

NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. XXIX.—AN OLD HOUSE AMONGST NEW FOLK.

As I stood there Ellen detached herself from the merry group on the little strand and came up to me. She took me by the hand, and said softly, "Take me on to the house at once; we need not wait for the others: I had rather not."

I had a mind to say that I did not know the way thither, and that the river-side dwellers should lead; but almost without my will my feet moved on along the road they knew. The raised way led us into a little field bounded by a backwater of the river on one side; on the right hand we could see a cluster of small houses and barns, new and old, and before us a grey-stone barn and a wall partly overgrown with ivy, over which a few grey gables showed. The village road ended in the shallow of the aforesaid backwater. We crossed the road, and again almost without my will my hand raised the latch of a door in the wall, and we stood presently on a stone path which led up to the old house to which fate in the shape of Dick had so strangely brought me in this new world of men. My companion gave a sigh of pleased surprise and enjoyment; nor did I wonder, for the garden between the wall and the house was redolent of the June flowers, and the roses were rolling over one another with that delicious superabundance of small well-tended gardens which at first sight takes away all thought from the beholder save that of beauty. The black-birds were singing their loudest, the doves were cooing on the roof-ridge, the rooks in the high elm-trees beyond were garrulous among the young leaves, and the swifts wheeled whining about the gables. And the house itself was a fit guardian for all the beauty of this heart of summer.

Once again Ellen echoed my thoughts as she said: "Yes, friend, this is what I came out for to see; this many-gabled old house built by the simple country-folk of the long-past times, regardless of all the turmoil that was going on in cities and courts, is lovely still amidst all the beauty which these latter days have created; and I do not wonder at our friends tending it carefully and making much of it. It seems to me as if it had waited for these happy days, and held in it the gathered crumbs of happiness of the confused and turbulent past."

She led me up close to the house, and laid her shapely beautiful sun-browned hand on the lichened wall, as if to embrace it, and cried out, "O me! O me! How I love the earth, and the seasons, and weather, and all things that deal with it, and all that grows out of it,—as this has done!"

I could not answer her, or say a word. Her exultation and pleasure were so keen and exquisite, and her beauty so delicate, yet so interfused with energy, expressed it so fully, that any added word would have been commonplace and futile. I dreaded lest the others should come in suddenly and break the spell she had cast about me; but we stood there a while by the corner of the big gable of the house, and no one came. I heard the merry voices some way off presently, and knew that they were going along the river to the great meadow on the other side of the house and garden.

We drew back a little, and looked up at the house: the door and the windows were open to the fragrant sun-cured air; from the upper window-sills hung festoons of flowers in honour of the festival, as if the others shared in our love for the old house.

"Come in," said Ellen. "I hope nothing will spoil it inside; but I don't think so. Come! we must go back presently to the others. They have gone on to the tents; for surely they must have tents pitched for the haymakers—the house would not hold a tithe of the folk, I am sure."

She led me on to the door, murmuring little above her breath as she did so, "The earth and the growth of it and the life of it! If I could but say or show how I love it!"

We went in, and found no soul in any room as we wandered from room to room,—from the rose-covered porch to the strange and quaint garrets amongst the great timbers of the roof, where of old time the tillers and herdsmen of the manor slept, but which a-nights seemed now, by the small size of the beds, and the litter of useless and disregarded matters—bunches of dying flowers, feathers of birds, shells of starling's eggs, caddis-worms in mugs, and the like—seemed to be inhabited for the time by children.

Everywhere there was but little furniture, and that only the most necessary, and of the simplest forms. The extravagant love of ornament which I had noted in this people elsewhere seemed here to have given place to the feeling that the house itself and its associations was the ornament of the country life amidst which it had been left stranded from old times, and that to re-ornament it would but take away its use as a piece of natural beauty.

We sat down at last in a room over the wall which Ellen had caressed, and the walls of which were still hung with old tapestry, originally of no artistic value, but which had now faded into pleasant grey tones which harmonised thoroughly well with the quiet of the place, and which would have been ill supplanted by brighter and more striking decoration.

I asked a few random questions of Ellen as we sat there, but scarcely listened to her answers, and presently became silent, and then scarce conscious of anything but that I was there in that old room, the doves

crooning from the roofs of the barn and dovecot beyond the window opposite to me.

My thought returned to me after what I think was but a minute or two, but which, as in a vivid dream, seemed as if it had lasted a long time, when I saw Ellen sitting, looking all the fuller of life and pleasure and desire from the contrast with the grey faded tapestry with its futile design, which was now only bearable because it had grown so faint and feeble.

She looked at me kindly, but as if she read me through and through. She said: "You have begun again your never-ending contrast between the past and this present. Is it not so?"

"True," said I. "I was thinking of what you, with your capacity and intelligence, joined to your love of pleasure, and your impatience of unreasonable restraint—of what you would have been in that past. And even now, when all is won and has been for a long time, my heart is sickened with thinking of all the waste of life that has gone on for so many years."

"So many centuries," she said, "so many ages!"

"True," I said; "too true," and sat silent again.

She rose up and said: "Come, I must not let you go off into a dream again so soon. If we must lose you, I want you to see all that you can see first before you go back again."

"Lose me?" I said—"go back again? What do you mean?"

She smiled somewhat sadly, and said: "Not yet; we will not talk of that yet. Only, what were you thinking of just now?"

I said falteringly: "I was saying to myself, The past, the present? Should she not have said the contrast of the present with the future: of blind despair with hope?"

"I knew it!" she said. Then she caught my hand and said excitedly, "Come, while there is yet time! Come!" And she led me out of the room; and as we were going downstairs and out of the house into the garden by a little side door which opened out of a curious lobby, she said in a calm voice, as if she wished me to forget her sudden nervousness: "Come! we ought to join the others before they come here looking for us. And let me tell you, my friend, that I can see you are too apt to fall into mere dreamy musing: no doubt because you are not yet used to our life of repose amidst of energy, of work which is pleasure and pleasure which is work."

She paused a little, and as we came out into the lovely garden again she said: "My friend, you were saying that you wondered what I should have been if I had lived in those past days of turmoil and oppression. Well, I think I have studied the history of them to know pretty well. I should have been one of the poor, for my father when he was working was a mere tiller of the soil. Well, I could not have borne that; therefore my beauty and cleverness and brightness" (she spoke with no blush or simper of false shame) "would have been sold to rich men, and my life would have been wasted indeed; for I know enough of that to know that I should have had no choice, no power of will over my life; and that I should never have bought pleasure from the rich men, or even opportunity of action, whereby I might have won some true excitement. I should have wrecked and wasted in one way or another, either by penury or by luxury. Is it not so?"

"Indeed it is," said I.

She was going to say something else, when a little gate in the fence, which led into a small elm-shaded field, was opened, and Dick came with hasty cheerfulness up the garden path, and was presently standing between us, a hand laid on the shoulder of each. He said: "Well, neighbours, I thought you two would like to see the old house quietly without a crowd in it. Isn't it a jewel of a house after its kind? Well, come along, for it is getting towards dinner-time. Perhaps you, guest, would like a swim before we sit down to what I fancy will be a pretty long feast?"

"Yes," I said, "I should like that."

"Well, goodbye for the present, neighbour Ellen," said Dick. "Here comes Clara to take care of you, as I fancy she is more at home amongst our friends here."

Clara came out of the field as he spoke; and with one look at Ellen I turned and went with Dick, doubting, if I must say the truth, whether I should see her again.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

[TO BE CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.]

A Tonic Sol Fa Class meets every Thursday evening at 8 o'clock at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith; comrade J. Munday conductor. All members of the League are cordially invited to attend and assist.

COSMOPOLITAN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, Wharfedale Temperance Bar, 46 Wharfedale Road, Kings Cross.—Meets every Wednesday at 8.30 for discussion of social subjects. October 1st, Mr. Sweet, "Social Democracy v. Anarchy."

FABIAN SOCIETY.—A course of lectures on "COMMON OBJECTIONS TO SOCIALISM" will be given at Bloomsbury Hall, Hart Street, New Oxford Street, W.C., on Friday evenings at 8 o'clock.—October 3rd. II. *That Socialism is condemned by the lessons of history.* "Because Democracy has always broken down," Sidney Webb; "Because all Socialist experiments have failed," Graham Wallas.

SCOTTISH SOCIALIST FEDERATION—EDINBURGH.—Our meetings in Edinburgh and Leith on the past two Sundays have been very successful, especially in Leith, where we anticipate crowded houses during the winter. We have all but secured a nice hall in Henderson Street. On Monday, 15th, we held our first annual picnic at Rosslyn, to which place a good number of our comrades, with their wives and children, drove out by coach. Comrade McDonald and his daughter, with their violins, furnished the music for the dancing, which was largely taken advantage of by the strangers present. The singing of revolutionary songs attracted a good many natives and others towards us, and the opportunity was taken to make an appeal for Socialism, comrades Glasse and Smith addressing the gathering. Comrade J. H. Smith took a capital photo of us all in group. On Wednesday, 17th, we held a public meeting in our hall, 50, South Bridge, when we had for discussion "The Tramways Question." It was fairly successful and well reported in the newspapers. We are still adding to our numbers.

SWEATING AMONG THE FISHERMEN.

Of all the white-slavery there is in Christian, commercial, and loyal England, perhaps the slavery of the demoralised, unorganised, and down-trodden fisherman is the worst. Little do the people in our inland towns and villages know the hardships, starvation, and degradation these men have to endure to procure the celebrated Yarmouth bloaters they hear so much of and get so few of, and the way they are robbed by the owners and middlemen. Well might John Ruskin say, "England has become a nation of thieves. Everybody is trying to rob everybody else, and that not bravely and strongly, but in the cowardly and loathsome ways of lying trade." When will the fishermen rise and assert their manhood like true men, and not go begging and crawling, cap in hand, to their so-called masters for a petty pittance, not sufficient to keep body and soul together, but by their united efforts, and organisation with their fellow-workers of the whole world, rise and shake off the chains of commercial slavery, and strike down monopoly and authority? Know ye not that the workers produce all wealth, yet do not get for themselves, their wives and children, the bare necessities of life; whilst the idlers—not the poor devils who hang about the quay, wearing shoddy clothes, eating adulterated food, and living, or *lingering* is perhaps nearer the mark, in filthy, insanitary slums, not fit for dogs to live in, but those rich idlers, those sweaters, "those luxurious drones who would eat your flesh and drink your blood"—live in mansions, that we the workers have built—not one single brick or nail have they made themselves—nay, they would not make them if they could, and they could not if they would? Have you never walked along a nice pleasant country road and seen some large mansion, in the midst of a splendid park, in which there is a large board announcing that "trespassers will be prosecuted" or "Beware of the dog," and has not your blood boiled within you to think that one useless creature should monopolise the glorious gifts of nature, and the labour of scores of poor workers, who perhaps have not where to lay their heads, some in prison for "stealing" a rabbit, or even a turnip, to ease their hunger for a little while, and some dying in our modern bastille the workhouse? Oh, workmen, do show a little spirit of rebellion, and try to break down the present wage-slavery. Why should we not enjoy the very best of everything nature and labour has provided for us all, but which we the workers never get? Everything is produced by labour, every nail, every rope, every sail, everything that is necessary to catch the fish, is made by some worker or other. Then why should not everything belong to labour? It should, and it will do as soon as you make up your minds to do it. "Why, then, and for what are we waiting? There are three words to speak, *We will it*, and what is the foeman but the dream-strong wakened and weak?"

But the fisherman. It will be as well to state here the conditions on which the men are engaged, as most people inland think the boats belong to the men—which they should do. After all expenses are paid, including towing, harbour dues, wharf-dues, salesman's commission, food, etc., the remainder of the money, *earned by the men*, is divided into seventeen shares, the owner taking ten, for which he has done nothing, and the crew seven shares; which seven shares are again divided into ten or ten and a half shares amongst the crew of ten men and a boy as follows:

Number of Shares.	Boat's Crew.
2 for the	Master or Skipper
1½ "	Mate
1 "	Oarsman
1 "	Whalesman
7-8ths "	Net Ropeman
7-9ths "	Net Stower
¾ each for	4 Scudders or Junkers
½ for the	Boy

As will be seen by the above, the master, who does the least work and gets the most sleep, also gets the most pay. The first four get more than the other seven. The scudders, who do the hardest and the most work, get the worst paid. The owner, the damned monopolist, the greatest curse of the present society, gets more than all the crew put together. Men, is not this eating your flesh and drinking your blood? See to this, like true men. If you are too cowardly to do it for your own sakes, think of your children at home crying for bread, their poor little faces pinched with hunger; compare them with the children of your *masters*—nay, they will not bear comparison; their little feet cold and often bare as they have to trot off to school, sometimes without a bit in their insides, whilst the children of the monopolist have the best of everything their hearts can desire, and your daughters, who ought to be at home helping their overworked mother, have to wait on them hand and foot.

If only we can get the mothers to understand Socialism, our cause is won; for instead of instilling respect for authority into their little hearts, which, when they reach manhood, takes so much to knock out of them, they would instil into their young hearts the noble principles of Socialism.

On signing to a boat, the men have to go and rig her out for sea—the boat having been laid up since the last fishing—which lasts four or five days. All the men get for this is a little bread and cheese and beer. Directly she has got all on board that is required she is towed out to sea; then the slavery begins. There is always something or other to be done, either pulling on ropes, scudding the fish, scrubbing down, etc.; the crew, with the exception of the master, very seldom get more than four or five hours sleep at a stretch, and that in a little bunk not large enough to keep a rabbit in, in fact, if any one was to keep rabbits in places like the men have to sleep in they would soon have the inspector of nuisances down on them. Can you wonder at them being degraded?

On coming into harbour with her catch, and directly she touches the quay, she is covered with a swarm of men and boys anxious to get a job, telling out or carrying the herrings ashore. The money they are paid comes out of the boat expenses instead of out of the owner's share. When all the herrings are got out the boat is washed down and got ready for sea again; all this is done by the crew. If they get her ready by 12 or 1 p.m., they very often go to sea again the same day. If not, the crew are allowed a night ashore, which happens about once in eight or ten days, but they are sent off to sea first thing in the morning. If any of the crew stop rather late the owner sets another slave on in his place, sometimes paying him as much as £1 a night during the time they are at sea, which money comes out of the man's share that stops ashore. Sometimes by an accident of this kind a man with a wife and family has to go the whole of the fishing for nothing, the owner having paid most of his money away to the man he set on in his place, the rest of his wages go for sea clothing.

The following is a bill one of the Yarmouth men had stopped out of his share:

<i>This is what he is paid, because he had no money to pay Cash.</i>	<i>This is what he could have got them for in any shop for Cash.</i>
£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1 Pair Slush Boots 1 4 0	. . . . . 0 16 0
1 Oil Frock 0 10 6	. . . . . 0 7 6
1 Pair Duffel Trousers 0 10 6	. . . . . 0 7 6
1 Blue Guernsey 0 10 6	. . . . . 0 7 6
1 Gray Guernsey 0 7 6	. . . . . 0 5 0
2 Sea Shirts 0 7 6	. . . . . 0 4 0
1 Tan Jumper 0 3 6	. . . . . 0 1 6
1 Sou' Wester 0 2 3	. . . . . 0 1 0
1 Pair Sea Stockings 0 6 6	. . . . . 0 2 9
1 Sea Bag 0 1 6	. . . . . 0 1 0
1 Pair Oil Leggings 0 3 6	. . . . . 0 2 6
1 Pair Mitts 0 1 3	. . . . . 0 1 0
1 Knife 0 1 0	. . . . . 0 0 9
Total 4 10 0	Total 2 18 0
Deduct 2 18 0	
Money Stolen 1 12 0	not including the other sweater's pound of flesh.

A sweating exploiter, one of the great unpaid, has a monopoly in this gigantic robbery. When will the fishermen awake to their own interests?

And so the game goes on year after year, to the latter part of December, when the boats make up, which last three or four days. Then comes the grand settling of accounts, some getting £10 or £12 for twenty or more weeks of the worst of slavery, whilst others pay off their "debts" the owner taking good care that he gets his plunder. After Christmas the fishermen are forced by hunger to go begging to the Corporation to *allow* them to break stones or some other slavery for 2s. per day. Some day they will go to the sweaters and demand the wealth they have stolen from them.

J. HEADLEY.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

GERMANY.

The discussion of the proposed party programme, etc., which will be the order of the day at the Congress, is going on, and has already stirred up a great deal of bad temper. The way in which the old ones want to enforce their authority is certainly very provoking, especially as everybody knows that they are very far from being the "old ones." They have shifted and drifted about according to circumstances, that it might be said it is surprising that still such a great number follow them in their antics. Berlin seems to be the stronghold of the "kickers," and some meetings there have been far from harmonious. No doubt that the enemies of the Socialistic movement are rather pleased at this sight, but that can't be helped; it is much better that these differences are open and freely discussed than kept back; they only go in the blood of the body, forming diseases much worse than sores which can receive open treatment. Meanwhile everybody is anxiously waiting for the coming Congress, and most members wished that the wrangling should be stopped till then, though it is not at all unlikely that a split will take place.

The great lock-out in Hamburg is nearly at an end now. It can't be said that it has ended quite in favour of the workmen, though it is true the combined capitalists have been unable to smash the union (which was their desire), and must take men on without asking them to sign a paper declaring that they belong to no union; but on the other hand the unions have lost a good many members and have an enormous drain on their funds. The committee thank all friends who so liberally helped them in their struggle; and after all, if the beneficial results are not great, the workmen have learnt to stand together, and the different trades will work more and more in combined unity; if one organisation is touched it will be felt and resented by all.

RTR.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

The son of our old friend, John Bedford Leno, in writing to his father a few days since from Helensburgh, N.S.W., says:

"The masters of this continent are beginning to quake. The miners, to which body of workers I belong, are all combined, the three districts as one. The trades here are like a bundle of sticks, the tie that binds them being formed of one common interest. We have been paying sixpence in the pound weekly for six months in order to keep the men out at a neighbouring pit. I can see that Labour is about to turn the table on Capital, or, in other words, assume the position of 'boss.'—Yours, dear father, WILLIAM LENO, Miner."

"The Labour World."

Michael Davitt's paper, although "moderate" in tone, is certainly the best written and best edited "labour paper" we have yet seen. Morrison Davidson begins a fine series of articles entitled 'The Book of Labour.' The 'Scottish Notes' and the column on 'Social Contrasts' are also excellent. Some sensational revelations about the dealings of the present Government with Pigott, and also concerning the way dynamite explosions have been got up by the "law-'n'-order" party, are promised for next week. We are glad to see Mr. Davitt doesn't share the Republican prejudices of our old friend Reynolds, since the following appears in the pages of the *Labour World*:

"Let us hear no more trash about 'free' America as compared with down-trodden Europe. Both continents are down-trodden by the rich men who own the raw material out of which wealth is created by human labour. When the land of the United States is all absorbed by private persons, as it will be in 20 years' time, there will not be a pin to choose between America and Europe, so far as wage-workers are concerned. Wages may be higher in America, but the increased cost of living there will nearly equalise the condition of the two continents. While for swindling, lying, and merciless oppression, many American capitalists leave their European brethren far behind."

What does Reynolds think of this? Mr. Davitt and his friends know the condition of the American workers, unlike the writers in Reynolds, whose sole knowledge springs from reading the works of Mr. Andrew Carnegie.

EXCURSION TO SHIRLEY HILLS will take place on Sunday, September 23th. Brakes will start from the Office at 10 a.m.
SCOTTISH SOCIALIST FEDERATION.—Labour Hall, 50 South Bridge, Edinburgh. Business meeting Fridays at 8 p.m. Secretary, W. D. Tait, 20 Dundee Street.