NEWS FROM NOWHERE:
OR
AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. IX.—CONCLUDING LOR. X.

"Your kinsman doesn't much care for beautiful building, then," said I, as we entered the other dimly lighted saloon; which indeed was as need be, except for some big pots of the June flowers which stood about here and there; though it was very clean and nicely whitened.

"O, I don't know," said Dick, rather abashed. "He is getting old, certainly, for he is over a hundred and five, and no doubt he doesn't care much for building. But of course there were things he could like: he is not obliged to live in one place any more than anywhere else. This way, Guest.

And he led the way upstairs, and opening a door we went into a fair-sized room of the old type, as plain as the rest of the house, with a few necessary pieces of furniture, and those very simple and even rude, but solid and with a good deal of curving about them, well designed but rather crudely fashioned. He was dressed in a sort of Norfolk jacket of worsted with a white stock, and thick woollen trousers. He lifted up his chair, and cried out in a voice of considerable volume for such an old man, "Welcome, Dick, my lad; come here, and tell me as you are pleased to see you; and keep your heart up!"

"Clara here!" quoth Dick; "if I had known, I would not have brought her. At least, I mean I would."

He was stuttering and confused, clearly because he was anxious to say nothing to make me feel too much. But the old man who had not seen me at first, helped him out by coming forward and saying to me in a kind tone: "Pray pardon me, for I did not notice that Dick, who is big enough to hide me, had brought a friend with him. A most heartly welcome to you! All the more, as I hope that you are going to cause an old man by giving him news from over seas, for I can see that you are come from over the water and far off countries."

He looked at me thoughtfully, almost anxiously, as he said in a changed voice, "Might I ask you where you come from, as you are so clearly a stranger?"

I said in an absent way: "I used to live in England, and now I am come back again; and I slept last night at the Hamerstein Guest House."

He bowed gravely, but seemed, I thought, a little disappointed with my answer. As for me, I was now looking at him harder than good manners allowed of, perhaps; for in truth his face, dried-apple-like as it was, seemed strangely familiar to me; as if I had seen it before—in a looking-glass it might be, said to myself.

"Well," said the old man, "wherever you come from, you are among friends. I am sure I can tell you some. But I am going to ask you something that will probably make you feel more at home than all this has happened in the last two hundred years than anybody else does."

What's that?"

"He turned toward the door again. We heard footsteps outside; the door opened, and in came a very beautiful young woman, who stopped short on seeing Dick, and flashed as red as a rose, but bared him nevertheless. Dick looked at her, and half turned out his hand toward her, and his whole face quivered with emotion.

The old man did not leave them long in this shyness of comfort, but said, smiling, with an old man's smile: "Dick, my lad, and you, my dear Clara, I rather think that we two oldsters are in your way; for I think you will have plenty to say to each other. You had better go into my room up above; I know he has gone out; and he has just been covering the walls all over with more books, it will be pretty enough for you two and your renewed pleasures."

The door of our room was shut, and, taking his work out of the room, looking straight between her; but it was easy to see that her blushes came from happiness, not anger; as, indeed, love is far more frequent than death.

When the door and shut on them the old man turned to me, still smiling, and said:

"Frankly, my dear guest, you will do me a great service if you are willing. You are old enough and capable to tell us of your old country, which we have forgotten, and I have no doubt you will not think of the past interest them much. The last harvest, the last baby, the last knot of carving in the marketplace for them. It was different, I think, when we were young; but we were not so used and a plenty and a clarity pleasant as we are now—Well, well! Without putting you the question, let me ask you what you are, a farmer or a manufacturer, or a tailor or a pedestrian, who knows a little of our own ways of life, or as one who comes from some place where the very foundations of life are different from ours.—do you know anything or nothing about us?"

He looked at me keenly and with growing wonder in his eyes as he spoke; and I answered in a low voice—

"I know only two so much of your modern life as I could gather from using my eyes on the way here from Hamerstein, and from asking some questions of Richard Hammond, most of which he could hardly understand."

The old man smiled at this. "Then," said he, "I am to speak to you as equals."

"As if I were a being from another planet," said I.

The old man, whose name, by the bye, like his kinsman's, was Hammond, smiled and nodded, and wheeling his seat round to me, bade me sit in a heavy oak chair, and said, as he saw my eyes fix on its curious carving—

"Yes, I am much tied to the past, my past, you understand. These very pieces of furniture here a time before we could live in a prettier house, a time when we could live in a prettier house. It was my father who got them made; if they had been done within the last fifty years they would have been much cleverer in execution; but I don't think he would have tried to live in their times. They were almost beginning again in those days; and they were brisk, bright-hearted. But you hear how garishly I am: ask me questions, ask me questions about anything, dear guest; since I must talk, make my way.

I was silent for a minute, and then I said, somewhat nervously:

"Excuse me if I am rude; but I am so much interested in Richard, since he has been so kind to me, and I would like to ask a question about him."

"Well," said old Hammond, "if he were not kind, as you call it, to a perfect stranger he would be thought a strange person, or we would be apt to shun him. But ask on, ask on! don't be shy of asking.

Said I: "That beautiful girl, is he going to be married to her?"

"Well," said he, "yes, he is. He has been married to her once already, and now I should say it is pretty clear that he will be married to her again."

"Indeed," quoth I, wondering what that meant.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

[To be continued.]

IN AUSTRALIA.

One of the most attractive and interesting parts of the world is Australia, and the most remarkable feature of the country is the great number of people who have settled in it. The population is over 6,000,000, and there are over 15,000 trade unionists in Queensland. The Central Carriers, the Labourers, and the Seamen Unions have unanimously agreed to the Labour Federation proposal. The Trades are also expected to follow suit. The Western Federation has already formed a union, their headquarters being at Sydney. The telegraph operators have also formed a union. The railway employees have been working under the same conditions as the other classes, but the Queensland employees have decided to make arrangements with the Q.R.R., and will send delegates to the conference in February. As an instance of the good feeling prevailing between the classes of the two colonies, the employees on the Great Western Railway, Queensland, have sent £10 to the fund for the building of the new station, which has now been in progress over three months.

The motor bakers of Sydney make out that by selling bread at 1d. per pound they have only made 2d, on every pound of five shillings, an extra 6d. per pound, and by selling it at five shillings, the difference between the two prices, the employees have decided to send their bread at 1d. per pound, and the customers have been willing to do so.

We have lectures and concerts every Sunday evening at our own house, 323, George Street, and they are very well attended. The Free Reading Rooms are a great success, and much used. We have a very fine collection of the Socialist, Labour, and Radical papers of the world, which are being sent free, and the letters and papers are received at the rate of 3000 per month. They are taken at the rate of 1d. per thousand, and it is said that they have been received at the rate of 100,000 per month. The smallest contributions thankfully received.

The Melbourne Socialists are fighting valiantly for the battle for free speech on the Wireless. Some of the prominent men have been fined and imprisoned by the Victorian Government for their persistence, but they keep right on, and the Wireless is now two weeks old. The Sunday Opening of Museums and Libraries. They look like winning, but unfortunately the struggle is a long one.

Queensland.

Sydney, N.S.W., Jan. 14, 1890.

Never did the proletariat more literally deserve its name than since the advent of the factory period, their rapid and degenerative increase, indeed, the word seems a mere fancy to describe the rapidity of their increase. "The Working Class: An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy."—The Socialism of the Irish by Prof. Giddens and J. A. Thomas.