

## NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,  
AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. VIII.—AN OLD FRIEND.

WE now turned into a pleasant lane where the branches of great plane-trees nearly met overhead, but behind them lay low houses standing rather close together.

"This is Long Acre," quoth Dick; "so there must once have been a cornfield here. How curious it is that places change so, and yet keep their old names! Just look how thick the houses stand! and they are still going on building, look you!"

"Yes," said the old man, "but I think the cornfields must have been built over before the middle of the nineteenth century. I have heard that about here was one of the thickest parts of the town. But I must get down here, neighbours; I have got to call on a friend who lives in the gardens behind this Long Acre. Goodbye and good luck, Guest!"

And he jumped down and strode away vigorously, like a young man.

"How old should you say that neighbour will be?" said I to Dick as we lost sight of him; for I saw that he was old, and yet he looked dry and sturdy like a piece of old oak; a type of old man I was not used to seeing.

"O, about ninety, I should say," said Dick.

"How long-lived your people must be!" said I.

"Yes," said Dick, "certainly we have beaten the threescore-and-ten of the old Jewish proverb-book. But then you see that was written of Syria, a hot dry country, where people live faster than in our temperate climate. However, I don't think it matters much, so long as a man is healthy and happy while he is alive. But now, Guest, we are so near to my old kinsman's dwelling-place that I think you had better keep all future questions for him."

I nodded a yes; and therewith we turned to the left, and went down a gentle slope through some beautiful rose-gardens, laid out on what I took to be the site of Endell Street. We passed on, and Dick drew rein an instant as we came across a long straight-ish road with houses scantily scattered up and down it. He waved his hand right and left, and said, "Holborn that side, Oxford Road that. This was once a very important part of the crowded city outside the ancient walls of the Roman and Mediæval burg: many of the feudal nobles of the Middle Ages, we are told, had big houses on either side of Holborn. I daresay you remember that the Bishop of Ely's house is mentioned in Shakespeare's play of King Richard III.; and there are some remains of that still left. However, this road is not of the same importance now that the ancient city is gone, walls and all."

He drove on again, while I smiled faintly to think how the nineteenth century, of which such big words have been said, counted for nothing in the memory of this man, who read Shakespeare and had not forgotten the Middle Ages.

We crossed the road into a short narrow lane between the gardens, and came out again into a wide road, on one side of which was a great and long building, turning its gables away from the highway, which I saw at once was another public group. Opposite to it was a wide space of greenery, without any wall or fence of any kind. I looked through the trees and saw beyond them a pillared portico quite familiar to me—no less old a friend, in fact, than the British Museum. It rather took my breath away, amidst all the strange things I had seen; but I held my tongue and let Dick speak. Said he:

"Yonder is the British Museum, where my great-grandfather mostly lives; so I won't say much about it. The building on the left is the Museum Market, and I think we had better turn in there for a minute or two; for Greylocks will be wanting his rest and his oats; and I suppose you will stay with my kinsman the greater part of the day; and to say the truth, there may be someone there whom I particularly want to see, and perhaps have a long talk with."

He blushed and sighed, not altogether with pleasure, I thought; so of course I said nothing, and he turned the horse under an archway which brought us into a very large paved quadrangle, with a big sycamore tree in each corner and a plashing fountain in the midst. Near the fountain were a few market stalls, with awnings over them of gay striped linen cloth, about which some people, mostly women and children, were moving quietly, looking at the goods exposed there. The ground floor of the building round the quadrangle was occupied by a wide arcade or cloister, whose fanciful but strong architecture I could not enough admire. Here also a few people were sauntering or sitting reading on the benches.

Dick said to me apologetically: "Here as elsewhere there is little doing to-day; on a Friday you would see it thronged and gay with people, and in the afternoon there is generally music about the fountain. However, I daresay we shall have a pretty good gathering at our mid-day meal."

We drove through the quadrangle and by an archway, into a large handsome stable on the other side, where we speedily stalled the old nag and made him happy with horse-meat, and then turned and walked back again through the market, Dick looking rather thoughtful, as it seemed to me.

I noticed that people couldn't help looking at me rather hard; and considering my clothes and theirs, I didn't wonder; but whenever they caught my eye they made me a very friendly sign of greeting.

We walked straight into the forecourt of the Museum, where, except that the railings were gone, and the whispering boughs of the trees were all about, nothing seemed changed; the very pigeons were wheeling about the building and clinging to the ornaments of the pediment as I had seen them of old.

Dick seemed grown a little absent, but he could not forbear giving me an architectural note, and said:

"It is rather an ugly old building, isn't it? Many people have wanted to pull it down and rebuild it; and perhaps if work does really get scarce we may yet do so. But, as my great-grandfather will tell you, it would not be quite a straightforward job; for there are wonderful collections in there of all kinds of antiquities, besides an enormous library with many exceedingly beautiful books in it, and many most useful ones as genuine records of texts; and the worry and anxiety, and even risk, there would be in moving all this has saved the buildings themselves. Besides, as we said before, it is not a bad thing to have some record of what our forefathers thought a handsome building. For there is plenty of labour and material in it."

"I see there is," said I, "and I quite agree with you. But now—hadn't we better make haste to see your great-grandfather?"

In fact, I could not help seeing that he was rather dallying with the time. He said, "Yes, we will go into the house in a minute. My kinsman is too old to do much work in the Museum, where he was a custodian of the books for many years; but he still lives here a good deal; indeed I think," said he, smiling, "that he looks upon himself as a part of the books, or the books a part of him, I don't know which."

He hesitated a little longer, then flushing up, took my hand, and saying "Come along, then!" led me toward the door of one of the old official dwellings.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## JOHN MOST.

JOHN MOST's recent imprisonment and release on bail has occasioned some newspaper talk about him just now, says Hugh O. Pentecost, in the *Twentieth Century*. One of Inspector Byrnes's men is reported to have said of him:

"The best people in New York, by which I mean the solid, respectable, and business-like folk who make up the wealth of the metropolis, hate him about as thoroughly as they do any man in Christendom. They have abused the police—pretty roundly on one or two occasions for not shooting Most down, hanging him to a lamp-post, or disposing of him in some similarly abrupt manner, and his name in many a quiet household in this town inspires a sentiment of fear and alarm."

If this is true it reveals a bloodthirstiness in "the solid, respectable, and business-like folk who make up the wealth of the metropolis" that equals all that is charged against Most. And I am quite prepared to believe it. I have no doubt that "the solid, respectable, business-like," wealthy, church-going folk are the most merciless, cruel, and bloodthirsty people on earth when the fate of a discontented poor man is in question. The way they delight in capital punishment and reward the police for shooting strikers is an indication of their heartless natures. There is only one thing that surpasses their wicked cruelty, and that is their stupid ignorance of the real character and aims of such men as John Most. The idea of Most's name striking terror into quiet households is as laughable as to suppose the intelligent persons of this city to be afraid that a banshee would appear at their firesides.

Inspector Byrnes's man continued:

"The police have not bothered him much and for a very good reason. This reason has been explained with a good deal of frequency, but the public will not accept it. It is based on the fact that Most has really very little influence with the dangerous Anarchists of this town. He is a blowhard and that is all. There has never been any reason for people to fear him, and there never will be. The police are always in a position to take hold of him when they want him, but we have always been anxious here to avoid making martyrs of men who pose as liberators of a country that is already free. When you arrest a blatant fool of the Most stamp you make him a hero in the minds of ignorant people, and that is exactly the end he is striving for. The police have steadfastly refused thus far to make any more of a hero of Most than they could help. That is the real reason of the so-called lenity which has been shown to this silly and bumptious poser."

I may be mistaken, but I think Inspector Byrnes's man is wrong in everything he says here. If he means to say that Most has no influence with the working people of revolutionary tendencies on the east side of this city, he is certainly wrong. I have heard Most speak to two thousand working people who listened to him with rapt attention. And I have been informed that he has the confidence of the revolutionists almost, if not quite universally. My impression is that he has more influence among the social radicals in this city than any other one man.

When Most is called a "blowhard," a "blatant fool," and a "bumptious poser," he is totally misrepresented or I am no judge of men. I never saw him but once, and I confess that I was surprised to meet a perfect gentleman. Newspaper descriptions had had their effect upon me. I expected to meet a coarse person. Herr Most, as I saw him that evening, was a well dressed and perfect mannered gentleman; a man of polished and cultured address. I afterwards heard him speak, and do not hesitate to say that for choice words, fine rhetoric, and dignified though impassioned oratory, I have not heard so fine a platform performance for years. There were four or five speakers upon that occasion, Sergius G. Shevitch and I among them, but Herr Most was far and away the most finished and forcible orator of the number. There was nothing of the ranter about him. He was quiet and self-controlled even in his most impassioned utterances, and he swayed his audience with magnetic power.

I have written this for the purpose of cautioning our readers against believing what the newspapers print about Herr Most, or any other of the prominent men in the movement for social regeneration. I do not agree with Herr Most in his philosophy of society or in his advocacy of the use of physical force to resist the physical force of the capitalists. But I do believe him to be in intelligence, in learning, in gentlemanly manners, and in moral integrity, far superior to the average "solid, respectable, business-like" person who is so willing to have him shot or hanged.