

MERRIE ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROBLEM OF LIFE.

We are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes, and we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness. Wealth we employ, not for talk and ostentation, but when there is real use for it. To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it. An Athenian Citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household. We regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs not as harmless, but as a useless character. The great impediment to action is not discussion, but the want of that knowledge which is gained by discussion preparatory to action. We make friends by conferring, not by receiving favours. The love of honour alone is ever young, and not riches, as some say, but honour is the delight of men when they are old and useless.—*Thucydides*.

Dear Mr. Smith, I am sorry to hear that you look upon Socialism as a vile and senseless thing, and upon Socialists as wicked or foolish men.

Nevertheless, as you have good metal in you, and are very numerous, I mean to argue the point with you.

You are a staunch Liberal, and you pride yourself upon being "a shrewd, hard-headed, practical man." You would not pride yourself upon that, for you are naturally overmodest, had you not been told by political orators that you are that kind of man.

Hence you have come to believe that you "entertain a wholesome contempt for theories," and have contracted a habit of calling for "Facts" in a peremptory manner, like a stage brigand calling for "Wine."

Now, Mr. Smith, if you really are a man of hard, shrewd sense, we shall get on very well. I am myself a plain, practical man. I base my beliefs upon what I know and see, and respect "a fact" more than a Lord Mayor.

In these letters I shall stick to the hardest of hard facts, and the coldest of cold reason; and I shall appeal to that

Now I assert that if the labour of the British people were properly organised and wisely applied, this country would, in return for very little toil, yield abundance for all.

I assert that the labour of the British people is not properly organised, nor wisely applied; and I undertake to show how it might and should be organised and applied, and what would be the results if it were organised and applied in accordance with my suggestions.

The ideal of British Society to-day is the ideal of individual effort, or competition. That is to say, every man for himself. Each citizen is to try as hard as he can to get for himself as much *money* as he can, and to use it for his own pleasure, and leave it for his own children.

That is the present personal ideal. The present national ideal is to become "The Workshop of the World." That is to say, the British people are to manufacture goods for sale to foreign countries, and in return for those goods are to get more money than they could obtain by developing the resources of their own country for their own use.

My ideal is that each individual should seek his advantage in co-operation with his fellows, and that the people should make the best of their own country before attempting to trade with other people's.

I propose, Mr. Smith, and I submit the proposal to you, who are a sensible and practical man, as a sensible and practical proposal, that we should first of all ascertain what things are desirable for our health and happiness of body and mind, and that we should then organise our people with the object of producing those things in the best and easiest way.

The idea being to get the best results with the least labour.

And, now, Mr. Smith, if you will read the following books for yourself, you will be in a better position to follow me in my future letters:—

Thoreau's "Walden." London: Walter Scott, 1s.

"Problems of Poverty," John Hobson, M.A. London: Methuen, 2s. 6d.

"Industrial History of England," H. de B. Gibbins, M.A. London: Methuen, 2s. 6d.

There are also a Fabian tract called "Facts for Socialists,"

price one penny, and a pamphlet called "Socialism," a reply to the Pope, price one penny, which will be useful. The last-named pamphlet is by Robert Blatchford, and can be had at the *Clarion* office.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRACTICAL SCHOOL.

Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. Their land also is full of idols: they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.—*Isaiah*.

As I said in my first chapter, the problem we have to consider is:—

Given a country and a people, find how the people may make the best of the country and themselves.

Before we can solve this problem, we must understand the country and the people. We must find out their capacities; that is to say, what can be got from the country; what it will yield; and what can be got from ourselves; what we can do and be.

On these points I differ from the so-called practical people of the Manchester School, for I believe that this country will yield a great deal more of the good things of life than the people need; and that the people can be much happier, healthier, richer, and better than they now are.

But the Manchester School would have us believe that our own country is too barren to feed us, and that our people are too base and foolish to lead pure, wise, and honest lives.

This is a difference as to facts. I will try, presently, to show you that the facts are in my favour.

You, Mr. Smith, are a practical man; you have reason and judgment. Therefore you would do a pleasant thing in preference to an unpleasant thing. You would choose a healthy and agreeable occupation in preference to an unhealthy and disagreeable occupation. You would rather live in a healthy and agreeable place than in an unhealthy and disagreeable place. You would rather work four hours a day than twelve hours a day. You would rather do the