NEWS FROM NOWHERE:
OR,
AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. IX.—CONCERNING LOVE.

"Your kinsman doesn't much care for beautiful building, then," said I, as we entered the rather dreary classical house; which indeed was bare as need be, except for some big pots of the June flowers which stood here and there; though it was very clean and nicely whitewashed.

"Oh, I don't know," said Dick, ratherabsently. "He is getting old, perhaps, and worn out with trouble. And don't you think he doesn't care about moving. But of course he could live in a prettier house if he liked; he is not obliged to live in one place any more than anyone else. This way, Guest."

And they led us upstairs, and opening a door we went into a fair-sized room of the old type, as plain as the rest of the house, with a few necessary pieces of furniture, and those very simple and even rude, but solid and such a good deal of carving about them, as was designed but rather crudely executed. At the farthest corner of the room, at a desk near the window, sat a little old man in a rooky oak chair, well buckcased. He was dressed in a sort of Norfolk jacket of blue serge worn threadbare, with breeches of the same, and grey worsted stockings. He jumped up from his chair, and cried out in a voice of considerable volume for such an old man, "Welcome, Dick, my lad; Clara is here, and will be more than glad to see you; so keep your whispers down!"

"Clara here!" quoth Dick; "if I had known, I would not have brought—At least, I mean I would—"

Dick, stuttering all over upstairs, came out, clearly because he was anxious to say nothing to make me feel one too many. But the old man, who had not seen me at first, helped him out by coming forward and saying to me in a kind tone.

"Don't you worry, for me, I did not notice that Dick, who is big enough to hide anybody, you know, had brought a friend with him. A most hearty welcome to you! All the more, as I almost hope that you are going to amuse an old man by giving him news from over seas that can be seen that you are come from over the water and far off countries."

He looked at me thoughtfully, almost anxiously, as he said in a changed voice, "Might I ask you where you come from, as you are so clearly a stranger?"

I said in an absent way: "I used to live in England, and now I am come back again; and I slept last night at the Hammersmith Guest House."

He bowed gravely, but seemed, I thought, a little disappointed with my answer. As for me, I was now looking at him harder than good manners allowed of, perhaps; for in truth his face, dried-apple-like as it was, seemed strangely familiar to me; as if I had seen it before—in a looking-glass it might be, said I to myself.

"Well," said the old man, "wherever you come from, you are come among friends. And I see my kinsman Richard Hammond has an air about him as if he had sought you here for me to do something for you. Is that so, Dick?"

Dick, who was getting still more absent-minded and kept looking unwillingly an empty box, said, "Yes, Sir; but I don't think it is such a thing."

"Well, you know, my kinsman, Dick, knows things much altered, and cannot understand it; nor can I; so I thought I would bring him to you, since you know more of all that has happened within the last two hundred years than anybody else does—What?"

And he turned toward the door again. We heard footsteps outside; the door opened, and in came a very beautiful young woman, who stopped short on seeing Dick, and nodded to me as a rose, but faced him never a hair. Dick looked at her hard, and half reached out his hand toward her, and his whole face quivered with emotion.

The old man did not leave them long in this sky discomfort, but sat, shining on the old furniture, and, saying to me, my lad, and you, my dear Clara, I rather think that we two oldsters are in your way; for I think you will have plenty to say to each other. You had better go into Nelson's room up above; I know he has gone out, and he has just been over to the Museum and the public library. I should be glad to hear that you have very much improved in health since he has been here. He is doing valiant work."

We have leaving-leave debates every Sunday evening at our rooms, 533, George Street, and they are very well attended. The Free Reading Room is in a great success, and much used. We have a very fine collection of the Socialist, Labour, and Radical papers of the world, which are doing great well in letting the people here see how things are going on elsewhere. Our last contributions thankfulness to you, dear old man.

The Melbourne Socialists are fighting valiantly the battle for free speech on the War. Some of the prominent men have been called upon to give up their persistence, but they keep right on. There are two things over which the battle rages there—Free Speech and Free Trade. They don't want it from us, but meanwhile the struggle is a fierce one.

Sydney, N.S.W., Jan. 14, 1890.

Did never the proletarian more literally deserve its name than since the advent of the factory period, their rapid and degenerative increases, indeed, primarily representing "the progress of investments."—The Revolution of Sea, by Prof. Godden and J. A. Thomson.