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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

A WORD TO THE POLICE.

BRAZEN and shameless impudence has ever been a distinguishing characteristic of a hired bully, and the stout men in blue who guard the fat persons, and, above all, the fat purses of the London middle-classes, have never been deficient in this necessary quality of their vile calling. Yet, shameless and brazen as we know their impudence to be, it came as a shock of surprise even to those of us who had seen most of them, to find them posing as underpaid workers, and raising a piteous cry concerning higher wages and "pensions." Warm from the congenial business of bludgeoning under-sized and overstrained post-men on their way to demonstrate on Clerkenwell Green, these well-fed chawbacons from the country districts hold meetings, elect delegates, present petitions, and formulate demands and pass resolutions couched in quite mutinous, not to say revolutionary, terms. Apparently these men who are betraying their brethren every day for the sake of the safe weekly wages and the warm uniform, and the certain pension secured to them, and of the countless tips and gratifications of all kinds given to them on all hands, are so ignorant of their own infamy as to suppose that the workers, whose ranks they have left, will sympathise with them because they find the devil a hard taskmaster, as in the long run he generally is.

If any policeman reads this number of the *Commonweal*, he may be really surprised to learn that he is regarded by us revolutionary Socialists (and not, as we believe, by us only, but by tens of thousands of London workers not yet Socialists) as an infamous scoundrel. We will endeavour to make clear to the presumably dull intellect of this bobby why this should be so. Let him understand that Socialists in general (and the present writer least of all) blame no man who, under present conditions, is driven into what we look upon as an anti-social trade. For aught we care, he may get his living by thieving on the Stock Exchange or at the Bar, he may join even the hired assassins of the army, or carry advertisements of swindlers in the streets, and yet be a good comrade. We recognise the fact that, like the rest of us, he is a slave and cannot help himself. But, slave though he be, there must surely be certain limits beyond which he will not go, although the penalty for not passing them be even the Christian's hell itself. If he be born an agricultural labourer and be expelled by landlordism from the fields whereon he has grown to manhood, we can understand that he may easily drift into the police force. Once there he must, of course, perform the "duty" which is set him to do. Yet, surely, not *all* such duty. Even you, our dull-brained friend, must see that you would not be justified in committing murder at the command of your inspector, or even of "I, Sir Edward Bradford" himself. You see it in the abstract, do you? But that is precisely what the police of London, you yourself, perhaps, have done—not in the abstract, but in the concrete. Not yet three years ago, at the command of your Commissioner, you set upon and cruelly bludgeoned your fellows, men of your own class from all parts of London, on their way to peaceably demonstrate in Trafalgar Square. You bludgeoned them and killed some; others you made prisoners, and when you got them inside your station yards and had them completely at your mercy, you beat them before trial within an inch of their lives; jeering and mocking meanwhile at the fools who, unlike you, had not sold their manhood for a compliment from the "beak," or a share of the cook's cold mutton. But why need we recall the memories of "Bloody Sunday"? Not that they need much recalling to London workers! What you were three years ago, that you are to-day. On May-day this year you broke up our processions, tore our banners, and (brave men that you are) assaulted and insulted some stalwart lasses (who, let us hope, will never endure the shame of having given suck to creatures like you) on Clerkenwell Green.

Great, doubtless, is the powers of organisation and what is called "discipline," and you may plead that you have made yourselves mere machines, and act like automata at the word of command. Even if true, such an excuse would not avail you much. We may remind you of those sentries on duty at Buckingham Palace that Sunday afternoon last autumn, who broke all military rule and doubtless incurred punishment by facing round, and presenting arms to the dockers' procession as it passed to Hyde Park: contrast their conduct with yours. But the excuse is not true; you have played no automatic part in the

outrages of the last few years; you have absolutely revelled in the base and bloody tasks which have been set you; you have cracked coarse jests as you have cracked heads; and you have shown yourselves brutal, cowardly hounds, who know neither justice nor mercy, you hired prostitutes, the baser and meaner because you claim to be "men."

On calm reflection, do you wonder that you are not appreciated at your own valuation? Seriously speaking, are you not vile and infamous? Do you wonder that we look upon your attempt to represent yourselves as ill-used workers as about the sublimest height yet reached by the blatant insolence of persons whose offensive impertinence springs from their utter lack of perception or intelligence?

Yet, even now, one way of repentance is still open to you as it is to others: it may not be open long. Even yet, you may save yourselves from that true wrath which is really coming, the wrath of the workers in the Revolution. You claim that you, too, can organise a strike for better wages and shorter hours. Organise a strike first, then, for nobler ends. Strike against such employment as you have been lately put to. *The next time you are ordered to "disperse" a peaceable procession, throw down your bludgeons and refuse the cowardly and brutal work like men.* Will you take this advice, now you find that the tyrants who have used you as tools for their dirty work are beginning to suppress your meetings? when the new Chief Commissioner, fresh from butchering natives in Hindustan, will not even allow you to meet in order to complain a little about your grievances? Now is the day of salvation; now is the time; now is the hour. By refusing this very day to carry out your new despot's orders you will win the sympathy of the working classes, and they will support you in your agitation. Prove that you are men, and not cowardly flunkies, base and cringing to the rich but brutal, murderous, bullies with the poor, and you will have the kindly help of your brothers in obtaining your demands. Refuse, and you will neither get sympathy nor help, and you will fail—as cowards always fail—in your agitation.

R. W. B.

NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. XIX. (continued).—THE DRIVE BACK TO HAMMERSMITH.

As soon as I had spoken I perceived that I had got back to my old blunder; for I saw Dick's shoulders shaking with laughter; but he wouldn't say a word, but handed me over to the tender mercies of Clara, who said—

"Why, I don't know what you mean. Of course we can afford it, or else we shouldn't do it. It would be easy enough for us to say, we will only spend our labour on making our clothes comfortable: but we don't choose to stop there. Why do you find fault with us? Does it seem to you as if we starved ourselves of food in order to make ourselves fine clothes? or do you think there is anything wrong in liking to see the coverings of our bodies beautiful like our bodies are?—just as a deer's or an otter's skin has been made beautiful from the first? Come, what is wrong with you?"

I bowed before the storm, and mumbled out some excuse or other. I must say, I might have known that people who were so fond of architecture generally would not be backward in ornamenting themselves; all the more as the shape of their raiment, apart from its colour, was both beautiful and reasonable—veiling the form without either muffling or caricaturing it.

Clara was soon mollified; and as we drove along toward the wood before mentioned, she said to Dick—

"I tell you what, Dick: now that kinsman Hammond the Elder has seen our guest in his queer clothes, I think we ought to find him something decent to put on for our journey to-morrow: especially since, if we don't, we shall have to answer all sorts of questions as to his clothes and where they came from. Besides," she said, slyly, "when he is clad in handsome garments he will not be so quick to blame us

for our childishness in wasting our time in making ourselves look pleasant to each other."

"All right, Clara," said Dick; "he shall have everything that you—that he wants to have. I will look something out for him before he gets up to-morrow."

CHAP. XX.—THE HAMMERSMITH GUEST-HOUSE AGAIN.

AMIDST such talk, driving quietly through the balmy evening, we came to Hammersmith, and were well received by our friends there. Boffin, in a fresh suit of clothes, welcomed me back with stately courtesy; the weaver wanted to button-hole me and get out of me what old Hammond had said, but was very friendly and cheerful when Dick warned him off; Annie shook hands with me, and hoped I had had a pleasant day—so kindly, that I felt a slight pang as our hands parted; for to say the truth, I liked her better than Clara, who seemed to be always a little on the defensive, whereas Annie was as frank as could be, and seemed to get honest pleasure from everything and everybody about her without the least effort.

We had quite a little feast that evening, partly in my honour, and partly, I suspect, though nothing was said about it, in honour of Dick and Clara coming together again. The wine was of the best; the hall was redolent of rich summer flowers; and after supper we not only had music (Annie, to my mind, surpassing all the others for sweetness and clearness of voice, as well as for feeling and meaning), but at last we even got to telling stories, and sat there listening, with no other light but that of the summer moon streaming through the beautiful traceries of the windows, as if we had belonged to time long passed, when books were scarce and the art of reading somewhat rare. Indeed, I may say here that though, as you will have noted, my friends had mostly something to say about books, yet they were not great readers considering the refinement of their manners and the great amount of leisure which they obviously had. In fact, when Dick, especially, mentioned a book, he did so with an air of a man who has accomplished an achievement; as much as to say, "There, you see I have actually read that!"

The evening passed all too quickly for me; since that day, for the first time in my life, I was having my fill of the pleasure of the eyes without any of that sense of incongruity, that dread of approaching ruin, which had always beset me hitherto when I had been amongst the beautiful works of art of the past, mingled with the lovely nature of the present; both of them, in fact, the result of the long centuries of tradition, which had compelled men to produce the art, and compelled nature to run into the mould of the ages. Here I could enjoy everything without an after-thought of the injustice and miserable toil which made my leisure; the ignorance and dulness of life which went to make my keen appreciation of history; the tyranny and the struggle full of fear and mishap which went to make my romance. The only weight I had upon my heart was a vague fear as it drew toward bed-time concerning the place wherein I should wake on the morrow: but I choked that down, and went to bed happy, and in a very few moments was in a dreamless sleep.

CHAP. XXI.—GOING UP THE RIVER.

WHEN I did wake, to a beautiful sunny morning, I leapt out of bed with my over-night apprehension still clinging to me, which vanished delightfully however in a moment as I looked around my little sleeping chamber and saw the pale but pure-coloured figures painted on the plaster of the wall, with verses written underneath them which I knew somewhat over well. I dressed speedily, in a suit of blue laid ready for me, so handsome that I quite blushed when I had got into it, feeling as I did so that excited pleasure of anticipation of a holiday, which, well remembered as it was, I had not felt since I was a boy, new come home for the summer holidays.

It seemed quite early in the morning, and I expected to have the hall to myself when I came into it out of the corridor wherein was my sleeping chamber; but I met Annie at once, who let fall her broom and gave me a kiss, quite meaningless I fear, except as betokening friendship, though she reddened as she did it, not from shyness, but from friendly pleasure, and then stood and picked up her broom again and went on with her sweeping, nodding to me as if to bid me stand out of the way and look on; which, to say the truth, I thought amusing enough, as there were five other girls helping her, and their graceful figures engaged in the leisurely work were worth going a long way to see, and their merry talk and laughing as they swept in quite a scientific manner was worth going a long way to hear. But Annie presently threw me back a word or two as she went on to the other end of the hall: "Guest," she said, "I am glad that you are up early, though we wouldn't disturb you; for our Thames is a lovely river at half-past six on a June morning: and as it would be a pity for you to lose it, I am told just to give you a cup of milk and a bit of bread outside there, and put you into the boat: for Dick and Clara are all ready now. Wait half a minute till I have swept down this row."

So presently she let her broom drop again, and came and took me by the hand and led me out on to the terrace above the river, to a little table under the boughs, where my bread and milk took the form of as dainty a breakfast as any one could desire, and then sat by me as I ate. And in a minute or two Dick and Clara came to me, the latter looking most fresh and beautiful in a light silk embroidered gown, which to my unused eyes was extravagantly gay and bright; while Dick was also handsomely dressed in white flannel prettily embroidered. Clara raised

her gown in her hands as she gave me the morning greeting, and said laughingly: "Look, guest! you see we are at least as fine as any of the people you felt inclined to scold last night; you see we are not going to make the bright day and the flowers feel ashamed of themselves. Now scold me!"

Quoth I: "No, indeed; the pair of you seem as if you were born out of the summer day itself; and I will scold you when I scold it."

"Well, you know," said Dick, "this is a special day—all these days are, I mean. The hay-harvest is in some ways better than corn-harvest because of the beautiful weather; and really, unless you had worked in the hayfield in fine weather, you couldn't tell what pleasant work it is. The women look so pretty at it, too," he said, shyly; "so all things considered, I think we are right to adorn it in a simple manner."

"Do the women work at it in silk dresses," said I, smiling.

Dick was going to answer me soberly; but Clara put her pretty hand over his mouth, and said: "No, no, Dick; not too much information for him, or I shall think that you are your old kinsman again. Let him find out for himself: he will not have long to wait."

"Yes," quoth Annie, "don't make your description of the picture too fine, or else he will be disappointed when the curtain is drawn. I don't want him to be disappointed. But now it's time for you to be gone, if you are to have the best of the tide, and also of the sunny morning. Good-bye, guest."

She kissed me in her frank friendly way, and almost took away from me my desire for the expedition thereby; but I had to get over that, as it was clear that so delightful a woman would hardly be without a due lover of her own age. We went down the steps of the landing stage, and got into a pretty boat, not too light to hold us and our belongings comfortably, and handsomely ornamented; and just as we got in, down came Boffin and the weaver to see us off. The former had now veiled his splendour in a due suit of working clothes, crowned with a fantail hat, which he took off, however, to wave us farewell with his grave old-Spanish-like courtesy. Then Dick pushed off into the stream, and bent vigorously to his sculls, and Hammersmith, with its noble trees and beautiful water-side houses, began to slip away from us.

As we went, I could not help putting beside his promised picture of the hay-field as it was then the picture of it as I remembered it, and especially the images of the women engaged in the work rose up before me: the row of gaunt figures, lean, flat-breasted, ugly, without a grace of form and face about them; dressed in wretched skimpy print gowns, and hideous flapping sun-bonnets, moving their rakes in a listless mechanical way. How often had that marred the loveliness of the June day to me; how often had I longed to see the hay-fields peopled with men and women worthy of the sweet abundance of early summer, of its endless wealth of beautiful sights, and delicious sounds and scents. And now, the world had grown old and wiser, and I was to see my hope realised at last!

WILLIAM MORRIS.

TO BE CONTINUED.]

(This Story began in No. 209, January 11, 1890. A few sets of Back Numbers can still be had.)

SOCIALISM IN THE PROVINCES.

LEICESTER.

Socialism has now firmly caught on here, and shows every sign of spreading. May 11th, Chambers and Barclay addressed good audiences, and there was a lengthy discussion. The Sunday following, our old friend Peacock, of Nottingham, lectured morning and evening—ruffling, in his second address, the complacent well-to-do and worldly Christians, and keeping the crowd in good humour. Proctor, of Nottingham, was the next speaker, who tore the emigration fraud to very tatters from personal experience. Sunday June 1st, Carless, of Walsall, delivered two addresses. For a young fellow of twenty-three, he is surprisingly fluent and confident, and put the principles of Socialism before his hearers with force and animation. June 8th, Raymond Unwin, of Chesterfield, gave us two most thoughtful addresses—morning, "Democracy"; evening, "The Survival of the Fittest." The speaker's exposure of our senseless shoddy production and terrible cut-throat competition was hailed with applause by the audience.

Friday, June 6th, we made our first incursion of this year into the villages. Barclay addressed the people of Ansty, a large village five miles out. Thomas Slatter and other anti-Socialists, getting wind of our meeting, went from Leicester to oppose us, and there was animated discussion, and great excitement among the audience. The next Saturday we took George Cores, of London, over, and a local capitalist, a brewer, made a personal attack upon him: but a friend of ours in Ansty, having whispered to Cores the information that his opponent was a sweating employer, our comrade lashed out, and turned the tables beautifully on the capitalist, to the immense delight of the villagers. Comrade Taylor also spoke at this meeting. Sunday 15th, Cores lectured thrice, a new station being opened up on the Old Cross, Belgrave Gate. Friday 20th we paid a third visit to Ansty, a Positivist friend taking the chair for us. Plenty of discussion again. But Sunday 22nd was by far our greatest day this season. Mrs. Lahr, of London, spoke thrice, the third time being on Sanvey Gate. Mrs. Lahr is an earnest speaker, and the fact of her being a woman told with her Leicester audiences. Three quires *Commonweal* were sold, 14s. 3d. collected, and six new members were enrolled.

We have had discussion at most of our meetings; and long after we have broken up it has continued among little groups. Sometimes the opponent of our principles is a fanatical teetotaler or thrift-monger, sometimes a capitalist on the make, and sometimes the discussion is simply one of difficulties among enquirers; but discussion there is sure to be, and from week to week it increases. Education inside our Branch is not neglected meanwhile. Every Monday night some member brings in a difficult phase of the great question for discussion; and as we are mostly young men, we are hoping to have presently two or three other speakers. We intend, as long as we come near paying railway-fare of speakers from elsewhere, to keep on importing them.