NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAPTER VII—THALASSAIS UTOPIA.

Now again I was busy looking about for, we were quite clear of the railway, and portable property, to see if they had been snug, and pretentious, which was very far from being the case. Each house, in a region of elegantly-built brick cottages, was furnished with a garden, famously cultivated, and with a flowery expanse of green, the flowers. The blackbirds were singing their best amidst the garden trees, which, except for a bay here and there, and occasional groups of large trees, were all fruit-trees; there was a great many cherry-trees, all in blossom; and fruit, and and all the times as we knew. That garden we were offered baskets of fine fruit by children and young girls. Amongst all these gardens and houses it was of course impossible to trace the site of the old streets; but it seemed to me that the main roads were the same as of old.

We were presently into a large open space, sloping somewhat toward the south, the same as the old streets, but here the houses were of brick, rather than of wood, and the gardens were more profuse, with many trees and flowers. The houses were large and spacious, and the gardens were extensive, with many fruit-trees, and a great variety of flowers. The air was fresh, and the weather was pleasant, with a gentle breeze blowing, and the sun shining brightly. It was a delightful place, and I felt that I was in a region of beauty and peace.

A strange sensation came over me; I shut my eyes to keep out the glare of the sun glinting on this fair expanse of gardens, and for a moment there passed before me a picture of another day. A great space surrounded by tall yew hedges, with a grotto church at the corner and a nondescript gray espaliered building at my back; the roadway thronged with a swarming crowd, dominated by a cottoned, crowded with spectators. In the midst a paved bowling square, populated only by a few men dressed in blue, and a good many stage and street performers. I was reminded of the top of a tall bell in an old church, and the grey of the roofs of the city November afternoon.

I opened my eyes to the sunlight again and looked round me, and came out amongst the whispering trees and odorous blossoms, "The palace!" I said, "is this it?"

"Yes," said Dick, who had drawn rein again, "it is. I don't want you to go and find the same ridiculous: but after all, it was nobody's business to give it to us, since the place is so lovely, but it's the size of it that's the secret. Yet sometimes I think we might have given it a name which would have commemorated the great battle which was fought on the spot itself in 1589, of which it is impossible to imagine the advantage of a historian doesn't lie.

"What they generally do, or at least did," said the old man. "For instance, what can you make of this, neighbor? I have made an unexplored account in a book—O a stupid book!—called James Social Democratic History, of a fight which took place here or in about the year 1589. I am sure that I have crossed the story, were going to hold a ward-robe here, or some such thing, and the Government of London, or the Council, or the Commission, or what not other business bodies had hotly of fools, till the councilors were then called with the armed hand. That seems too ridiculous to be true; but according to this version of the story, nothing much came of it, though it was a great improvement on the dinner, and the boys had gone before them."

"Well," said I, "but after all your Mr. James is right as far as it is true; except that there was no fighting, mere unarmed and peaceable people attacked by ruffians armed with bludgeons."

"And they put up with that!" said Dick, with the best unpalliated expression I had ever seen on his good-tempered face.

"I don't believe it; we couldn't help it," said he.

"A long look of me, and I said: "You seem to know a great deal about it, neighbor! And is it really true that nothing came of it?"

"This came of it," said I, "that a good many people were sent to prison for it."

"Yes, of the bludeguers?" said the old man. "For devil's sake!"

"No, no," said I, "of the bludgemen."

Said the old man rather severely: "Friend, I expect that you have been reading some rotten collection of lies, and have been taken in by it too easily."

"I assure you," said I, "what I have been saying is true."

"Well, I am sure you think so, neighbor," said the old man, "but I should be glad if you would let me have this.

As I couldn't explain why, I held my tongue. Meanwhile Dick, who had been sitting with knit brows, cogitating, spoke up at last, and said: "You know why I am so troubled."

"How strange to think that there have been men like ourselves, and living in this beautiful and happy country, who suppose that

"Yes," said I, in a didactic tone; "yet after all, even those days were not so far off. The latest descriptions of the country, and the works of the people, show that there was a great deal of progress, and that the country was in a state of high prosperity.

Have you not read of the medieval period and the enormity of its criminal laws; and how in those days man fairly seen to have enjoyed corresponding their fellow-men—so, for the matter of that, they made their God a tormentor and a jailer rather than anything else.

"Yes," said Dick, "there are good books on that period also, some of which I have read. But as to the great improvements of the nineteenth century, I don't see it. After all, too, that was simply their own, their own conscience, as your remark about their God (which is true) shows, and they were ready to bear what they inflicted upon others; whereas the nineteenth century ones were hypocrites, and pretended to be humane, and yet went on tormenting those whom they desired to treat, by shutting them up in prison, for no reason at all, except that it was what they themselves, the prisoners, had forced them to be. O, it's horrible to think of!"

"But perhaps," said I, "they did not know what the prisons were like.

Dick seemed round, and even angry. "More shame for them," said he, "when you and I knew it all those three years afterwards. Look, your neighbor, they couldn't fail to know that! Come, commonwealth at the best, and that their prisons were a good step on towards being at the worst."

But: "But have you not prisons at all now?"

As soon as the words were out of my mouth I felt that I had made a mistake, for Dick flushed red and frowned, and the old man looked serious and amazed; and presently Dick said angrily, yet as if restraining himself somewhat—"Men alive! how can you ask such a question? Have I not told you that we know what a prison means by the undeniable evidence of really trustworthy books, helped out by our own imaginations? And haven't you specially called me to notice that the people about the roads and streets look happy; so how could they look so gloomy if they knew that their neighbours were shut up in prison, while they bore such things quietly! And if there were people in prison, you couldn't look at it from folk, like you may suppose I once did, that this isn't that doesn't done set purposes, with a lot of people backing up the slayer in cold blood, as this prison business is. Zounds, indeed! O, no, not I!"

He stopped, and began to cool down, and said in a kind voice: "But forgive me! I needn't be so hot about it, since there are not any prisoners. I'm afraid you will think the worse of me for losing my temper. Of course, you coming from the outside and we cannot expect to know about those things. And now I'm afraid I have made you feel uncomfortable."

In a way he had; but he was so generous in his heat, that I liked him the better for it, and I said: "No, really! I've all my faults for being so stupid. Let me change the subject, and ask you what the national building is on our left just showing at the end of the grove of plane-trees?"

"Ah," he said, "that is an old building built quite in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and as you see, in a queer fantastic style—very not over beautiful; but there are some fine things inside it, too, mostly pictures, some very old. It is called the National Gallery; I have sometimes puzzled as to what the same means: anyhow, nowadays wherever there is a place where pictures are kept at curiosities permanently it is called a National Gallery, perhaps after this one. Of course there are a good many of them up and down the country, but this is the largest."

"I didn't try to enlighten him, feeling the task too heavy; but I pulled out my magnifying glass and fell a-smoking, and the old horse jogged up alongside me.

These pipes is a very elaborate toy, and you seem so reasonable in this country, and your architecture is so good, that I rather wonder why you're turning out such trivialities."

"You struck me as that was rather ungrateful of me, after having received such a fine present; but Dick didn't seem to notice it— 

"Well, don't know; it is a pretty thing, and since nobody needs to make such things unless they like, I don't see why they shouldn't make them, if they like. Of course, if courts were scarce they would all be busy on the architecture, as you call it and then those 'taches (a good word) would not be made; but since there are plenty of people who can care—in fact, almost everybody, and as work is somewhat scarce, or we are afraid it may be, folk do not discourage this kind of petty work."

"Yes, it seemed a little, and seemed somewhat paradoxical; but presently his face cleared, and he said: "After all, you must admit that the pipes is a very pretty thing, with the little people under the less all so down and sweet—too doleful for a pipe, perhaps, but—well, it is very pretty.

"Too valuable for its use, perhaps," said I.

"I know that," he said; "I don't understand.

I was just going in a helpful way to try to make him understand, when we came by the gate of a big rambling building, in which work of some sort seemed going on. "What building is that?" I said, very politely, for it was a pleasure to see all those strange names, and something a little like what I used to: "it seems to be a factory."

"Yes," he said, "I think I know what you mean, and that's what it is; but we don't call them factories by Banded workshops: that is, places where people collect who want to work together."

"I suppose," said I, "power of some sort is used there?"

"No, no, he said. "Why should people collect together to use power, when they can have it at the places where they live, or hand by any two or three of them; or any one, for the matter of that? No; they collect in these 'badges' to do hard work in which working together is necessary or convenient; such work is often very
February 22, 1890.

THE COMMONWEAL

IN AUSTRALIA.

This is a cutting from last week's "Brisbane Telegraph," the most powerful weekly in Queensland.

We like to be a little consistent, even if we are labour matters. At the time of the strikers' strike the "Brisbane" was called all sorts of names for declaring that the men were right, that solidarity was the best remedy for the evil, that there was no interference in the internal affairs of an office, and if, having chanced their future on this policy of non-interference, they were now going to try to sell the same on non-partisan matters.

We are, therefore, of opinion that no action has been taken by the Master Printers' Association, and we presume, generally Labour unions, which have received a second opinion that the M.P. was right, will be the same on non-partisan matters. We are, therefore, of opinion that no action has been taken by the Master Printers' Association.

There is an explanation pointing out that responsible managers are being treated with a certain amount of respect, just as competing shipping companies are, we suppose; and this explanation is justified, by another, which, although it does not definitely state that the M.P. was right, at least indicates that the laborers were not being dealt with in a manner that the M.P. could justify.

We ask you to believe that the more thoughtful of the laboring classes are dissatisfied with this situation; but whether they do or not no one can say. But, in short, the Brisbane Telegraph is justified in its policy, and we are as consistent as the men who were at the strike.

The Australian labour movement just now seems to be in a constant state of flux. There is no progress toward the "ideal" solution of the strike question. The tragi-comedy of all wage-earners within a fold. The speech of the Fiji government and the "close" position of the workers have given rise to this feeling.

The following letter has been sent by the South Australian Railway Commission to the Railway Executive officers of the general public:

"The Commissioners have duly considered the communications made by you. We are of opinion that the interview was not made in good faith, but that the Commissioner was not in a position to bring the matter to the attention of the public. In consequence, the Commissioner must resign his position."

The Commissioners have, therefore, decided to adopt the following course of action:

1. First year, 6s. per day; second year, 6s. 6d. per day; third year, 7s. 6d.
2. The Commissioners shall, at the expiration of the first year, give to the employees a notice of 14 days, and the employees shall be free to accept the offer, or to continue in the service."

The Brisbane Wharf-labourers' Union, having found that the rule providing for fifteen minutes notice in case of dismissal was not observed, has made an effort to enforce the rule. This "smoke" or breathing time is regarded by many people who know nothing of a wharf-labourer's occupation as an unnecessary interruption with "disputes," and "no-known-results should take a walk down to the wharf and watch the men at work for an hour or two.

I am told that the officials of the Australian coasting steamer unions have been negotiating with the management of a vessel which is engaged in the transport of coal on the wharf, and the men are now completely exhausted by their work. At the highest rate of pay, 2s. 6d. per hour, the number of hours required to complete the task is over 2,000.

How does this strike, called from the highly-respectable, vice-supplying lots, obtained by the South Australian Morning Bulletin, the "Corporation's" arrangements for the purpose of protecting the public, and the "working men's" arrangements for the purpose of protecting the public, and the "working men's" arrangements for the purpose of protecting the public:

"We know not what to do."

The editors say in their advertisement:

"We are hereby notified that we have been defeated in our attempt to establish a daily paper, and we therefore request all our subscribers to look to their accounts and renew their subscriptions before the end of the month, or we shall be forced to discontinue publication."

The Brisbane Building Trades Council is in the first to adopt the Labour Convention, and the Trades and Labour Association, as it is called, is now ready to "defend," and not to discriminate.

"We believe that the Labour party will not be able to assert its influence until it has established a newspaper to give it a voice to its requirements."

CORNWALL

---[End of article]---

---[End of page]---

---[End of sheet]---

---[End of document]---