

## NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

## AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

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

"Yes," said I. "I was expecting Dick and Clara to make their appearance any moment: but is there time to ask just one or two questions before they come?"

"Try it, dear neighbour—try it," said old Hammond. "For the more you ask me the better I am pleased; and at any rate if they do come and find me in the middle of an answer, they must sit quiet and pretend to listen till I come to an end. It won't hurt them; they will find it quite amusing enough to sit side by side, conscious of their proximity to each other."

I smiled, as I was bound to, and said: "Good; I will go on talking without noticing them when they come in. Now, this is what I want to ask you about—to wit, how you get people to work when there is no reward of labour, and especially how you get them to work strenuously?"

"No reward of labour?" said Hammond, gravely. "The reward of labour is *life*. Is that not enough?"

"But no reward for specially good work," quoth I.

"Plenty of reward," said he—"the reward of creation. The wages which God gets, as people might have said time ago. If you are going to ask to be paid for the pleasure of creation, which is what excellence in work means, the next thing we shall hear of will be a bill sent in for the begetting of children."

"Well, but," said I, "the man of the nineteenth century would say there is a natural desire towards the procreation of children, and a natural desire not to work."

"Yes, yes" said he, "I know the ancient platitude,—wholly untrue; indeed, to us quite meaningless. Fourier, whom all men laughed at, understood the matter better."

"Why is it meaningless to you?" said I.

He said: "Because it implies that all work is suffering, and we are so far from thinking that, that, as you may have noticed, whereas we are not short of wealth, there is a kind of fear growing up amongst us that we shall one day be short of work. It is a pleasure which we are afraid of losing, not a pain."

"Yes," said I, "I have noticed that, and I was going to ask you about that also. But in the meantime, what do you positively mean to assert about the pleasurable of work amongst you?"

"This, that *all* work is now pleasurable; either because of the hope of gain in honour and wealth with which the work is done, which causes pleasurable excitement, even when the actual work is not pleasant; or else because it has grown into a pleasurable *habit*, as in the case with what you may call mechanical work; and lastly (and most of our work is of this kind) because there is conscious sensuous pleasure in the work itself; it is done, that is, by artists."

"I see," said I. "Can you now tell me how you have come to this happy condition? For, to speak plainly, this change from the conditions of the older world seems to me far greater and more important than all the other changes you have told me about as to crime, politics, property, marriage."

"You are right there," said he. "Indeed, you may say rather that it is this change which makes all the others possible. What is the object of Revolution? Surely to make people happy. Revolution having brought its foredoomed change about, how can you prevent the counter-revolution from setting in except by making people happy? What! shall we expect peace and stability from unhappiness? The gathering of grapes from thorns and figs from thistles is a reasonable expectation compared with that! And happiness without happy daily work is impossible."

"Most obviously true," said I: for I thought the old boy was preaching a little. "But answer my question, as to how you gained this happiness."

"Briefly," said he, "by the absence of artificial coercion, and the freedom for every man to do what he can do best, joined to the knowledge of what productions of labour we really wanted. I must admit that this knowledge we reached slowly and painfully."

"Go on," said I, "give me more detail; explain more fully. For this subject interests me intensely."

"Yes, I will," said he; "but in order to do so I must weary you by talking a little about the past. Contrast is necessary for this explanation. Do you mind?"

"No, no," said I.

Said he, settling himself in his chair again for a long talk: "It is clear from all that we hear and read, that in the last age of civilisation men had got into a vicious circle in the matter of production of wares. They had reached a wonderful facility of production, and in order to make the most of that facility they had gradually created (or allowed to grow, rather) a most elaborate system of buying and selling, which has been called the World Market; and that world-market, once set a-going, forced them to go on making more and more of these wares, whether they needed them or not. So that while (of course) they could not free themselves from the toil of making real necessities, they created in a never-ending series sham or artificial necessities, which became, under the iron rule of the aforesaid world-market, of equal importance to them with the real necessities which supported life.

By all this they burdened themselves with a prodigious mass of work merely for the sake of keeping their wretched system going."

"Yes—and then?" said I.

"Why, then, since they had forced themselves to stagger along under this horrible burden of unnecessary production, it became impossible for them to look upon labour and its results from any other point of view than one—to wit, the ceaseless endeavour to expend the least possible amount of labour on any article made, and yet at the same time to make as many articles as possible. To this 'cheapening of production,' as it was called, everything was sacrificed: the happiness of the workman at his work; nay, his most elementary comfort and bare health; his food, his clothes, his dwelling, his leisure, his amusement, his education—his life, in short—did not weigh a grain of sand in the balance against this dire necessity of 'cheap production' of things, a great part of which were not worth producing at all. Nay, we are told, and we must believe it, so overwhelming is the evidence, though many of our people scarcely *can* believe it, that even rich and powerful men, the masters of the poor devils aforesaid, submitted to live amidst sights and sounds and smells which it is in the very nature of man to abhor and flee from, in order that their riches might bolster up this supreme folly. The whole community, in fact, was cast into the jaws of this ravening monster, 'the cheap production' forced upon it by the world-market."

"Dear me!" said I. "But what happened? Did not their cleverness and facility in production master this chaos of misery at last? Couldn't they catch up with the world-market, and then set to work to devise means for relieving themselves from this fearful task of extra labour?"

He smiled bitterly. "Did they even try to?" said he. "I am not sure. You know that according to the old saw the beetle gets used to living in dung; and these people, whether they found the dung sweet or not, certainly lived in it."

His estimate of the life of the nineteenth century made me catch my breath a little; and I said feebly, "But the labour-saving machines?"

"Heyday!" quoth he. "What's that you are saying? the labour-saving machines? Yes, they were made to 'save labour' (or, to speak more plainly, the lives of men) on one piece of work in order that it might be expended—I will say wasted—on another, probably useless, piece of work. Friend, all their devices for cheapening labour simply resulted in increasing the burden of labour. The appetite of the world-market grew with what it fed on: the countries within the ring of what was called 'civilisation' (that is, organised misery) were glutted with the abortions of the market, and force and fraud were used unsparingly to 'open up' countries *outside* that pale. This process of opening up is a strange one to those who have read the professions of the men of that period and do not understand their practice; and perhaps shows us at its worst the great vice of the nineteenth century, the use of hypocrisy and cant to evade the responsibility of vicarious ferocity. When the civilised world-market coveted a country not yet in its clutches, some transparent pretext was found—the suppression of a slavery different from and not so cruel as that of commerce; the pushing of a religion no longer believed in by its promoters; the 'rescue' of some desperado or homicidal madman whose misdeeds had got him into trouble amongst the natives of the 'barbarous' country—any stick, in short which would beat the dog at all. Then some bold, unprincipled, ignorant adventurer was found (no difficult task in the days of competition), and he was bribed to 'create a market' by breaking up whatever traditional society there might be in the doomed country, and by destroying whatever leisure or pleasure he found there. He forced wares on the natives which they did not want, and took their natural products in 'exchange,' as this form of robbery was called, and thereby he 'created new wants,' to supply which (that is, to be allowed to live by their new masters) the hapless, helpless people had to sell themselves into the slavery of hopeless toil so that they might have something wherewith to purchase the nullities of 'civilisation.' Ah," said the old man, pointing to the Museum, "I have read books and papers in there, telling strange stories indeed of the dealings of civilisation (or organised misery) with 'non-civilisation'; from the time when the British Government deliberately sent blankets infected with small-pox as choice gifts to inconvenient tribes of Red-skins, to the time when Africa was infested by a man named Stanley, who—"

"Excuse me," said I, "but as you know, time presses; and I want to keep our question on the straightest line possible; and I want at once to ask this about these wares made for the world-market—how about their quality? These people who were so clever about making goods, I suppose they made them well?"

"Quality!" said the old man, crustily; for he was rather peevish at being cut short in his story; "how could they possibly attend to such trifles as the quality of the wares they sold? The best of them were of a lowish average, the worst were transparent make-shifts for the things asked for, which nobody would have put up with if they could have got anything else. It was a current jest of the time that the wares were made to sell and not to use; a jest which you, as coming from another planet, may understand, but which our folk could not."

Said I: "What! did they make nothing well?"

"Why, yes," said he, "there was one class of goods which they did make thoroughly well, and that was the class of machines which were used for making things. These were usually quite perfect pieces of workmanship, admirably adapted to the end in view. So that it may be fairly said that the great achievement of the nineteenth century was the making of machines which were wonders of invention, skill, and patience, and which were used for the production of measureless

quantities of worthless makeshifts. In truth, the owners of the machines did not consider anything which they made as wares, but simply as means for the enrichment of themselves. Of course, the only admitted test of utility in wares was the finding of buyers for them—wise men or fools, as it might chance.”

“And people put up with this?” said I.

“For a time,” said he.

“And then?”

“And then the overturn,” said the old man, smiling, “and the nineteenth century saw itself as a man who has lost his clothes whilst bathing and has to walk naked through the town.”

WILLIAM MORRIS.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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

## THE LABOUR STRUGGLE.

### How to get the Eight Hours Day.

Now the London Trades Council has declared that an eight hours labour day is a necessity, on account of the “misery and social demoralisation” resulting from the “long hours of labour” in many industries, it remains for them to declare what means they will adopt to obtain this boon. On this point the resolution is vague, as it merely “urges our fellow-countrymen to be unceasing in their effort to successfully establish this limit by every legitimate means in their power”; but practically there are only two methods of obtaining an eight hour day—by organisation of trade unions, or Parliamentary enactment. Now, we cannot suppose the London Trades Council intends to adopt legislative action, or it would certainly not have declared, through the mouth of its virtuous secretary, Mr. George Shipton, that it could have no “politicians” at the meeting. We will confess that we thought George meant to exclude himself, for we remembered the sugar business, but find we were mistaken, for George is going to boss the show. Therefore this is not a case of righteous self-denial. Well, as no politicians are to be allowed to speak, we presume the London Trades Council intends to obtain the eight hours by the organised action of their trade unions. Now, there are two ways of doing this. First, sectional agitation on the part of each separate society; which would be unsuccessful, as it would simply mean hurling a small battalion against the whole organised force of capital; or a general attack by the immense array of organised labour on capitalist host, which would mean certain victory. Most trade unionists know, for they have been taught by recent experience, that small strikes mean defeat even in ordinary wages disputes, and therefore they would be useless to carry a concession which every capitalist would bitterly oppose. But supposing all the trade societies represented by the London Trades Council decided, say, on the 1st of May 1891 to come out on strike for the eight hours day. According to their own account, this Council represents from 100,000 to 150,000 workmen belonging to the principal trades carried on in the metropolis, and if they ceased work business would be paralysed, for their example would certainly be copied, in the excitement that would follow, by most of the workmen in London. This is not a matter of conjecture, but of absolute certainty, for when the excitement of the dock strike was at its height, if the employers had not made concessions nearly every workshop in London would have been deserted. Nothing could stand against such a movement, and the masters would be forced to give way. I doubt myself whether they would not surrender before the men left their work, for they would see resistance would be fruitless. Therefore it is clear that if the London Trades Council want the eight hours day they can easily obtain it. Some may say that this scheme is too revolutionary and that serious consequences might follow. Possibly, if the masters were obstinate. But I don't think they would be. At any rate, the consequences would not be more serious than those which the leaders of the miners had to face when they ordered a general strike for ten per cent. advance in wages a few weeks ago. Surely Mr. Shipton and his colleagues have as much courage as the leaders of the miners, and surely if the eight hours day is worth anything, it is worth a little risk and trouble.

### Mr. Bradlaugh again.

Mr. Bradlaugh again distinguished himself as a champion of capital in the House of Commons. On Tuesday April 22nd Cunningham Graham, in a speech on the motion concerning profit-sharing, said that he thanked God that he had never intervened as conciliator in disputes between capital and labour. Mr. Bradlaugh, who followed him, attacked him on this point, and was cheered by the assembled capitalists because he declared that he had never interfered in labour disputes except as a conciliator. Perhaps this is why they unanimously repudiated him as a representative of labour. As we know that acting as a conciliator usually means getting workmen to lessen their already too moderate demands for the benefit of greedy employers, we can understand why Cunningham Graham has never played that part. We can also understand why the young gentlemen on the Tory benches, elated with wine and insolence, vociferously applaud their pet Old Bailey bully when he “courageously” attacks a man who stands alone and friendless in the House because he lifts his voice on behalf of the wronged and oppressed. But we confess we cannot understand why papers that profess to represent workmen, like *Reynolds* and the *Dispatch*, should take the side of Bradlaugh against Graham. Have they also, like the *Star*, received their instructions from Mr. John Morley?

### Great Strike of Irish Railwaymen.

On Monday April 21 the railwaymen in Cork came out on strike as a protest against the dismissal of two porters who had refused to load some bacon which had been brought by blacklegs belonging to a firm of carriers where the men were on strike. Discontent had long been rife among the men employed on this line, and on Tuesday the strike spread to Queenstown and Limerick. On Friday at noon the strike became general; from Cork to Dublin, guards, signalmen, and porters all came out. The traffic is completely disorganised, for the only people who will do the blacklegging necessary to enable the company to carry on their business are the clerks, and they are not very efficient as guards or porters. There was an amusing

scene on Friday at Kingsbridge station. Owing to the strike of porters, Right Reverend Bishops and Removable Magistrates were forced to carry their own luggage, and being gentlemen of comfortable appearance, they sweated like bulls as they toiled along under the weight of their heavy travelling bags, etc. The trade in the south of Ireland is completely paralysed. A telegram from Fermoy on Saturday stated that in consequence of the strike, flour and coal were becoming scarce in that town, as there was then only five days' supply. It is expected that if the strike continues many firms in Cork and Limerick will be forced to suspend business. Michael Davitt has been interviewing the directors to see if they will receive a deputation from the men; but the directors have vowed vengeance against the signalmen, and are prosecuting them for having left their boxes without giving notice. They have now offered to receive the deputation from the guards and porters, but these honest fellows decided they would not leave their comrades in the lurch, Mr. Foreman (the delegate of the A.R.S.) declaring amid loud cheers that they had come out together and would go back together, and that all attempts to separate them would fail. It is a curious fact that some of the Nationalist papers, particularly the *Freeman's Journal*, have been most bitter in their attacks upon the men and their leaders. This proves that Irish capitalists, although they may be good Home Rulers, are quite as much the enemies of Irish workers as Balfour and his gang. No one can say the men are extreme, for they have offered to submit their demands to arbitration, and it is the obstinacy of the directors in even refusing to reply to the communications from their trade union that has brought about the strike. Seven signalmen have been prosecuted, and one has been fined £10. There is still no prospect of the strike ending, owing to the unrelenting attitude of the directors.

THE EAST-END TAILORS will come out on May 4th against the sweaters, who still work them from fourteen to eighteen hours a-day.

THE JEWISH BOOTMAKERS have returned to work, the masters conceding an advance of 3d. per dozen pairs of boots. N.

### INDIA.

COTTONOPOLIS is wild because India is supplanting her in China and Japan. The export of yarns from India to these countries during the past six years has increased by 300 million lbs., while during the same period the export of English yarns to China and Japan has decreased by 30 million lbs. Manchester now sees that her only chance of competing with Bombay lies in the introduction of the English Factory Acts, the advocacy of which will enable her to pose as a philanthropist. 'Tis true the factory hours in India are long, aye, too long. The average hours are 80 per week in Indian factories, 56 in English. But there is a difference. The white slave is driven hard the whole time, but the Indian works leisurely. To quote from the report of the Bombay government, “To long work they (*i.e.*, the operatives) have no objection as long as it is light work, and provided they occasionally go out to talk and smoke.” Western civilisation has not yet produced in the East human automatic machines, wound up to go factory like without stopping. Having failed to pose as philanthropists, the Manchester cotton-lords have become exasperated, and actually talk of getting “some sort of control over the mills in India.”

Behold! Western ideas are permeating India. The latest phase of Western life which the mild Hindoo has seized with avidity is the taste for alcoholic liquors. We are told that Brahmins are becoming liquor contractors in *sharub*, and that at high-caste weddings and religious festivals the liquor freely flows. Shocking news for the Blue Ribbon Army!

In the Jessore district matters are becoming rather strained between the ryots and the indigo planters. Mr. Suson, the magistrate, has been dealing summarily with the poor ryots; they have been fined and sent to jail in batches. Has any wicked Anarchist been circulating *Commonweal* amongst them?

An Indian paper, commenting upon Lord Cross's Indian Council's Bill, thus concludes, “Thirty year's experience has shown clearly that the means devised by the authors of the Act (of 1861) for ascertaining the thoughts and feelings, wishes and wants of the people of India in regard to legislation, have not been attended with the desired success, and that our Legislative Councils stand in urgent need of reform.” A. B.

Cardinal Manning speaks of “sweating” as “the greatest curse under heaven.” As the whole of our industrial system is a huge sweating shop, the cardinal must see the need for a big blessing to descend and mop the whole curse up. So the Brisbane *Worker* thinks.

A newspaper reporter, eleven years of age, engaged on a Sydney journal, and paid per line, made 12s. one week lately. Whereupon, says the Brisbane *Boomerang*, the senior proprietor on the following Monday morning notified the boy that he would in future be charged a subscriber's rates for the use of the paper, and would be obliged to pay 3d. per week for copy slips.

A London writer asserts that “now-a-days you have no choice between a society which is utterly soulless or one which is no doubt intellectual enough, but where half the company have at one time or another attacked the throne, denied the Thirty-nine Articles or assaulted the police” Quite true. All the brains are with the Radicals, the Agnostics, and the Revolutionaries.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

Capitalism asks pompously, as though it were putting an unanswerable question, “Can a man not do as he pleases with his own?” Before answering this question it is necessary to know what is a man's own and how he came by it. The mere assertion of a claim does not prove its equity, and sometimes unjust laws defend inequitable claims while the manner of acquisition has much to do with the integrity of an assumed title. Ethics is becoming a most important factor in modern economics.—*Christian Advocate*.

PARLIAMENTARY DUTY.—According to the best authorities on the subject, the chief duty of a parliamentary party is to oust the other side from power and instal itself instead, and any conduct which will tend to bring about this result is fair. Party leaders are supposed never to allow that anything done by the other side has been either really good or prompted by anything but base motives. A manifest duty of a party leader is to claim the authorship of any reform which he cannot convince the public will be injurious, by references to newspaper paragraphs and private letters to eminent persons. Should any press reports or *Hansard* reports seem to be against this claim, it is the duty of the leader to attribute the mistake to a hostile and misrepresenting press, ditto to *Hansard*.—*Australian Standard*.