OFFICES: 24 Great Queen Street, London, W.C.

THE COMMONWEAL

ONE PENNY, WEEKLY.

October

THE COMMONWEAL is the official organ of the Socialist League; but, unless definitely announced by the Editor, no article is to be taken as expressing in more than a passing way the views of the League as a body. In accordance with the Manifesto and Statement of Principles of the League, the COMMONWEAL is an exponent of international Revolutionary Socialism. On minor differences of opinion the widest freedom of discussion is maintained.

Matters are not always in print as if you were reading it naturally. I will not hallucinate.

THE HMD waiting when might be, and the little hill of the three very pretty stone houses new-grown on it (I use the word advisedly; for they seemed to belong to it) looked down happily on the full streams and waving grass, grey now, but for the sunset, with its ripening nothing.

The railway having disappeared, and therewith the various level bridges over the streams of Thames, we were soon through Medley Lock and in the wide water that washes Port Meadow, with its numerous populous and handsome rowing boats. We now entered the world of books, and I thought with interest how its name and use had survived from the older imperfect communal period, through the time of the confused struggle and every of the rights of property, into the present rest and happiness of complete Communism.

I was taken ashore again at Godstow, to see the remains of the old nunery, pretty nearly in the same condition as I had remembered them; and from the high ledge over the last close I could see, in the twilight, how beautiful the little village with its grey stone houses had become; for we had now come into the stone-country, in which every house must be either built, walls and roof, of grey stone or be a blot on the landscape.

We still rowed on after this, Ellen taking the sculls in my boat; passed a weir a little higher up, and about three miles beyond it came a house, which, though it was a little hill, had been inhabited, as its folk were mostly tented in the hay-fields. We started before six o'clock the next morning, as we were still twenty-five miles from our resting place, and Dick wanted to be there before dusk. The weather was pleasant, too, though I personally would not allow this, nor mention the interesting person of the company.

After having come so far," said she, "I will not be put off with a companion who will always think of somebody else than me. The guest is the only person who can accommodate itself to that really," said she, turning to me, "and have not said it merely as a pretty saying."

Ellen was blushed and looked very happy at all this; for I think up to this time she had been rather frightened of Ellen.

As we passed through the short and winding reaches of the now quickly lessening stream, Ellen said: "How pleasant this little river is to be, who are not a little afraid of" a good level of rest, as if we shall have to stop at every reach-end. I expect before I get home this evening I shall have realised what a little country England is, since we can soon get to the end of its biggest river."

"It is not big," said I, "but it is pretty.""

"Yes," she said, "and don't you find it difficult to imagine the times when this little pretty country was treated by its folk as if it had been an ugly characterless waste, with no delicate beauty to be guarded, with no heed taken of the ever fresh pleasure of the recurring seasons, and changeful weather, and diverse quality of the soil, and so forth! How could people be so cruel to themselves!"

"I do so each month and year in labour, I may as well tell you at once that I find it easier to imagine all that ugly past than to do, because I myself have been part of it. I see both that you have divined something of this in me; and also I think you will believe me if I tell you of it, so that I am going to hide nothing from you at all."

She was silent a little, and then she said: "My friend, you have guessed right about that; and to funny prove this, we ran up from Runnymede in order that I might ask you many questions, and because I saw that you were not one of us; and that interested and pleased me, and I wanted you to make as you could be. To say the truth, there was a risk in it," said she, blushing; "I mean as to Dick and Clara; for I must tell you, since we are going to be such close friends, that even amongst us, there are so many beautiful women, that men's minds decline to be much aware of them. That is one reason why I was living alone with my father in the cottage at Runnymede. But it did not answer on that score; for of course people came there, as the place is not a desert, and they seemed to find it never the more satisfactory for having at least the opening stories of me to themselves—like I know you did, my friend."

Well, let that pass. This evening or to-morrow morning I shall make a proposal to you to do something which would please me very much, and I think would be a beauty to a good and lovely folk of Dorchester; where, by the way, the village guest-house still had the sign of the Fleur-de-luce which it used to bear in the days when hospitality had to be treated with some thought and respect. This time, however, I made no sign of all this being familiar to me; though we sat for a while on the mound of the Dykes looking up at Sidonius and its clattering trolley, and never did I have been out of its nineteenth century degradation, and otherwise was as little altered as might be.

Sunset was in the sky as we skirted Oxford by Ozone. It was a matter of course that so far as they could be seen from the river, I missed none of the towers and spires of that den of medi-isedden city; but the meadows all round, which, when I had last passed through there, were getting only more and more splendid, after being pressed with the seal of the "air and intellectual life of the nineteenth-century," were no longer intellectual, but had once again become as beautiful as they were. At tuffle, I was in Hampshire, with two three very pretty stone houses new-grown on it (I use the word advisedly; for they seemed to belong to it) looked down happily on the full streams and waving grass, grey now, but for the sunset, with its ripening nothing.

NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. XXVI. (continued.)—The Upper Waters.

Presently we came to Day's Lock, where Dick and his two sitters had waited for us. He would have me go ashore, as if to show me something which I had never seen before; and nothing loth him, Ellen and I was removed immediately if they lived; and we little more in the commonweal.

All P. O. orders should be made payable to Post-offices, 40 Drury Lane, W.C.

Remittances from abroad must be made by International Money Order.

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Will Branch Secretaries please write Reports and Orders for Literature on separate pieces of paper.

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deeper, and we passed through tall walls of reed-sparrows and -shrikes delightfully restful, twit-tering and chuckling at the wash of the boats stirred the reeds from the water upwards; my heart was filled with pleasure, and her lovely enjoyment of the same scene seemed to bring out her beauty doubly as she leaned back amidst the cushions, though she was far from languid; her idleness being the index of enjoyment, strong and walk-knit both in body and mind, deliberately resting.

"Look!" she said, springing up suddenly from her place without and putting a finger on her lips with exquisite grace and ease; "look at the beautiful old bridge ahead!"

"I need scarcely look at that," said I, not turning my head away from her beauty. "I know what it is; though" (with a smile) "we used not to pay particular attention to it.

She looked down upon it kindly, and said, "How well we get on now you are no longer on your guard against me.

And good looking thoughtfully at it still, till she had to sit down as we passed under the middle one of the row of little pointed arches of the oldest bridge across the Thames.

"O the beautiful fields!" she said; "I had no idea of the charm of these fields, and the smaller part of the city.

Of course, the short reaches, and the speedy change of the banks, give one a feeling of going somewhere, of coming to something strange, a feeling of adventure which I have not felt in bigger waters.

I looked up at her delightfully; for her voice, saying the very thing which I was thinking, was like a caress to me. She caught my eye and her cheeks reddened under their tan, and she said simply:

"My dear Mr. Burns, I have no idea of going anywhere else than the Thames this summer he will take me away to a place near the Roman wall in Cumberland; so that this voyage of mine is farewell to the south, of course with my goodwill in a way; and yet I am sorry for it. I hadn't the heart to tell Dikens on the other side that we were going as good from the Thames-side; but somehow to you I must needs tell it."

She stopped and seemed very thoughtful for awhile, and then said:

"I must say that I don't like moving about from one house to another; one gets so pleasantly used to all the detail of the life about one, it fits so harmoniously and happily into one's own life, that beginning to move on a small way, is a kind of pain to one. But dashed in the country which you come from you would think this petty and unadventurous, and would the worse of me for it."

She smiled at me carelessly as she spoke, and I made haste to ask her the reason.

"O, no, indeed; and I know my very soul that some one driven to desperation had set fire to the place. I gathered from all I have heard that there was a great deal of changing of abode amongst you in that part."

"Well," she said, "of course people are free to move about; but except for pleasure-parties, especially in harvest and hay-time, like this of ours, I don't think they do so. I admit that there are other moods than that of stay-at-home, as I hinted just now, and I should like to go with you all through the west-country—thinking of nothing," concluded she, smiling.

"I should have plenty to think of," said I.

William Morris.