which is talked by a huge number of communes and colleges on the mainland. These are the principal languages we speak in these islands, along with English and Welsh; and children pick them up very quickly, because their elders all know them; and besides our guests from over sea often bring their children with them, and the little ones get together and rub their speech into one another."

"And the older languages?" said I.

"O, yes," said he, "they mostly learn Latin and Greek along with the modern ones, when they do anything more than merely pick up the latter."

"And history?" said I; "how do you teach history?"

"Well," said he, "when a person can read, of course he reads what he likes to; and he can easily get someone to tell him what are the best books to read on such or such a subject, or to explain what he doesn't understand in the books when he is reading them."

"Well," said I, "what else do they learn? I suppose they don't all learn history?"

"No, no," said he; "some don't care about it; in fact, I don't think many do. I have heard my great-grandfather say that it was mostly in periods of turmoil and strife and confusion that people cared much about history; and you know," said my friend, with an amiable smile, "we are not like that now. No; many people study facts about the make of things and the matters of cause and effect, so that knowledge increases on us, if that be good; and some, as you heard about friend Bob yonder, will spend time over mathematics. 'Tis no use forcing people's tastes."

Said I: "But you don't mean that children learn all these things?"

Said he: "That depends on what you mean by children; and also you must remember how much they differ. As a rule, they don't do much reading, except for a few story-books, till they are about fifteen years old; we don't encourage early bookishness: though you will find some children who *will* take to books very early; which perhaps is not good for them; but its no use thwarting them; and very often it doesn't last long with them, and they find their level before they are twenty years old. You see, children are mostly given to imitating their elders, and when they see most people about them engaged in genuinely amusing work, like house-building and street-paving, and gardening, and the like, that is what they want to be doing; so I don't think we need fear having too many book-learned men."

What could I say? I sat and held my peace, for fear of fresh entanglements. Besides, I was using my eyes with all my might, wondering as the old horse jogged on when I should come into London proper, and what it would be like now.

But my companion couldn't let his subject quite drop, and went on meditatively:

"After all, I don't know that it does them much harm, even if they grow up book-students. Such people as that, 'tis a great pleasure

seeing them so happy over work which is not much sought for. And besides, these students are generally such pleasant people; so kind and sweet-tempered, so humble, and at the same time so anxious to teach everybody all that they know. Really, I like those that I have met prodigiously."

This seemed to me such *very* queer talk that I was on the point of asking him another question; when just as we came to the top of a rising ground, down a long glade of the wood on my right I caught sight of a stately building whose outline was familiar to me, and I cried out, "Westminster Abbey!"

"Yes," said Dick, "Westminster Abbey—what there is left of it."

"Why," said I, "what have you done with it?"

"What have we done with it?" said he; "nothing much, save clean it. But you know the whole outside was spoiled centuries ago: as to the inside, that remains in its beauty after the great clearance, which took place over a hundred years ago, of the beastly monuments to fools and knaves, which once blocked it up, as great-grandfather says."

We went on a little further, and I looked to the right again, and said, in rather a doubtful tone of voice, "Why, there are the Houses of Parliament! Do you still use them?"

He burst out laughing, and was some time before he could control himself; then he clapped me on the back and said:

"I take you, neighbour; you may well wonder at our keeping them standing; and I know something about that, and my old kinsman has given me books to read about the games that went on there. Use them! Well, yes, they are used for a sort of subsidiary market, and a storage place for manure, and they are handy for that, being on the water-side. I believe it was intended to pull them down quite at the beginning of our days; but there was, I am told, a queer antiquarian society, which had done some service in past times, and which straightway set up its pipe against their destruction, as it has done with many other buildings, which most people looked upon as worthless and public nuisances; and it was so energetic, and had such good reasons to give, that it generally gained its point; and I must say that when all is said I am glad of it: because you know at the worst these silly old buildings serve as a kind of foil to the beautiful ones which we build now. You will see several others in these parts; the place my great-grandfather lives in, for instance, and a big building called St. Pauls. And you see, in this matter we need not grudge a few poorish buildings standing, because we can always build elsewhere; nor need we be anxious as to the breeding of pleasant work in such matters, for there is always room for more and more work in a new building, even without making it pretentious. For instance, elbow-room *within* doors is to me so delightful that if I were driven to it I would almost sacrifice out-door space to it. Then, of course, there is the ornament, which, as we must all allow, may easily be overdone in mere living houses, but can hardly be in mote-halls and markets, and so forth. I must tell you though that my great-grandfather sometimes tells me I am a little cracked on this subject of fine building; and indeed I *do* think that the energies of mankind are chiefly of use to them for such work, for in that direction I can see no end to the work, while in many others a limit does seem possible."

WILLIAM MORRIS.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

DENMARK.

One of our comrades in Stockholm visited Copenhagen when the elections to Parliament were on, and made a special point of studying the tactics of the party leaders and their organ, *Social-Demokraten*. He says:—"The tactics have been: (1) To criticise the proposals and doings of the Government; (2) To point out the standpoint of the Danish Social Democratic party in regard to these proposals and doings; (3) Besides that, *not to point out any* measures that the candidates of the working-men party would struggle for if they were elected." And our Swedish comrade says he is utterly astonished to find that the Danish elections are not at all used for Socialistic propaganda, not even for agitation against the Liberals, but merely for discussion of the Conservative policy of the government and their party. Not even a word about the resolutions of the Paris Congress, eight hours working-day, and laws protecting the workers against some of the worst forms of capitalistic oppression. Not even that! These Danish Social Democrats explain that we shall get Socialism (the Social Democratic reforms) through reform legislation by Parliament. That may be some sort of standpoint, but it is socialistic?

Arbeideren has begun a very good and interesting series of critical articles upon "The Programme of the Danish Social Democracy." It would only be reasonable and evolutionistic if every party that has a programme revised and criticised it at least once every two or three years. Such "house-cleaning" will always be found healthy and necessary. Anybody doubting this will change his opinions when reading the above-mentioned partly amusing, partly astonishing articles in *Arbeideren*.

What I said last week about *Social-Demokraten* leaving *Arbeideren* and its group in peace, is no longer true. There have again lately been some most vile personal attacks in the former paper upon the principal supporters of the latter, who are again and again by means of evidence, that the latter has proved false, denounced as hirelings of the Conservatives and of the Government.

STN.

Every serious thinker, and the great body of the working-men, who are, if they will, the real rulers of the land, look steadily to the inevitable and noble outcome of the Australian Republic. The wise among us regard the Imperial Federation League as an important ally of republicans, because it has aroused the just and vigilant suspicion of people that it and similar enterprises are intended to impede and defeat the national aspirations for independence.—*Chief Justice Lilliey*.

IN AUSTRALIA.

THE Western Queensland drovers are organising; and the following suggestions are to be submitted to a general meeting of drovers called for December 28th, at Tambo:

RATES OF WAGES, AT PER WEEK.—For sheep, 10,000 or under, not less than 80s.; over 10,000, not less than 100s. For cattle, 500 or under, not less than 80s.; over 500, not less than 100s.

CONTRACT RATES.—For cattle, at per hundred miles, for 500 head, not less than 1s. 6d. per head; over 500 head, not less than 1s. 3d. per head. For sheep, 10,000 or under, not less than 55s. per week per thousand; over 10,000, not less than 50s. per week per thousand. And that the annual subscription be £2 2s.

As considerable enthusiasm prevails successful organisation seems certain.

The Darlings Downs shearing dispute still drags on, several stations being seriously crippled by the severe letting alone they are getting. In the *Toowoomba Chronicle*, "A Shearer" has pointed out that if the squatters offered to meet the shearers in a fair way they would find the trouble easily got over, as the union rules do not prevent the manager being boss of his own shed but simply prevent him imposing on the men. Some of the shed rules have been the grossest imposition, notably one clause which enabled an overseer to forfeit a whole pen of ten or twelve sheep if in his opinion one was improperly shorn. Such a rule is one of the many reasons why the shearers are sticking to the union.

A conference was held at the Maritime Hall, Brisbane, on Saturday last, to discuss the starting of a labour paper, which was attended by delegates from the Charters Towers and Gympie miners, Queensland railway employes, Brisbane Early Closing Association, Maritime Council, Central Queensland Labourers and Carriers, Building Trades Council, Australian Labour Federation, Boilermakers, and Butchers. Over 20,000 workmen were represented. After a long discussion a scheme was recommended to the various societies which provides for a monthly journal to be circulated free of charge among all members of co-operating societies, and to be supported by a payment of 1s. per member per annum from such societies. This paper will be the sole property of the societies supporting it, and be in charge of a board of trustees to be elected by the societies. The question will be submitted to the shearers, carriers, and labourers at their annual meetings, and it is generally thought that such advanced bodies cannot fail to lead the way by carrying a resolution to co-operate *nem. con.* The indications seem to be that most of the other societies represented will be similarly and spontaneously favourable, particularly as the scheme has the joint advantages of excluding every interest detrimental to labour, and of placing the finances of the concern at once on a sound and truly co-operative footing. The name suggested, by the way, is the *Swagsman*, the Australian term for a workman tramping in search of work, a popular and topical name that should "take."

The *Australian Trades and Labour Journal*, of Melbourne, has gone to pieces on the financial rocks. The *Sydney Trades and Labour Advocate* celebrated its tenth weekly issue by announcing the receipt of a writ for libel. Its editor, W. G. Higgs, was for a long while secretary of the Typographical Association, and was given a testimonial the other day by the members for long and good service.

At the meeting of the Council of the Queensland Labour Federation held on November 26th, the secretary was elected delegate to visit the annual meetings of the Labourers, Carriers, and Shearers Unions to be held at Barcardine and Blackall on the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th of January next; he will endeavour to secure the affiliation of these societies, and, judging from the feeling which is manifesting itself in all parts of the colony, there will be no difficulty in doing so. At a meeting of shearers held on the Downs the other day, it was unanimously agreed to instruct their delegate to the Blackall annual meeting to vote for the federation of their union with all other unions in the colony. This in itself speaks well for the success likely to attend the secretary's efforts.

The rules of the Sydney Tailoresses' Union contain provisions for the payment of 7s. 6d. per week to each member who may be ill, this sick pay to continue for the first thirteen weeks, after which 5s. per week will be paid for the following thirteen weeks. The Sydney Journeymen Butchers have formed a union, which starts with 300 members. The Journeymen Bakers are following suit. The Cutters and Trimmers are also organising, and have about 30 members in their Provisional Union.

On Saturday, a meeting of the Operative Bakers' Association and non-union men connected with the trade took place at the Temperance Hall, about 400 being present. The object was, to invite the non-union men to join the Operative Bakers' Association in consequence of the defiant attitude shown by the master bakers towards trades-unionism. The following resolutions were passed *nem. con.*:

"That the non-union bakers of Sydney and suburbs agree to join the Bakers' Union; that five non-union members be appointed from the meeting to meet the committee of the Bakers' Union to arrange for entrance fees and any other business necessary to further the one object they have in view."

"That the committee appointed report to the Executive of the Trades and Labour Council and request them to take the matter up, and get an interview with the employers with the object of bringing about a settlement of the bakers' question."

About 70 men handed in their names to join the union, and a committee of five was appointed to meet the union committee, and the operative bakers now seem in a fair way of being united at last.

The movement for Australian independence is growing fast. This is the sort of paragraph one comes across:—"France has recognised the Brazilian Republic. Of course it has, but Britain has as yet—witness the last Exhibition—not fully recognised the French Republic, and will probably feel disinclined at first to recognise the Federated States of Australia." But then one also sees items like this taken from the Cairns (Queensland) *Post*:—"Before Mr. O'Malley, P.M., at the Police-court, an aboriginal, the property of Mr. A—, was charged with having stolen a coat with a watch and chain in the pocket from one Ah Fee, a cook in the Cairns hotel."

What with wage-slavery and chattel-slavery, the working-classes here won't be much better off for their new Republic, unless they take warning in time and prepare for it.

CORNSTALK.

Sydney, N.S.W., Dec. 14, 1889.

"If the *Commonweal* should succeed in its purpose, important and permanent will be the benefits accruing to those who have hitherto satisfied themselves with creating and accumulating wealth, of which they obtain but a very small and precarious share."—*Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, June-July, 1845.