

The great lesson which mankind has to learn is, how they may most speedily deliver themselves from the economical and political theories which enslave them to-day. To aid them in the performance of this duty is the object of all Socialist teaching. The greatest abilities have been from time immemorial engaged in rivetting or polishing their chains, though truth and freedom have not always wanted worthy advocates. I rely greatly on the sacredness of the Cause, and trust my earnestness and sincerity may be accepted in lieu of any other qualities which nature may have denied me. If the popular mind be disenthralled, the road to liberty will be short and easy. The people's mission at the outset is to destroy what is bad. It must be for their teachers while engaged in this process to consider what is to be substituted for the vast apparatus of evil which they are trying to remove. Revolutions are brought about in various ways in the course of time, by gradual changes, when they bear the name of reformation; or suddenly, by conspiracy, insurrection, and armed conflict—when they are given their natural designation. Philosophers, commonly inclining to the form of dominion established in their country, have too frequently counselled innovations imperceptible from their minuteness, in imitation, as they say, of time, which, though the greatest of all innovators, brings about its changes by slow degrees. But this, to my mind, is timidity, sheltering itself under the disguise of prudence. The life of nations have necessarily their paroxysms when the principle of *laissez faire*, after a protracted struggle, is overcome by the principle of change. The work of years is then crowded into a day, enthusiasm and passion are enlisted in the service of wisdom, sufferings are endured, life is sacrificed, but society emerges from the turmoil advanced whole centuries beyond the point at which it stood at the bursting forth of the tempest. If these periodical visitations are distasteful to the rulers and monopolists, the certain means of avoiding them is by ceasing to exist as rulers and monopolists and taking their fair share of the world's useful work. C. W. MOWBRAY.

(To be continued.)

COAL IN KENT.

THE news that coal had been discovered in Kent, and that it would probably be found to be workable, has no doubt sent a shock of hope and expectation to some hearts and of terror to others. Amongst those who have anything to lose, those who are able to live in tolerably pleasant places without being too stupified by poverty to prevent their enjoying them, among the cultivated middle-classes in short, I should think the latter feeling prevails. The threat of the creation of a new black country on the ruins of the rural beauty of some of the most beautiful country in England, and close to London also, must impress most well-to-do people, who do not claim direct relationship with Mr. Podsnap, as a real terror not to be compensated by the hope of that vague and somewhat doubtful advantage, additional commercial prosperity. This feeling shines pretty clearly through the conventional twaddle which is being written in the newspapers about the splendour of the discovery, and the splendid energy of that great and beneficent employer of labour, Sir Edward Watkin, whose virtues this grand discovery is advertising in a quite providential manner. We know pretty well that though a few capitalists may make fortunes over the job, and a few landlords fill their pockets with the royalties for working the coal-field, the discovery if it leads to anything serious will be to the well-to-do public a ghastly disaster, which will not be compensated by the possible reduction in the price of coal used for household purposes; a benefit which could be obtained at a much lower price by compelling the railways to carry the coals at reasonable rates. (I say nothing about the profits of the coal-masters and the royalties of the landlords of the existing coal-fields, as they should go to the miners and other workmen engaged in getting the coal and making it marketable).

But some of our working-men readers will perhaps cry out, "O damn the well-to-do classes!" (a sentiment in which a knowledge of facts compels me to concur,) "Won't this new discovery be a great benefit to the workers?"

Well, I don't think *Socialist* working-men are under any delusions on this point. I think they know pretty well that whatever loss they may suffer from the establishment of a new manufacturing hell in the south-east of England, will not be compensated to them by any amelioration in the lives of, for instance, the workers in London. They have learned by this time that Sir Edward Watkin and his pals will stick to whatever swag they may filch out of Kentish coal, which belongs to the people not to them, and will only yield to the workers what they are compelled to yield.

But to non-Socialist workers I must point out that whatever gains may be made will pass by them. The new coal-fields will give employment? Yes, but at no higher rate of wages than workmen receive now; that is, wages which just take the place of the slaves' housing and rations of ancient days; wages also subject to all the precariousness which curses the lives of all other workers at present. It will cheapen the price of coal to all London workmen? Well, if it does so permanently and generally, with such an article of necessity as coal, it will on the other hand reduce the wages of the workers throughout London. As a matter of fact, as far as the present condition of the London workers are concerned, it will leave them in the same condition as they are in now, and will but destroy the beauty of the country which will one day be theirs in reality, and not in name only as it is now. A few rich men will be richer; that is to say, they will waste more of the labour of the workers than they do now; but

no poor man will have advanced one step nearer towards the attainment of wealth, that is, to a decent enjoyable life.

For the rest, surely a new manufacturing district is the thing of all others which England least needs. Double, treble, fourfold if you will (and I think you can) the yield of victuals from the fields of Kent, and you will have done some good; for though the profit-monger will in the present eat up the extra produce, and keep it from reaching those who need it, yet with the first days of the break-up of monopolist capitalism (*i.e.*, class robbery) it would at once become real wealth to be used by our teeming population.

But fresh groups of manufactories for producing the inanities and abortions of civilisation, what shall we say about them? This—in the present they are instruments for carrying on the robbery of the poor by the rich, for producing counters to be used in the gambling market, which at once dominates and supports the capitalistic system of production. That is one function of their production; and the other is the making of goods for poor people, which none but poor people (*i.e.*, slaves) would buy. To make useless luxuries for the rich, and to force shoddy rubbish on the poor, will be the office of the manufacturing districts in the present if we are cursed with them. And in the future when we have become free, and no longer need the toys of the fool or the rags of the slave, what shall we do with them? They will be mere nuisances to be got rid of at the expense of labour and trouble.

Let us hope, then, that coal in Kent will turn out an empty scare; that is, *nothing but* a blatant advertisement for the worker's friend, Sir Edward Watkin.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIALISM.

Mr. Rickarby's letter, though written in a friendly and conciliatory spirit, requires, I think, some answer. Let it be admitted that Christianity, like all religions which include a system of morality, has something in common with Socialism. Let it also be admitted that many of the "sneers and unjust charges" of which Mr. Rickarby writes, are aimed at the stupidities and hypocrisies of the Christianity of the day, which no doubt men of Mr. Rickarby's stamp sincerely condemn; granted this, yet if Christianity is "a revelation addressed to all times" it can not be neutral as to political and social institutions, which, if they are to be binding on men's consciences, and not merely pieces of arbitrary coercion, must be founded on a system of morality; and that morality must not be founded on explanations of natural facts or a theory of life in which people have ceased to believe. At the risk of offending "real Christians," however well-meaning or honest they may be, we must ask "Is this true?"

Mr. Rickarby's contrast between real and actual Christianity evades the point of difference; that real (I should call it ideal) Christianity has never existed at all. Christianity has developed in due historic sequence from the first, and has taken the various forms which social, political, economic circumstances have forced on it; its last form moulded by the sordid commercialism of modern capitalism being the bundle of hypocrisies which, as I have said, Mr. Rickarby with other Christian Socialists condemns. When this beggarly period has been supplanted by one in which Socialism is realised, will not the system of morality, the theory of life, be all-embracing, and can it be other than the Socialistic theory? Where then will be the Christian ethic?—*absorbed in Socialism*. No separate system of ethics will then be needed; there will be no protest needed against the theory of life which will then be commonly held, we shall only have to guard the freedom which we have won.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE IMPERIAL MOUNTAIN AND ITS MOUSE.

ACCORDING to the *Reichsanzeiger*, the following is the agenda-paper of the Labour Conference called by the German Emperor:

I. Regulation of Work in Mines: (a) Is work underground to be prohibited for children under a certain age, and for females? (b) Are the working hours to be limited in mines in which the work is particularly dangerous to health? (c) Is it possible in the general interest, in order to secure a regular output of coal, to subject the work in coalpits to international regulations?

II. Regulation of Sunday Labour: (a) Is Sunday work in general to be prohibited, except in cases of emergency? (b) What exceptions are to be permitted in case of such prohibition being issued? (c) Are these exceptions to be decided by international agreement, by law, or by administrative ordinances?

III. Regulation of Children's Work: (a) Are children up to a certain age to be excluded from industrial work? (b) How is the age up to which exclusion takes place to be decided? is it to be the same for all branches of industry, or different? (c) What restrictions on working hours, and the sort of work permitted, are to be enforced for children permitted to take part in industrial work?

IV. Regulation of the Work of Youths: (a) Is the work of young people who are past the age of childhood to be subjected to restrictions? (b) Up to what age are the restrictions to apply? (c) What restrictions are to be prescribed? (d) Are exceptions to be made from the general rules for single branches of industry?

V. Regulation of Women's Work: (a) Is the work of married women to be restricted in the day time or at night? (b) Is the industrial work of all females (married and unmarried) to be subjected to certain restrictions? (c) What restrictions are to be recommended in this case? (d) Are exceptions to be permitted from the general rules for single branches of industry, and for which?

VI. Putting into Practice of the Regulations adopted: (a) Are provisions to be made for carrying out the regulations adopted, and for their control? (b) Are repeated conferences to be held by the representatives of the respective Governments, and what questions are to be submitted to them?