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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

LABOUR DAY.

THERE is only one event this week to be noted; beside its overpowering importance all others shrink into insignificance. And this event, of course, is the world-wide demonstration of the international solidarity of Labour which took place on May Day. The capitalist press, with characteristic futility, has seized well-nigh unanimously upon the Eight Hours part of the celebration as though that were its be-all and end-all. It must be plain, however, to the most casual and careless of honest observers that the whole essence of the demonstration was the international solidarity of Labour; the Eight Hours' Day was an accidental, tacked on because it was the object of desire for the passing moment with those who, although desiring Socialism, dream of palliating the present system as they go along. There are always two divisions in the Labour movement—those who are fully convinced and avowed Socialists, and regard the present system as beyond anything but entire destruction; and those who, sometimes calling themselves Socialists, are disposed to patch and plaster here and there, rather than go in for sweeping and radical change. The former section, numerically the smaller, but intrinsically by far the more important, have throughout been at the head and front of the international agitation for a Labour Day; the other, by far the larger, and by far the least important, has been trying to divert attention and enthusiasm from the definite assertion of Labour as Labour to the claim for a legally fixed working-day.

Here, in London, the Revolutionary Socialists and the new Trades' Unions, in spite of all opposition, kept the red flag aloft and held the simultaneous meetings for which our foreign brethren looked. Those who, by dividing the London Demonstration and throwing all their weight in favour of the Sunday one, provided a means of escape and ready excuse for the cowards and sneaks of the Labour movement, did not see (or did they see too well?) that the whole value of the event lay in its proof of the capacity of the proletariat of the world for organised and simultaneous effort. They did not see (or, again, did they see too well?) that ten thousand men in the Park on Thursday, in spite of the police and damned by the press, were of immensely more weight than a hundred or two hundred thousand on Sunday, not only allowed but aided by the police, blessed by the reptile press, and looked upon with favour by all pastors, masters, and other persons in authority. Which will be remembered and looked back upon in years to come as meaning something more than a mere outing? The one was a demonstration of an intention to do something; the other of a desire to have something—when their masters gave it them. It showed that a large number of workmen would like to work shorter hours; it showed nothing else, except that it added the information they were only prepared to submissively ask for it, and would not even sacrifice a day's wages in order to get it. The international side of the question was practically ignored, as might have been expected from men who could with wanton treachery break away from the world movement to demonstrate the blindness, stupidity, and cowardice of that large part of the London workmen who follow their "legal" and "moderate" leadership. There is one consolation, if it is a small one; the May Day Demonstration in England belongs to us; in years to come, the "moderates" will be glad to come crawling behind us through the gap that we have made, but they will never be able to claim any share in its making. They will remember that while we were banned they were blessed by the police, and praised by the enemies of Labour on the press. A thought that should burn a fiery brand of never-ending self-reproach into their souls.

However, May Day was celebrated in London; and it shall be again. Though but a few of us be found who will do it, it shall be done. If we have to work double tides from now to then, it shall be done. Our comrades throughout the world may rely upon this, that though the majority of English workmen still retain a good deal of their arrogant insularity, and follow those who will stoop to play upon it, there is a large and rapidly growing minority who have awakened to the true position of Labour and the need for international action, and who are resolved to stand or fall with their brethren abroad. As we have begun we shall go on; as each recurring May Day comes and goes our strength will be seen to leap steadily up and up, until we are strong enough to push aside the sneaks and faint-hearts who embarrass us, break down the barriers that confront us, and enter into the promised land. S.

NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. XV. (continued).—ON THE LACK OF INCENTIVE TO LABOUR IN A COMMUNIST SOCIETY.

"You are very bitter about that unlucky nineteenth century," said I. "Naturally," said he, "since I know so much about it."

He was silent a little, and then said: "There are traditions—nay, real histories—in our family about it: my grandfather was one of its victims. If you know something about it you will understand what he suffered when I tell you that he was in those days a genuine artist, a man of genius, and a revolutionist."

"I think I do understand," said I: "but now, as it seems, you have reversed all this?"

"Pretty much so," said he. "The wares which we make are made because they are needed: men make for their neighbours' use as if they were making for themselves, not for a vague market of which they know nothing, and over which they can have no control: as there is no buying and selling, it would be mere insanity to make goods on the chance of their being wanted; for there is no longer anyone who can be compelled to buy them. So that whatever is made is good, and thoroughly fit for its purpose. Nothing can be made except for genuine use; therefore no inferior goods are made. Moreover, as aforesaid, we have now found out what we want, so we make no more than we want; and as we are not driven to make a vast quantity of useless things, we have time and resources enough to consider our pleasure in making them. All work which would be irksome to do by hand is done by immensely improved machinery; and in all work which it is a pleasure to do by hand machinery is done without. There is no difficulty in finding work which suits the special turn of mind of everybody; so that no man is sacrificed to the wants of another. From time to time, when we have found out that some piece of work was too disagreeable or troublesome, we have given it up and done altogether without the thing produced by it. Now, surely you can see that under these circumstances all the work we do is an exercise of the mind and body more or less pleasant to be done: so that instead of avoiding work everybody seeks it: and, since people have got defter in doing the work generation after generation, it has become so easy to do, that it seems as if there were less done, though probably more is produced. I suppose this explains a certain fear of a possible scarcity in work, which perhaps you have already noticed, and which is a feeling on the increase, and has been for a score of years."

"But do you think," said I, "that there is any fear of a work-famine amongst you?"

"No, I do not," said he, "and I will tell why: it is each man's business to make his own work pleasanter and pleasanter, which of course tends towards raising the standard of excellence, as no man enjoys turning out work which is not a credit to him, and also to greater deliberation in turning it out; and there is such a vast number

of things which can be treated as works of art, that this alone gives employment to a host of deft people. Again, if art be inexhaustible, so is science also; and though it is no longer the only innocent occupation, which is thought worth an intelligent man spending his time upon, as it once was, yet there are, and I suppose will be, many people who are excited by its conquest of difficulties, and care for it more than for anything else. Again, as more and more of pleasure is imported into work, I think we shall take up kinds of work which produce desirable wares, but which we gave up because we could not carry them on pleasantly. Moreover, I think that it is only in parts of Europe which are more advanced than the rest of the world that you will hear this talk of the fear of a work-famine. Those lands which were once the colonies of Great Britain, for instance, and especially America—that part of it, above all, which was once the United States—are now and will be for a long while a great resource to us. For these lands, and, I say, especially the northern parts of America, suffered so terribly from the full force of the last days of civilisation, and became such horrible places to live in, that they are now very backward in all that makes life pleasant. Indeed, one may say that for nearly a hundred years the people of the northern parts of America have been engaged in gradually making a dwelling-place out of a stinking dust-heap; and there is still a great deal to do, especially as the country is so big.”

“Well,” said I, “I am exceedingly glad to think that you have such a prospect of happiness before you. But I should like to ask a few more questions, and then I have done for to-day.”

CHAP. XVI.—DINNER IN THE HALL OF THE BLOOMSBURY MARKET.

As I spoke, I heard footsteps near the door; the latch yielded, and in came our two lovers, looking so handsome that one had no feeling of shame in looking on at their little-concealed love-making: for indeed it seemed as if all the world must be in love with them. As for old Hammond, he looked on them like an artist who has just painted a picture nearly as well as he thought he could when he began it, and was perfectly happy. He said:

“Sit down, sit down, young folk, and don't make a noise. Our guest here has still some questions to ask me.”

“Well, I should suppose so,” said Dick; “you have only been three hours and a half together; and it isn't to be hoped that the history of two centuries could be told in three hours and a half: let alone that, for all I know, you may have been wandering into the realms of geography and craftsmanship.”

“And as to noise, my dear kinsman,” said Clara, “you will very soon be disturbed by the noise of the dinner-bell, which I should think will be very pleasant music to our guest, who breakfasted early, it seems, and probably had a tiring day yesterday.”

I said: “Well, since you have spoken the word, I begin to feel that it is so; but I have been feeding myself with wonder this long time past: really, it's quite true,” quoth I, as I saw her smile, O so prettily!

But just then from some tower high up in the air came the sound of silvery chimes playing a sweet clear tune, that sounded to my unaccustomed ears like the song of the first blackbird in the spring, and called a rush of memories to my mind, some of bad times, some of good, but all sweetened now into mere pleasure.

“No more questions now before dinner,” said Clara; and she took my hand as an affectionate child would, and led me out of the room and down-stairs into the forecourt of the Museum, leaving the two Hammonds to follow as they pleased.

We went into the market place I had been in before, a thinnish stream of elegantly¹ dressed people going in along with us. We turned into the cloister and came to a richly moulded and carved doorway, where a very pretty dark-haired young girl gave us each a beautiful bunch of summer flowers, and we entered a hall much bigger than that of the Hammersmith Guest House, more elaborate in its architecture and perhaps more beautiful. I found it difficult to keep my eyes off the wall-pictures (for I thought it bad manners to stare at Clara all the time, though she was quite worth it). I saw at a glance that their subjects were taken from queer old-world myths and imaginations which in yesterday's world only about half a dozen people in the country knew anything about; and when the two Hammonds sat down opposite to us, I said to the old man, pointing to the frieze:

“How strange to see such subjects here!”

“Why?” said he. “I don't see why you should be surprised; everybody knows the tales; and they are graceful and pleasant subjects, not too tragic for a place where people mostly eat and drink and amuse themselves, and yet full of incident.”

I smiled, and said: “Well, I scarcely expected to find record of the Seven Swans and the King of the Golden Mountain and Faithful Henry, and such curious pleasant imaginations as Jacob Grimm got together from the childhood of the world, barely lingering even in his time: I should have thought you would have forgotten such childishness by this time.”

The old man smiled, and said nothing; but Dick turned rather red, and broke out:

“What do you mean, guest? I think them very beautiful, I mean not only the pictures, but the stories; and when we were children we used to imagine them going on in every wood-end, by the bight of every stream: every house in the fields was the Fairyland King's House to us. Don't you remember, Clara?”

“Yes,” she said; and it seemed to me as if a slight cloud came over her fair face. I was going to speak to her on the subject, when the pretty waitresses came to us smiling, and chattering sweetly like reed warblers by the river side, and fell to giving us our dinner. As to this, as at our breakfast, everything was cooked and served with a daintiness which showed that those who had prepared it were interested in it; but there was no excess either of quantity or gourmandise; everything was simple, though so excellent of its kind; and it was made clear to us that this was no feast, only an ordinary meal. The glass, crockery, and plate were very beautiful to my eyes, used to the study of mediæval art; but a nineteenth-century club-haunter would, I daresay, have found them rough and lacking in finish; the crockery being lead-glazed pot-ware, though beautifully ornamented; the only porcelain being here and there a piece of old oriental ware. The glass, again, though elegant and quaint, and very varied in form, was somewhat bubbled and hornier in texture than the commercial articles of the nineteenth century. The furniture and general fittings of the hall were much of a piece with the table gear, beautiful in form and highly ornamented, but without the commercial “finish” of the joiners and cabinet-makers of our time. Withal, there was a total absence of what the nineteenth century calls “comfort”—that is, stuffy inconvenience; so that, even apart from the delightful excitement of the day, I had never eaten my dinner so pleasantly before.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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

“WHAT NEXT?”

WHO would have thought that in the short space of time that has elapsed since Sir W. Harcourt made the jesting remark, “We are all Socialists now,” statesmen and politicians of all shades would roll the word Socialism over in their mouths and use it to conjure and delude with? It has ever been so, that a new inspiration or movement has first been condemned and ridiculed, and then prostituted and stolen by its enemies to use against itself. And the avowed enemies of Socialism (the Liberty and Property Defence League and others), what have they done or not done? Has all their work and money been in vain, or will they not make one more desperate and determined effort to counteract the influence of Socialism and grapple with the inevitable? What has brought this “theory” within the range of practical politics? What is the meaning of this sudden change in our masters, this conversion to kindness? Fear? Of what? An uneducated mob held well in check, or organisation of the workers? Or may it not be some diabolical conspiracy between Capital and “Labour,” or Landlords *versus* Capitalists, and the People to be again used as tools for their own enslavement, and for safer but not less profits for the classes? “Socialistic” legislation, forsooth! “We are all Socialists now,” and can well afford to be, so long as “we” live on rent, interest, and profit, and you produce them.

An “eight hour day” is first in the field.—To think that our noble comrades in Chicago went to their deaths for this thing!—What is the cause of this move? Our organisations say some. Conceded, for the sake of argument. But, mark you, “limited to government employes,” which means that more people shall be employed for government purposes on worse than useless work, the work of means of destruction and jobbery. Yes, it is possible that combinations of men will be able, by signs of their earnestness and determination, to wring from their masters this same concession; but when these same masters can no longer hold their positions or make enough profit, they may perhaps introduce the “iron man” (machinery) greatly improved upon, or shift their business into sunnier climes (where the workers are not so “damned unreasonable”), and so cripple that particular industry. O well, they may by that time have stopped foreign pauper immigration, and imposed retaliative duties on foreign imports. “What next?” What next, ye blind leaders of the blind? What next, ye constructive prophetic philosophers? Nearly everybody employed a “reasonable number of hours.” Is this the social transformation? Nearly everybody (among the poor) working “for the benefit of an idle, vicious class” just the same, only different (by an hour or two). Yes, the hour or two, or more, is certainly to be considered, and we shall use this time for educational purposes, hoping the freed workers will do the same. But what a consummation! What next? Why, we'll house the poor. Build cheap lodging-houses, and compete with the doss-house, or poor man's hotel-keepers; and build “healthy” workmen's dwellings; at what price and at whose cost? And give them “free” education, elementary, secondary, university, and technical. Yes, and free meals and “free” gifts of boots and clothing and lodgings and seaside trips. And what will be provided for the big children between 20 and 50? Why not free amusements and free competitions for prizes; would not that tend to keep the people contented and happy? “Socialistic” legislation, indeed, what a horrible farce! All that they could do (with the help of men that profess to know better) in Parliament would leave the workers all the time slaves, “better-off slaves,” but still wage-slaves. Look to it, ye simple, trusting, leader-worshipping workers. Organise, organise, you are told. Good. Organise, but also Educate, or what will avail you your unions if ye know not why and when to use them. Can you understand that a commercial crisis will affect you in your unions just the same as before? A new invention, a new fashion, and your unions

¹ “Elegant,” I mean, as a Persian pattern is elegant; not like a rich “elegant” lady out for a morning call. I should rather call that genteel.