Chapter 21

The Reign of Terror. The Great Money Trick

During the next four weeks the usual reign of terror continued at 'The Cave'. The men slaved like so many convicts under the vigilant surveillance of Crass, Misery and Rushton. No one felt free from observation for a single moment. It happened frequently that a man who was working alone--as he thought--on turning round would find Hunter or Rushton standing behind him: or one would look up from his work to catch sight of a face watching him through a door or a window or over the banisters. If they happened to be working in a room on the ground floor, or at a window on any floor, they knew that both Rushton and Hunter were in the habit of hiding among the trees that surrounded the house, and spying upon them thus.

There was a plumber working outside repairing the guttering that ran round the bottom edge of the roof. This poor wretch's life was a perfect misery: he fancied he saw Hunter or Rushton in every bush. He had two ladders to work from, and since these ladders had been in use Misery had thought of a new way of spying on the men. Finding that he never succeeded in catching anyone doing anything wrong when he entered the house by one of the doors, Misery adopted the plan of crawling up one of the ladders, getting in through one of the upper windows and creeping softly downstairs and in and out of the rooms. Even then he never caught anyone, but that did not matter, for he accomplished his

principal purpose--every man seemed afraid to cease working for even an instant.

The result of all this was, of course, that the work progressed rapidly towards completion. The hands grumbled and cursed, but all the same every man tore into it for all he was worth. Although he did next to nothing himself, Crass watched and urged on the others. He was 'in charge of the job': he knew that unless he succeeded in making this work pay he would not be put in charge of another job. On the other hand, if he did make it pay he would be given the preference over others and be kept on as long as the firm had any work. The firm would give him the preference only as long as it paid them to do so.

As for the hands, each man knew that there was no chance of obtaining work anywhere else at present; there were dozens of men out of employment already. Besides, even if there had been a chance of getting another job somewhere else, they knew that the conditions were more or less the same on every firm. Some were even worse than this one. Each man knew that unless he did as much as ever he could, Crass would report him for being slow. They knew also that when the job began to draw to a close the number of men employed upon it would be reduced, and when that time came the hands who did the most work would be kept on and the slower ones discharged. It was therefore in the hope of being one of the favoured few that while inwardly cursing the rest for 'tearing into it', everyone as a matter of self-preservation went and 'tore into it' themselves.

They all cursed Crass, but most of them would have been very to change places with him: and if any one of them had been in his place they would have been compelled to act in the same way--or lose the job.

They all reviled Hunter, but most of them would have been glad to change places with him also: and if any one of them had been in his place they would have been compelled to do the same things, or lose the job.

They all hated and blamed Rushton. Yet if they had been in Rushton's place they would have been compelled to adopt the same methods, or become bankrupt: for it is obvious that the only way to compete successfully against other employers who are sweaters is to be a sweater yourself. Therefore no one who is an upholder of the present system can consistently blame any of these men. Blame the system.

If you, reader, had been one of the hands, would you have slogged? Or would you have preferred to starve and see your family starve? If you had been in Crass's place, would you have resigned rather than do such dirty work? If you had had Hunter's berth, would you have given it up and voluntarily reduced yourself to the level of the hands? If you had been Rushton, would you rather have become bankrupt than treat your 'hands' and your customers in the same way as your competitors treated theirs? It may be that, so placed, you--being the noble-minded paragon that you are--would have behaved unselfishly. But no one has any right to expect you to sacrifice yourself for the benefit of other people who would only call you a fool for your pains. It may be true that if any

one of the hands--Owen, for instance--had been an employer of labour, he would have done the same as other employers. Some people seem to think that proves that the present system is all right! But really it only proves that the present system compels selfishness. One must either trample upon others or be trampled upon oneself. Happiness might be possible if everyone were unselfish; if everyone thought of the welfare of his neighbour before thinking of his own. But as there is only a very small percentage of such unselfish people in the world, the present system has made the earth into a sort of hell. Under the present system there is not sufficient of anything for everyone to have enough. Consequently there is a fight--called by Christians the 'Battle of Life'. In this fight some get more than they need, some barely enough, some very little, and some none at all. The more aggressive, cunning, unfeeling and selfish you are the better it will be for you. As long as this 'Battle of Life' System endures, we have no right to blame other people for doing the same things that we are ourselves compelled to do. Blame the system.

But that IS just what the hands did not do. They blamed each other; they blamed Crass, and Hunter, and Rushton, but with the Great System of which they were all more or less the victims they were quite content, being persuaded that it was the only one possible and the best that human wisdom could devise. The reason why they all believed this was because not one of them had ever troubled to inquire whether it would not be possible to order things differently. They were content with the present system. If they had not been content they would have been anxious to find some way to alter it. But they had never taken

the trouble to seriously inquire whether it was possible to find some better way, and although they all knew in a hazy fashion that other methods of managing the affairs of the world had already been proposed, they neglected to inquire whether these other methods were possible or practicable, and they were ready and willing to oppose with ignorant ridicule or brutal force any man who was foolish or quixotic enough to try to explain to them the details of what he thought was a better way. They accepted the present system in the same way as they accepted the alternating seasons. They knew that there was spring and summer and autumn and winter. As to how these different seasons came to be, or what caused them, they hadn't the remotest notion, and it is extremely doubtful whether the question had ever occurred to any of them: but there is no doubt whatever about the fact that none of them knew. From their infancy they had been trained to distrust their own intelligence, and to leave the management of the affairs of the world--and for that matter of the next world too--to their betters; and now most of them were absolutely incapable of thinking of any abstract subject whatever. Nearly all their betters--that is, the people who do nothing--were unanimous in agreeing that he present system is a very good one and that it is impossible to alter or improve it. Therefore Crass and his mates, although they knew nothing whatever about it themselves, accepted it as an established, incontrovertible fact that the existing state of things is immutable. They believed it because someone else told them so. They would have believed anything: on one condition--namely, that they were told to believe it by their betters. They said it was surely not for the Like of Them to think that they knew better than those who were more educated and had plenty of time to

study.

As the work in the drawing-room proceeded, Crass abandoned the hope that Owen was going to make a mess of it. Some of the rooms upstairs being now ready for papering, Slyme was started on that work, Bert being taken away from Owen to assist Slyme as paste boy, and it was arranged that Crass should help Owen whenever he needed someone to lend him a hand.

Sweater came frequently during these four weeks, being interested in the progress of the work. On these occasions Crass always managed to be present in the drawing-room and did most of the talking. Owen was very satisfied with this arrangement, for he was always ill at ease when conversing with a man like Sweater, who spoke in an offensively patronizing way and expected common people to kowtow to and 'Sir' him at every second word. Crass however, seemed to enjoy doing that kind of thing. He did not exactly grovel on the floor, when Sweater spoke to him, but he contrived to convey the impression that he was willing to do so if desired.

Outside the house Bundy and his mates had dug deep trenches in the damp ground in which they were laying new drains. This work, like that of the painting of the inside of the house, was nearly completed. It was a miserable job. Owing to the fact that there had been a spell of bad weather the ground was sodden with rain and there was mud everywhere, the men's clothing and boots being caked with it. But the worst thing about the job was the smell. For years the old drain-pipes had been

defective and leaky. The ground a few feet below the surface was saturated with fetid moisture and a stench as of a thousand putrefying corpse emanated from the opened earth. The clothing of the men who were working in the hendeca became saturated with this fearful odour, and for that matter, so did the men themselves.

They said they could smell and taste it all the time, even when they were away from the work at home, and when they were at meals. Although they smoked their pipes all the time they were at work, Misery having ungraciously given them permission, several times Bundy and one or other of his mates were attacked with fits of vomiting.

But, as they began to realize that the finish of the job was in sight, a kind of panic seized upon the hands, especially those who had been taken on last and who would therefore be the first to be 'stood still'. Easton, however, felt pretty confident that Crass would do his best to get him kept on till the end of the job, for they had become quite chummy lately, usually spending a few evenings together at the Cricketers every week.

'There'll be a bloody slaughter 'ere soon,' remarked Harlow to Philpot one day as they were painting the banisters of the staircase. 'I reckon next week will about finish the inside.'

'And the outside ain't goin' to take very long, you know,' replied Philpot.

'They ain't got no other work in, have they?'

'Not that I knows of,' replied Philpot gloomily; 'and I don't think anyone else has either.'

'You know that little place they call the "Kiosk" down the Grand Parade, near the bandstand,' asked Harlow after a pause.

'Where they used to sell refreshments?'

'Yes; it belongs to the Corporation, you know.'

'It's been closed up lately, ain't it?'

'Yes; the people who 'ad it couldn't make it pay; but I 'eard last night that Grinder the fruit-merchant is goin' to open it again. If it's true, there'll be a bit of a job there for someone, because it'll 'ave to be done up.'

'Well, I hope it does come orf replied Philpot. 'It'll be a job for some poor b--rs.'

'I wonder if they've started anyone yet on the venetian blinds for this 'ouse?' remarked Easton after a pause.

'I don't know,' replied Philpot.

They relapsed into silence for a while.

'I wonder what time it is?' said Philpot at length. 'I don't know 'ow you feel, but I begin to want my dinner.'

'That's just what I was thinking; it can't be very far off it now. It's nearly 'arf an hour since Bert went down to make the tea. It seems a 'ell of a long morning to me.'

'So it does to me,' said Philpot; 'slip upstairs and ask Slyme what time it is.'

Harlow laid his brush across the top of his paint-pot and went upstairs. He was wearing a pair of cloth slippers, and walked softly, not wishing that Crass should hear him leaving his work, so it happened that without any intention of spying on Slyme, Harlow reached the door of the room in which the former was working without being heard and, entering suddenly, surprised Slyme--who was standing near the fireplace--in the act of breaking a whole roll of wallpaper across his knee as one might break a stick. On the floor beside him was what had been another roll, now broken into two pieces. When Harlow came in, Slyme started, and his face became crimson with confusion. He hastily gathered the broken rolls together and, stooping down, thrust the pieces up the flue of the grate and closed the register.

'Wot's the bloody game?' inquired Harlow.

Slyme laughed with an affectation of carelessness, but his hands trembled and his face was now very pale.

'We must get our own back somehow, you know, Fred,' he said.

Harlow did not reply. He did not understand. After puzzling over it for a few minutes, he gave it up.

'What's the time?' he asked.

'Fifteen minutes to twelve,' said Slyme and added, as Harlow was going away: 'Don't mention anything about that paper to Crass or any of the others.'

'I shan't say nothing,' replied Harlow.

Gradually, as he pondered over it, Harlow began to comprehend the meaning of the destruction of the two rolls of paper. Slyme was doing the paperhanging piecework--so much for each roll hung. Four of the rooms upstairs had been done with the same pattern, and Hunter--who was not over-skilful in such matters--had evidently sent more paper than was necessary. By getting rid of these two rolls, Slyme would be able to make it appear that he had hung two rolls more than was really the case. He had broken the rolls so as to be able to take them away from the house without being detected, and he had hidden them up the chimney until he got an opportunity of so doing. Harlow had just arrived at this solution of the problem when, hearing the lower flight of stairs

creaking, he peeped over and observed Misery crawling up. He had come to see if anyone had stopped work before the proper time. Passing the two workmen without speaking, he ascended to the next floor, and entered the room where Slyme was.

'You'd better not do this room yet,' said Hunter. 'There's to be a new grate and mantelpiece put in.'

He crossed over to the fireplace and stood looking at it thoughtfully for a few minutes.

'It's not a bad little grate, you know, is it?' he remarked. 'We'll be able to use it somewhere or other.'

'Yes; it's all right,' said Slyme, whose heart was beating like a steam-hammer.

'Do for a front room in a cottage,' continued Misery, stooping down to examine it more closely. 'There's nothing broke that I can see.'

He put his hand against the register and vainly tried to push it open. 'H'm, there's something wrong 'ere,' he remarked, pushing harder.

'Most likely a brick or some plaster fallen down,' gasped Slyme, coming to Misery's assistance. 'Shall I try to open it?'

'Don't trouble,' replied Nimrod, rising to his feet. 'It's most likely

what you say. I'll see that the new grate is sent up after dinner. Bundy can fix it this afternoon and then you can go on papering as soon as you like.'

With this, Misery went out of the room, downstairs and away from the house, and Slyme wiped the sweat from his forehead with his handkerchief. Then he knelt down and, opening the register, he took out the broken rolls of paper and hid them up the chimney of the next room. While he was doing this the sound of Crass's whistle shrilled through the house.

'Thank Gord!' exclaimed Philpot fervently as he laid his brushes on the top of his pot and joined in the general rush to the kitchen. The scene here is already familiar to the reader. For seats, the two pairs of steps laid on their sides parallel to each other, about eight feet apart and at right angles to the fireplace, with the long plank placed across; and the upturned pails and the drawers of the dresser. The floor unswept and littered with dirt, scraps of paper, bits of plaster, pieces of lead pipe and dried mud; and in the midst, the steaming bucket of stewed tea and the collection of cracked cups, jam-jam and condensed milk tins. And on the seats the men in their shabby and in some cases ragged clothing sitting and eating their coarse food and cracking jokes.

It was a pathetic and wonderful and at the same time a despicable spectacle. Pathetic that human beings should be condemned to spend the greater part of their lives amid such surroundings, because it must be

remembered that most of their time was spent on some job or other. When 'The Cave' was finished they would go to some similar 'job', if they were lucky enough to find one. Wonderful, because although they knew that they did more than their fair share of the great work of producing the necessaries and comforts of life, they did not think they were entitled to a fair share of the good things they helped to create! And despicable, because although they saw their children condemned to the same life of degradation, hard labour and privation, yet they refused to help to bring about a better state of affairs. Most of them thought that what had been good enough for themselves was good enough for their children.

It seemed as if they regarded their own children with a kind of contempt, as being only fit to grow up to be the servants of the children of such people as Rushton and Sweater. But it must be remembered that they had been taught self-contempt when they were children. In the so-called 'Christian' schools, they attended then they were taught to 'order themselves lowly and reverently towards their betters', and they were now actually sending their own children to learn the same degrading lessons in their turn! They had a vast amount of consideration for their betters, and for the children of their betters, but very little for their own children, for each other, or for themselves.

That was why they sat there in their rags and ate their coarse food, and cracked their coarser jokes, and drank the dreadful tea, and were content! So long as they had Plenty of Work and plenty

of--Something--to eat, and somebody else's cast-off clothes to wear, they were content! And they were proud of it. They gloried in it. They agreed and assured each other that the good things of life were not intended for the 'Likes of them', or their children.

'Wot's become of the Professor?' asked the gentleman who sat on the upturned pail in the corner, referring to Owen, who had not yet come down from his work.

'P'raps 'e's preparing 'is sermon,' remarked Harlow with a laugh.

'We ain't 'ad no lectures from 'im lately, since 'e's been on that room,' observed Easton. ''Ave we?'

'Dam good job too!' exclaimed Sawkins. 'It gives me the pip to 'ear 'im, the same old thing over and over again.'

'Poor ole Frank,' remarked Harlow. ''E does upset 'isself about things, don't 'e?'

'More fool 'im!' said Bundy. 'I'll take bloody good care I don't go worryin' myself to death like 'e's doin', about such dam rot as that.'

'I do believe that's wot makes 'im look so bad as 'e does,' observed Harlow. 'Several times this morning I couldn't help noticing the way 'e kept on coughing.'

'I thought 'e seemed to be a bit better lately,' Philpot observed; 'more cheerful and happier like, and more inclined for a bit of fun.'

'He's a funny sort of chap, ain't he?' said Bundy. 'One day quite jolly, singing and cracking jokes and tellin' yarns, and the next you can't hardly get a word out of 'im.'

'Bloody rot, I call it,' chimed in the man on the pail. 'Wot the 'ell's the use of the likes of us troublin' our 'eads about politics?'

'Oh, I don't see that.' replied Harlow. 'We've got votes and we're really the people what control the affairs of the country, so I reckon we ought to take SOME interest in it, but at the same time I can't see no sense in this 'ere Socialist wangle that Owen's always talkin' about.'

'Nor nobody else neither,' said Crass with a jeering laugh.

'Even if all the bloody money in the world WAS divided out equal,' said the man on the pail, profoundly, 'it wouldn't do no good! In six months' time it would be all back in the same 'ands again.'

'Of course,' said everybody.

'But 'e 'ad a cuff the other day about money bein' no good at all!' observed Easton. 'Don't you remember 'e said as money was the principal cause of poverty?'

'So it is the principal cause of poverty,' said Owen, who entered at that moment.

'Hooray!' shouted Philpot, leading off a cheer which the others took up. 'The Professor 'as arrived and will now proceed to say a few remarks.'

A roar of merriment greeted this sally.

'Let's 'ave our bloody dinner first, for Christ's sake,' appealed Harlow, with mock despair.

As Owen, having filled his cup with tea, sat down in his usual place, Philpot rose solemnly to his feet, and, looking round the company, said:

'Genelmen, with your kind permission, as soon as the Professor 'as finished 'is dinner 'e will deliver 'is well-known lecture, entitled, "Money the Principal Cause of being 'ard up", proving as money ain't no good to nobody. At the hend of the lecture a collection will be took up to provide the lecturer with a little encouragement.' Philpot resumed his seat amid cheers.

As soon as they had finished eating, some of the men began to make remarks about the lecture, but Owen only laughed and went on reading the piece of newspaper that his dinner had been wrapped in. Usually most of the men went out for a walk after dinner, but as it happened to

be raining that day they were determined, if possible, to make Owen fulfill the engagement made in his name by Philpot.

'Let's 'oot 'im,' said Harlow, and the suggestion was at once acted upon; howls, groans and catcalls filled the air, mingled with cries of 'Fraud!' 'Imposter!' 'Give us our money back!' 'Let's wreck the 'all!' and so on.

'Come on 'ere,' cried Philpot, putting his hand on Owen's shoulder. 'Prove that money is the cause of poverty.'

'It's one thing to say it and another to prove it,' sneered Crass, who was anxious for an opportunity to produce the long-deferred Obscurer cutting.

'Money IS the real cause of poverty,' said Owen.

'Prove it,' repeated Crass.

'Money is the cause of poverty because it is the device by which those who are too lazy to work are enabled to rob the workers of the fruits of their labours.'

'Prove it,' said Crass.

Owen slowly folded up the piece of newspaper he had been reading and put it into his pocket.

'All right,' he replied. 'I'll show you how the Great Money Trick is worked.'

Owen opened his dinner basket and took from it two slices of bread but as these were not sufficient, he requested that anyone who had some bread left would give it to him. They gave him several pieces, which he placed in a heap on a clean piece of paper, and, having borrowed the pocket knives they used to cut and eat their dinners with from Easton, Harlow and Philpot, he addressed them as follows:

'These pieces of bread represent the raw materials which exist naturally in and on the earth for the use of mankind; they were not made by any human being, but were created by the Great Spirit for the benefit and sustenance of all, the same as were the air and the light of the sun.'

'You're about as fair-speakin' a man as I've met for some time,' said Harlow, winking at the others.

'Yes, mate,' said Philpot. 'Anyone would agree to that much! It's as clear as mud.'

'Now,' continued Owen, 'I am a capitalist; or, rather, I represent the landlord and capitalist class. That is to say, all these raw materials belong to me. It does not matter for our present argument how I obtained possession of them, or whether I have any real right to them;

the only thing that matters now is the admitted fact that all the raw materials which are necessary for the production of the necessaries of life are now the property of the Landlord and Capitalist class. I am that class: all these raw materials belong to me.'

'Good enough!' agreed Philpot.

'Now you three represent the Working class: you have nothing--and for my part, although I have all these raw materials, they are of no use to me--what need is--the things that can be made out of these raw materials by Work: but as I am too lazy to work myself, I have invented the Money Trick to make you work FOR me. But first I must explain that I possess something else beside the raw materials. These three knives represent--all the machinery of production; the factories, tools, railways, and so forth, without which the necessaries of life cannot be produced in abundance. And these three coins'--taking three halfpennies from his pocket--'represent my Money Capital.'

'But before we go any further,' said Owen, interrupting himself, 'it is most important that you remember that I am not supposed to be merely "a" capitalist. I represent the whole Capitalist Class. You are not supposed to be just three workers--you represent the whole Working Class.'

'All right, all right,' said Crass, impatiently, 'we all understand that. Git on with it.'

Owen proceeded to cut up one of the slices of bread into a number of little square blocks.

'These represent the things which are produced by labour, aided by machinery, from the raw materials. We will suppose that three of these blocks represent--a week's work. We will suppose that a week's work is worth--one pound: and we will suppose that each of these ha'pennies is a sovereign. We'd be able to do the trick better if we had real sovereigns, but I forgot to bring any with me.'

'I'd lend you some,' said Philpot, regretfully, 'but I left me purse on our grand pianner.'

As by a strange coincidence nobody happened to have any gold with them, it was decided to make shift with the halfpence.

'Now this is the way the trick works--'

'Before you goes on with it,' interrupted Philpot, apprehensively, 'don't you think we'd better 'ave someone to keep watch at the gate in case a Slop comes along? We don't want to get runned in, you know.'

'I don' think there's any need for that,' replied Owen, 'there's only one slop who'd interfere with us for playing this game, and that's Police Constable Socialism.'

'Never mind about Socialism,' said Crass, irritably. 'Get along with

the bloody trick.'

Owen now addressed himself to the working classes as represented by Philpot, Harlow and Easton.

'You say that you are all in need of employment, and as I am the kind-hearted capitalist class I am going to invest all my money in various industries, so as to give you Plenty of Work. I shall pay each of you one pound per week, and a week's work is--you must each produce three of these square blocks. For doing this work you will each receive your wages; the money will be your own, to do as you like with, and the things you produce will of course be mine, to do as I like with. You will each take one of these machines and as soon as you have done a week's work, you shall have your money.'

The Working Classes accordingly set to work, and the Capitalist class sat down and watched them. As soon as they had finished, they passed the nine little blocks to Owen, who placed them on a piece of paper by his side and paid the workers their wages.

'These blocks represent the necessaries of life. You can't live without some of these things, but as they belong to me, you will have to buy them from me: my price for these blocks is--one pound each.'

As the working classes were in need of the necessaries of life and as they could not eat, drink or wear the useless money, they were compelled to agree to the kind Capitalist's terms. They each bought

back and at once consumed one-third of the produce of their labour. The capitalist class also devoured two of the square blocks, and so the net result of the week's work was that the kind capitalist had consumed two pounds worth of the things produced by the labour of the others, and reckoning the squares at their market value of one pound each, he had more than doubled his capital, for he still possessed the three pounds in money and in addition four pounds worth of goods. As for the working classes, Philpot, Harlow and Easton, having each consumed the pound's worth of necessaries they had bought with their wages, they were again in precisely the same condition as when they started work--they had nothing.

This process was repeated several times: for each week's work the producers were paid their wages. They kept on working and spending all their earnings. The kind-hearted capitalist consumed twice as much as any one of them and his pile of wealth continually increased. In a little while--reckoning the little squares at their market value of one pound each--he was worth about one hundred pounds, and the working classes were still in the same condition as when they began, and were still tearing into their work as if their lives depended upon it.

After a while the rest of the crowd began to laugh, and their merriment increased when the kind-hearted capitalist, just after having sold a pound's worth of necessaries to each of his workers, suddenly took their tools--the Machinery of Production--the knives away from them, and informed them that as owing to Over Production all his store-houses were glutted with the necessaries of life, he had decided to close down

the works.

'Well, and wot the bloody 'ell are we to do now?' demanded Philpot.

'That's not my business,' replied the kind-hearted capitalist. 'I've paid you your wages, and provided you with Plenty of Work for a long time past. I have no more work for you to do at present. Come round again in a few months' time and I'll see what I can do for you.'

'But what about the necessaries of life?' demanded Harlow. 'We must have something to eat.'

'Of course you must,' replied the capitalist, affably; 'and I shall be very pleased to sell you some.'

'But we ain't got no bloody money!'

'Well, you can't expect me to give you my goods for nothing! You didn't work for me for nothing, you know. I paid you for your work and you should have saved something: you should have been thrifty like me. Look how I have got on by being thrifty!'

The unemployed looked blankly at each other, but the rest of the crowd only laughed; and then the three unemployed began to abuse the kind-hearted Capitalist, demanding that he should give them some of the necessaries of life that he had piled up in his warehouses, or to be allowed to work and produce some more for their own needs; and even

threatened to take some of the things by force if he did not comply with their demands. But the kind-hearted Capitalist told them not to be insolent, and spoke to them about honesty, and said if they were not careful he would have their faces battered in for them by the police, or if necessary he would call out the military and have them shot down like dogs, the same as he had done before at Featherstone and Belfast.

'Of course,' continued the kind-hearted capitalist, 'if it were not for foreign competition I should be able to sell these things that you have made, and then I should be able to give you Plenty of Work again: but until I have sold them to somebody or other, or until I have used them myself, you will have to remain idle.'

'Well, this takes the bloody biskit, don't it?' said Harlow.

'The only thing as I can see for it,' said Philpot mournfully, 'is to 'ave a unemployed procession.'

'That's the idear,' said Harlow, and the three began to march about the room in Indian file, singing:

'We've got no work to do-oo-oo'
We've got no work to do-oo-oo!
Just because we've been workin' a dam sight too hard,
Now we've got no work to do.'

As they marched round, the crowd jeered at them and made offensive

remarks. Crass said that anyone could see that they were a lot of lazy, drunken loafers who had never done a fair day's work in their lives and never intended to.

'We shan't never get nothing like this, you know,' said Philpot. 'Let's try the religious dodge.'

'All right,' agreed Harlow. 'What shall we give 'em?'

'I know!' cried Philpot after a moment's deliberation. '"Let my lower lights be burning." That always makes 'em part up.'

The three unemployed accordingly resumed their march round the room, singing mournfully and imitating the usual whine of street-singers:

'Trim your fee-bil lamp me brither-in,
Some poor sail-er tempest torst,
Strugglin' 'ard to save the 'arb-er,
Hin the dark-niss may be lorst,
So let try lower lights be burning,
Send 'er gleam acrost the wave,
Some poor shipwrecked, struggling seaman,
You may rescue, you may save.'

'Kind frens,' said Philpot, removing his cap and addressing the crowd, 'we're hall honest British workin' men, but we've been hout of work for the last twenty years on account of foreign competition and

over-production. We don't come hout 'ere because we're too lazy to work; it's because we can't get a job. If it wasn't for foreign competition, the kind'earted Hinglish capitalists would be able to sell their goods and give us Plenty of Work, and if they could, I assure you that we should hall be perfectly willing and contented to go on workin' our bloody guts out for the benefit of our masters for the rest of our lives. We're quite willin' to work: that's hall we arst for--Plenty of Work--but as we can't get it we're forced to come out 'ere and arst you to spare a few coppers towards a crust of bread and a night's lodgin'.'

As Philpot held out his cap for subscriptions, some of them attempted to expectorate into it, but the more charitable put in pieces of cinder or dirt from the floor, and the kind-hearted capitalist was so affected by the sight of their misery that he gave them one of the sovereigns he had in us pocket: but as this was of no use to them they immediately returned it to him in exchange for one of the small squares of the necessaries of life, which they divided and greedily devoured. And when they had finished eating they gathered round the philanthropist and sang, 'For he's a jolly good fellow,' and afterwards Harlow suggested that they should ask him if he would allow them to elect him to Parliament.