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 townhall, as we thought it to be. Although there was nothing familiar to me in its surroundings, I knew pretty well where we was, for it was not surprised when my guide said briefly, "Kensington Market."

Just after this we came into a short street of houses; or rather, one large 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 naturalism of old or rude, as it is said to be. The spot is chosen 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 leads to Primrose Hill, and so on; rather a narrow strip of it gets through Kinsella to Stoke-Newington and Clapton, where it spreads out along the heights above the Le marshes, on the other side of which, as you know, is Epping Forest holding out a hand to it. This part was justly praised 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 did not feel much like 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 oak and sweet chestnuts were of a good growth; while the quakin, hawthorn, and gorse, which the planes and sycamores too numerous were) were very big and fine-grown.

It was exceedingly pleasant in the dupped shadow, for the day was growing hotter, and we need be, and the coolness and shade soothed my excited mind into a condition of dream. I was as free as any 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 a house as like that side of the way, built of timber and plaster, chief amongst which was the smell of the trodden broken near the way-side.

Romantic as this Kensington wood was, however, it was not lovely. We came on many groups both coming and going, or wandering in the edges of the wood, and from this we learnt that 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 green, and the rest of them, 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. I was said there 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, amiable, as if we were, and 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 a house as like that side of the way, built of timber and plaster, chief amongst which was the smell of the trodden broken near the way-side.

"Oh," said I, "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-tine, living in tents as you see. We rather used to them; they learn to do things for themselves, and get to notice the wild creatures; and, you see, the less they stay inside houses the better for them."

I must tell you that many grown people will go to live in the forests through the summer; though they are, like us, mostly part of 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 kinman 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 youngest here will be all the fresher for school when the summer gets over, and they have to go back again."

"But how do they manage that word? I don't see how it can have anything to do with children. We talk, indeed, of a school of hearing, and a school of painting, and in the former sense we might talk of a school of children—but otherwise, I don't know what it means."

"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 were supposed to be an incident of the museum, and not, itself, a thing. 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 doer, to lead out; and I have heard it used before; 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, contemptuously, "Well, education means a system of teaching young people."

"Why not old people also?" said I, 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 will you 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 pool where's one of them now? They all of them know how to light a fire; the bigger ones can make a fire, and do odd jobs at cabinet-making; or they know how to keep shop. I can tell you they know plenty of things.

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

"Guest," he, "perhaps you have not learned to do these things I have been speaking about; and if that's the case, do you run away with the idea that you must give all your time to study, and don't provide enough work for one's mind: you would change your opinion if you saw a Dorsetshire lad thatching, for instance. But how, I understand you to be speaking of book-learning; and as to that, it is a very simple affair. Most children learn 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 write too early; and even through scraps of their day-books 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 out books and make them, get them into book of which a few copies are needed—poems, and such like, you know. However, I am wandering from my lambds; but you must excuse me, for I am interested in this matter of writing, being myself a fair writer.

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

"Oh, of course," said he; in which he was right, for all the 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 seas often bring their children with them, and the little ones get together and rub their speech between one another.

And the older languages? said I.

"Oh, yes," said he, "they mostly learn Latin and Greek with better 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 wants; and if he want to learn, he can talk French, which is the nearest language talked on the other side of the water; and they soon get to German also, which is talked by a huge number of commons and colleges on the mainland."

Then the problem that I felt I had to answer myself as I sat, was, '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 a great pleasure to spend long periods of turmoil and strife and confusion. And as for me, I know 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 they get to know what's there to be known; because they've got to be known, and they've got to be known."

"And what about Bob Younger, 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?"

"Oh yes," said he, "they learn of you 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 look 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."

Besides, as I have already said, they go to 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 doing too much to them."

What could I say? I sat and held my peace, for I was afraid of tempting any sort of entanglements. Besides, I was using my eyes with all my might, to have a last glance at the charming scene 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:

"I say, 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..."
February 8, 1890.
THE COMMONWEAL

IN AUSTRALIA.

The Western Queensland drovers are organising; and the following practices are to be submitted to a general meeting of drovers called for December 5th, at Tambo.

RATES OF WAGES, AT PER WEEK.—For sheep, 10,000 and under, not less than 5s.; over 10,000, not less than 10s. For cattle, 500 and under, not less than 5s.; 500 and over, not less than 10s.

CONTACT RATES.—For cattle, at per hundred miles, for 500 head, not less than 1s. 6d. per head; over 500, not less than 1s. 3d. per head. For sheep, 10,000 and under, not less than 5s., 500 and over, not less than 10s.

As considerable enthusiasm prevails successful organisation seems certain.

Darlings' Disputing Disputing Disputing Disputing Disputing Disputing Disputing Disputing Disputing Disputing

"Yes," said Dick, "Westminster Abbey—what there is left of it." "Why," said I, "what have you done with it?" "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 about thirty years ago, of the lenitive monuments to feed and knives, 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 there. Use them, Will; you are not used to work of this sort of subsidiary market, and a storage place for munitions, and the handy thing was 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 queen-anne lath built in one of the parliaments, pioneer in past times, and which straightforward set up its pipe against their destruction, as it has done with many other buildings, which most people have had a hand in and public nuisances; and it was so energetic, and bad such good arguments presented in court to save it, that it 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 fob to the beautiful men who works and labours for the benefit of others in these parts; the place my great-grandfather lives in, for instance, and a big building called St. Paul's. And you see, in this matter we ordinary people, the poor building stands, because we can always build elsewhere; not need to have ugly business done in public places. Pleasing 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, the Social Democratic Association, which has been driven to it I would almost sacrifice out-door space to it. Then, of course, the ornament, which as we must all allow, may easily be made more livelier, but can hardly be in mews-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 used for such work, for in that direction I can see no end to the work, while in many a other lands some does seem possible."

WILLIAM MORRIS.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

DENMARK.

One of our comrades in Stockholm visited Copenhagen when the elections took place, and noting a special point, studying the tactics of the party leaders and their organ, Social-Democratic, he came to the conclusion that the tactics have been: (1) To criticise the proposals and doings of the Government, (2) To criticise the political difference between the candidates of the working-men party would struggle, if they were defeated. And our Swedish comrades say he is utterly astonished to find that the Danish elections are not at all used for Social-Democratic purposes, even for agitation against the Government, 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 years ago, regarding the workers against the worst forms of capitalist oppression. Not even that! These Danish Social Democrats only express in detail shall form Socialism (the Social Democratic reforms) through reform legislation in the Danish Parliament. It may be something of a standpoint, but it is socialistic.

An interesting and surprising series of critical articles upon "The Programme of the Danish Social Democracy." It would only be reasonable and evolutionary if every party that has a programme revised it, and tried to do the work of the Social Democracy, always be found healthy and necessary. Anybody doubting this only need read the reading the above-mentioned party amusing, party astonishing articles in Social-Democratic.

What I said last week about Social-Democratic leaving Arbeidersen and its being a new party since last year, has simply been a vail abuse of attacks in the former paper upon the former supporter of the party, who are again and again by means of evidence, that the latter has proved false, announced as hirelings of the Conservatives and the Government.

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. The noble outcome of the Australian Republic. The wise among us regard the Imperial Federation League as an important ally of republicanism. Because it has aroused the just and vigilant suspicion of people that it and similar movements lead to and it, and the national aspirations for independence.—Chief of Press.

"If the Commons should succeed in its purpose, important and permanent will be the benefits accruing to those who have hitherto satisfied their demand for self-government, but may yet be much better off for their new Republic, unless they take warning in time, and put the government of the Liverpool Daily Post, July 14, 1845.

Such a movement would with very and changing circumstances, be not a very small and precarious share."—Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper.